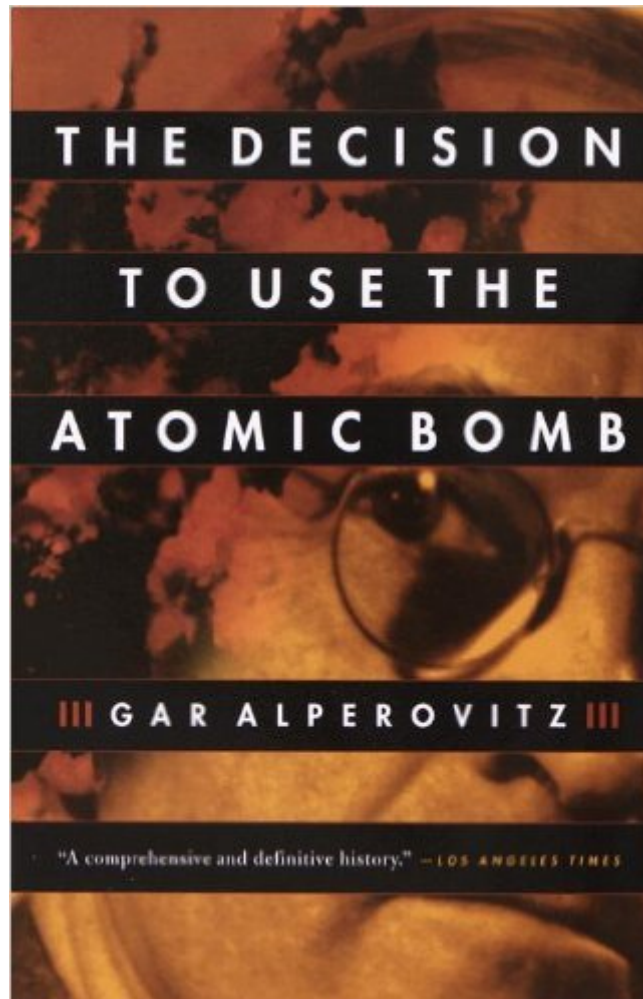


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The Decision To Use The Atomic Bomb



Synopsis

Controversial in nature, this book demonstrates that the United States did not need to use the atomic bomb against Japan. Alperovitz criticizes one of the most hotly debated precursory events to the Cold War, an event that was largely responsible for the evolution of post-World War II American politics and culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My Father was drafted out of Harvard Graduate school. He scored very highly on IQ tests and was given a very sensitive job in the Ultra Code breaking project. He reported to a Lt General in the US army and was classified as an Army Intelligence officer. The story he told me before this book was ever published is identical to the general outlines of the story as related here by Alperovitz. He has always said that the Japanese were clearly looking to end the war a couple of months before the bomb was dropped. He also said that the general US military command was of the opinion that the Invasion of Japan was not going to be necessary Regardless of the presence of the Atom bomb or not. He cannot speak to what might or might not have been going on in Washington DC but he himself read the decrypts of Japanese messages being sent to intermediaries whom were charged with approaching the Americans with the intent to discontinue the war. He has said that the general consensus of the upper echelons of the military was that the bomb was used to intimidate the Russians who were behaving quite menacingly rather than to save American lives which might be lost in an invasion. He also said that he was always surprised that "nobody wrote a book about it". He was unaware of Alperovitz's work until I found it while in college.

Excellent book, an exhaustive investigation into the process that led to the decision to use the atomic, tearing apart the official history. With all this evidence, it is simply irrefutable that throwing the bombs was completely unnecessary to end the war and save lives (and Truman knew it when he made the decision), and that it was rather used against the Russians than the Japanese (destroying any hope of a peaceful postwar). It's also an excellent book on how politicians distort the truth. I usually do not write reviews (English is not my mother's tongue, and it's quite obvious) but I felt compelled to compensate for all the negative, unjustified reviews.

In an age when Truman has become the everyman's president, this book shines an extremely focussed light on what certainly is his most important decision. This book is not for the faint of heart. The story is told by reconstructing minute sequences of events from May through August of 1945 in order to unravel how the decision was made to deliver atomic weapons Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It uses excerpts from every written form of communication that has been found by historians in the past 50 years. The book is very interesting on three levels. First, it immerses the reader in the flow of information that actually existed for the president and his closest advisors. Second, it highlights for the reader the two most vexing problems for the president -- how to handle the Japanese surrender AND how to handle the Soviets' stranglehold on Eastern Europe. Third, it honestly confronts the myths that have explained why the Americans dropped the bomb and how it has been rationalized as the "right thing to do." If you are a person that believes that the bomb saved "500,000 to a million American casualties and ended the war" and are willing to learn that this may not be true, read this book. Be warned though, it is very unsettling when one has believed this all one's life. I know I have been somewhat shocked. All this said, the book could be called pedantic to a fault. There is much repetition because many of the key communications are used over and over to make numerous points. On the other hand, the repetition does keep the key stuff close to the uninitiated reader (me).

This is incredibly important book reveals some of the behind-the-scenes thought processes that lead to Truman's decisions to use nuclear weapons on Japan. It's replete with supporting evidence, including quotes from the key players in the US, UK, USSR and Japan (taken from their diaries, memoirs, official records, diplomatic communications, intercepted comms, etc), and tries hard to be balanced and cautious with leaping to conclusions. The final assessment is that the opinion of nearly every single senior military and political leader in the US and UK before August 1945 was that Japan was utterly defeated and willing to surrender - especially once the USSR entered the war

with them. Why drop the bombs if it wasn't necessary to end the war? It seems to have a lot to do with using the last opportunity to use them in war time (billions had been spent on developing them), and in sending a warning signal to Stalin.

Interesting to read the squabbling reviews of the last couple decades. For me, it's an excellent piece of serious scholarship, one that compels the reader to think about the past. And truly, what more does one want from a book of history? Whether Alperovitz is "right" or "wrong" (I happen to think neither is true - it is a painstaking and deeply- researched work of history), this book will make you think (and rethink) one of the most critical events in world history. Don't listen to us, read the book for yourself.

Gar Alperovitz builds a strong case that the atomic bomb was not militarily necessary to end the war in the Pacific, but was used to advance American diplomatic and political interests in the post war period, especially with respect to the Soviet Union. In particular, the apparent reluctance of military leaders to use the bomb is most interesting. Of equal interest is the implicit suggestion that the after-the-fact efforts to justify the bomb's use and mute public criticism began a fifty year pattern of government secrecy, deception, and propaganda which threatens the democratic process even to this day, and that the cold war was arguably triggered by U.S. efforts to make the Soviet Union more "manageable" during the summer of 1945. Finally, I was impressed that the author was far less judgmental than he could have been. I expected a political diatribe when I started this book. Instead, I encountered a well researched objective analysis of original source material. Where evidence was missing, conflicting, or subject to varying interpretations, the author said so.

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