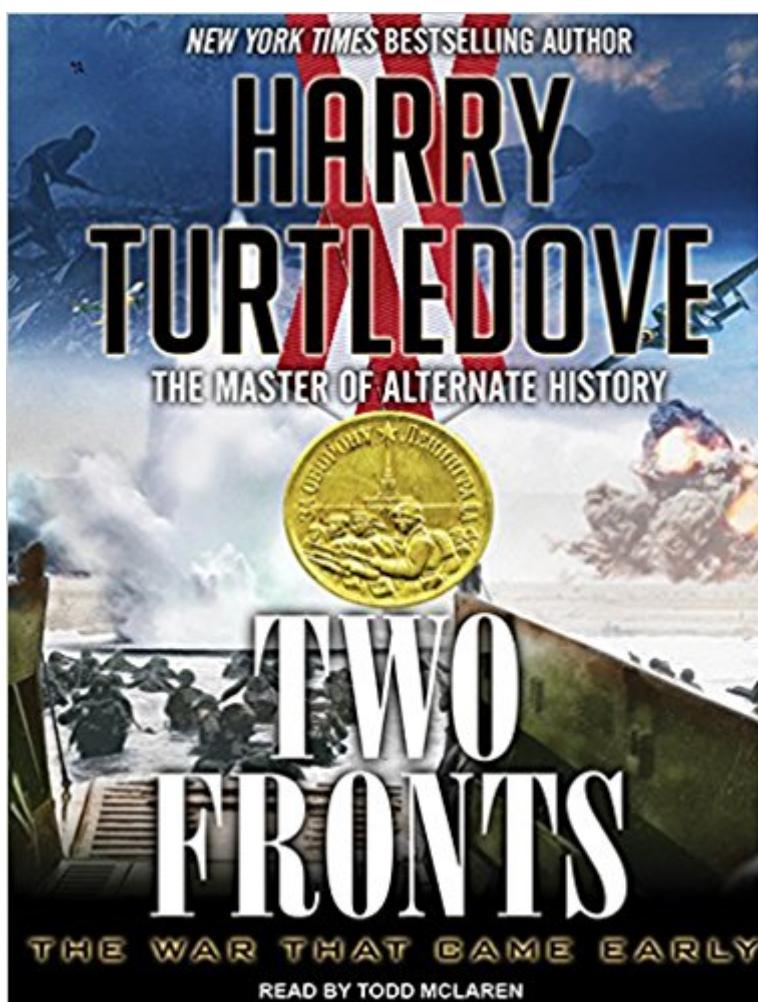


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Two Fronts (War That Came Early)



Synopsis

In the real world, England and France allowed Adolf Hitler to gobble up the Sudetenland in 1938. Once Hitler finished dismembering Czechoslovakia, he was ready to go to war over Poland a year later. But Hitler had always been eager to seize Czechoslovakia, no matter the consequences. So what if England and France had stood up to the Nazis from the start, and not eleven months later? That is the question behind the War That Came Early series. Four years later, the civil war in Spain drags on, even after General Franco's death. The United States, still neutral in Europe, fights the Japanese in the Pacific. Russia and Germany go toe-to-toe in Eastern Europe—yet while Hitler stares east, not everything behind him is going as well as he would like. But nothing feeds ingenuity like the fear of losing. The Germans wheel out new tanks and planes, Japan deploys weapons of a very different sort against China, and the United States, England, and France do what they can to strengthen themselves against imminent danger. Seen through the eyes of ordinary citizens caught in the maelstrom, this is a you-are-there chronicle of battle on land and sea and in the air. Here are terrifying bombing raids that shatter homes, businesses, and the rule of law. Here are commanders issuing orders that, once given, cannot be taken back. And here are the seeds of rebellion sown in blood-soaked soil. In a war in which sides are switched and allies trust one another only slightly more than they trust their mortal enemies, Nazi Germany has yet to send its Jews to death camps, and dangerous new nationalist powers arise in Eastern Europe. From thrilling submarine battles to the horror of men fighting men and machines all through Europe, Two Fronts captures every aspect of a brilliantly reimagined conflict: the strategic, the political, and the personal force of leaders bending nations to their wills.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Turtledove's new variation on the theme of WWII is departing more and more from the original, sometimes in subtle ways (the Tiger tank is the Mark V instead of the Mark VI) and sometimes in less subtle ones (Sergeant Fujita flies on missions to drop bacteriological weapons on Hawaii, making life uneasy for marine Pete McGill, and Herb Druse gets a certain research project in Tennessee canceled). The lot of the poor bloody infantrymen, however, does not change—it's still miserable, and for Wilhelm Deming, fatal. Meanwhile, British sergeant Walsh, French lieutenant Demange, and Czech sniper Vaclav Havacek are still full of fight, the first two on a French front bolstered by lend-lease supplies and the third in Spain. Hans Rudel continues to enjoy a charmed life in his tank-busting Stuka, while Julius Lemp takes his U-30 into Arctic waters, where he unbolts his record by sinking a British aircraft carrier. The real pressure for an explosion is building up in Germany, as dissatisfaction with the progress (or regress) of the war is building. The center of the dissent is in Münster, where newly widowed Sarah Bruck is dealing with it up close and personal and finding that not all Germans think of Jews as untermenschen. What's next is anybody's guess, except that it will almost certainly be more surprises. --Roland Green --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

plenty to satisfy fans of military strategy, tactics, and armaments. • Publishers Weekly: "Hitler's War" is always good, but this return to World War II . . . is genuinely brilliant. . . . The characterizations in particular bring the book to extraordinary life. • Booklist: From the Hardcover edition. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Sadly the high hopes I had for this series when the first novel came out have diminished with each new novel. Turtledove's writing has in the past been quite repetitive in previous series but "The War that Came Early" series and Two Fronts in particular take this repetition to new heights. No longer content with merely repeating certain similar phrases or subjects, in Two Fronts Turtledove replicates entire paragraphs almost exactly, from earlier in the series and within the book itself. Most readers would agree that he would be better served advancing the plot as opposed to repeatedly discussing the same topic: the Stukas and Russian bombers were outclassed by modern fighters; that anti-tank rifles made fantastic sniper rifles. The character of the Czech sniper's story is almost reduced to a version of wack-a-mole, with no drama whatsoever. Here's hoping that the wheels start turning in book 6.

I've read most of Turtledove's major series over the years, and I think this one is really starting to go off the rails and expose some of the flaws that have always been present in his writing, but are becoming increasingly pronounced as the years go on (which could also have something to do w/ starting on his books as a 15 year old and now reading them w/ a much more nuanced mid-30's understanding). The key problem w/ the series is that not enough seems to be changing...I come to alternate history for an entertaining exploration of what-if's or might-have-beens and this one just seems fairly predictable at this point, with the war mostly mirroring the real WW2. For instance, Germany is still going to lose to the USSR (we know this because we've had two books now of chapter after chapter of German and Soviet soldiers seeing the German advance slow, then halt, then slowly begin to retreat). The first bit of this series really promised some big changes w/ the implausible but still very interesting "switch" whereby Britain and France start fighting on the side of Germany, but that is dispensed with before there is really any impact and we move back to standard two front fighting in Europe. The US/Japan war seemingly will likely also grind on w/ a slower but eventual victory for the US, which will let the series end w/ a cold war stalemate fairly similar to what happened in real life but just w/ the organization of Europe probably modified a bit. I see a lot of similarities to his previous "Darkness" series where, once you decoded which fantasy nations stood

in for which real world nations, you were just reading a retelling of WW2 with different names and magic wands instead of rifles. The repetitive-ness of the writing style is also quite apparent five books in. In general, we have been told the same information about these characters what seems like dozens of times at this point...Awful Arno is a bad squad leader, and he's really upset that one of his privates painted his rifle a nonstandard color, the Czech sniper is able to kill at very long ranges with his anti-tank rifle, the Stuka pilot is a teetotaler and his squadmates make fun of him for it, etc etc etc. I understand why authors to some degree repeat and re-establish information about characters from book to book, but is there really anyone who is going to pick up this series at book 3 or 4 and just dive in without starting from the beginning? Furthermore, Turtledove seems to have acquired a list of "Colloquial sayings of the 1930's - 1940's" and applies them liberally across cultures, languages, etc in order to show he knows what people talked like back in that timeframe. Half the characters in this book wonder about things related to "when the balloon goes up" (i.e. war starts). Everyone who sees a German/interacts with Germany at any point has to make a point of working the word "Feldgrau" into their conversation/thought somehow. Herb Druce is emphasized over and over again to have gone "Over There" when it is saying he fought in WW1....we get it, we don't need to be repeatedly hammered over the head w/ the antiquated colloquialism's to make us realize we are reading about the past. Most importantly, Turtledove's style just seems such that all the really interesting things are happening outside of our view, and we are just seeing reactions. The series started off strong w/ the French, British, and German leaders being described at a meeting before the war began...show us that level of action and politicking, it will be way more interesting than the 100th battle scene in which the czech sniper kills someone from far away or infantrymen get shelled by artillery. Instead we just move from grunt level viewpoint to grunt level viewpoint, reacting to more interesting things that have happened off page by people who actually have a role in how the world is going, not just the ones getting chewed up by all of this. TBH, if you've read this far you might as well finish the series out w/ the last book due out in July 2014, just to conclude it. In all honesty though, unless Germany starts lobbing nukes around I don't really see how at Turtledove's pace he's going to be able to resolve things and tie up an interesting story in one volume.

I have been a fan of Harry Turtledove since The Guns of The South, and even I have to say this book is as dull as watching paint dry. He is good at describing battle scenes generally, but here you get the impression that he's being paid by the word. If I had a sip of beer every time he used the word "beast," I'd be passed-out drunk. The thing that bothers me is how he avoids drama. The

Japanese drop germ bombs on Hawaii. Is there panic as people start dying of the Plague? Nope. It's brushed off in two pages with mandatory vaccinations. Pfft. Even I could write better than that. He did the same thing in the last book, by completely avoiding telling how the pro-Fascists in London were overthrown. One day they're with Hitler, and the next, they aren't. Yawn. Next! He did better with the Timeline-191 series, because it was at least dramatic and didn't shy away from telling a larger story. But this series has become downright boring, and--I hate to say this--not worth reading. Seriously, it's simply a drawn-out soap opera. Will Peggy become an alcoholic? Will Chaim ever have sex with the Communist cutie again? Will anybody shoot Awful Arno in the back? Tune in next time for As The World War Turns---at \$35 an episode. As Chaim might have said, "Feh! Who needs it?"

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