



# All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939-45

*Max Hastings*

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## **All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939-45** Max Hastings

A magisterial history of the greatest and most terrible event in history, from one of the finest historians of the Second World War. A book which shows the impact of war upon hundreds of millions of people around the world- soldiers, sailors and airmen; housewives, farm workers and children. Reflecting Max Hastings's thirty-five years of research on World War II, All Hell Let Loose describes the course of events, but focuses chiefly upon human experience, which varied immensely from campaign to campaign, continent to continent. The author emphasises the Russian front, where more than 90% of all German soldiers who perished met their fate. He argues that, while Hitler's army often fought its battles brilliantly well, the Nazis conducted their war effort with 'stunning incompetence'. He suggests that the Royal Navy and US Navy were their countries' outstanding fighting services, while the industrial contribution of the United States was much more important to allied victory than that of the US Army. The book ranges across a vast canvas, from the agony of Poland amid the September 1939 Nazi invasion, to the 1943 Bengal famine, in which at least a million people died under British rule- and British neglect. Among many vignettes, there are the RAF's legendary raid on the Ruhr dams, the horrors of Arctic convoys, desert tank combat, jungle clashes. Some of Hastings's insights and judgements will surprise students of the conflict, while there are vivid descriptions of the tragedies and triumphs of a host of ordinary people, in uniform and out of it. 'The cliché is profoundly true', he says. 'The world between 1939 and 1945 saw some human beings plumb the depths of baseness, while others scaled the heights of courage and nobility'. This is 'everyman's story', an attempt to answer the question: 'What was the Second World War like?', and also an overview of the big picture. Max Hastings employs the technique which has made many of his previous books best-sellers, combining top-down analysis and bottom-up testimony to explore the meaning of this vast conflict both for its participants and for posterity.

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