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Worldwar: Upsetting The Balance



Synopsis

Communist China, Japan, Nazi Germany, the United States: they began World War II as mortal enemies. But suddenly their only hope for survival-never mind victory-was to unite to stop a mighty foe: one whose frightening technology appeared invincible. Far worse beings than the Nazis were loose. From Warsaw to Moscow to China's enemy-occupied Forbidden City, the nations of the world had been forced into an uneasy alliance since humanity began its struggle against overwhelming odds. In Britain and Germany, where the banshee wail of hostile jets screamed across the land, caches of once-forbidden weapons were unearthed, and unthinkable tactics were employed against the enemy. Brilliantly innovative military strategists confronted challenges unprecedented in the history of warfare. Even as lack of fuel forced people back to horse and carriage, physicists worked feverishly to create the first atomic bombs-with horrifying results. City after city joined the radioactive pyre as the planet erupted in fiery ruins. Yet the crisis continued-on land, sea, and in the air-as humanity writhed in global combat. The tactics of daredevil guerrillas everywhere became increasingly ingenious against a superior foe whose desperate retaliation would grow ever more fearsome. No one had ever put the United States, or the world, in such deadly danger. But if the carnage and annihilation ever stopped, would there be any pieces to pick up?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Harry Turtledove's idea of an alien invasion caught offguard by the pace of technological change is solid and entertaining. As in the Great War series, he appears to be milking the idea for more than it

is worth. His choice of short vignettes to keep the reader abreast of a wide variety of characters works, but after a few volumes seems to become counterproductive, and to make a variety of situations less distinctive. The book works because of Mr. Turtledove's thinking and in spite of his writing. His strong suit is thinking through "what ifs" to solid conclusions. To date, I have found following Mr. Turtledove's "what ifs" worth wading through an undisciplined multiplicity of subplots and endlessly, numbingly similar descriptions of combat. The decisions made on the use of atomic weapons in the book follow an interesting line; however, the vignette style leaves the actual detonations and aftermaths almost dull. Some specific quibbles with this volume: 1. The Lizards use 1990's USA technology. Judging from the descriptions in the book, Mr. Turtledove has visualized the aliens using the U.S. Army TO&E. Their air transport loads the same way as a C5, their tanks are identical, and their artillery counterbattery and submunitions capabilities were taken straight out of the U.S. Artillery field manuals. Perhaps I'm missing some subtle satire on Mr. Turtledove's part (and I concede the possibility), but equipping the Lizards with modern (read Earth) technology makes the book read like a schoolboy's fantasy of going back and rampaging through the Panzers with a good old M1 tank. That's been done before (Nimitz? Pearl Harbor?). This has the effect of taking the one or two efforts Mr.

As *Worldwar: Upsetting the Balance* opens, the Race isn't yet sure if the Soviets have another atomic bomb. But among the ramifications of the attack are an attempt led by Straha, third in command of the Race's fleet, to depose Fleetlord Atvar. When the vote fails, Straha defects to the United States and tries to persuade the Race's soldiers to give up the fight, broadcasting his rhetoric by radio. Meanwhile, Teerts, a Race pilot held prisoner by the Japanese, escapes during an attack. Back with his own people, he reveals the details of the Japanese nuclear program, headquartered in Tokyo. In response, the Race drops its own nuclear bomb on the Japanese capital. While this cripples the Japanese effort, both the Americans and Germans are almost at the point where they can produce enough plutonium on their own to make a steady supply of atomic weapons. The Race decides it needs to take the British out of the war, and so they invade England. In response, Churchill issues a demand that they leave or face a new weapon. The Race thinks Churchill is bluffing, only to be surprised by something they're completely unprepared for -- mustard gas. Not only do they lack the weapon themselves, they have no gas masks. And once the British start using chemical weapons, the Germans decide to deploy an even more deadly nerve gas. Until now, the Race has faced only inferior weaponry of types similar to its own. Now the war has entered a new stage. While the war seemed rather static in the second book, major events fill *Worldwar: Upsetting*

the Balance from the first scene. Turtledove still follows all of his major characters, depicting the war from many perspectives.

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