



**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**THE ULTIMATE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP DECISION:
EMPLOYING THE WORLD'S FIRST ATOMIC BOMB**

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ABSTRACT

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After fifty years, the events leading up to historic strategic decision by the President of the United States to employ atomic weapons against Japan are still being debated. Because of the controversy over whether the U.S. should have dropped the first atomic bomb, countless publications, newspaper articles and books dealing with this monumental singular event in the history of warfare have been written. Truman's decision crosses the spectrum of the strategic decision making process in dealing with the political, military, economic and moral issues of the day, to include the revisionist's historian interpretations 50 years later. The paper will examine why the bomb was developed, what were the key political / economic and military decision points during the development and employment of this weapon of mass destruction. Additionally, the paper will look at the moral issues raised by what historians are writing fifty years later. Senior Military War Colleges, through their strategic leadership studies, should incorporate within this curriculum a "study in time" of the events that led up to this singular historic decision.

THE ULTIMATE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP DECISION:
EMPLOYING THE WORLD'S FIRST ATOMIC BOMB

INTRODUCTION

After fifty years, the events leading up to the President of the United States, Harry S. Truman's historic strategic decision to employ unprecedented weapons of mass destruction against Japan are still being debated. Dropping the atomic bomb which forced the surrender of Japan, putting an end to the world's bloodiest war ever, is shrouded to this day with much written commentary and reflection from revisionist historians, military historians, military and political leader's past and present. The revisionists agree on one thing, that the U.S. should not have dropped the bomb on Japan. They ask, would the U.S. have dropped the bomb on Germany if it were available? Was the decision racial? Why were the civilian population centers (cities) targeted? Were there alternate ways to end the war quickly and avoid an allied invasion of the Japanese homeland? This event crosses the spectrum of the strategic decision making process in dealing with the political, military, economic and moral issues of the day.

The purpose of this paper is to examine and support the ultimate strategic leadership decision in the history of modern warfare, the employment of the atomic bomb. The paper will focus on the question, should the U.S., i.e., President Truman, have dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki,

Japan, to end World War II. To make this analysis, the paper will examine why the bomb was developed. The political/economic and the military situation that helped form the basis for which the employment of the world's first atomic bomb will also be analyzed. Last, the revisionists view and concluding thoughts will be presented.

BACKGROUND

In late July 1945 it seemed evident that Japan was a defeated nation. Although defeated, when they could be forced to surrender unconditionally was a different story. The challenge facing the allies was how to persuade the militant faction of the government and armed forces to cease hostilities. Japan's surrender would have clear advantages to both sides because it would bring a halt to the mounting U.S. casualties and the horrendous destruction of the Japanese homeland.

To bring the defeat and surrender to the Japanese empire the U.S. had developed six possible courses of action. Invade Japan in two stages, prolonging the war for a year or more and continue to take casualties in large numbers; continue the aerial bombing and naval blockade until the Japanese lost the will to resist and surrender; get the Russians into the war, crack the militant's resolve and force them to sue for peace; accept Japan's proposals to negotiate rather than an unconditional surrender; and finally, warn the Japanese that the U.S. had developed the atomic bomb and provide a demonstration. If the Japanese failed to surrender, and the

latter course was chosen, employ the atomic bomb, (contingent on the bombs successful test), on Japan's cities, providing a shock to the militarists and force the Japanese to quit before more devastation was inflicted on their country.¹ The U.S. selected the last course of action--employ the atomic bomb.

In order to understand the decision to drop the bomb, it is necessary to understand the background of the bomb's development. The technological revolution of the 20th century was racing forward. The world's scientific and engineering communities were developing faster, bigger and more lethal weapons of war.

The most lethal weapon planned by the allies was the atomic bomb. In 1939 it became common knowledge in the scientific world that if "uranium atoms were bombarded with neutrons they would split--or fission-- releasing some of their mass as energy, possibly high amounts of energy."² The military application was significant and posed a major problem for the allies. Specifically, the world was on the verge of war and the physicists that demonstrated the possibility of fission (releasing energy) were German. Could the German's be the first to harness atomic energy for weapons of mass destruction?

Fear that Germany would develop the ultimate weapon caused Leo Szilard, a refugee Hungarian scientist, and Albert Einstein, a refugee German scientist, to send a letter to the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt. The letter informed the president that Hitler's Germany could develop an atomic bomb that would have devastating effects on the world.³

When the first letter failed to produce the desired response, a second letter of warning was sent to the president stating that the German's were well on their way to development and the first use of the atomic bomb. In their opinion, and the United States had to take action.⁴

President Roosevelt ultimately took action, but it wasn't until after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1942. This brought the United States into the war and started the U.S. toward the development of the first atomic bomb through what was known as the Manhattan Project. Three years and two billion dollars later the scientists at Los Alamos were successful in the development of nuclear energy into a manageable form for military use. On 16 July 1945, at Alamogordo, New Mexico, the first nuclear weapon was detonated, the test exceeded expectations.⁵ The development of the bomb came too late to use against Germany since the war in Europe had ended the previous May. Plans to use the atomic bomb's now shifted to Japan. Since the decision to drop the bomb on the Japanese has been criticized by some in recent years, it is important to consider the political background of the decision.

POLITICAL

In examining the political/economic situation, it becomes became clear that political/economic and military realities in the decision to drop the bomb were somewhat interwoven. Though he was Vice President, Harry S. Truman, first learned about the Manhattan Project when he became president after Roosevelt's

death in April 1945.⁶ When he assumed office the war in Europe was virtually over, ending less than one month after he became president. The war, had resulted in millions of casualties, military and civilian, and entire countries were devastated. The Soviets were already making the western allies nervous over their aggressive intentions in Eastern Europe, their possible designs on Western Europe and their total disregard for democratic traditions. The war against Japan was raging-- American soldier casualties were mounting, but the tide had turned toward an allied victory there. The major question was, how soon and at what cost victory?

Secretary of War Henry Lewis Stimson said that, "Major fighting would not end until the latter part of 1946, at the earliest."⁷ A quick end was not in sight. There was, however, a way to end the fighting with fewer American casualties. By the spring 1945, the Manhattan Project was very close to its goal of producing the world's first atomic bomb. Mr. Stimson informed the new president, "Within four months we shall in all probability complete the most terrible weapon ever known in human history . . . "⁸ Truman, though new in office, would soon be forced to make the decision to drop the bomb and bring an earlier end of the war.

Politically, the reasons for dropping the bomb were convincing. The president was faced with the fact that the U.S. had been at war since 1942 and the American public was becoming war weary. Economically, congressional committees were

grumbling about the huge secret appropriations poured into the Manhattan Project. A congressional warning was issued saying that the results better be worth the two billion dollars invested--a tremendous sum of money in 1940's dollars.⁹ Some congressional leaders questioned, could the money have been better spent or invested in other military hardware to help bring the war to a quicker end?

Truman knew that he needed to end the war as soon as possible. He was also told that a land invasion of the Japanese homelands would be excessive in the cost of lives lost on both sides. He knew that "the Japanese military clique in power clung fiercely to the cherished values of bushido, the way of the warrior, which ordered no yielding of Japanese held territory without the battle to the death."¹⁰ Japanese message intercepts, also told him that the military leadership in Japan had ordered its commanders to kill over 100,000 allied prisoners of war if the invasion of the homeland took place.

Stimson speaking to the president two weeks before the Potsdam meeting of the big three, told him that he had toured Japan prior to the war and now remembered his impressions. "The terrain in Kyushu is unfavorable for maneuver and susceptible to a last ditch defense such as had been made at Iwo Jima and Okinawa." The struggle he feared, would be "long, costly and arduous... if possible he informed the president, some other way to force the surrender must be found."¹¹

To assist him in the decision process President Truman appointed a group of advisors known as the Interim Committee. The purpose of the Interim Committee was to advise the president on questions raised by the apparent success of the atomic weapon test. Moreover, the Interim Committee was to make recommendations about the bomb and more specifically to study the problem of postwar international atomic controls.¹² The Interim Committee was composed of elder statesman and scientists that were the top men in their fields. They considered the full spectrum of atomic energy to include its political, military, and scientific aspects and, more specifically, its recommended military use against Japan.

On 1 June 1945, after its discussion with the Atomic Scientific Panel, the Interim Committee unanimously adopted the following recommendations. First, the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible. Second, it should be used on a dual target--that is a military installation or a war plant surrounded by or adjacent to houses and other buildings most susceptible to damage. Third, it should be used without providing the Japanese prior warning of the nature of the weapons.¹³

The Committee also considered the Franck Report," a report developed by a group of scientists which proposed alternatives to their recommendations, such as, providing the Japanese advanced warning and giving a demonstration in some uninhabited area."¹⁴ They concluded however, that these actions could prove

ineffective. With advanced warning the Japanese could move prisoners of war to the announced area. A demonstration could prove to be a dud; failure could be counterproductive and there was a scarcity of weapons-grade material to contend with. In Secretary Harry L. Stimson's own words, "We have no bombs to waste."¹⁵ The Interim Committee said, a warning or demonstration would not shock and force the Japanese nation to reconsider its views of surrender or fight to the death values. They also suggested another alternative to help end the war more quickly was the forthcoming Soviet deceleration of war against Japan.

On 16 July 1945, President Truman traveled to Potsdam, Germany for a big three summit to include Stalin, Churchill, and himself. President Truman knew that at Yalta, Stalin had agreed to enter the Pacific War three months after the European conflict ended. Truman sought Stalin's assurances that the Soviet army would enter the war in a few weeks. Having been given that assurance at Potsdam, President Truman wrote, "Finni Japs when the Soviets enter the war."¹⁶ While at Potsdam, President Truman received word that the atomic bomb had been tested and was successful. The potential of this new weapon caused American officials to have second thoughts about future relations with the Soviets. The Soviets had already begun to cause trouble for their allies in occupied Europe. They subverted the democratic process, failed to keep agreements and dealt with their western allies in an adversarial fashion.

The U.S. political leadership, began to view the bomb as a force multiplier in ending the Pacific war quickly. Furthermore, it was viewed as a potential way to keep the Soviets out of Western Europe and limit their involvement in the Pacific.

Secretary of State James Byrnes, Truman's closest confidant, was eager to end the war against the Japanese before the Russians entered and felt the potential threat of the new weapon would make the Soviets more manageable. Secretary Stimson didn't want to use the bomb as a diplomatic tool but relented and referred to it as "a master card" in Washington dealing with the Kremlin."¹⁷ U.S. officials believed that a Soviet-free Far East would enhance the possibility that Japan would become a peaceful and a productive member of the region.

President Truman's view was perhaps the most significant. After considering the options he concluded:

"If the atomic bomb could save lives (on both sides) and shorten the war, possibly ending it before the Soviets entered, there was no real alternative to using it. Ending without Soviet entry would give the U.S. a freer hand in shaping the future of the region, specifically Japan and elsewhere in Asia."¹⁸

The dye was cast; and the bomb would be used.

While at Potsdam President Truman offered Japan a warning of the things to come. He warned of massive devastating attacks on Japan, without specifically mentioning the atomic bomb, that would continue until their surrender.

His resolve to use the bomb was supported by a small circle of advisors and scientists. The moral implications were mute. Allied leaders and scientists saw no urgency to stop the use of the bomb for they were convinced that the bomb represented new technology, a logical extension of war making. The atomic bomb would be no more morally repulsive than the strategic bombings on Germany's population centers or the horrendous fire bombings on Dresden, Germany and Tokyo, Japan.¹⁹ Stimson, the man who wrestled most with the imponderabilities called the bomb, ". . . the most terrible weapon ever known", but considered it . . . "as legitimate as any deadly explosive of modern war."²⁰ Prime Minister Churchill supported this claim stating, "There never was a moment's discussion as to whether the atomic bomb should be used or not. Why should there have been any discussion?--the world was at war and war had become total."²¹

MILITARY

The military necessity for employing the bomb was compelling. War had become total, and the U.S. objective was simple: force Japan to accept unconditional surrender and bring an end to the war. As stated by Secretary of War Stimson in his article, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," "the principal political, social, and military objectives of the United States in the summer of 1945 were the prompt and complete surrender of Japan. Only the

complete destruction of her military power could open the way to lasting peace."²²

The most compelling military reason to drop the bomb on Japan was the expected heavy casualties on both sides during the planned invasion of the Japanese homeland, scheduled in November 1945. Granted by July of 1945 the tide of war had turned significantly against the Japanese and in favor of the United States. On the other hand, the Japanese were still fighting with a vengeance, resulting in thousands of Americans casualties. There was every indication from all intelligence sources that Japan would continue to do so-- especially in the defense of the homeland. Although the Japanese Air Force and Navy were all but destroyed, the Army was in much better shape. As President Truman approved the Joint Chiefs' invasion plans of the Japanese home island "Olympic", on 18 June he remarked, " I do not want another Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other." ²³

Military leaders had cause and concern because the Japanese Army was still in command of over five million fighting troops. Additionally, it was expected that millions of civilians would take up arms to defend the homeland. It was estimated that there were some 5000-8000 suicide aircraft that could inflict massive damage on the invading U.S. and British Naval and ground forces. If the ground invasion had been executed as planned, the U.S. would have to commit over five million fighting troops to

the task of taking the home islands. What is more significant was the expected cost. Measured in terms of U.S. injured and soldiers lives lost, estimates ranged anywhere from a quarter a million to a million casualties during the initial invasion. Figures would have been much higher if British and Japanese casualties were factored in.²⁴ Japanese casualties, both civilian and military, would likely be many times larger than the allies.

General MacArthur's staff estimated that during the initial invasion there would be 50,000 U.S. casualties and several times that for the Japanese just to establish a beach head on Kyusku.²⁵ One can look back on MacArthur's advance across the Pacific and realize the fanatical nature of the Japanese fighting man. The first day of the fighting on the small island of Iwo Jima cost more American lives than D-day, the allied invasion of Europe. At Okinawa the casualty total was 79,000.²⁶ This would lead most military planners to believe that once the fight reached the Japanese homeland, resistance would be even more fanatical.

Opponents of the atomic bomb argued that a blockade would defeat Japan, by that, eliminating the need for a land invasion. In reality, history shows that blockades or embargoes can be only partially effective, thereby delaying the inevitable--a land invasion. Even if Japan was invaded, there was no guarantee of a swift victory. General MacArthur said that "if the Japanese government lost control

over its people and millions of former Japanese military men and civilians took to guerrilla warfare in the mountains, it could have taken a million American troops 10 years to master the situation."²⁷ Once an invasion occurred, Guerrilla warfare could have become reality in a conventional land campaign , a reality the U.S. did not want to deal with.

Despite the intense air raids against their homeland and successive losses of once-occupied territories, many Japanese soldiers didn't think they were being defeated. Japanese troops felt that losing Iwo Jima and Okinawa was part of the Japanese leadership's grand plan to lure the enemy closer to Japan where they would be crushed, by that, ending the war on their terms. The Japanese mentality was to resist and not surrender. Secretary Stimson wrote, "Resistance would be fanatical. It would be necessary to leave the Japanese homeland even more thoroughly destroyed than Germany. Continued B-29 raids would wreak more damage than any atomic raids. The atomic bomb was more than a weapon of terrible destruction; it was a psychological weapon."²⁸ Furthermore, Dr. James B. Conant, a distinguished member of the President's Interim Committee stated, " . . . the bomb was an ideal weapon to shock Japan's leaders into surrender."²⁹

General George Marshall, saw the bomb as part of a package of progressive shocks to coerce the Japanese into surrender. He did not see the invasion and the bomb as representing two separate alternatives. Like most army officers he refused to see the bomb as a strategic weapon--a grander version of strategic bombing. Instead, Marshall saw a series of steps to bring about the defeat of Japan including, the bomb, the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, a blockade of the home islands, continued strategic bombing, employing the atomic bomb and if necessary and the invasion of Japan to force. He had clear evidence that the Japanese intended to provide a fanatical and extended resistance and fight on as long as possible.³⁰

There were Japanese moderates who realized that they were beaten and who wanted to end the war, but, the army still controlled the Japanese government intercircles. These political moderates couldn't persuade the military leadership to surrender--as long as there was a means to fight. To add to this fanaticism, under orders from Tokyo, the moment the invasion of Japan's home islands began, allied POW's were to be killed enmasse.³¹

Most of the civilian and military leadership in the U.S., the atomic bomb was nothing more than an extension of strategic bombing. This was a concept they've employed throughout the war with a corresponding shift from military target sets(counter-force) to civilian target sets (cities)

(counter-value) such as in Europe. Frederick Sallagan wrote in his study of strategic bombing as an aspect of total war, said that "the stakes were so high in WWII that the belligerent's were compelled to employ, not all weapons they possessed, but any weapons they considered appropriate and advantageous to them."³² In his book, "Dictionary of Modern War," Edward Luttwak defines total war as "a war in which at least one party perceives a threat to its survival and in which all available weapons are used and the distinction between military and civilian targets is almost ignored."³³

The decision to attack Hiroshima and Nagasaki follow the same lines. Ultimately the decision was in the hands of the new president, Harry S. Truman. While the president was firmly convinced of the need to use the bomb, the only question left was targeting. President Truman was emphatic on the subject of dropping the bomb. "It was a question of saving hundreds of thousands of American lives. I don't mind telling you that you don't feel normal when you have to plan hundreds of thousands of complete, final deaths of American boys who are alive and joking and having fun while you are doing your planning. You break your heart and your head trying to figure out a way to save one life. The name given to our invasion was "Olympic," but I saw nothing godly about the killing of all the people that would make that invasion. I made the only decision I ever knew how to

make. I did what I thought was right."³⁴

U.S. war planners felt that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were major working centers for Japans's war machine. Hiroshima was a major army headquarters while Nagasaki was a major sea port with significant war-making industries. Secretary Stimson, "We believe our attacks had struck cities that must certainly be important to the Japanese military leaders' both Army and Navy." ³⁵

History records that bombs were dropped on what was regarded as valid military targets. On 6 August 1945 the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. At Hiroshima the atomic bomb killed about 80,000 people, pulverized about five square miles, and wrecked an additional ten square miles of the city. On 9 August 1945 the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. At Nagasaki there were 45,000 casualties and a smaller area was wrecked than Hiroshima because of the configuration of the city.³⁶ Thousands more died in the following weeks, months, and years from the bombs effects--effects not fully anticipated by the atomic scientist.

While destruction was significant these two attacks were not the most destructive in the war. Two fire bombings of Tokyo, accomplished with conventional ordinance, resulted in the death of 250,000 people, destruction of 210 square miles of buildings destroyed and making millions homeless. If atomic bombs had not been employed, the fire

bombing would have most certainly continued until every major city and economic center in Japan was utterly destroyed. Perhaps most significant, the shock of atomic weapons produced the desired effect, the Japanese sued for peace.

REVISIONIST HISTORIAN VIEWS

Despite the success of using atomic weapons to end the war, the atomic strategy revisionist historians and critics have raised both ethical and historical questions about employing the bombs. In the revisionist historians view, Hiroshima has become a symbol of counterculture hostility reflected toward the decision to drop the worlds first atomic bombs. Evidence of this was the depiction of the 50th Anniversary Exhibit of the Enola Gay (the B-29 aircraft that dropped the first atomic bomb) at the Smithsonian Institute's Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C., in an exhibit celebrating the end of WWII. This exhibit depicted that Japan was the victim of WWII and the U.S. as the aggressor.

The Original exhibit saw the U.S. war against Japan as one of vengeance and for the Japanese it was a fight to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism.³⁷ Adding to this revisionist approach, Time magazine in its revisionist version reports, a half century later, estimated that if an invasion of Japan took place the casualty toll would have been only 20,000.³⁸ This number is

considerably lower than the invasion of Japan war plan Operation Downfall estimates, made by the people who had the enormous responsibility of directing the troops in fighting the war. It also seems exceptionally optimistic given the casualties at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. General MacArthur, Secretary of War Stimson and Prime Minister Churchill expected huge casualties if the planned invasion went as planned.

Revisionist historians that are now claiming that the U.S. dropped the bomb for other reasons. Some claim the use of the atomic bomb was based purely on racial grounds. These revisionists believe that the U.S. political leadership saw the Japanese as an inferior people, so therefore dropping the bomb would not be the same as dropping it on the German's. The racism argument is quite shallow, since the bomb would have certainly been used on Germany had they not and surrendered in May 1945. On the 6th of August, the day the first atomic bomb was dropped, Dr. Oppenheimer, a German refugee scientist and director of Los Alamos atomic bomb research project spoke to an auditorium filled with atomic scientists. He stated that he was sorry that the bomb had not been ready in time for use against Germany. Moreover, "The available evidence supports the conclusion that Roosevelt expected to use any bombs against Germany and any not employed in Europe ready in time to be dropped on Japan." In either case the desire was to bring the war to a

rapid conclusion.³⁹

CONCLUSION

Dr. Conant, an Interim Committee member, provided some insight and a profound assessment of the situation. His ability to predict future global political and military realities were extraordinary. He believed not only that the bomb was an ideal weapon to shock Japan's leaders into surrender, but that its use was necessary to impress upon the world in general, and on the Soviet civilian and military leadership in particular, of the bombs devastating effects. His vision of the destruction that the bomb would inflict was unusually far-sighted. He recommended to Secretary Stimson that in the present war the bomb must be used for that was the only way to awaken the world to the necessity of abolishing "total" war altogether. No technical demonstration could take the place of actual use with its horrible results.⁴⁰

Dr. Conant wasn't the only scientist with this view, "If the bomb were not used in the present war," Arthur Compton wrote to Stimson in June 1945, "The world would not have adequate warning as to what is to be expected if war should break out again."⁴¹ These Scientists knew for a fact that the secrecy surrounding the atomic bomb would soon be removed, allowing other countries to obtain technology for this devastating weapon. History has proved them out.

Given the information available at the time, President Harry S. Truman, made the logical decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan during WWII. The overriding consideration to drop the bomb was the excessive casualties, perhaps a million, resulting from the necessary invasion of the home islands. Considering the planned Japanese fanatical resistance, demonstrations of the bomb would have been ineffective in shocking the Japanese leadership into a surrender. Finally the bombs power and a possible speedy end to war would assist in keeping the Soviet's out of the Far East, and justify the huge expenditures to develop the bomb. How could the president have explained to the American people the existence of this show-stopper weapon, the atomic bomb and its devastating effects, and not militarily employing it to stop the war?

Adding to the cost, the Japanese planned kill over 100,000 allied prisoners if the invasion of the homelands took place. All evidence showed Japan planned to fight to the death. Moreover, an 18 June military message traffic intercept "Ultra" pointed to a large buildup of Japanese troops on Kyushu, the selected initial invasion area. Furthermore, reading of Japan's diplomatic message traffic through "Magic" intercepts showed that the Japanese leadership had no intention of surrendering. The traffic suggested that the Japanese were attempting to make a deal with the Soviet Union to enable them to keep their prewar

empire and share the spoils of China with them. The atomic bomb would be used to shock Japan into surrender--it did. Another convincing issue was fear of another war with the use of atomic weapons without the benefit of the world knowing its utter devastating results.

Ending the war was not the only result the bombs had. The scale of the attacks, the shock effect, and the suffering and destruction they caused broke the warrior spirit of Japan, bringing to a close a century of uncontrolled militarism. Finally, the total horror of the atomic bombing must also give credit for the following fifty years in which no nuclear bombs were used in anger, and there was no major war between the great powers.

It is fashionable to look back from today's perspective and conclude that dropping the atomic bomb was not necessary. President Truman did not possess this luxury. He was thrown into the presidency with a full blown global total war in progress and all the associated fog of war decisions to make. Although militarily-defeated, Japan was not willing to surrender. Factions in the military and the government were calling for a fight to the finish, even inviting an invasion and planning to inflict enormous casualties on the American forces. As Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Truman had a responsibility to the soldiers and sailor's in the fight for the Pacific, those about to be sent to the fight, and also to the people of

the United States to bring the war in the Pacific to a quick end.

Critics of Truman's decision misunderstand both the political atmosphere at the time and concepts of ethics in war time. Is there a pleasant way to kill someone? Did the 300,000 who died through fire bombing appreciate being burned alive rather than incinerated through nuclear heat? Did soldiers fighting hand to hand hold discussions in advance to determine the absolute minimum amount of violence necessary to penetrate on the enemy to achieve the political or strategic objective of the day? If the Japanese were so close to surrendering in July 1945, why didn't they bother to inform the allies? Is it the responsibility of the defeated to protect their people and accept defeat: it wasn't the allied responsibility to second guess a brutal foe.⁴²

Bringing the war to an end as soon as possible was paramount to avoid casualties that an invasion would have most defiantly caused.⁴³ How could he ask the U.S. troops that just completed the long and arduous job of defeating Germany. He would have to tell them, instead of going home you are being thrust into the invasion of Japan? No doubt, if the invasion did become reality, the president would have had to order those men into the Pacific. Although revisionist historians like to claim that most U.S. historians questioned Truman's decision, this statement

needs some clarification. Many historians believe-- given the context of the time and Truman's options, that the president made the right decision. To support this claim, a survey conducted by the organization of American Historians showed that of 854 historians polled, only six thought that the dropping of the bomb was a "dark spot" in history.⁴⁴

Speaking to the British House Of Commons, London England, on 16 August 1945, two days after the surrender of Japan, Sir Winston Churchill spoke on the subject of *"Where Do We Stand."* He profoundly stated:

"I am surprised that the worthy people, who in most cases had no intention of proceeding to the Japanese front themselves, should adopt the position that rather than throw this bomb, we should have sacrificed a million Americans, and a quarter a million British lives in the desperate battles and massacres of the invasion of Japan . . . everything in human power, short of using the atomic bomb, was done to spare the civil population though there are voices which assert that the bomb should have never had been used at all. I cannot associate myself with such ideas. Six years of total war have convinced most people that had the Germans and the Japanese discovered the new weapon they would have used it upon us to our complete destruction with utmost alacrity."⁴⁵

Perhaps, a quotation from Secretary Stimson, best summarized this historic event. "Now with the release of atomic energy, man's ability to destroy himself is very near complete. The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended a war. They also made it wholly clear that we must never have another war. This is the lesson men and leaders everywhere must learn, and I believe that when they learn it, they will find a way to lasting peace. There is no other choice."⁴⁶

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