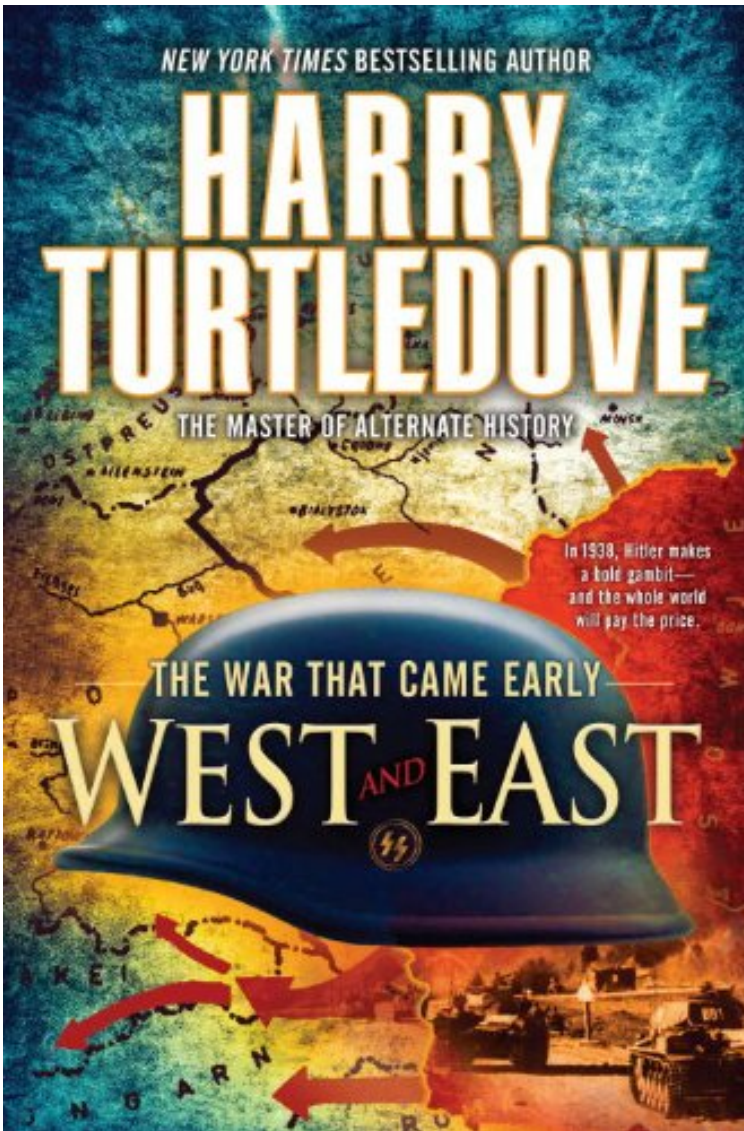


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West and East: The War That Came Early, Book Two



Par Harry Turtledove
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Harry Turtledove's The War That Came Early: The Big Switch.What if British prime minister Neville Chamberlain had defied Hitler? What if the Munich Accord had gone unsigned, and Nazi Germany had launched its bid for conquest sooner? How would World War II have unfoldedand with what consequences? Dean of alternate history Harry Turtledove has the stunning answers in his breathtaking sequel toHitlers War.In the wake of Hitlers bold invasion of Czechoslovakia, nations turn against nations, old enemies form new alliances, and ordinary men and women confront extraordinary life-and-death situations. An American marine falls in love with a Russian dancer in

Japanese-held Singapore, as Chinese guerilla resistance erupts. A sniper on the frontlines of France finds a powerful new way to ply his deadly art while a German assassin hunts him. In the icy North Atlantic, as a U-boat with a secret weapon wreaks havoc on British ships, occupying Nazi forces target Denmark. And in Germany, a stranded American woman encounters Hitler himself, as a Jewish family faces the rising tide of hatred. From Siberia to Spain, armies clash, sides are chosen, new weapons raise the deadly ante, and new strategies seek to break a growing stalemate. But one question hangs over the conflict from West to East: What will it take to bring America into this war?

Extrait Chapter One

Theo Hossbach lay on a cot in a military hospital in Cambrai. All of him was fine except for the last two joints on the ring finger of his left hand. He wouldnt see those again until and unless what the Resurrection of the Flesh preachers liked to talk about turned out to be the straight goods. Theo doubted it. Theo doubted almost everything people in authority said but you never could tell. One thing Theo didnt doubt was that he was lucky to be there, or anywhere. Along with the commander and driver, hed bailed out of a burning Panzer II. Theyd all run for some bushes a couple of hundred meters away. Hed made it. Ludwig and Fritz hadnt. It was about that simple. The bullet that amputated those last two joints came later. He didnt know whether it was aimed at him in particular or just one of the random bullets always flying around a battlefield. The one by Beauvais seemed to have had more of them than most. Theo might have been prejudiced; hed never had to bail out of a panzer before. Or he might not have been. The French and English had stopped the Wehrmachts drive at Beauvais, and it hadnt got started again. This made two wars in a row where the Schlieffen Plan didnt quite work. Hitlers generals came closer to pulling it off than the Kaisers had, but what was that worth? A nurse came by. She took his temperature. Normal. Very good, she said as she wrote it down. Do you need another pain pill? Yes, please, he answered. Those two missing joints seemed to hurt worse than the stub he had left. Phantom pain, the doctor who cleaned up the wound called it. He could afford to dismiss it like that; it wasnt his hand. Here. The nurse gave Theo the pill, watched while he swallowed it, and wrote that down, too. He figured it was codeine; it made him a little woozy, and it constipated him. It also left him less interested in the nurse, who wasnt bad looking, than he would have been if he werent taking them every four to six hours. But it pushed away the pain, both real and phantom. Most of the soldiers in the ward with him had nastier wounds. Most, but not all: the fellow two beds down wore a cast on his ankle because hed tripped over his own feet and broken it. I wasnt even drunk, he complained to anyone whod listen. Just fucking clumsy. Woozy turned to drowsy. Theo was dozing when hearing his own name brought him back to himself. The nurse was leading a captain over to his cot. The pink Waffensfarbe on the mans Totenkopf collar patches and edging his shoulder straps said he was a panzer man, too. You are, uh, Theodor Hossbach? he said. Theodor Hossbach, sir, Theo said resignedly. How was he supposed to explain that his father had been slogging through a translation of Gibbons *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* at just the wrong time? He got the panzer captains attention, anyhow. Theodor? Well, well. No wonder you go by Theo. No wonder at all, sir, Theo agreed. You are a radio operator. You are familiar with the operation of the Fu5 radio set? Yes, sir. Theo knew he still sounded resigned. Every panzer in the Wehrmacht used the Fu5 except commanders vehicles, which carried the longer-range Fu10. If he was a panzer radioman, hed damn well better know how to use the standard set. A pfennigs worth of thought . . . was evidently too much to hope for. Then the captain got to the point: Can you return to duty? A radio operator in a Panzer II is not required to do much with his left hand. That was true, and then again it wasnt. A radioman didnt need to do much with his left hand to operate the radio. When it came to things like engine repairs or remounting a thrown track, though . . . Theo knew he could have said no. His hand was swathed in enough bandages to wrap a Christmas present, or maybe a mummy. He hesitated no more than a heartbeat. As long as they give me a jar of those little white pills, sir, Im good to go. They will, the captain said, with a glance toward the nurse that warned someones head would roll if they didnt. Youll have it by the time I come back for you, in half an hour or so. A couple of other fellows here I want to scoop up if I can. A doctor gave Theo the codeine and a reproachful look. You should stay longer. Youre nowhere near healed. Ill manage, Theo said. Im sick of laying around. Lying, the doctor said automatically. No, sir. Im telling the truth. Right. The doctor looked more reproachful yet. Theo hadnt thought he could. Maybe were lucky to get rid of you. Maybe you are. Most of me doesnt need the bed only my hand. When the panzer captain came back for Theo, he had one other fellow (who walked with a limp) in tow and a discontented expression on his face. The last guy I want is shirking, he growled. Id bet my last mark on it even if I cant prove it. Well, I just have to make do with you two. Lets go. Theyd laundered Theos black coveralls. Putting them on again did feel good. The other panzer crewman, whose name was Paul, seemed to feel the same way. Once he had the black on, he stood taller and straighter and seemed to move

more fluidly. The captain bundled them both into a Citroën and got somewhere or other and headed west. They drove past and through the wreckage of a nearly successful campaign. Dead panzers—German, French, and British—littered the landscape, along with burnt-out trucks and shot-up autos. Here and there, German technicians salvaged what they could from the metal carcasses. Just outside of Mondidier, the captain stopped. You boys get out here, he said. We're regrouping for a fresh go at the pigdogs. They'll fit you into new crews. What'll you do, sir? Theo asked. Head for another hospital and see how many men I can pry loose there, the officer answered. The more, the better. We can use experienced people, God knows. Theo felt shy about joining a new crew. He'd spent his whole military career—he'd spent the whole war—with Ludwig and Fritz. They'd understood him as well as anybody did. They'd put up with him. If another driver and commander had lost their radioman . . . He made a sour face. He'd feel like a woman marrying a widower and trying to live up to the standard his first wife had set. To his relief, he didn't have to do that. The personnel sergeant assigned him to what would be a brand new crew. The commander was a sergeant called Heinz Naumann. He had bandages on his neck and his left hand and maybe in between, too. Burns. Getting better, he said laconically. On his coveralls he wore the Iron Cross First Class and a wound badge. Sooner or later, Theo knew, a wound badge would also catch up with him. By contrast, the driver was just out of training. His coveralls weren't faded and shapeless; you could cut yourself on their creases. He was a big fellow with dark hair who moved like an athlete. His name was Adalbert Stoss. Theo was from Breslau, way off in the east. Naumann came from Vienna. Stoss hailed from Greven, a small town outside of Münster. It's a wonder we can understand each other, he said with a grin. Grin or not, he wasn't kidding. As far as Theo was concerned, Stoss and Naumann had different strange accents. They probably thought he talked funny, too. Well manage, Heinz said. Oh, sure. Adalbert went on grinning. He seemed happy as could be to have escaped basic and come out to join the grown-ups at or at least near the front. Theo had seen that reaction before. Most of the time, it wore off as soon as the rookie saw his first body with the head blown off. Training was hard work, to say nothing of dull, but you hardly ever got killed there. In real war, on the other hand . . . I was hoping they'd give me a Panzer III, Naumann said. But no—it's another II. He eyed Theo's bandaged finger. You aren't complaining, though, are you? Not right now, Theo allowed. In a Panzer III, the radioman sat up front, next to the driver. He also served a hull-mounted machine gun. That wouldn't be much fun with a bad hand. Then again . . . A Panzer III, now, that's a real fighting machine. I know, I know. That's why I wanted one, the sergeant said. Along with two machine guns, a Panzer III mounted a 37mm cannon. Unlike the Panzer II's 20mm gun, which fired only armor-piercing ammo, the bigger weapon had high-explosive shells, too. That made it a lot more useful against infantry out in the open. A Panzer III also carried thicker armor, and boasted a more powerful engine. A Panzer III was a real panzer. A Panzer II was a training vehicle. Oh, you could fight with it. The Wehrmacht had been fighting with it, and with the even smaller, lighter Panzer I, ever since the Führer gave the order to march into Czechoslovakia, more than six months ago now. But it would be nice to have a fighting vehicle that matched the ones the enemy used. Would have been nice. Panzer IIIs were still scarce, while there were lots of IIs and, even these days, quite a few . . .

Revue de presse
Turtledove [is] the standard-bearer for alternate history.
USA Today
As entertainment, this is as good as any alternative fiction, or historical novel, you are going to read this or any other year.
The Washington Times