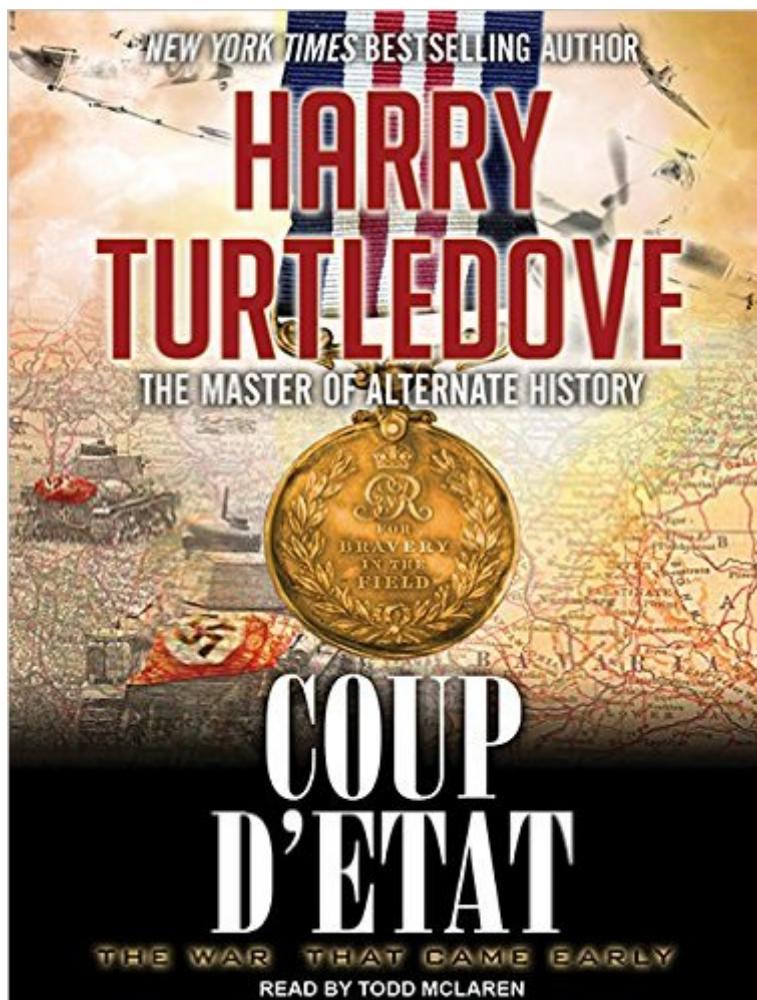


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The War That Came Early: Coup D'Etat



Synopsis

In Harry Turtledove's mesmerizing alternate history of World War II, the choices of men and fate have changed history. Now it is the winter of 1941. As the Germans, with England and France on their side, slam deep into Russia, Stalin's terrible machine fights for its life. But the agreements of world leaders do not touch the hearts of soldiers. The war between Germany and Russia is rocked by men with the courage to aim their guns in a new direction. England is the first to be shaken. Following the suspicious death of Winston Churchill, with his staunch anti-Nazi views, a small cabal begins to imagine the unthinkable in a nation long famous for respecting the rule of law. With civil liberties hanging by a thread, a conspiracy forms against the powers that be. What will this daring plan mean for the European war as a whole? Meanwhile, in America, a woman who has met Hitler face-to-face urges her countrymen to wake up to his evil. For the time being, the United States is fighting only Japan "and the war is not going as well as Washington would like. Can Roosevelt keep his grip on the country's imagination? Coup d'Etat captures how war makes for the strangest of bedfellows. A freethinking Frenchman fights side by side with racist Nazis. A Czech finds himself on the dusty front lines of the Spanish Civil War, gunning for Germany's Nationalist allies. A German bomber pilot courts a half-Polish, half-Jewish beauty in Bialystock. And the Jews in Germany, though trapped under Hitler's fist, are as yet protected by his fear of looking bad before the world "and by an outspoken Catholic bishop. With his spectacular command of character, coincidence, and military and political strategies, Harry Turtledove continues a passionate, unmatched saga of a World War II composed of different enemies, different allies "and hurtling toward a horrific moment. For a diabolical new weapon is about to be unleashed, not by the United States, but by Japan, in a tactic that will shock the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The fourth volume of Harry Turtledove's "The War That Came Early" series opens up at the start of 1941 onto a very different conflict. Britain and France have come to terms with Nazi Germany, and have even joined them in their ongoing war with the Soviet Union. The United States faces a number of setbacks against the Japanese, with whom they are at war after a series of sudden attacks throughout the Pacific. And the civil war in Spain drags on, a forgotten precursor to the conflict now raging. As the year unfolds, however, events begin to reorient the alignments. A military coup in Britain topples the government and rejoins the struggle against the Nazis, and with the French wobbling the prospect of a two-front war rears up as an unwelcome prospect for the Germans. But can they defeat the Soviets before that prospect becomes a reality? Readers who have reached this point in the series already know what they will be getting in this latest installment, and those who have enjoyed following his cast of characters will find much to satisfy them here. Moreover, Turtledove continues to provide more in the way of the action than he did in his second volume, *West and East*, which helps to keep things lively. Nevertheless, there is still a sense throughout this book of treading water, as much of the key events - both personal and political - seem to consist of undoing the developments of his last book, *The Big Switch*.

After the second book in this series, *West and East*, I couldn't help but be disappointed. The war that came early was only marginally different from the one in my history books: in fact, it seemed as though the war coming early had only hastened the pace. There Germany was, losing a two-front war. But then Japan invaded Russia, and then came the Big Switch, the creation of an alliance between the Allies and the Axis against the Soviet Union. Now THIS was alternate history. THIS was shaping to be a radically different ballgame. THIS is gone. The book's inside cover tells you everything you need to know. As far as plot goes, there's no need to read the novel -- just take a glance at your history book and you'll get the gist of it. By novel's end -- and here follow spoilers -- Germany is again at war with the Allies and the Soviet Union and Italy is losing to England in Africa and needs Germany to pull its chestnuts out of the fire. Considering that Japan has already weakened itself fighting against the Russians (a war which is now ended, and along with it the only other greatly interesting diversion from real life), and the American war machine has only the Pacific

to focus on, the endgame seems inevitably similar to our own, What's the point of an alternate history novel that is only marginally different? The coup that destroys the great premise isn't even executed in such a way as to engage our interest: one minute a character is being interrogated for planning to overthrow the British government, and the next minute he's free because his cohorts have succeeding in toppling Chamberlain. And that's it: no scenes about the coup, no real discussion of the ramifications of a liberal-democratic society being taken over by the military.

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