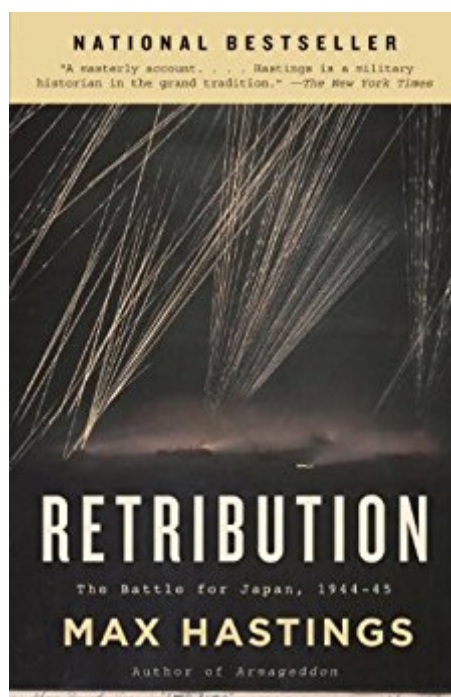


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Retribution



Synopsis

By the summer of 1944 it was clear that Japan's defeat was inevitable, but how the drive to victory would be achieved remained unclear. The ensuing drama that ended in Japan's utter devastation was acted out across the vast theater of Asia in massive clashes between army, air, and naval forces. In recounting these extraordinary events, Max Hastings draws incisive portraits of MacArthur, Mao, Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and other key figures of the war in the East. But he is equally adept in his portrayals of the ordinary soldiers and sailors caught in the bloodiest of campaigns. With its piercing and convincing analysis, *Retribution* is a brilliant telling of an epic conflict from a master military historian at the height of his powers. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

I am not a history buff but wanted to mix in this book with the typical fiction that I read. This book presented detailed insights into the war that I had not been overly familiar with before. There is the discussion about why the Americans dropped the bomb and why history brought us down that path. In addition, delving into the minds and culture of Japan was great. There is a passage that says

something to the effect that the Japanese were brave warriors but moral cowards thus the reason why the war continued much past when it should have ended.

Retribution is Max Hastings' companion history to *Armageddon*. This account of the end of the Pacific War is really well written, in fact I have read nothing by Mr. Hastings that has not been well done. Indeed, all his books are well done from the syntactical standpoint. The detailing of the end of the war is quite well done, but admittedly the accounts from the Japanese are very anecdotal. I appreciate Hastings' views in regard of Okinawa bringing to light its role in the use of the atomic bombs. I like Hastings' analysis for the most part. That Truman's decision to end the war with nuclear weapons was indeed justifiable is refreshing, especially from the modern histories, which are notoriously unrealistic in their estimation of what was possible in 1945. The war from the Japanese side was really anecdotal. Hastings even admits that the sources from Japan are notoriously unreliable, but I would have liked to get more information from the Japanese archives if any exist. That is really my only problem with the book, and I suppose that is something that Hastings could not control.

Max Hastings is just about the best WW2 historian writing today. As in his other masterpiece, *"Inferno"* (the best single volume history of the war), Hastings pulls no punches and is even-handed in his commentaries. For example, he makes it clear that the British Burma campaign had no strategic value whatsoever in terms of defeating Japan, but was only a final bloody exercise to try to restore a dying British empire. Tragically, thousands of Britons (and Indians) had to die for this fantasy. Similarly, Hastings makes it clear that MacArthur's obsession to restore American control over all of the Philippines, instead of just taking the ports and airfields that would have been useful to a later invasion of Japan, led to the unnecessary deaths of thousands of Americans and Filipino civilians. Hastings is unhesitant about exposing in graphic terms the genocidal crimes committed by the Japanese against other Asians whose countries they occupied, especially the Chinese and Filipinos. Hastings neither excuses nor condemns the horrors inflicted on the Japanese people in the final months of the war; rather, he explains the context in which those horrors occurred.

This is hands down the best book about the Pacific War I have ever read and it may be the best history on any topic I have ever read. I highly recommend you read this book if you're interested in the Pacific War. I guarantee that you will learn a great deal about topics that are typically not discussed. I especially appreciate that the author looks at various controversial aspects of the war

from multiple viewpoints before providing his conclusion. Seriously, read this book.

An amazing narrative of Allied involvement not only in the war in the Pacific, but the battles in the BIC theater. The Soviet Union's war against Japan & the Commonwealth (nations) of S Africa, Australia & New Zealand. Highly recommended by this avid follower of the great WWII historian Max Hastings

Truly splendid writing, a sharp, balanced account of events involving millions of human beings--soldiers, politicians, civilians of any number of nationalities and ethnicities--at their best and worst. Another reviewer commented on Hastings seemingly repeating his thesis regarding the use of the atomic bombs by U.S.A., but he is simply countering different arguments from different camps. The geographic sweep of the area he covers is enormous, yet one does truly get a sense of the various places: the jungles of Burma, the streets of Manila, the shores of Iwo Jima, etc. I'm about to purchase his "Armageddon: The Battle for Germany."

To understand the Second World War in the Pacific, this is the primer, to accompany detailed studies of elements (e.g., Slim's account of Burma). Particularly useful is the blend of grand strategy and personal accounts, "bookending" this colossal set of events.

Hastings covers the end of the War in the Pacific with his usual crisp and accurate style. Especially valuable is the coverage of the Russian assault, which combined with the atomic bombs brought the conflict to its terrible and necessary end. No cheap revisionist, Hastings places the deployment of the A-bomb in the context of the escalating and maniacal dead-end desperation of Japanese leadership, and correctly identifies it as the least worst way to end the war. Certainly there are opinions expressed: that MacArthur was an overrated preening hack, that the Philippines campaign was a costly distraction from the end goal, that Halsey was out of position at Leyte Gulf. All these opinions have mainstream support, but there are those who would disagree. Well worth reading.

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