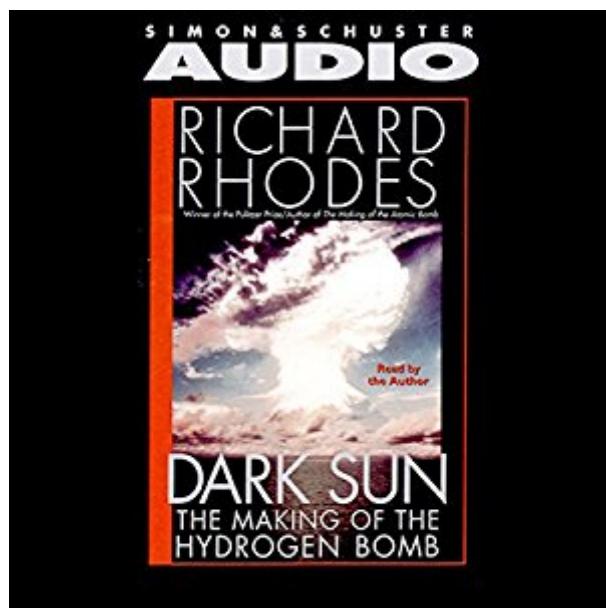


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Dark Sun: The Making Of The Hydrogen Bomb



Synopsis

Here, for the first time, in a brilliant, panoramic portrait by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, is the definitive, often shocking story of the politics and the science behind the development of the hydrogen bomb and the birth of the Cold War. Based on secret files in the United States and the former Soviet Union, this monumental work of history discloses how and why the United States decided to create the bomb that would dominate world politics for more than forty years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is an excellent companion to the author's "The Making of the Atomic Bomb." It is the next step in atomic history. Perhaps, even to quote Fermi, "it can be done; and almost certainly will be done." In that case; this book is an inevitability. The book starts out with a survey of what happened at Los Alamos and the invention of the fission bomb. Rhodes goes into painstaking detail regarding the development of the bomb and atomic espionage. He links the communist party of The United States to the infiltration by the Soviet Union the bomb project. Clearly there were enough holes in the system the Russians were nearly up to date on everything we knew and used that information to their advantage by taking years off their own bomb program. The book continues in describing the debate regarding the fusion bomb. Some scientists felt it should be made in the national interest and yet others thought it was a disaster. They preferred science spends its time on making nuclear power work in a non-military fashion. Not only does the author do a fantastic job of

showing this debate. But he also shows us how the US moved forward and eventually produced the first hydrogen bomb. He ultimately finishes the book by describing in detail the Cuban Missile Crisis and how close we came to mutually assured destruction. Without a doubt this is not an easy read. It is the kind of heavy book you might read in a major history class. You need to know something about physics, history, some politics as they relate to the history. If you happen to have a keen interest in Atomic History, then this book is clearly written for you. Ultimately, the book was entirely enjoyable. I look forward to reading more books by author. His making of the atomic bomb book was required reading when I was in college and still remains on my book shelf. Somethings never get old. If you would like to know more about atomic history then I would suggest the author's previous book, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* or the magnificent book, *American Prometheus*, by Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin.

I believe Richard Rhodes would have received the Pulitzer Prize for this book if he had not already won it for its predecessor. Once again he brings to life a pivotal point in human history. The historical research is full and rich, and I was amazed that Rhodes was able to or allowed to unearth so much information inside the former Soviet Union. Romantic myths about American and British spies are shredded by his revelations. The one redeeming factor for many of those who betrayed democracy was that millions like them also believed the lies about the miracles of Soviet communism. Some honestly believed they were assisting an ally and its utopian system. My one criticism is that I think this book devotes too much time to the espionage and thus partly drowns out the scientific, ethical and political struggles in building the bomb that could snuff out life. Rhodes properly calls our attention to the foolishness of Mutually Assured Destruction. I believe, however, that he takes a too simplistic view of what this weapon can do in the hands of terrorists as its creators lose control of the genie they let out of the bottle. That aside this is a worthy addition to any library devoted to a realistic appraisal of human nature and achievement.

Excellent book on a very difficult subject. All five stars, highly recommended to everyone who wants to know what REALLY happened after the Russians exploded their bomb without much research, just copying stolen US documents. That explosion in 1949 triggered the 'super bomb' research in the USA supported by some and bitterly opposed by others here but performed also mostly by Sakharov in USSR without any hesitation. The author writes explicitly about MAD, 'mutual assured destruction', that resulted from possession of hydrogen bombs by USA and USSR and, hopefully, still holds. At the end of the book he adds his own comment that put some nuances on MAD. Some

of them are obvious: US generals could speak quite 'freely', I doubt that the Russian generals could. Also, the newer nuclear powers, especially North Korea, is not a really a nuclear power and not likely to attack South Korea anytime soon (if ever). The MAD still holds and appears to be an intrinsic part of the world history, that is history after the fission was discovered in 1939. The author should be admired for his long and comprehensive work on this book.

This is a dense book. No question about that when the tome in question has literally THOUSANDS of footnotes and many dozens of cited sources. But despite its density, or perhaps because of it, it is a rich mixture of science, politics, history and even some degree of economics. It covers topics as wide-ranging as the basic concept of the Teller-Ullam device to the politics of deterrence to an overview of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It gives us bright-line sketches of the major historical figures from Oppenheimer - the American Prometheus himself - to Teller to Bethe to Sakharov and even Curtis LeMay and Leventia Beria. Not an easy read, but all the more rewarding for the effort required for anyone remotely interested in nuclear weapons, the roots of the Cold War and the huge national effort it took to develop and weaponize thermonuclear fusion.

This is the definitive account of the US program to build the hydrogen bomb. The book does a great job of covering the technical aspect of the race to build this bomb along with the personal stories of those involved. It also details the Soviet effort to grab secrets from the Manhattan project and turn them into a functioning A-bomb. Every part of this book is amazing. Richard Rhodes deserves very high praise for this and his book "The Making of the Atomic Bomb." I read Dark Sun before I read its predecessor and it made no difference. I was enthralled. Then after reading those two books I read everything else he's written. I suggest you do the same. It is all pretty cool stuff for anyone that considers themselves a cold war history buff.

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