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UCSB Historian Awarded Prestigious Prize for Acclaimed Book About the Role of the Atomic Bomb in Japan's Surrender in WWII

UC Santa Barbara Historian Tsuyoshi Hasegawa has been awarded the Robert Ferrell Book Prize, the most prestigious award given by the Society of Historians for Foreign Relations, for "Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan" (Harvard University Press, 2005), a critically acclaimed book about the role of the atomic bomb in Japan's surrender at the end of World War II.

The selection committee at the national organization of American diplomatic history described Hasegawa's multiarchival contribution to research on the end of the war as "a stunning achievement."

The book is the first international history to examine the drama of Japan's surrender in the Pacific War in the international context, involving the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan.

The New York Times called Hasegawa's book "a brilliant and definitive study of American, Soviet, and Japanese records of the last weeks of the war."

The Ferrell Prize, which recognizes distinguished scholarship in the history of American foreign relations, will be presented to the eminent UCSB historian on April 21 in Washington, D.C. at the annual meeting of the society.

"I am delighted and honored to learn that the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations recognized this book to be an important achievement," said Hasegawa, who specializes in modern Russian and Soviet history.

"I am thrilled to enter the rank of such previous prize-winners as William Taubman (winner of the Pulitzer Prize) and Mel Leffler (winner of the Bancroft award)."

While many Americans believe that World War II ended in the blinding flashes of the atomic bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945, historians have hotly debated if the American use of the atomic bombs was justified.

With their exclusive focus on the atomic bombings, however, historians have not fully examined other important factors of the entry of the Soviet Union into the war and a confused and divided Japanese leadership.

Examining in detail the deliberations of the Japanese leadership immersed in squabbling over how to end the war with the emperor system intact, Hasegawa claims the bombs were not the most decisive factor in Japan's decision to end the war.

Only when the Soviets, jockeying with the United States for post-war influence in Asia, declared war and invaded Japanese-held Manchuria did the Japanese leadership capitulate to prevent falling under Soviet dominance.

"The Soviet factor has been treated as a sideshow by traditional history," said Hasegawa, who is fluent in Japanese, English, and Russian and studied documents and conducted interviews in Japan, the United States, and Russia in researching his book.

"I bring it to center stage. I think the Soviet presence was crucial."

The Ferrell Prize was established in honor of Robert H. Ferrell, professor of diplomatic history at Indiana University from 1961 to 1990, by his former students.

The prize recognizes any book beyond the first monograph by the author and provides a \$2,500 award.

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