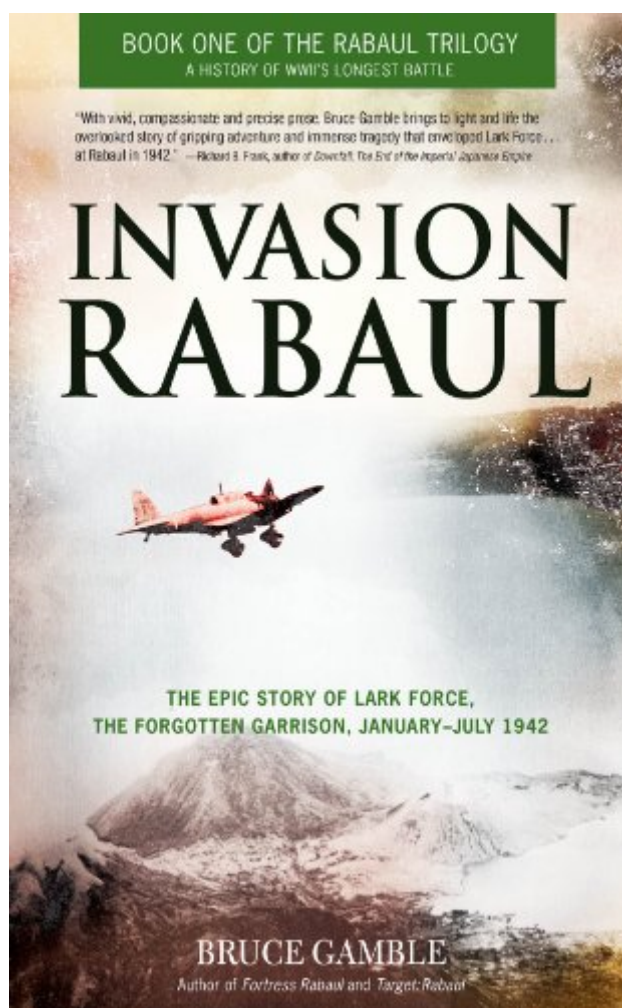


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# Invasion Rabaul: The Epic Story Of Lark Force, The Forgotten Garrison, January ? July 1942



## Synopsis

The riveting first book in Bruce Gamble's critically acclaimed Rabaul trilogy, originally published in hardcover as *Darkest Hour*, which chronicles the longest battle of World War II. January 23, 1942, New Britain. It was 2:30 a.m., the darkest hour of the day and, for the tiny Australian garrison sent to defend this Southwest Pacific island, soon to be the darkest hour of the war. Lark Force, comprising 1,500 soldiers and six nurses, faced a vastly superior Japanese amphibious unit poised to overrun Rabaul, capital of Australia's mandated territories. *Invasion Rabaul*, the first book in military historian Bruce Gamble's critically acclaimed Rabaul trilogy, is a gut-wrenching account of courage and sacrifice, folly and disaster, as seen through the eyes of the defenders who survived the Japanese assault. Gamble's gripping narrative follows key individuals—soldiers and junior officers, an American citizen and an Army nurse among them—who were driven into the jungle, prey to the unforgiving environment and a cruel enemy that massacred its prisoners. The dramatic stories of the Lark Force survivors, told here in full for the first time, are among the most inspiring of the Pacific War—and they lay a triumphant foundation for one of today's most highly praised military nonfiction trilogies.

## Book Information

File Size: 2709 KB

Print Length: 306 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0760345910

Publisher: Zenith Press; First edition (March 15, 2014)

Publication Date: March 15, 2014

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00K4SEXKG

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #289,713 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #16

in Books > History > Australia & Oceania > Papua New Guinea #85 in Kindle Store > Kindle

## Customer Reviews

In the early hours of January 23, 1942, a large Japanese force sat poised to attack Rabaul. Standing in their way were the 1,500 Australian soldiers of Lark Force. In what was soon to become known as Australia's darkest hour in World War II, the Japanese swarmed ashore and overran the small garrison. Many were captured, but others managed to flee into the jungle. Over the next several months, these survivors tried in vain to stay one step ahead of the Japanese. Some managed to evade capture, others were rescued, but most were eventually rounded up by the Japanese. Seen as sacrificial by the Australian government, the men of Lark Force were basically on their own from the time they reached Rabaul. The Australian government refused to reinforce the garrison, and when the Japanese landed, they refused to pull them out. These men were on their own, with no hope of assistance. The contemptible acts of the garrison commander only made things worse. Ultimately, many of the Lark Force POWs perished when a Japanese freighter they were on was torpedoed by an American submarine. Author Bruce Gamble has written a magnificent history about one of World War II's longest battles. The battle for Rabaul raged from early 1942 up until the Japanese surrender in August, 1945. Gamble's trilogy covers each aspect of this historical campaign, from the Japanese invasion to the numerous bombings by the Allies, until the Japanese were left to "whither on the vine". Lark Force's story is inspiring, and the acts of heroism against nearly impossible odds shows the character of these fighting men. I highly recommend "Invasion Rabaul" along with Gamble's other books "Fortress Rabaul" and "Target Rabaul". This trilogy does a fine job of describing one of World War II's most pivotal battles.

This is the first of three books about the battle for Rabaul. This book was originally titled "Darkest Hour : The true story of Lark Force at Rabual". It is an interesting book in that it presents a contradiction in what the Australian government wants to do, what it should have done and what it ultimately did do. Which not unlike some of the Dutch and even the American forces in the Pacific at the opening of the war, they were needlessly sacrificed in the hope of being that one speed bump against the Japanese. My biggest complaint about the book is that there is one chapter on the actual invasion of New Britain and the area of Rabual by the Japanese. After that it is a chase story that you already know is going to end a certain way because the prologue gave away the chase. As well there is an impressive number of people covered and due to my copy being electronic, it was

very hard to keep up with who is who and what their role was. The last half of the book when the Southwest Pacific Campaign is going on seems interesting, but the author appears to gloss over items either because the folks interviewed don't remember or more likely they are covered in more detail for the other two books of the trilogy. Oh one last complaint is that there are a number of civilians talked about and then dismissed in the discussion about Rabaul and the administration of the area by Australia, but there is no discussion as to if they were original to the area or recently arriving (when Australia gained control after WW1 and the Germans gave up the region). Some of this would have filled in the story as well. Overall, an interesting and amazing book about a particular portion of the world that I thought I knew. Well worth reading if you are interested in the Pacific war and the campaign for the Solomon Islands region.

Reading the other reviews, it seems the old adage you can't please everyone holds true. Too much detail, not enough detail, too many characters, not enough character revealment - development, were it a novel. I came looking for a book about the Rabaul when held by the Japanese and found "Fortress Rabaul". I also found this. Downloading and finishing the chapter sample, I bought it immediately along with "Fortress Rabaul". For me, Bruce Gamble gets it just right. I like his flowing prosaic style, the way he interweaves the well researched historical truth together in event relevance and timelines. Sufficient detail to comprehend the personalities, units, scale, situations, maps and topographical description to make sense of it all tactically and strategically, whilst still personalising events sufficiently to maintain a personal connection on a level balancing its humanity. Importantly, he grants the gravity the historical record deserves without turning the tale into a turgid academic tome. Moral judgement of actions, personalities and political decisions of so long ago unable to be changed now which altered the course of so many lives are left to the reader to pronounce. Bought yesterday, I'm halfway through "Invasion Rabaul" already. I'd call it "a can't put down read", but I'm reading from my sickbed recovering from surgery and find fatigue prevails, otherwise its definitely in that category. If you're at all interested in the campaigns in the Solomons and PNG, the significance of the Battles of the Coral Sea and Savo Island, you'll A. understand the importance of Rabaul, and wanting to know as much about it as possible, B. want this book. Just buy it. Thanks Bruce. Job very well done.

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