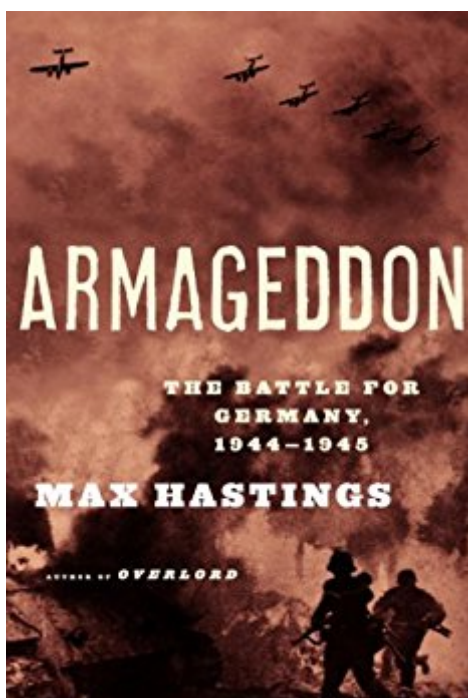


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Armageddon: The Battle For Germany, 1944-45



Synopsis

This is epic story of the last eight months of World War II in Europe by one of Britain's most highly regarded military historians, whose accounts of past battles John Keegan has described as worthy to stand with that of the best journalists and writers • (New York Times Book Review). In September 1944, the Allies believed that Hitler's army was beaten, and expected that the war would be over by Christmas. But the disastrous Allied airborne landing in Holland, American setbacks on the German border and in the Hürtgen Forest, together with the bitter Battle of the Bulge, drastically altered that timetable. Hastings tells the story of both the Eastern and Western Fronts, and paints a vivid portrait of the Red Army's onslaught on Hitler's empire. He has searched the archives of the major combatants and interviewed 170 survivors to give us an unprecedented understanding of how the great battles were fought, and of their human impact on American, British, German, and Russian soldiers and civilians. Hastings raises provocative questions: Were the Western Allied cause and campaign compromised by a desire to get the Soviets to do most of the fighting? Why were the Russians and Germans more effective soldiers than the Americans and British? Why did the bombing of Germany's cities continue until the last weeks of the war, when it could no longer influence the outcome? Why did the Germans prove more fanatical foes than the Japanese, fighting to the bitter end? This book also contains vivid portraits of Stalin, Churchill, Eisenhower, Montgomery, and the other giants of the struggle. The crucial final months of the twentieth century's greatest global conflict come alive in this rousing and revelatory chronicle.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hasting's 'Armageddon' (ARM) is the most entertaining, although, not the best historical book I have read related to WW II. However, there are a number of inaccuracies found throughout the book.

These minor inaccuracies do not detract from an enjoyable reading experience. Hasting's provides insight into the allies, their role, with, particular attention to the Red Army (eastern front) and the Wehrmacht's battling on two fronts (east and west.) The book is not laborious, and, is reasonably well researched and informative. For the individual who is searching for an over arching view of WW II this is a fine text, albeit, somewhat lengthy. Max Hasting's spends minimal verbiage on well known individuals i.e. Churchill, Eisenhower, Montgomery, Roosevelt, Stalin, Zhukov, etc. Rather the focus is on anecdotal quotes from soldiers in the trenches which, is interesting, but difficult to validate. The tremendous losses incurred by the Russian army, and, also the Wehrmacht is detailed and contrasted. These losses are also compared with those of Britain and the USA, which, again, is useful for one beginning a review of WW II. The Russians are broadly painted with a rather harsh brush "for their savagery." The Wehrmacht is exemplified as "the best soldiers of WW II" which, is arguably, an accurate assessment. Britain and the USA are to some extent, relegated to secondary roles, and, when one looks at the numbers Hasting's provides, is perhaps reasonable. The bombing of key German cities is viewed, by Hasting's, with scathing judgment. Hasting's opinions which abound in this text, are similarly expressed by numerous WW II veterans with whom I have spoken.

(1) Germans were the best soldiers; (2) Russians were rather barbaric; (3) British soldiers were difficult to deal with; (4) US soldiers had a steep learning curve; (5) many German will never forgive our bombing of civilian targets and destruction of those cities. Hasting's provides data, numbers, dates, turning points and valued information as he breaks down the different army roles during WW II. There is discussion about personality conflicts between allied command, with emphasis on the USA and Britain. A stark contrast is presented between Stalin and utilization of the Red Army, and, Hitler's utilization of the Wehrmacht. Hasting views Stalin's and Hitler's armies as part of a "warrior culture." Whereas the British and American armies are "more humanitarian." These points are

difficult to deny although, Hasting drives this to redundant exhaustion. The book engages the reader from the outset. Hasting provides ample evidence, as to how and why, at the end of WW II lines of demarcation were settled while dividing the spoils of war. Also, how allied and axis army(s) were controlled, by whom, and, the consequence of this command paradigm. Primary individuals of allied and axis forces are discussed, but, not in detail or depth. This is not a biography of individuals. If the reader is looking for such, then this book is not for you. Look elsewhere. Max Hasting provides a point of view which does not overwhelm the reader. Hasting discusses the amount of manpower and the economic cost each country invested in WW II. Hasting's writes: (that) "in the end it was as though two great beast were locked in savage combat with only one possible outcome....a fight till the death." Long entrenched social, cultural, economic, political prejudices become clear through Hasting's written word. I often read historical books and recommend Hasting's work 'Armageddon.' With the caveat...read other better researched text as well. This is a pleasant respite from many laborious text, wherein the writer over cites, over writes, and, at times may bore the reader. An excellent book for one just stepping into the murky waters of history. Hasting is not boring and 'Armageddon' is a start or early point for any person who shares an interest related to WW II. My only criticism is that better maps could have been provided.

Anything Max Hastings writes is likely to be a five star book-- and that certainly is true of this one. I am a WWII buff, and have read dozens or hundreds of books on World War II. This book is much more lucid than most, and is adding significantly to my understanding. The only criticism I have is of the publisher, who chose a very small type font which makes it difficult to read. However, I am an old man, and am managing.

Max Hastings as usual combines his deep knowledge of the subject matter as a historian, his first-person interviews, and his subjective judgments to the cataclysmic end of the worst two years in the history of the world. He spends particular attention on the effects of the carpet bombing of German cities, and the resultant loss of civilian life. His account of the refugee crisis in the East, as millions of ethnic Germans fled Prussia, Poland and occupied regions along the Baltic is eye-opening and stunning. There are a few subjective judgments of his that I take issue with, however. For example, he mostly attributes the viciousness of the Soviets as a form of "payback" for the brutality of the Nazis toward occupied Russia. While certainly a factor, "payback" does not explain the equal viciousness with which the Soviets treated returned Soviet PoWs. Were returning PoWs mistreated by the Soviets because of the way the Nazis handled occupied Russia? He also

explains Eisenhower's overall interest in reducing casualties and maintaining an Allied front, and his success in doing so despite growing British and Soviet mistrust. Putting aside the editorializing, Hastings is a master historian of the period who has delivered a crisp, well-written account of Europe's destruction at the end of this horrific war.

I probably can't add much to the existing 200 reviews for this book, but did want to add a high rating. The author does a good job covering all of the relevant sides in the last year or so of war--the Western Allies, the Soviets, the Germans, and the civilians--with a good mix of "big picture" narrative and "down in the weeds" quotes from individual soldiers, etc. Some readers could probably quibble about the author's (often harsh) assessments of their favorite generals, but generally this reader found his opinions to be justified. My only slight criticism is that the author actually jumps around a bit too much, quoting a soldier in the British army, then in the next sentence quoting a GI, etc. Not a major issue, however, and overall this book is a very good overview of the last several months of the war.

This book contributes greatly to a much fuller and richer understanding as to how the war against Germany affected everyone, from soldiers in the various armies, POWs, and the lives of the general populations in the countries directly impacted by the fighting and bombing. That the impact was horrific is well known, but the myriad stories of individuals--soldiers, sailors, airmen, POWs, and civilians--give a more complete sense as to just how bad that impact was. Hastings also provides a balanced and objective assessment of the relative performance of Generals in the battling armies as well as the armies themselves. I have read a large number of books on WWII and various battles and this book is one of the best--if not the best--that I have ever read.

Actually this book was purchased for my husband. He enjoys reading war history and Max Hastings is one of his favorite writers. I cannot speak about the book because I have not read it, but my husband was thrilled with the book.

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