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POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

Volume 120 · Number 4 · Winter 2005-06

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Book Reviews

Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan by Tsuyoshi Hasegawa. Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005. 432 pp. \$29.95.

Few issues in twentieth-century international history are more contentious than those surrounding America's dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Most studies concentrate on the United States or Japan; Tsuyoshi Hasegawa's signal contribution is to add the crucial third element—the role of the Soviet Union and its entry into the war. The whole ugly picture emerges much more clearly when one focuses on this piece of the puzzle. Hasegawa shows that Stalin systematically deceived Japan in order to delay the Japanese surrender and give himself time to enter the war and collect the prizes that had been promised him at Yalta (and a bit more as well); and he argues that it was the shock of the Soviet attack even more than the dropping of the A-bombs that strengthened the hand of the peace party in Tokyo and produced the surrender. At the end, he nicely summarizes many of his arguments by examining a series of counterfactual questions dealing with choices that might have accelerated or retarded the process.

American, Japanese, and Soviet choices and strategies interacted in complex ways. Each was trying to out-guess and out-game the others. The two crucial sides of the equation were whether the United States would modify the demand for unconditional surrender and what terms Japan would be willing to accept. Neither country was united, and the factional fighting was particularly fierce in Japan. Both sides of the equation were deeply affected by the atomic bomb and by the anticipation of what the Soviet Union would do. Harry Truman and his colleagues sought above all to avoid the need for an invasion of the home islands, which they knew would be terribly bloody, but they simultaneously wanted to maintain their demands. In retrospect, it seems puzzling that the United States did not move more quickly to reassure the Japanese that the Emperor could retain his throne, but the leading members of the Truman administration thought that doing so would make it harder to eradicate Japanese militarism; they were concerned also about American public opinion and, even more, were driven by their desire to avenge Pearl Harbor, Hasegawa argues (pp. 143, 212, 234, 291).

Although they did not consider reneging on their Yalta pledges, the Americans did hope to avoid Soviet involvement. The atom bomb seemed to be the

way to square this circle, to force Japan to surrender quickly without weakening the American demands. At one point, Hasegawa goes so far as to say that Truman held to the demand for unconditional surrender because he “needed Japan’s refusal to justify the use of the atomic bomb” (p. 292). But nothing in his book supports this claim, and on the next page he gets it right: “The atomic bomb provided [Truman and his top advisors] with the solution to previously unsolvable dilemmas” (p. 293). Of course, it did not entirely work: Stalin entered the war a bit sooner than expected and kept his troops moving even after Japan said it was ready to surrender. Among other things, Stalin needed 640,000 Japanese prisoners to work in labor camps in Siberia. Although Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes did expect that by ending the war quickly, the use of the A-bomb would limit Soviet influence in East Asia, they did not see it as a means of intimidating the U.S.S.R. And although Stalin was deeply disturbed about the American nuclear program (which, of course, he knew about through his spies), the actual use of the weapons seems to have had little effect on his perceptions of American intentions. Probably more alarming to him was the fact that the United States and Britain issued the Potsdam ultimatum to Japan without consulting him on its terms, as he had expected.

Of course, the crucial players were in Tokyo, and although Hasegawa’s story here follows basically familiar lines, he adds detail and stresses the central role of expectations of Soviet behavior. Even after the Japanese military realized that they could not win the war, many clung to the hope of fighting a battle that would so bloody the Americans that they would agree to lenient terms. At this point, the lines between the peace and war factions were not sharply drawn, with some individuals like Prime Minister Suzuki vacillating; and the crucial question came down to exactly what aspects of the imperial system had to be maintained. In the end, the Emperor himself decided on a narrow definition, preserving himself and his family while sacrificing the privileged status of the military and his relationship to it.

The book is well-written, and the frequent headings help the reader through the complex narrative. Although political scientists might call for more explicit analysis of theories, and those interested in bureaucratic politics may prefer Leon Segal’s *Fighting to a Finish* (Cornell University Press, 1988), for deep historical research in three languages and balanced judgments, *Racing the Enemy* is likely to remain the best book on the subject for many years to come.

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Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Laws that Changed America by Nick Kotz. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005. 544 pp. \$26.00.

During the past several years, both Lyndon Baines Johnson and Martin Luther King have received extensive treatment from journalists and historians. Author