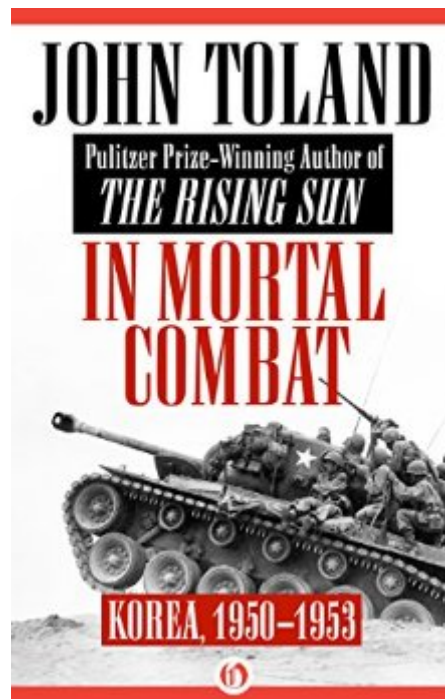


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In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953



Synopsis

A history of the Korean War with soldier's-eye views from both sides, by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Rising Sun and Infamy*. A Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Toland reports on the Korean War in a revolutionary way in this thoroughly researched and riveting book. Toland pored over military archives and was the first person to gain access to previously undisclosed Chinese records, which allowed him to investigate Chairman Mao's direct involvement in the conflict. Toland supplements his captivating history with in-depth interviews with more than two hundred American soldiers, as well as North Korean, South Korean, and Chinese combatants, plus dozens of poignant photographs, bringing those who fought to vivid life and honoring the memory of those lost. *In Mortal Combat* is comprehensive in its discussion of events deemed controversial, such as American brutality against Korean civilians and allegations of American use of biological warfare. Toland tells the dramatic account of the Korean War from start to finish, from the appalling experience of its POWs to Mao's prediction of MacArthur's Inchon invasion. Toland's account of the "forgotten war" is a must-read for any history aficionado.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

due to the fact that it has a strong and interesting beginning, a somewhat "vanilla" middle, and a

rather "limp" ending. I am not a military historian, but am an analyst. I am not a veteran, but do understand the difference between the various types of "histories", i.e. academic military history, journalistic military history, popular military history ("coffee table" books, etc.), "official histories", oral history, etc. This book definitely falls into the journalistic history category, with all its pitfalls and advantages. One pitfall is that Mr. Toland is FAR too easy on the press in general and he doesn't spend much time at all on faults of the forementioned press. On the other hand, one of the advantages is that this book is a wonderful "read", i.e. the book has a definite flow to it (along with being easy to read). In my opinion, the book, like some of his other books, starts off very strong and detailed and then proceeds to a somewhat bland middle and finishes with a rather "limp" ending. [The book of his that epitomizes this is: The Rising Sun!] His discussion of Generals Walker and MacArthur are very good indeed and better than most other books (considering that he does it better in FAR less space/wording). Another strong suit of this book is the insight and discussion of POWs and their treatment. He also, does give a view of the "other side of the hill", which other so-called "histories of the Korean War" fail to do. However, in the middle of the book I would have liked to see more detailed discussion on some of the "nitty-gritty" tactical battles once the Chinese entered the war (as by this pt.

I want to use the title of this book to contrast Mortal Combat, which is what war is all about, with Mortal Kombat, which is what Clintonesque left wing radicals think it is all about. To be fair, the Pentagon did not help matters much with its 'videos' of missiles going thru store windows in Desert Storm. Some blame goes to Hollywood's celluloid warriors, who have been trying to sanitize battle for decades, and the Air Force, which thinks war consists of flyboys doing a few afternoon sorties and returning in time for dinner at the Officers club. I once met an editor who claimed he could decide if a book was suitable for publication after reading just three pages. I must state a concurring opinion. The early pages-- preface, contents, organization of a book-- are critical indicators of the quality which follows. In this sense, Toland's book does a good job, stating a few questions about the Korean War he will attempt to answer. *** Did Russia and China Conspire to start the war? No. China not only distrusted Russia because of its rape of Manchuria, Mao's dislike for Stalin was deep and personal. Instead, Stalin approved of the Korean War because it distracted American attention and materiel from Europe. His support of Chinese intervention was tepid and came at a high price. [Reviewers comment: I lived in the Russian Far East on the Manchurian border for six months. Russian visceral dislike for the Chinese continues and is a factor in local elections in Vladivostok and Khabarovsk.] *** Was Truman's insistence on voluntary repatriation of POWs valid? Toland

really has little new to offer here, and you would be better off reading Turner Joy's book, "How Communists Negotiate." On some questions, he punts....

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