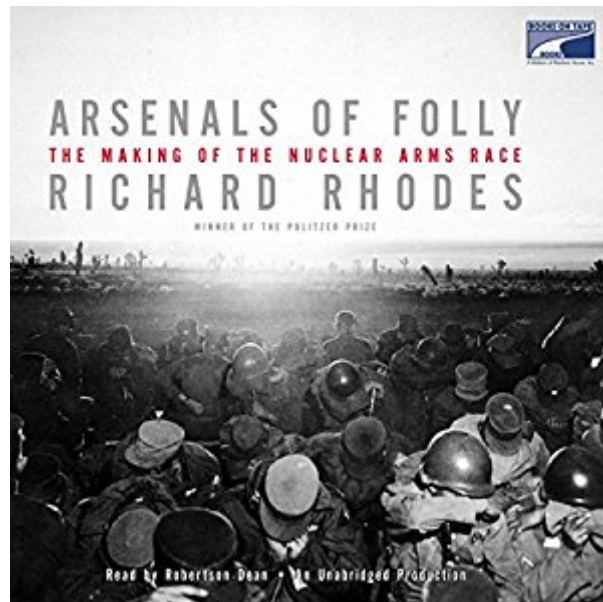


The book was found

Arsenals Of Folly



Synopsis

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*: the story of the entire postwar superpower arms race, climaxing during the Reagan-Gorbachev decade when the United States and the Soviet Union came within scant hours of nuclear war—and then nearly agreed to abolish nuclear weapons. In a narrative that reads like a thriller, Rhodes reveals how the Reagan administration's unprecedented arms buildup in the early 1980s led ailing Soviet leader Yuri Andropov to conclude that Reagan must be preparing for a nuclear war. In the fall of 1983, when NATO staged a larger than usual series of field exercises that included, uniquely, a practice run-up to a nuclear attack, the Soviet military came very close to launching a defensive first strike on Europe and North America. With Soviet aircraft loaded with nuclear bombs warming up on East German runways, U.S. intelligence organizations finally realized the danger. Then Reagan, out of deep conviction, launched the arms-reduction campaign of his second presidential term and set the stage for his famous 1986 summit meeting with Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, and the breakthroughs that followed. Rhodes reveals the early influence of neoconservatives and right-wing figures such as Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and Paul Wolfowitz. We see how Perle in particular sabotaged the Reykjavik meeting by convincing Reagan that mutual nuclear disarmament meant giving up his cherished dream of strategic defense (the Star Wars system). Rhodes's detailed exploration of these and other events constitutes a prehistory of the neoconservatives, demonstrating that the manipulation of government and public opinion with fake intelligence and threat inflation that the administration of George W. Bush has used to justify the current war on terror—and the disastrous invasion of Iraq—were developed and applied in the Reagan era and even before. Drawing on personal interviews with both Soviet and U.S. participants, and on a wealth of new documentation, memoir literature, and oral history that has become available only in the past ten years, Rhodes recounts what actually happened in the final years of the Cold War that led to its dramatic end. The story is new, compelling, and continually surprising—a revelatory re-creation of a hugely important era of our recent history. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Pulitzer Prize winning author Richard Rhodes jumps back into the fire of nuclear physics with his latest book "Arsenals of Folly: The Making of The Nuclear Arms Race". Here Rhodes tackles the history of the nuclear arms race from the explosion of "Joe" the first Soviet atomic bomb to the arms escalation and he documents how close we have come on a number of occasions to use these weapons of mass destruction. To give a better overview of the time Rhodes also focuses on the various peace treaties, the development of "Star Wars" (no, not the movie) and Reagan's obsession with trying to engage Gorbachov in trying to defuse the arms race. Beginning with the accident at Chernobyl in 1986 and covering the history of both the United States and Russia as they became involved in their nuclear war dance throughout the latter part of the 20th century, Rhodes uses information demonstrating that the disinformation that we've seen within government recently to shape public opinion has been going on for the last 40 years (big surprise!) creating circumstances that allowed the arms race to escalate out of control. Rhodes begins with Chernobyl (later covering the history of detente and the roles of various presidents before Reagan and Gorbachov sat down to try and rid the world of nuclear arms) because the plant itself was designed to do dual duty as both a reactor and a source of plutonium for weapons. The accident changed Gorbachov's perspective on the destruction that could result from a nuclear device simply because the damage to the environment and human life from Chernobyl was like a small nuclear device going off. This opened the way for more open and honest discussion on how to reduce the world's nuclear arsenal.

Richard Rhodes is perhaps the foremost nuclear historian of our time. His past two books (among many others on extremely varied subjects) on the making of the atomic and hydrogen bombs are landmark historical studies. But as readers of those books would know, they were much more than nuclear histories. They were riveting epic chronicles of war and peace, science and politics in the

twentieth century and human nature. In both books, Rhodes discussed in detail other issues, such as the Soviet bomb effort and Soviet espionage in the US. In this book which can be considered the third installment in his nuclear histories (a fourth and final one is also due), Rhodes takes a step further and covers the arms race from the 1950s onwards. He essentially proceeds where he left off, and discusses the maddening arms buildups of the 60s, 70s and 80s. One of the questions our future generations are going to ask is; why do we have such a monstrous legacy of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons, enough to destroy the earth many times over? The answer cannot be deterrence because much fewer would have sufficed for that. How did we inherit this evil of our times? Much of the book is devoted to answering this question, and the answer is complex. It involves a combination of paranoia generated by ignorance of what the other side was doing, but more importantly threat inflation engendered by hawks in government who used the Soviet threat as a political selling point in part to further their own aims and careers.

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