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Atomic Diplomacy

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BOOKS

Alperovitz, Gar. *Atomic Diplomacy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965. 317 p.

This book is certain to be highly controversial. Based upon an intensive study of certain major aspects of great world affairs between April and September 1945, it seeks to prove that the real purpose of dropping the first atom bomb on Hiroshima in August of that year was to intimidate Soviet Russia, not to save American lives by ending the Pacific war before an invasion of the Japanese homeland became necessary. According to the author, President Truman and his advisors had sharply reversed American policy toward Soviet Russia after President Roosevelt's death by adopting a tougher line toward Stalin. He feels that the United States failed to live up to its promises at the Yalta Conference and that the only purpose of the Potsdam Conference was to put off any major postwar decisions until Stalin had been intimidated by the atom bomb.

In writing this book the author used not only all the published sources, but also the unpublished papers of the 1945 Undersecretary of State, Joseph C. Grew, Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, and Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, who served as Personal Chief of Staff to both President Roosevelt and President Truman. Though he has done a splendid job of research, he has written within a frame of reference which is very far, indeed, from representing the universal historical consensus. There are many who do not share his obvious assumption that the terms of the Yalta Agreement were in the best interests of the United States, and whose estimate of President Truman is likely to be enhanced by the evidence afforded by this book. There are, moreover, those who will feel that whatever the real reasons for the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan in 1945, the world would never have grasped the military significance of nuclear energy without this demonstration. One can, of course, argue that it was unwise to knock out Japan completely as a Great Power, but the decision to do this had been made by Roosevelt, not by Truman.

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