



Hiroshima Nagasaki: The Real Story of the Atomic Bombings and Their Aftermath

By Paul Ham



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In this harrowing history of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, Paul Ham argues against the use of nuclear weapons, drawing on extensive research and hundreds of interviews to prove that the bombings had little impact on the eventual outcome of the Pacific War. More than 100,000 people were killed instantly by the atomic bombs, mostly women, children, and the elderly. Many hundreds of thousands more succumbed to their horrific injuries later, or slowly perished of radiation-related sickness.

Yet American leaders claimed the bombs were "our least abhorrent choice"?and still today most people believe they ended the Pacific War and saved millions of American and Japanese lives. In this gripping narrative, Ham demonstrates convincingly that misunderstandings and nationalist fury on both sides led to the use of the bombs. Ham also gives powerful witness to its destruction through the eyes of eighty survivors, from twelve-year-olds forced to work in war factories to wives and children who faced the holocaust alone.

Hiroshima Nagasaki presents the grisly unadorned truth about the bombings, blurred for so long by postwar propaganda, and transforms our understanding of one of the defining events of the twentieth century.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review In 1945, in the midst of secrecy about the development of the atomic bomb and ongoing debates over the most “efficient” way to end the war with Japan, American leaders made the fateful decision to launch nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bombings certainly stopped the war and destroyed its targeted cities, killing more than 100,000 people, but had they been necessary? Ham presents a forceful argument that the bombing was excessive and unjustified. Alternate chapters recount the building tension toward the awful decision by the Allies and the day-to-day lives of starving Japanese caught between their aggressive emperor and military and sure retaliation. In this sweeping and comprehensive history, Ham details the geopolitical considerations and huge egos behind evolving theories of warfare, the burgeoning killing technology of biological and nuclear war on the part of the Japanese and the Allies as well as the shameful tactic of dehumanizing the Japanese enemy. But most powerful are the eyewitness accounts of 80 survivors, ordinary people caught up in the events of war, who felt the terrible destruction of a nuclear blast and its aftermath of radiation sickness. --Vanessa Bush

Review

“Ham's 629-page volume shows familiarity with much of the literature and debates within historiography, skillfully uses some archival research, and ranges widely in political, diplomatic, and military history... Ham is a splendid storyteller, a master of engrossing and exciting narrative. ...[he] digs deeper, and brings back to life the figures who dominated this history, in a page-turner that could reach a wide audience.” *Los Angeles Review of Books*

“Ham presents a forceful argument that the bombing was excessive and unjustified... In this sweeping and comprehensive history, Ham details the geopolitical considerations and huge egos behind evolving theories of warfare... But most powerful are the eyewitness accounts of 80 survivors, ordinary people caught up in the events of war.” *Booklist (starred review)*

“Moral anger drives Mr. Ham... He shows us in agonizing detail that many were maimed or killed... Ordinary Japanese, Mr. Ham believes, were less emperor-worshiping fanatics than victims of an authoritarian elite that prolonged the war with no regard for their hardships.” *The Wall Street Journal Book Review*

“A provocative look at the closing days of the Japanese Empire and the long shadow cast ever after by the atomic bomb....A valuable contribution to the literature of World War II that asks its readers to rethink much of what they've been taught about America's just cause.” *Kirkus Reviews*

“An absorbing read and thoroughly researched work, it is a must-read for those interested in the mortal aspects of total war and military strategy in general. Ham's work will be cited as an important addition to a debate that continues 70 years after the event.” *Publishers Weekly*

“[A] vivid, comprehensive, and quietly furious account . . . Paul Ham brings new tools to the job, unearthing fresh evidence of a deeply disturbing sort. He has a magpie eye for the telling detail.” *Ben Macintyre, The Times (UK)*

“Comprehensive and horrifying.” *Jonathan Mirsky, Literary Review (UK)*

“Provocative and challenging . . . A voice that is both vigorous and passionate.” ?*Christopher Sylvester, Daily Express (UK)*

“An eyewitness picture that leaves Dante's *Inferno* looking pale . . . Well documented and stringently argued.” ?*Peter Lewis, Daily Mail (UK)*

“A provocative reassessment . . . Ham writes with anger and a journalist's eye.” ?*The Daily Telegraph (UK)*

“With more detail than the average textbook yet written in a way that pulls you in . . . this is essential for anyone remotely interested in . . . history.” ?*The Sunday Telegraph (Australia)*

“In his comprehensive narrative [Ham] explores the history of the two blasts with considerable skill.” ?*Josh Glancy, The Sunday Times (UK)*

About the Author

PAUL HAM is a historian, specializing in twentieth-century conflict. He is the author of several histories, including the highly acclaimed *Kokoda, Vietnam: The Australian War, Hiroshima Nagasaki, Sandakan* and *1914: The Year the World Ended*. A former journalist and publisher, he has worked for the Financial Times Group and was the Australia correspondent for *The Sunday Times* of London for fifteen years. Paul was born in Australia and educated in Sydney and London. He now lives in Paris with his family.

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