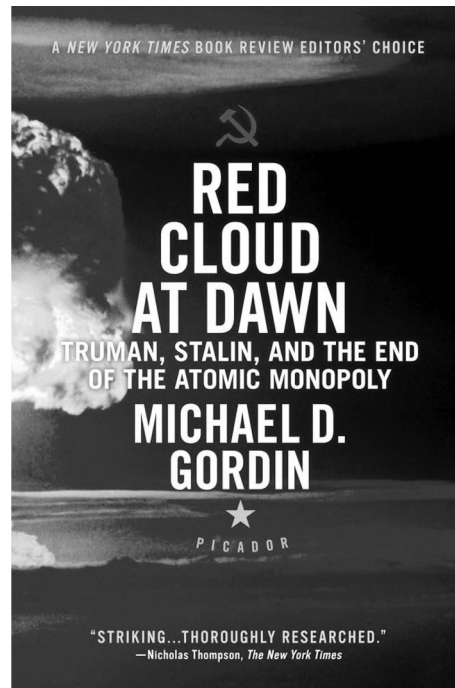


*Red Cloud at Dawn:  
Truman, Stalin, and  
the End of the  
Atomic Monopoly*

by

Michael Gordin



1

- Basic Chronology
  - July 16, 1945
    - Trinity test
  - August 6 & 9, 1945
    - Bombs over Hiroshima (Little Boy) and Nagasaki (Fat Man)
  - August 1945
    - Smyth Report
  - August 1946
    - Atomic Energy Act of 1946
  - August 29, 1949
    - Soviets explode bomb
  - September 3, 1949
    - U.S. detects evidence for bomb
  - September 23, 1949
    - Truman announces that Soviets have bomb

2

- What is the book principally about?
- The period of time U.S. held a monopoly as a nuclear power
- What to reveal to the world?
  - Information / misinformation / omission
- How to find out what enemy is doing?
  - How to interpret information / misinformation / omission

3

- Who or what is the main character of this book?
  - pp. 12-13: *“The main character in this book is not a person or an organization but an event: a nuclear explosion... [the] ninth explosion which the Soviets dubbed ‘First Lightning’ and the Americans called ‘Joe-1’ (in ironic homage to Stalin), is our star character.”*
- Main character:
  - Information?
- p. 17: *“... atomic weapons have always been enmeshed in an adversarial context, replete with the smoke of deception and the mirrors of inference.”*
- p. 17: *“Throughout the following chapters, therefore, we must focus not just on what both sides were doing in parallel, but also on what each side thought the other was doing, and how each imagined the other would react—and so on down the chain.”*

4

- p. 15: What one side (for example, the United States) chooses to reveal to its opposite number is subjected to a series of questions:
  - Was this an honest revelation?
  - What was left out?
  - Why tell specifically *this* piece of information?
  - Why tell us *now*?
  - How can one be sure it is reliable, especially since one cannot simply repeat “observations” as is often the case with a scientific experiment?
  - How should one react to the news without revealing too much about one’s position?
- *These problems inhere in every piece of intelligence data but were dramatically intensified if the information came through illicit channels.”*

5

## Historiography

- p. 19: *“This is not the way atomic history is often told.”*
  - What way?
- p. 19: *“The emphasis tends to be on the devices themselves rather than on the knowledge about those devices; usually the story is not reflected in the international reactions and counterreactions, but kept within the confines of one country. Such an approach makes the development of a nuclear device a story of technological progress and breakthrough, culminating in a success—typically in the form of a mushroom cloud.... Thus, we find many histories of the Soviet bomb, the Chinese bomb, the Israeli bomb, the French bomb, and so on.”*
  - Focus on devices
  - Focus on nations
- p. 19: *“There are some serious problems with thinking about the development of nuclear weapons this way.”*

6

- p. 19: *“First, despite the tendency of historians to focus on atomic bomb development within specific national contexts, no state has ever developed a nuclear device on its own.”*
- US (1945): Manhattan project?
  - British, Canadians, + core group of European emigres
- Soviet Union (1949)
  - used U.S. information
- Great Britain (1952)
  - used U.S. information, Canadian and South African uranium, + German emigres
- France (1960)
  - used European emigres + help from Germany and Italy
- China (1964)
  - assistance (until 1960) from Soviets
- Israel (late 1960s)
  - full assistance from France
- India (1974)
  - used British, Canadian, French assistance
- Pakistan (1998)
  - used Chinese assistance
- North Korea (2006)
  - used Pakistani assistance

7

- p. 19: *“The monolithic ‘national’ nuclear histories thus miss out on one of the central features of these weapons: They are immensely complicated devices built from many resources, domestic and international. Primary among the resources crossing borders was information.”*

8

- pp. 13-14: *“We might be tempted to think about the story of the ninth nuclear explosion as either about the Soviet Union (how did it manage to produce an explosion?) or about the United States (how did it learn about the Soviet bomb, and how did it react?). It is a story about both and neither.”*
- p. 14: *“...in the period from 1945 to 1949—the atomic monopoly, a unique period in which only one power possessed nuclear weapons—every American atomic bomb decision was fundamentally built around the potentiality of a Soviet bomb. So although this book is most concerned with events in the United States, those events were always internationally inflected and reactive, usually to actions by the Soviet regime; the substantial narrative devoted to Soviet actions likewise resonates with how the Americans and Europeans interpreted them. This book is a history of the atomic monopoly, and thus an American story, but it is also a story of how that monopoly collapsed—which makes it an international one.”*
- What is the implication for other Cold War science episodes?