

in fact—treats “urban space,” yet apart from a few early street maps, the book lacks any geographic signposts. In several instances, for example, when Ryan describes a Fourth of July parade route or a neighborhood’s social composition, a map would have enabled this reader to “locate” the goings-on more easily.

Although the book does not discuss Indiana or its cities, local readers will nevertheless find much value in Ryan’s enjoyable and informative work that should contribute to the continuing social analysis of public life in the coming years.

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Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs against Japan. By J. Samuel Walker. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Pp. xiii, 142. Illustrations, notes, essay on sources, index. Clothbound, \$34.95; paperbound, \$14.95.)

Beautifully designed and printed, lucidly written, this little book covers the usual ground. It relates the White House meeting of the joint chiefs of staff with President Harry S. Truman on June 18, 1945, in which the decision was taken to invade the southernmost Japanese home island, Kyushu, on November 1, 1945, with invasion of Honshu, the Tokyo plain, scheduled for April 1, 1946. After the test of the plutonium bomb on July 16 (a warning went out from the Potsdam Conference on July 26, which the Japanese government spurned), the bombings on August 6 and 9 ended the war on August 14. One of the best things about this book is the author’s willingness to say that it was the second bomb, not Russian entry into the war the preceding day, that persuaded the Japanese military to go along with the civil members of the cabinet and surrender.

Unfortunately, the author, a historian in the Nuclear Regulatory Agency, is not as evenhanded as he seems, and the unhappy debate among historians and political scientists over use of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki will go on—with sides taken frequently out of emotion, ignorance, or memory of the Cold War (Gar Alperovitz opened the debate in 1965 with his book contending that the United States dropped the bombs not to end World War II but to impress the Russians). The first evidence of J. Samuel Walker’s point of view is his use of the word “myth” to describe the argument that President Truman did not face a stark choice between invasion of the Japanese home islands and use of the bombs. A second appears in his assertion that scholars agreed in deploring cancellation of the proposed text for an exhibit at the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., displaying the nose of the *Enola Gay* and showing Japan

defending itself against American imperialism. The book says little, almost nothing, about possible casualties on Kyushu, implying that such discussion would be (to use a recent academic word) counterfactual: the invasion never happened. The truth is that Japanese force levels on Kyushu rose rapidly after the White House meeting on June 18, from an estimated 350,000 to 900,000. The figure for estimated casualties offhandedly mentioned by General George C. Marshall at the meeting, 31,000 (deaths would have been one out of three or four) became irrelevant. The one million figure for casualties in the invasion of Japan mentioned after the war by former secretary of war Henry L. Stimson and by President Truman was far from unbelievable. In an astonishing assertion, Walker says that scholars now are united in believing the bombs unnecessary. He does not say that the half-dozen books published on the fiftieth anniversary of Hiroshima divided evenly, pro and con. One of the three "pro" books maintained that an invasion of Kyushu could easily have cost 150,000 United States deaths. This figure did not include the 100,000 Allied captives in Japan; the Japanese vice-minister of war already had issued the order for their deaths, by any available means, when the first American soldier set foot on Kyushu. Nor did it include casualties possible in the invasion of Honshu, to follow Kyushu. What was Marshall to do when faced with such a holocaust? Until the end of his life in 1959 he insisted that the bombs were necessary. So did Truman.

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