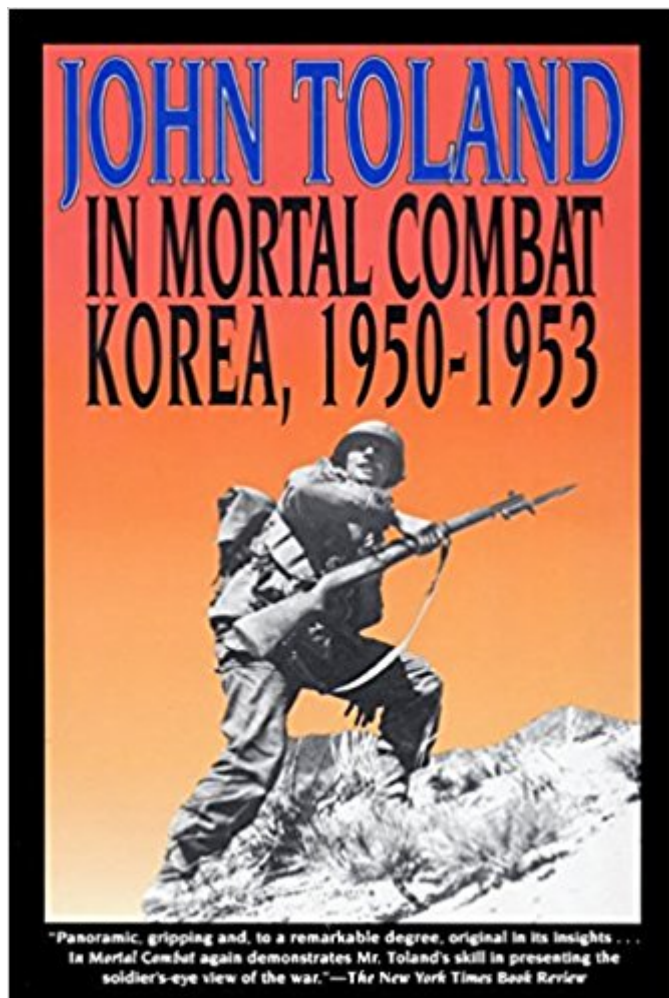


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# In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953



## Synopsis

In this brilliant narrative of America's first limited war, John Toland shows yet again why, for over two decades, he has been one of this country's most respected and popular military historians. Toland lets both the events and the participants speak for themselves, employing scrupulous archival research and interviews as the bases for the drama and accuracy of his writing. In *Mortal Combat* reveals Mao's prediction of the date and place of MacArthur's Inchon landing, Russia's indifference to the war, Mao's secret leadership of the North Korean military, and the true nature of both sides' treatment and repatriation of POWs. In addition to being the first Westerner to gain access to Chinese records and combatants, Toland interviewed numerous North and South Korean veterans and over two hundred members of the American military, many of whom had never been approached before. The result is a signal work of compelling readability and lasting importance.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this Korean War history, Toland ( *Infamy* ) makes skillful use of material gathered in Chinese and North Korean archives and through interviews with Chinese and North Korean veterans of the 1950-1953 war. In crisp, lucid prose he relates the familiar chronology from Pusan to Panmunjom, personalizing the course of events through well-chosen anecdotes and quotes, examining from a fresh perspective the controversial aspects of the conflict, including Chinese allegations that the Americans used germ warfare, the Truman-MacArthur confrontation and American brutality against Korean civilians. The relatively static last half of the war, usually given short shrift, is here fully developed, with Toland explaining how critical the POW issue was for both sides during the truce talks. In a book full of impressive features, the most noteworthy is this: Toland has gathered

previously inaccessible material enabling him to describe Mao Zedong's direct role in the war as well as that of his field commander Peng Teh-huai. The "forgotten war," in which four million people perished, has never been described more interestingly. Photos. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Toland, author of *Adolf Hitler* ( LJ 12/15/78), *Infamy* ( LJ 3/15/82), and *The Rising Sun* ( LJ 3/1/71), applies his skills as a popular historian to the Korean War. There is little historical background; some of the ongoing analysis is weak and poorly documented (e.g., when dealing with Chinese motives and policy-making); and there are also a few omissions and errors. Of the almost 20 maps, many are confusingly drawn and not very helpful. These problems are generally minor, however, and the story is well worth reading. Toland makes good use of participants' interviews (from both sides) to enrich the secondary literature in a lively, moving, and at times disturbing presentation. He covers strategic and tactical maneuvers, correspondents, political struggles, behind-the-lines activities, prisoners of war, and numerous acts of combat and leadership heroism (and failure) in a fluid style certain to hold the reader's attention. Highly recommended for public libraries and subject collections. Previewed in *Prepub Alert*, LJ 6/1/91.- Kenneth W. Berger, Duke Univ. Lib., Durham, N.C. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Toland is a fine writer. This book is a wonderful description of what is now known as "the forgotten" war." It is not forgotten. I knew many officers and men who fought in Korea as I entered into an Army career. They personified the best in America and who did an outstanding job in Korea. I was a bit too young to serve (I had to wait until Vietnam) but I learned a great deal from the Korean vets. Toland definitely told the story as it really was. This book should be read by anyone with a yen for history but also by young people who have no idea what citizenship means to those who lay down their lives for our Country. This war should never be forgotten.

Very well written and informative with stories from all sides of the conflict. It gave me a much better understanding of the politics, fundamental mistake of dividing Korea at the end of WWII, missed opportunities by the USA to end the conflict early, the dangers of superstar military commanders, and the ineffectiveness of nuclear deterrence against China or NK. The suffering of our troops, the unheralded heroism of French, AUS, ROK and UK units is well portrayed as is the experiences of POW's and Chinese "Volunteer" troops. This war seems to be a forgotten chapter of our history by

most Americans but is worth reviewing, if only to provide insight to Cold War era events and how they have shaped current events.

A forgotten but brutal conflict. Brave soldiers led by often inept generals somehow forced a stalemate against overwhelming odds. Good combination of individual stories and strategic review.

If you think we have it bad, then read this book. We have absolutely nothing to complain about. An excellent read if you want to get to know him a bit about North Korea and their evil empire.

Toland weaves the stories of some of the individual combatants, the generals and the politicians from both sides throughout his telling of the events and battles that made up The Korean War. Writing it that way made the conflict come alive. I knew little of the Korean War before I read this account and I feel that I now understand the importance of what happened and how it impacted the history of the cold war as well as how the two Koreas we know now came to be.

A trove of historical detail, but a bit too wordy for me to plow through all of it. Other than that, a good read.

All of John Toland's books are thoroughly researched and well written. Although I had earlier read David Halberstam's book on the Korean War, this story is told from a completely different perspective that includes thoughts from both the North Koreans and Chinese.

Eye opening. I have read John Toland (named my computer after him), so the style was familiar, but the content was presented from all sides and I was shocked by the mistakes we made, and good men that we lost because of them.

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