



The Great Fire of Rome: The Fall of the Emperor Nero and His City

By Stephen Dando-Collins

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On the night of July 19, AD 64, a fire began beneath the stands of Rome's great stadium, the Circus Maximus. For more than a week the fire spread, engulfing most of the city and nearly burning it to the ground. With its capital in ruins, Rome's powerful empire teetered on the edge of collapse as Nero struggled desperately to save his empire...and his skin.

In *The Great Fire of Rome*, Dando-Collins takes readers through the streets of ancient Rome, where unrest simmers, and into the imperial palace, where political intrigue seethes, relating a pot-boiler story filled with fascinating historical characters who will determine the course of an empire. It is an unforgettable human drama that brings ancient Rome and the momentous events of 64 AD scorchingly to life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Australian-born historian Dando-Collins vividly recreates one of history's most famous events. On a warm summer night in 64 C.E., a small fire broke out in a Roman shop; fanned by winds, the fire spread quickly, destroying huge parts of the city. The emperor, Nero, an accomplished lyre player and singer, was in Antium for a singing competition, and when news of the fire reached him, he reluctantly set sail for home. Nero announced an ambitious rebuilding plan, with bounties for landowners who completed reconstruction of buildings on their land in a prescribed period. Nero also planned for wider streets, which made him unpopular with many. Seeking to assign blame for the fire, Nero settled on the priests of Isis, persecuting them at public festivals. This drew the ire of Nero's critics, who believed the emperor himself had set the fire. Nero spent the last four years of his life in seclusion. Drawing heavily upon the conflicting accounts of the fire and Nero's rise and demise in the works of Roman historians Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, historian Dando-Collins energetically recreates the days leading up to the fire, the conflagration itself, and the subsequent decline of Nero's fortunes. 8 pages of b&w photos, maps.

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Review

“Surprisingly little nonfiction exists for a general audience about the Great Fire of Rome...Dando-Collins fills this gap with an exciting, novelistic account of the fire that remains solidly grounded in the primary source literature...This book will appeal to general Roman history buffs and students with its fast pacing and dramatic content. Recommended.”

Italian America, Fall 2010

“Expos[es] the secrets and scandals surrounding this infamous historical event and separat[es] truth from legend.”

Kingman Daily Miner, 10/8/10

“A page-turner and an insightful eye-opener to ancient Roman history...Brilliantly written and highly recommended.”

San Francisco Book Review website, 11/4/10

“Dando-Collins presents another side to the story...[His] hypotheses are well-researched...The language is refreshing, simple, and not overly academic...The book retains intrigue as Dando-Collins moves from the underlying turmoil that led up to the fire to the slow dethroning of Nero. Overall, it is an easy, entertaining read.”

Midwest Book Review, November 2010

“A fine addition to any history collection focusing on the time of antiquity.”

Publishers Weekly, 7/26/10

“Dando-Collins vividly recreates one of history's most famous events...Dando-Collins energetically

recreates the days leading up to the fire, the conflagration itself, and the subsequent decline of Nero's fortunes."

WTVF (CBS, Nashville), 9/7/10

"Did Nero really set fire to Rome in 64AD? More than just a convenient slam against a failed emperor, this book solves the historical puzzle and is interesting reading."

Internet Review of Books, September 2010

"Dando-Collins manages the narrative skillfully, burying his transitions so that the story flows as easily and inevitably as the Tiber. The cruelty and violence are appalling but fascinating, and they help keep the pages turning...He writes with admirable enthusiasm and a good grasp of the things that interest him most, military affairs, plots, and power plays...Enjoy it!"

Washington Times, 9/17

"Dando-Collins takes readers inside ancient Rome and its political intrigues that unfold alongside a momentous human drama."

Asbury Park Press, 9/19

Military Heritage, January 2011

"Dando-Collins gives us an entirely different view of the events that led to the cataclysmic inferno that engulfed Rome on the evening of July 19, AD 64...[His] account of Nero's brief life, the conspiracy that was concocted against him, and the great fire that consumed 70 percent of the Eternal City is intriguing."

Asbury Park Press, 1/16/11

"Dando-Collins' chronicle of Nero's career is presented in the context of the dynamics of the empire as well as the lives of ordinary people in Rome in the first century. For most readers, it will shed new and interesting light on the man and the era."

Reference & Research Book News, February 2011

"An excellent corrective to myth and a good introduction to first-century Roman history."

Collected Miscellany, 4/25/11

"Dando-Collins does a superb job of describing the various plots to overthrow Nero and how he reacted to each threat...A fascinating look at ancient Rome and the power politics of the last days of the Caesar dynasty. Dando-Collins captures the scheming and back-stabbing among the power elite...A must-read for anyone interested in the politics of Rome."

"This book explores that fateful (for Rome, at least) night of July 19 in the year 64, when a blaze began beneath the Circus Maximus—ancient Rome's version of Madison Square Garden."

PopMatters.com, 9/22

"Nero and the *Great Fire of Rome* is a tale that begs to be told; it is a heck of a good story...It is entertaining. It moves quickly and delivers its main points well."

The Lone Star, September 2010

“[A] totally interesting book...You will learn the many secrets and the scandals that surround this most mysterious of historical event.”

InfoDad.com, 9/30/10

“Very well-written and very well-paced...What Dando-Collins does so well, in addition to re-creating the sense of Rome 2,000 years ago, is explain both the confluence of events leading to the fire and the later circumstances that led to the besmirching of Nero’s name...A clearheaded, intelligent look at what sort of man the last Caesar seems really to have been, and how the devastating fire for which he was wrongly blamed led to the ruin of his rule and reputation.”

Bookviews.com, October 2010

“Heavily researched”

Library Journal, 10/08/10

About the Author

Stephen Dando-Collins is an Australian-born historian, editor, and author. He has written several highly acclaimed nonfiction books, including *Caesar’s Legion* and *Tycoon’s War*. He lives in Tasmania.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Roger Johnson:

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