

Bomb: The Race to Build--and Steal--the World's Most Dangerous Weapon

By Steve Sheikin

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An entire city completely leveled in an instant- this is the legacy of the atomic bomb, the most devastating weapon to be used in the history of war. Like any other famed historical figure, this terrifyingly awesome weapon has its own story, “The Race to Build--and Steal--the World's Most Dangerous Weapon”. The story spans three continents, following the progress of the world’s top physicists in their endeavors to turn a scientific discovery into an unprecedented military feat, spies enlisted by the Soviets to steal this knowledge, and the leaders of various missions related to the creating and sabotaging of the bomb.

The discovery of nuclear fission by German physicists drew the attention of scientists and governments alike who realized the potential effect the experiment could have. Then, information on nuclear fission disappeared from the public eye as a race started between the United States and Britain, Germany, and Russia to build an atomic bomb. Physicists were recruited or simply taken by force to top-secret laboratories such as the one in Los Alamos, New Mexico directed by Robert Oppenheimer. At the same, Britain was sending Norwegian insurgents back into Norway to cripple the German’s atomic bomb program, and the Soviets were extracting information from the American’s bomb program, the Manhattan Project, for their own bomb. The race was on, and the results would be cataclysmic.

Steve Sheikin has transformed a historical event into an intense story of deceit, genius, and extreme risks. It combines photos, quotes, and primary documents to create an exciting, spy-themed book that will draw the reader’s attention from the start. Furthermore, the book is detailed and fast-paced, written in a way that the basic science behind this incredibly complex bomb and the military tactics used can be easily understood. The personal reflections of the characters and the shifting moods are skillfully incorporated into the story, which really sets it out from a bland history lesson, which mainly contains facts. However, there are quite a few characters, and even though they each have thorough descriptions, it is difficult to keep track of all of them, especially when the chapters jump from one place to another. Other than that, there is no other reason why this gripping tale of the atomic bomb’s creation should be overlooked.

Recommended Reading

I highly recommend *Bomb: The Race to Build--and Steal--the World's Most Dangerous Weapon* to anyone who is even minutely interested in World War II. It is a good read for high school students who want a more extensive look at the Manhattan Project, and for middle school students as introductory material for the war. Other books similar to this one include *The Boy Who Dared* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *Behind Enemy Lines* by Bill Doyle, *Vespers Rising* (*The 39 Clues* series), and *Beyond Courage: The Untold Story of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust* by Doreen Rappaport.