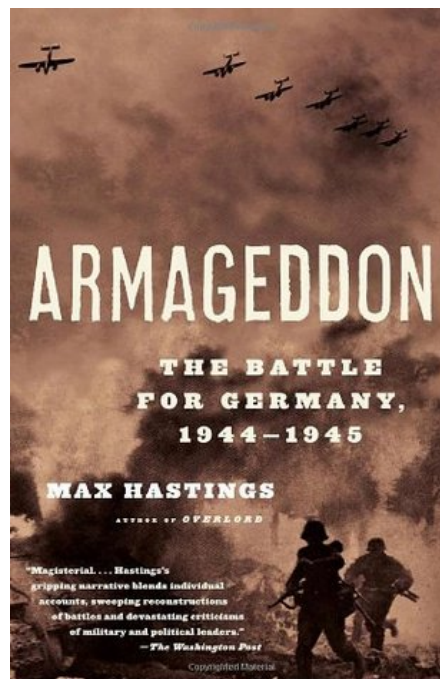




Armageddon: The Battle for Germany, 1944-1945

Max Hastings

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In September 1944, the Allies believed that Hitler's army was beaten and expected the bloodshed to end by Christmas. Yet a series of mistakes and setbacks, including the Battle of the Bulge, drastically altered this timetable and led to eight more months of brutal fighting. With **Armageddon**, the eminent military historian Max Hastings gives us memorable accounts of the great battles and captures their human impact on soldiers and civilians. He tells the story of both the Eastern and Western Fronts, raising provocative questions and offering vivid portraits of the great leaders. This rousing and revelatory chronicle brings to life the crucial final months of the twentieth century's greatest global conflict.

Armageddon: The Battle for Germany, 1944-1945 Details

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Alberto Martín de Hijas says

Hastings repasa los sucesos entre el otoño de 1944 y mayo de 1945, centrándose en la lucha por Alemania. Aunque a los Balcanes e Italia nos les dedica atención, y pasa bastante por encima de la batalla de Berlín (directamente refiere a los lectores al libro de **Beevor**) hace un repaso completo a todos los demás aspectos de la lucha (bombardeos, política interna, prisioneros, batallas, logística, crímenes)

Lo más interesante del libro es su opinión de que los mandos y soldados ingleses y estadounidenses eran inferiores a sus contrapartidas soviéticas y alemanas. Aunque reconoce que el menor grado de salvajismo en el frente occidental limitaba a los generales aliados, Hastings no deja de criticar los errores de Eisenhower y Montgomery (ni siquiera Patton se salva de críticas por su divismo) Sin ir más lejos, en la narración de la batalla de Arnheim, atribulle directamente el fracaso de la operación a los fallos del Vizconde de El-Alamein y a la escasa calidad de las tropas británicas. No por ello deja de criticar la brutalidad y los errores de los comandantes rusos y alemanes (especialmente su desprecio por la vida de sus hombres) ni las atrocidades rusas, que tienen un capítulo específicamente dedicado a Prusia Oriental.

La tesis de **Hastings** es que los retrasos de los Aliados y la brutalidad del Ejército Rojo contribuyeron a hacer mucho peor la situación (unos por dejar abandonados a las víctimas, los otros por estimular la resistencia alemana al convencerles de que no tenían más opción que luchar o morir) En concreto, en el frente occidental, la prolongación de la guerra tubo consecuencias terribles para los prisioneros y la población holandesa (víctima de una hambruna en el invierno de 1944-1945), mientras que el terror a caer en manos de los rusos provocó una lucha mucho más dura y con muchas más víctimas en ambos bandos.

Finalmente, el libro repasa la situación de Europa Oriental, y concluye que el comportamiento de Stalin, aunque brutal fue eficiente al asegurar sus objetivos y que los que plantean el abandono de esos países por los aliados no tienen en cuenta que no había nada que hacer sin provocar una nueva guerra.

Hilmi Isa says

Armageddon: The Battle for Germany 1944-45 merupakan buku kedua yang dibaca oleh saya, yang dikarang oleh Max Hastings selepas Catastrophe: Europe Goes to War 1914. Namun demikian, ini merupakan buku pertama yang saya tulis ulasannya. Insya-Allah, saya akan melakukan ulasan ke atas Catastrophe pada masa akan datang. Saya berharap akan melakukannya sebelum tahun 2015 berakhir.

Sejujurnya, membaca hasil tulisan Hastings bukanlah sesuatu yang mudah. Saya akui, penguasaan bahasa Inggeris saya bukanlah pada tahap yang terbaik atau sempurna. Hanya cukup untuk memahami apa yang ditulis. Dengan bantuan kamus, memampukan diri saya untuk memahami apa yang cuba disampaikan penulis. Tetapi, perkara ini sering menjadi halangan kepada saya untuk menghadam isi kandungan yang disampaikan Hastings. Sesetengah ayat atau perenggan perlu diulangbaca dan kamus dirujuk apabila bertemu dengan perkataan yang tidak pernah saya temui sebelum ini. Kemungkinan penulis yang berasal dari Britain, bumi di mana tempat asal bahasa Inggeris dilahirkan, menyebabkan dirinya mempunyai perbendaharaan kata dan gaya penulisan bahasa Inggeris yang cukup tinggi dan kompleks. Inilah antara alasan saya kenapa saya tidak melakukan ulasan ke atas Catastrophe sebelum ini.

Walaupun demikian, Armageddon merupakan sebuah buku yang sangat komprehensif dan padat. Seperti tajuknya, buku ini adalah mengenai Perang Dunia Kedua, di mana fokus utamanya adalah pada tahun 1944 sehingga 1945. Untuk lebih tepat lagi, selepas Ogos 1944 *Pembebasan Paris*, hasil dari Operasi *Overlord* yang menyaksikan pendaratan secara besar-besaran anggota tentera *Allied* (Bersekutu) pada Jun 1944. Sebenarnya, Armageddon merupakan buku kesinambungan kepada *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy*. Menariknya, bukan sekadar *Western Front* (Medan Perang Barat) sahaja yang disentuh. Malahan, apa yang berlaku di *Eastern Front* (Medan Tempur Timur) juga disampaikan oleh penulis. Ini adalah sangat signifikan kepada saya. Medan Tempur Timur adalah sesuatu yang agak 'misteri' kepada saya kerana agak kurang penulisan mengenainya yang saya baca. Pendek kata, buku ini mengisahkan mengenai apa yang berlaku selepas Ogos 1944 sehingga kepada *Kejatuhan Berlin* pada Mei 1945.

Jika anda mengharapkan sebuah buku yang hanya membincangkan aspek-aspek teknikal, taktikal dan strategik semata-mata, Armageddon bukanlah untuk anda. Buku ini lebih menekankan kepada aspek kemanusiaan. Benar, penulis mengkronologikan apa yang berlaku pada jangka masa yang seperti dinyatakan di atas, terutamanya peristiwa pertempuran-pertempuran yang berlaku. Namun, pada masa yang sama, Hastings lebih memfokuskan kesan perang kepada individu-individu yang terlibat secara langsung atau tidak langsung. Baik anggota tentera atau orang awam semasa perang berlangsung dan selepas perang. Malahan, Hastings turut mengkhususkan sebuah bab yang menceritakan mengenai perasaan dan penderitaan yang dialami oleh tahanan perang Jerman.

Sesungguhnya, membaca buku ini banyak memberikan maklumat yang sangat berinformasi yang selama ini saya tidak ketahui atau saya abaikan. Terdapat juga pengajaran yang saya dapati hasil pembacaan saya ini. Agak sukar untuk saya menyenaraikan kesemuanya. Tetapi, saya berpandangan bahawa Armageddon merupakan antara buku terbaik yang ditulis oleh Hastings. Juga, merupakan antara buku terbaik yang membincangkan tahun-tahun terakhir Perang Dunia Kedua di Eropah.

Raymond says

It was the biggest battlefield in history, spreading from the English Channel to the Vistula River in Poland. The battlefield involved more humans, combatants and non-combatants, than any other battlefield. It claimed more lives. More guns and tanks and airplanes were massed across the battlefield than were seen before or since on a single continent. This battle ground was - Max Hastings' title, "Armageddon, The Battle for Germany, 1944-1945." Hastings is a master when writing of battles on the land and in the air, when writing of soldiers and POWs and civilians caught in desperate circumstances and people in death camps. His account is compelling. Some editors might have eliminated some of the anecdotal material - interviews with people/battle participants of all descriptions. The anecdotes do slow momentum but each is self-evidently precious. This book will remain valuable.

Kate says

Very different approach to the history of World War II, as it is presented through the antidotes of participants both military and civilian. Like all large volumes, it cannot cover everything in this last year of the war, but offers teasers that make the reader realize that they didn't know about something that was covered and took a lesser space in another history. I know I will be looking for an in depth book on that last year in East Prussia, the winter of "blood and ice".

This was one of the first books that hinted at the weaknesses of both the American Commanders and the lack of training of the average American ground force, who prevailed not because of grand strategies, but but

sheer numbers as they timidly advanced across Europe.

It was the first time that I became aware of the number of American troops that just abandoned battle, and melted into the European countryside....a luxury that soldiers and Marines in the South Pacific did not have as an option, nor was it an option in Korea or Vietnam or our wars in the Middle East. It was not an option for the Russian soldiers either as deserters were treated harshly, and the choice was to die fighting or die shirking with a minimal chance of survival and no real R & R, no trips to refresh your spirits.

The brutality of the last year of the war was astounding for those on the Eastern Front, especially for civilians. This text brought interesting perspectives, and for that alone it was a good read.

Mike says

Armageddon: The Battle for Germany, 1944-1945 is the **definition of a 5 Star rating**. Max Hastings chronicles the final battles to defeat Nazi Germany. He starts the story in August, 1944 with the Allies about to launch Op Market-Garden in the West and the Soviets drawn up along the Vistula, preparing for their next stage of the assault into Poland. Mr Hastings is able to take you effortlessly from the foxhole or tank turret to the highest levels of SHAEF or STAVKA. He makes it all interesting and shows the results of decision-making at all levels. All the while, he brings new information to light while briskly moving the story along. There wasn't a single area that I found boring or uninteresting. Couldn't put it down.

What I found most refreshing was Mr. Hastings honest and clear-eyed view of all sides. If you don't like seeing your side of the conflict or performance of your forces criticized, I would avoid this book. Hastings hands out criticism where deserved and praise where earned. Everyone is subjected to his critical analysis. He got me reconsidering my impressions about events in this period. I like to put little markers where I find an anecdote or fact that struck me. This book is a forest of those markers, far more than I could ever discuss in a review. Some of the themes and events that stick out:

The Soviet command system struggled to successfully employ forces but had some extraordinary generals who knew how to employ massive forces—and were mostly indifferent to casualties incurred as long as the objective was achieved. They must have been very good at reading between the lines to accurately assess the situation:

(view spoiler)

Women Soviet soldiers performed many functions, both on the battlefield and behind the front. Although Hastings doesn't spend a lot of time on the subject, he does bring in the women soldiers at various points. Some women were at the mercy of their commanders:

(view spoiler)

Clearing the Scheldt estuary and opening Antwerp was a job given to the Canadians by Monty. I really need to read about this operation because it was so crucial to success. It should have been ordered by Monty much earlier and the Canadians had a very tough time of it, compounded by a shortage of troops:

(view spoiler)

The performance of the soldiers of the Western Allies vs. German soldiers vs. Soviet soldiers is covered in many places. Hastings lays down the assessment that the western soldiers were amateurs raised in democracy

and relied on technology and high explosives to win the war.

(view spoiler)

Hastings does not give high marks to almost any western general and believes the slow, methodical movement of allied armies in the west was due to fear of exposed flanks, reinforced by local counterattacks by the Germans. The Battle of the Bulge, Hastings argues, only made the high command more paranoid about bold moves. The German soldier fought fiercely right to the end:

(view spoiler)

Yanks vs. Brits:

(view spoiler)

Allied command vs. German command:

(view spoiler)

Many battles are covered in some detail along with generally excellent maps for big picture orientation. The Hürtgen Forest campaign comes in for special criticism:

(view spoiler)

The relationships between generals and leaders are often brought to light. The competition between Zhukov, Konev and Rokossovsky in the Battle of Berlin is highlighted. Many Soviet soldiers paid with their lives so one general could achieve success. Another area of friction was between Monty and Eisenhower. While Eisenhower is painted as no more than a competent manager, Monty is portrayed as insufferable:

(view spoiler)

Monty performed well in the bulge, yet shortly thereafter resumed his obnoxious ways.

(view spoiler)

I could go on extracting more quotes from the book. Hastings tears apart the air war strategy; he covers the plight of all the nations and people under the Nazi yoke and later under the iron grip of Stalin. He explains the terrible bloodbath in East Prussia and later in Berlin. He touches upon all the topics you want to hear

about. I can't say enough about how good this book is. Just read it.

Ushan says

In 1984 this British journalist wrote a book on the 1944 landing in Normandy and the subsequent Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France. This book takes off where that one ends, in September 1944, and goes on until May 1945; during this period, Germany fought a war on two fronts. It has chapters on the ill-planned Operation Market Garden, the Warsaw Rising (which General Anders thought was madness), the Soviet conquest of East Prussia (a German woman told Hastings, "It was our Holocaust, but nobody cares"), the hungry winter of 1944-1945 in Holland, the Battle of the Bulge, and so on until the German surrender. The overall story is familiar to all educated people (but not to everyone, of course; Peter Novick's book on the Holocaust in American life cites the results of some poll where only 49% Americans knew that the Soviet Union fought on the same side as their country in World War II; I wonder if more or fewer modern-day Russians are aware that the United States fought on the same side as their country in World War II), but Hastings gives a lot of detail. Hastings is full of admiration for the Red Army, both ordinary soldiers and the generals, who he says were more skilled and showed more initiative than their Western Allied counterparts; he thinks that if Zhukov were in Eisenhower's shoes, he would have pursued the Germans after the failure of their Ardennes offensive instead of allowing them to escape and regroup. I used to work with an applied mathematician who was the oldest grandson of an American World War II hero; he once asked me, what I thought of Patton's idea of pushing the Russians out of Europe after having pushed away the Germans. I answered that it would have been unfair, not to mention politically infeasible; if Hastings is right, Patton would not have stood a chance because the Red Army of 1944-1945 fought better than Western Allied armies, and German soldiers considered it a relief to be transferred to the Western front.

Many ordinary people, both soldiers in all the armies and German civilians, get a chance to tell their story in Hastings' book. The most extraordinary one comes from a fighter pilot named Mikhail Devyataev, who was shot down over Germany in July 1944 and as a POW was sent to the slave labor camp in the German rocket center at Peenemünde. In February 1945 he and nine other prisoners commandeered the camp commandant's Heinkel plane and escaped by flying over the Baltic Sea. When they landed at the front and were discovered by a Red Army patrol, the NKVD didn't believe their story. The nine other former prisoners were sent to the penal battalions, where five of them died advancing into German minefields; Devyataev himself was imprisoned, and was only released a year later. As a former POW, Devyataev could not find a proper job; only in 1957 was his achievement recognized and he was made a Hero of the Soviet Union. The endnote says, "AI Mikhail Devyataev." [presumably, author's interview?] Now, popular Russian historian Igor Pykhalov says that some unnamed contemporary Russian media outlets claim that Devyataev was in the Gulag and was only released after Stalin's death; this is not so, objects Pykhalov; in Devyataev's own book *Escape from Hell* he says that he had never been imprisoned by the Soviets. Either Devyataev told one thing to Hastings and wrote something else in his book, or Hastings lied about what Devyataev told him, or Pykhalov lied about what Devyataev wrote in his book.

Craig says

The end of the war in Europe is often glossed over to a large extent in many of the general books about world war 2. The relatively short time between the Allied invasion in June of 1944 and the final defeat of Nazism in May of 1945 seemingly rushed through when compared to the preceding war years.

But with the D-Day landings, the loss of life in ground combat on the Western Front had only just restarted after a 4 year hiatus. On the Eastern Front, the casualty rate was even higher, far higher than may have been acceptable to the US or British peoples.

Max Hastings covers the last 12 months of the war in great detail and pulls no punches in highlighting the failings and foibles of some of the key figures charged with leading the brave men of all the armies to their destiny. The war may have been over by Christmas 1944, but dithering decision making, inability to grasp correctly the techniques of mobile warfare, stubbornness and abject stupidity all contributed to prolonging the fighting.

The chance to speak to those who took part in this piece of history is slipping away as time takes its grim toll. Without their input to underline the events, the rest of the excellent narrative would be wasted and greatly adds to the feelings of the impact of war has on soldiers and civilians alike.

Some novels you can't put down because the story is gripping; this story is real and you know the ending, but the path to the ending is no less gripping.

C. Patrick says

So far, so good. Very readable narrative.

Having completed the book, here is a passage that stands out for me:

"Matthew Ridgway, commanding XVII Airborne Corps, was absent in England when the German offensive (the Bulge, in December 1944) began. Gavin of the 82nd filled his place superbly through the first days, returning to his own division when the corps commander arrived. The force of Ridgway's personality is stamped upon every line of his correspondence, every record of his conversations. After days in which some senior officers who should have known better panicked, it is striking to contrast Ridgway's remarks to his formation commanders on Christmas Eve: "The situation is normal and completely satisfactory. The enemy has thrown in all his mobile reserves, and this is his last major offensive effort in this war. This Corps will halt that effort; then attack and smash him... I want you to reflect that confidence to the subordinate commanders and staffs in all that you say and do." "

Miquixote says

Interesting read on how the Soviet Union, not the US was the foremost combatant in the destruction of the Nazi empire. Ties the social powers of ideology and military together. Of how the communist and Nazi leaders used their ideological fanaticisms to push their soldiers ahead. The ideology was the real competition, that drove both sides farther and farther into more and more insanity, in order to win the war. Can't help but think the message here is that if you want your country to be powerful, the best way is to fill your people's heads with more fear-based propaganda and ideology so that they will fight and kill better...

Mohaimn Draz says

"Armageddon: The Battle for Germany" is the best book I have ever read about WW2, period.

Hastings delivers an incisive, brutally honest account of the last months of the Hitler era. From first hand accounts, Hastings shows us in shocking detail what war truly is. A brilliant book. Max Hasting never fails.

Duncan says

Excellent book though heavy on detail and a bit slow in places but I love his work and would highly recommend.

Kenghis Khan says

This book was seriously overrated. I read a few reviews before deciding to read it that considered it one of the best books of the year. There are, to be sure, some interesting points. The author points out how reluctant western allied soldiers were, and the emphasis on the fragility of the Anglo-American alliance was pretty interesting. But these are points that did not take about 500 pages to make. Indeed, aside from a few really gripping chapters (e.g., on the allied air war), the book was simply long-winded and repetitive. This was compounded by the author's incessant moralizing (more on this below) and the pedantic description of military details. Way too many dry passages about the minutia of military manoeuvres that really remind one of the history channel narration. It's not clear to me what detailed accounts of ammunition counts had to add, and the author seemed more intent on getting recollections of soldiers in print than on really giving the reader a feel for the battle scene.

I also found the book to be unduly harsh on the Soviet Union. The author repeatedly laments how the allies let Eastern Europe fall under Stalin's tyranny, and how Zhukov and his ilk were really quite horrific people. Fair enough, but in other areas the author let's his biases shine through. For instance, the author goes to considerable length repeatedly documenting how the Soviet Union singularly betrayed hopes for democracy in Poland, but utterly neglects how the American/British imposed military junta of Greece for instance violently persecuted labor unionists, communists and socialists there.

There were also several potentially interesting story lines the author just leaves dangling. He gives no more than a passing reference to some of the institutional racism that operated within the American presence in Europe. He sites the astounding statistic that something like 40% of death penalty cases the US military handled against their own soldiers were against African Americans, but this only mentioned in passing. Another example of what I see as a "missed opportunity" of sorts is the author's all-too brief mention of non-German SS units. If the central question of the book is why Germany fought a doomed struggle so doggedly, the question of how those non-Germans came to see the war, and how they dealt with repatriation, would seem insightful. Perhaps there just weren't enough eyewitness accounts.

In conclusion, I found this book disappointing. The author asks an interesting question and is upfront that a lot of what they have to say isn't particularly novel. But between the anti-Soviet preaching and the tedious discussions of military detail, I found that even the author's pretty good writing abilities couldn't salvage what became an unwieldy and needlessly drawn-out project.

Doubledf99.99 says

Very good informative read, on the battle for Germany, most from the the Soviet side, very very good read.

Nick Black says

read it, went back to the beginning, read it again. pretty splendid.

Paul says

What REALLY happened to that Band of Brothers as they gingerly subdued the German army in WWII.

Marc says

I will admit I wasn't sure how good this book would be before I read it. I had previously read "Overlord" by Max Hastings and found it to be slow and at times, boring. I am very pleased to report this book is so much better.

Hastings weaves together a chronicle of the of Third Reich's last days, starting with events leading up to Operation Market Garden and continuing through the fall of Berlin and parts of the Allied occupation. Along the way he uses personal recollections from German, Russian, American and British Commonwealth soldiers, along with those of civilians who were caught up in the brutal events leading up to Germany's defeat. In my opinion, this is what makes this book shine--the personal words of those who were there. Gritty, unvarnished, tragic, at times humorous, and more often than not just incredibly compelling reading.

The leadership of the Americans, British, Germans and Russians are all examined. Virtually no one escapes criticism, but praise is given in equal doses. Some generals get a bit more harsher treatment than others, and I think it was all deserved, whether it's Montgomery's poor planning for Market Garden, Zhukov's strategy of taking Berlin before anyone else could claim the glory, or Patton's failed rescue attempt at Hammelburg.

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the last days of the Third Reich. Well done!

Peter Jowers says

Many excellent reviews. I would only add that readers of any nationality involved in this final campaign of WW2 in Europe might have feelings of pride, embarrassment and shame! I had my 13th birthday in January 1945 and followed the printed news. Now it seems like a different war to our readings to-day!

Sandy Ferguson says

Max Hastings has done it again. With his blend of analysis of the big picture and personal reminiscences of the participants, Hastings tells the story of those terrible last months of the Second World War in Europe. He pulls no punches as he details the reality of those days, the terrible price paid by the Soviets in their

campaigns, the revenge they inflicted on the Germans for the horrors that the Germans had inflicted on the Soviet Union and the struggles of the Western Allies as they grind their way through Germany, and discover the grim reality of their German opponents who many believed were civilized, but had stooped to the barbarism of the concentration camps. Hastings does not spare the reader in his descriptions of the price of the war on its military and civilian participants, as the Wall Street Journal said in its review of the book: "Every leader contemplating a military operation, for whatever reason, should read this book and take several deep breaths."

Eric_W says

Max Hastings is one of the premier historians of the Second World War. Unlike Stephen Ambrose, who , while a very readable historian -- even knowing whom to plagiarize (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_...) -- is as much a cheerleader as historian, Hastings presents objective analysis. It's fortuitous that he also happens to be a very good writer.

Armageddon: The Battle for Germany 1944-1945 follows his Overlord D-Day and the Battle for Normandy. Hastings succeeds in explaining why the Germans fought so tenaciously even after the war was obviously lost. Within ten weeks after the landings at Normandy, the allies were at the Rhine. The Russians, without whom we could never have defeated Hitler, were pressing hard on the eastern front.

Hastings portrays the Wehrmacht as one of the premier armies of the world -- and also one of the most vicious in its treatment of civilians. We tend to forget the enormous casualties suffered in WW II that make WW I look like a walk in the park. The Russians alone, according to some estimates, suffered some forty million deaths (of course, Stalin was responsible for many of them through vicious reprisals and substantial incompetence.)

Hastings presents a convincing case that poor training of allied troops and less than inspired generalship by Montgomery and Eisenhower prolonged the war, which should have ended, her argues, by the end of 1944. [A book I recently finished reading, [book:Company Commander The Classic Infantry Memoir of World War II|182134], notes that George Marshall deliberately kept the numbers of troops down so as to allocate more resources to materiel production and naval and air resources.] The Red Army, while having more spectacular leadership, suffered from its callous treatment of its own troops. They responded with savagery against the occupied countries. The more democratic countries' armies were substantially more humane -- Americans never saw the Germans as the inhuman barbarians they considered the Japanese to be -- but relied on the advances of the Russians to tie down German SS units on the east which otherwise would have been used against the allies.

Democracies tend to be more cautious in war, having to be concerned with casualties. Hastings notes that the Red Army and Germans had no such concern and could be much more profligate with their armies.

On the other hand, Germans fighting to the bitter end, for whatever reason, be it indoctrination or saving Europe from the Asiatic hordes, meant that they had more time to kill Jews. Almost 500,000 Jews were shipped to concentration camps from Hungary in mid-1944.

A fascinating book .

Toby White says

This is probably one of the longest, and ultimately best history books, that I have ever read. It wasn't for the faint hearted - there is so much information packed into each page that at times it did make it rather tiring to read - needless to say the text size was rather small - so unless you're interested in the subject or know someone who is I wouldn't recommend it...

Personally though - for any historians or warfare enthusiasts - this is well worth checking out!
