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Harry Turtledove

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Set in an alternate 1950s in which General MacArthur ignites a nuclear war that nearly destroys the planet. The third and final installment in an all new series.

Not only is the outcome of the world's first nuclear war still to be determined, as the Americans and Russians continue to sling death at each other, but there remains the question of how hard it will be for humanity to rebuild itself from the ashes of destruction that this war has wrought. For can a victor truly be declared when all of humanity has paid the price?

Armistice Details

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From Reader Review Armistice for online ebook

James Crabtree says

In this, the third book in the Atomic War series, both the United States and the Soviet Union have suffered utter devastation thanks to atomic bombs delivered by B-29 Superforts and Tu-4 Bulls. Lives have been overturned as eastern Europe rises up against the Soviet occupation... not to mention some soviet socialist republics which never really bought into the whole USSR thing.

Once again, Turtledove brings the period to life using the experiences of his characters. Of course, this seems to be a bit repetitious or disconnected after a while as some of the characters have no real contact with the war anymore. Indeed, by the time the book is over it feels unfinished.

Christian D. Orr says

Action-packed, sometimes humorous, sometime harrowing & disturbing, always page-turning and entertaining final instalment in Harry Turtledove's Cold War/Korean War/WWIII alternate history trilogy, "The Hot War."

RANDOM STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS (and noteworthy passages):

--p. 7: Harry Truman "knew how to cuss, all right." Give 'em hell, Harry!

Philly the capital of the USA again? Hey, just like the author's Southern Victory book series!

The majority of the SCOTUS lived while Congress didn't ? Drat!

--p. 9: "And, like every other Democrat in the race, he [Adlai Stevenson] ran with a uranium-weighted anvil on his back." In these days, it'd be a hammer & sickle!

--p. 10: "as the Russians liberated their country from the Germans for them? (That the USSR had helped the Reich assassinate Poland a few years earlier was something that had never crossed Ihor's mind.)" Haha, gotta love the communists' convenient selective memory!

--p. 11: "If you were going to lead, though, you had to *lead*." Word. ??

"Fuck Stalin!" a Pole shouted." God bless the Poles!

--p. 15: "Like his own people, the Amis preferred mild tobacco. French cigarettes, Gitane and especially Gauloises, felt like sandpaper and blowtorches in your lungs. The cheap junk the Russians smoked tasted as if it were stretched with horseshit. For all Rolf knew, it was." Haha, ach Scheisser! ? ?

--p. 18: (SPOILER ALERT from cliffhanger in Book #2) Dammit, RIP Daisy Baxter!

--p. 22: "'Captain'....Vavilov was only a commander..." Actually, in the Soviet Navy, a Commander was in fact called a Captain 2nd Rank.

--p. 23: "'Bozhemoi'" = "Oh my God!"

--p. 25: "I serve the Soviet Union!" (????? ?????????? ???? - s-loo-zhOO sah-vYE-ts-kah-moo sah-YU-zoo.) = "Hooah!" in the U.S. Army and "Ganbaru" (Hard work!) in Japanese.

--p. 26: RIP San Pedro!

--p. 29: Ah so, the old school un-PC term "Oriental."

--p. 30: Jimmy = the Korean War version of Forest Gump?

--p. 50: "The stench would have knocked Satan off his throne in Hell." Damn! ? ?

--p. 91: "But Harry Truman was the kind of man who called a spade a goddamn shovel." What a rare bird in politics--kinda like Donald Trump in the present day!

--p. 100: George Kennan!

--p. 103: "Vasili Yasevich didn't mind Poland. It put him mind of what the Soviet Union would have looked like if it were cleaner and the people worked harder." Haha, zing!

--p. 107: Commies assigning "the ash heap of history" to capitalism?? Deliberate irony on Turtledove's part (R.I.P. and God bless, Ronald Reagan).

Okay, the author is already repeated the same Cade-saved-Jimmy story he'd already recounted less than a hundred pages earlier.

--p. 108: "To some people, war was the best, truest, the most exciting thing they ever found." True enough, and as Demo Dick Marcinko and LTC Dave Grossman would point out, that doesn't make 'em bad people either.

--p. 109: "'How come English not all time one letter, one sound?'" Damn good question, Jimmy!

--p. 110: "If dialectical materialism at top volume wasn't a fate worse than death, Cade hadn't the slightest idea what possibly could be." Ha!

--p. 118: Lipshitz!

--p. 119: A Red Army Major actually getting his hands dirty in hands-on work on his tank?!

--p. 136: "geh kak afem yam" = GFY??

--p. 144: Westwood, Fucla, blecchh!

--p. 146: Hungarian secret police of the Cold War = AVO

So, the author let USC get nuked while Fucla survived, eh? Fucker!

--p. 154: FDR one of the greatest Presidents? Bullshit!

--p. 156: Um, pets are more likely to go "meshuggeh" *before* an earthquake, not during.

--p. 178: "Rukhi verkh" = Hands up

Does "metyeryebyets" really mean "motherfucker," or was that something made up by James Clavell back in the day?

--p. 184: "You could lose yourself, or lose days, here" in the British Museum. True enough, and true of damn near any museum.

--p. 212: Ike "wasn't a dope; he just looked and sounded as if he ought to be one." Same thing could be said about Abe Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt.

--p. 256: Haha, roll that in your commie-loving cuntpipe and smoke it, Roxane!

--p. 263: Slivovitz = Yugo plum wine

"Zhiveli!" = "To life!" toast

--p. 296: "Danken Gott dafür"

--p. 300: Ah yes, the "New Soviet Man" concept.

--p. 317: "Alevai omayn" = May it be so.

--p. 338: "When you chose between Spam and hunger, Spam won every time."

--pp. 342-344: "But I'll tell you something. Some people with college degrees don't know when to use *it's* the contraction and *its* the possessive." Ain't that the frickin' truth! Your [sic] right, Mr. van Zandt (and Mr. Turtledove).

--p. 360: Flying-A station one and the same as present-day Flying-J?

CENTRAL CASTING:

Liam Neeson as Capt. 2nd Rank Valivov (submarine S-71), Judd Hirsch as Herschel Weissman, Jeff Goldblum as Aaron Fink, Billy Bob Thornton (or James Carville) as Jim Summers, Jimmy from "The Reliant" as Capt. Cade Curtis, Josh Brolin as Lt. Howard Sturgis, John Cho as "Jimmy" (ROK), Steve Sarkisian (hey, he could use a decent job, heh heh) as Vazgan Sarkisyan, George Clooney as Bruce McNulty (USAF B-29 pilot), Karen Allen as Marian Staley, Jon Favreau as Phil Vukovich, Sonny Puzikas as Boris Gribkov, Abraham Benrubi as Dr. Eckhardt, Nicolas Cage as MSG/2Lt Sturgis, Steve Zahn (or Jon Favreau?) as Col. Pagliarone, Steven Berkoff as Col. Petlyura, Nikita Koloff as Col. Azarov

Aaron says

This book, which seems to be the final one in the series, picks up right where the previous book ended. Harry Truman is walking through Washington, D.C., taking in the scene of the capital city after it was attacked by Russia with an atomic bomb. Truman has lost everything in the attack ... not just the fact that it is a scar on the nation and a major hit that removed a majority of the country's governing officials. His wife and daughter were killed in the attack. Not surprisingly, he orders further atomic attacks on Russia. In the end, this starts

the process of bringing both the Soviet Union and the United States to the table to start discussing the possibility of an armistice.

As the Hot War starts to cool, readers join the various protagonists as they start to return home to see the devastation, both physical and psychological, that can be found in all the countries involved, including the superpowers themselves and their client nations. Not surprisingly, the results for each character are not different no matter where they are from.

As with all of Turtledove books, history is humanized by the tale largely being told from the perspective of the "everymen & women" on both sides. He has a talent for making history come alive by coming up with interesting and challenging what-ifs. In a way, this book (and the previous two in the series) is timely as it explores the possibility of what might have happened if the United States, and then the Soviet Union, brought atomic bombs into the Korean War. This causes the world to shift into a Hot War instead of the Cold War we know from history.

Turtledove is definitely not an easy read. There is a lot of thinking that goes into it all, but he is totally worth it. This book is no different.

Michael Rickard says

A good wrap-up to Turtledove's trilogy of what if the U.S. used nukes during the Korean Conflict. I've been reading Harry Turtledove's work since his "Worldwar" series and he continues to find new alternate history topics that prove entertaining. What works for me is that he does a good job creating a group of characters all situated in a "what-if?" world. Here, how would people around the world react if NATO and the Warsaw Pact started dropping atomic bombs indiscriminately? It's a chilling premise, but Turtledove shows how people rise to the occasion and others don't fare so well.

Peter McLoughlin says

The final installment of the alternate history trilogy about the Korean War turning into a nuclear war. straightforward narrative about something that looks like a more destructive version of world war two. enjoyed the story but was bothered by its taking an unthinkable apocalypse and turning it into a war story. it is what it is.

David says

Always enjoy alternate history, what if being one of my favorite subjects. Turtledove is one of the best at it so I'm really happy when I get a new one from him. This one is a good ending to the series and is typical Turtledove. If you enjoy pondering what if one thing changed, how would the world be different, than you should check out Turtledove. This series asked the question, what if a-bombs had been used in the Korean War and takes it from there. I recommend it and look forward to his next.

Cliff Dalton says

Atomic War Ends

Affairs get wrapped up, either by resolution or by circumstance in the third and final installment of The Hot War series. In typical Turtledove style characters form, relationships blossom and life happens. You may become endeared to a character or you might despise them, but just as in real life you really don't know their fate until it's revealed in the end. Just as real life there may or may not be a neat little package all wrapped up but there is at least an idea of what will be.

A good read and a great series.

Tomislav says

Armistice is the third book in the alternate history series “The Hot War”, in which the Korean War goes nuclear. I have previously read Bombs Away and Fallout (The Hot War #1 and #2), and many of Harry Turtledove’s other alternate histories – particularly the “The Great War/American Empire/Settling Accounts” sequence concerning an alternate US history starting from the Civil War onwards, which I liked, and “The Worldwar Saga” concerning an alternate World War II in which aliens invade Earth after the onset of the human war, which I did not like, and a few of his standalone novels as well.

In general, this review is free to reveal plot events of the first two books, so I would suggest you read no further, if you want to avoid spoilers of those. This review will not reveal plot developments of Armistice itself, although the title itself could be a pretty big clue.

The point of departure (POD) of this alternate history is in 1950, after China intervenes to prevent the loss of Korea to US/UN forces. In the first book, President Truman authorized the use of atomic bombs against Chinese troops within China, near the Korean border. In response, the Soviet Union took nuclear retaliation against western Europe, and started a land invasion across Germany. There have also been aircraft-borne atomic bombings of some major cities of the US and even more of the Soviet Union and central Europe. Germany in particular was caught in the middle and has taken a pounding. This conflict is only a few years after the end of World War II, but the central European nations are now arranged in different combinations, sometimes still bearing old hatreds. The narrative switches frequently between a dozen lead characters, located at various points around the globe. However, all are impacted by the conflict – civilians who once lived near cities that have been nuked, pilots that fly the bombers, tank crews, and infantry, and President Harry Truman himself.

In this third book, all parties are facing depletion of their ability and will to fight, especially the Soviet Union. The story follows the dozen main characters as they continue to endure the consequences of what has already taken place, to logical conclusions. The message here is the complete folly of a so-called limited nuclear exchange. And on the individual level, that the final outcome for any particular person is controlled mostly by luck. There is more attention paid to specific attributes of the infantry, tank, and air weapons systems than contribute to the narrative or those messages.

I also feel that Turtledove missed an opportunity to extrapolate on the tensions that existed between Stalin and Tito in the early 1950s – and the consequences of that within Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav role in this novel seemed like an afterthought, that could have been filled by anyone.

This third novel does complete the major story arc as a trilogy, and Turtledove might be done with this time stream. To me, it also seems possible that he could fast-forward a half-generation or more and pick up the surviving characters again in a 1960s setting, recasting the Vietnam conflict (or some divergent analog of the Vietnam conflict) into this world. I'm kind of hoping for that.

Patrick DiJusto says

The first Turtledove novel that I felt might not have been necessary.

Turtledove started the trilogy with a brilliant alternate history premise I've never seen before -- what if Harry Truman had granted Douglas MacArthur's request to use atomic bombs in Manchuria during the Korean War? Since the only atomic weapons at the time were 15-20 kiloton devices, and the only delivery systems B-29s (and their Soviet copies), such a war would be slow and protracted.

As such, the first two books brilliantly portrayed how such a war might play out--obviously, the Korean war would continue, and just as obviously the Soviets would invade Germany. Not as obvious, but reasonable, was the Soviet's development of in-fight refueling, and the ability this gave them to bomb either coast of the US.

But that's all pretty much over by the time this book gets going. As befits its title, a story of the armistice between the US and the Soviet Union focuses very little on the dropping of atomic weapons, and much more on the political fallout of a third world war.

Minerva Spencer says

First off, this is my first novel by Turtledove, who I've heard about for years. I used to teach US and Latin American history, so I really got a kick out of the deft blending of actual historical actors/events with fantasy.

I greatly enjoyed almost everything about this book. The only reason I am at 4.5 stars is because I just can't make the jump to 5 because of the dialogue, which I thought was far less "masterful" than the rest of the book. For whatever reason, the dialogue often pulled me out of the story. Not because it was anachronistic, just because it often felt a little clunky. I think it was even more noticeable when compared to the rest of the book. The author's ability to paint a picture and scene with words is amazing. His alternate vision is also chilling and makes for a page-turning read. If this were a first or even second or third attempt, I would probably bump up the half star. However, it seems like somebody who has been writing this long might offer more compelling and smooth dialogue. The dialogue made the novel feel "distant" to me, if that makes any sense.

All in all, I found the book very enjoyable. The blurb says this book is a good place to start if you've never read a Turtledove book before and I have to agree as I had no problem getting into the swing of things right from the first page. The author is great at pulling the reader in without devolving into heavy backstory or resorting to annoying info dumps (well, not any that I noticed, but I suppose my opinion might be different if I had read the prior 2 books).

I would read another book by Turtledove, but probably not the first 2 in this trilogy

Sheehan says

Like any third act, Armistice, wrapped up everyone's story lines, navigated the truce between warring parties and digressed into what would become of the world speculations.

The series on the whole I would give 4 stars, with the 1st and 2nd books being more interesting than the last in the series...the constant reiteration of things addressed in previous books was the soul-crusher in this 3rd iteration, it just bogged down the narrative and made me feel like all three were written so you never had to read the other two if you so chose...and ultimately punished you with redundancy of facts if you powered through all three.

I'd recommend the 1st book, but only the rest for the very interested.

Apparently reading the series and the 2018 Winter Olympics got the Korean peninsular political parties (DPRK and South) to consider peace talking and ratcheting down the vitriol in real life, so that feels like a serendipitous coincidence, they get the folly of war in that area with nukes too!

Steven Raszewski says

Another good read by Mr. Turtledove. I've read just about all his stuff. For whatever reason this series has been my favorite! aLL GOOD READS :-)

Daniel says

Third book in a substandard Turtledove series, began with premise of using A-Bomb on Chinese in 1950s Korean war.

Turtledove is usually a good read but this series He made USSR too powerful, it is KNOWN in 1950 USA had 299 A Bombs, USSR only had 5, in 1951 USA had well over 500 where USSR (including 1950's 5) had 25

Turtledove gave USSR more A-bombs then they had and the premise in this series of USSR hitting USA cities.. USA would have gone all out including targeting USSR A-bomb production in that case..

It Has a redeeming quality of Stalin getting H-Bomb Vaporized..

But Turtledove seems have fallen here in swallowing the propaganda of decades past of USSR being more powerful then it was in 1950 and simply overlooks the A-Bomb actual totals the USA had in 50-51-52-53.

A series that could been done better

Clay Kallam says

I almost gave up on Harry Turtledove's Hot War alternate history – which postulates that Harry Truman authorized the use of nuclear weapons early in the Korean War – because volume one, "Bombs Away," was so unremittingly grim. But I stuck with it through "Fallout" and the conclusion, "Armistice" (Del Rey, \$28.99, 430 pages), and it turned out OK, both in terms of the mood and the decision.

"Armistice" does not break new ground for Turtledove, as he uses his familiar device of tracking multiple characters around the world to tell a larger story, and though no one is going to be teaching Turtledove in English Lit classes, there's a reason he has a huge readership and massive bibliography.

If you've read Turtledove before and enjoyed the alternative history books, then start with "Bombs Away" – and don't get too depressed with the steady rain of atomic bombs.

Brentman99 says

I have to admit that I've been a fan of Harry Turtledove's for over thirty years and read quite a number of his books and short stories. And given how prolific a writer he is, that is saying a lot.

I found Hot War: Armistice a good read. The plots are well done and Turtledove is a master of keeping multiple storylines going at once and winding them all up by the end of the book. I think this means that some characters may then die a quick death to close out that line by the end of the book, but it all seems to fit.

My only issue with this book, and here I would say that Turtledove is a victim of his volume, is that he has some favourite phrases that keep cropping up. At least in this book I don't recalling anyone skinning their teeth or their cheeks hollowing as they smoke, but there were a couple of others that can sometimes be annoying.

Overall, I think Turtledove has delivered another quality novel that I'm sorry to see the story end. His strength is his characters and you are sad to see their story come to an end. Some day, I hope to write half as well as Harry Turtledove does on a bad day. Something to shoot for.

THis book was enjoyable and well worth reading. I don't think it would be a good stand alone book as too much went on in the previous two books to know where the characters are coming from, so read them first.
