

CHAPTER 1

THE BURDENS OF POWER: THE DECISION TO DROP THE ATOMIC BOMB, 1945

☺ THE PROBLEM ☺

At 2:45 A.M. on August 6, 1945, three B-29 bombers took off from an American air base in the Marianas, bound for Japan. Two of the airplanes carried cameras and scientific instruments; the third carried an atomic bomb, a new type of weapon with the destructive power of 20,000 tons of TNT.

In the Japanese city of Hiroshima, residents were so undisturbed by the sight of so few enemy planes that most did not bother to go to air raid shelters. When the bomb exploded 2,000 feet above the city, 80,000 people were killed instantly, and at least that many died soon afterward of radiation poisoning.¹ More than 80 percent of Hi-

roshima's buildings were destroyed, and the flash of light was so intense that shadowlike "silhouettes" of people who disappeared were "photographed" onto the walls of buildings and rubble.

The decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima ultimately rested with President Harry S Truman, who had been in office only 116 days when

estimated the number of people who were killed instantly at 80,000. An August 1946 survey placed the total number killed (instantly and soon after, from radiation poisoning) at more than 122,000. A 1961 Japanese study contended that the true figure was about 166,000. In the late 1970s, a careful estimate by Japanese officials placed the total bomb-related deaths (as of November 1945) at 130,000. The total population of Hiroshima at the time the bomb was dropped was 300,000.

1. The actual number of bomb-related deaths in Hiroshima has been the subject of much debate. The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey

the bomb was dropped and, indeed, had known of its existence only since April 25. The war in Europe ended with the surrender of Nazi Germany in early May of 1945. But Japan was still to be conquered, and there was enormous hostility against the Japanese in the United States. Truman's military advisers told him that an invasion of the Japanese mainland could cost the United States between 500,000 and 1,000,000 casualties. At the same time, however, the situation in Europe was grave, as it was becoming increasingly clear that the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union was rapidly deteriorating. As for President Truman, he had been suspicious of the Russians since 1941, and the eroding alliance confirmed his worst fears. To what extent might the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima have been used to threaten the Soviets with American military prowess in the postwar years? Moreover, at the Yalta Conference, Soviet premier Joseph Stalin promised to enter the war against Japan approximately three months after the fall of Germany. To

what extent was the atomic bomb used to end the war in the Pacific before the Russians could become involved and thus increase the Soviet Union's power in Asia?

In this chapter, you will be analyzing the evidence to answer four major questions: (1) Why did President Truman decide to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima? (2) What principal factors went into that decision? (3) Were there any alternatives to using the atomic bomb? If so, why did President Truman not choose one of the alternatives? (4) Who were the key figures who helped President Truman make up his mind? Why did he heed the words of some advisers but not others?

Even though you will have to go beyond the evidence provided here, you also should be willing to ponder the important question of whether President Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was the proper one. To answer that question (a controversial one even today), you will have to combine the evidence with material in the Background section of this chapter and with other reading.

BACKGROUND

In 1918, New Zealand physicist Ernest Rutherford was criticized for his failure to attend a meeting of a British committee of scientists trying to create a defense against German submarines during World War I. Rutherford's excuse for his absence shocked his fellow scientists: "Talk softly, please. I have been engaged in experi-

ments which suggest that the atom can be artificially disintegrated. If it is true, it is of far greater importance than a war."

By the 1920s, separate research centers investigating the splitting of the atom had been established at Göttingen (Germany), Cambridge (England), and Copenhagen (Denmark). Physi-

3. Were there any alternatives to using the atomic bomb? If so, why didn't President Truman choose one of them?
4. Who were the key figures who helped Truman with his decision? Why did he heed the words of some advisers but not those of others?
5. Do you think the decision President Truman made to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was the proper one?

Keep in mind that alternatives to dropping an atomic bomb on Japan were open to President Truman. Those alternatives included urging Japan to surrender and offering a guar-

antee that the emperor would retain his throne; an American invasion of the Japanese mainland; the continued (or increased) use of conventional bombs; a joint United States-Soviet Union assault on Japan; and inviting Japanese government and military leaders to witness a test demonstration of an atomic bomb in the hope that it would convince Japan to surrender. As you examine the evidence, you might well get a clearer picture of why Truman ultimately made the decision he did if you keep in mind the alternatives open to him. As you will see in the evidence, many of these alternatives were advocated by others.

∞ THE EVIDENCE ∞

Source 1 from Harry S Truman, *Memoirs: Year of Decisions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1955), pp. 10-11, 416-423.

1. Harry S Truman (President of the United States, April 12, 1945-January 1953).⁶

My own knowledge of these developments had come about only after I became President, when Secretary Stimson had given me the full story. He had told me at that time that the project was nearing completion and that a bomb could be expected within another four months. It was at his suggestion, too, that I had then set up a committee of top men and had

6. We have rearranged Truman's recollections to put events closer to chronological order.

asked them to study with great care the implications the new weapon might have for us. . . .⁷

[Here Truman identifies the eight-man Interim Committee, chaired by Secretary of War Stimson and composed of leading figures in government, business, and education. Truman then names the three scientists from the Manhattan Project who would consult with the committee and reports that the Interim Committee's recommendations were brought to him by Stimson on June 1, 1945.]

It was their recommendation that the bomb be used against the enemy as soon as it could be done. They recommended further that it should be used without specific warning and against a target that would clearly show its devastating strength. I had realized, of course, that an atomic bomb explosion would inflict damage and casualties beyond imagination. On the other hand, the scientific advisers of the committee reported, "We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use." It was their conclusion that no technical demonstration they might propose, such as over a deserted island, would be likely to bring the war to an end. It had to be used against an enemy target.

The final decision of where and when to use the atomic bomb was up to me. Let there be no mistake about it. I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used. The top military advisers to the President recommended its use, and when I talked to Churchill he unhesitatingly told me that he favored the use of the atomic bomb if it might aid to end the war.

In deciding to use this bomb I wanted to make sure that it would be used as a weapon of war in the manner prescribed by the laws of war. That meant that I wanted it dropped on a military target. I had told Stimson that the bomb should be dropped as nearly as possible upon a war production center of prime military importance. . . .

[Here Truman describes how the four potential targets of Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata, and Nagasaki were chosen by Truman, Stimson, and the president's military advisers. The Strategic Air Forces were given the latitude to choose from among those four cities the one where the first atomic bomb would be dropped, with weather as the primary consideration.]

A month before the test explosion of the atomic bomb the service Secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had laid their detailed plans for the

7. This was the Interim Committee, referred to below and in other memoirs.

defeat of Japan before me for approval. There had apparently been some differences of opinion as to the best route to be followed, but these had evidently been reconciled, for when General Marshall had presented his plan for a two-phase invasion of Japan, Admiral King⁸ and General Arnold had supported the proposal heartily.

The Army plan envisaged an amphibious landing in the fall of 1945 on the island of Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese home islands. This would be accomplished by our Sixth Army, under the command of General Walter Krueger. The first landing would then be followed approximately four months later by a second great invasion, which would be carried out by our Eighth and Tenth Armies, followed by the First Army transferred from Europe, all of which would go ashore in the Kanto plains area near Tokyo. In all, it had been estimated that it would require until the late fall of 1946 to bring Japan to her knees.

This was a formidable conception, and all of us realized fully that the fighting would be fierce and the losses heavy. But it was hoped that some of Japan's forces would continue to be preoccupied in China and others would be prevented from reinforcing the home islands if Russia were to enter the war.

There was, of course, always the possibility that the Japanese might choose to surrender sooner. Our air and fleet units had begun to inflict heavy damage on industrial and urban sites in Japan proper. Except in China, the armies of the Mikado had been pushed back everywhere in relentless successions of defeats.

Acting Secretary of State Grew had spoken to me in Late May⁹ about issuing a proclamation that would urge the Japanese to surrender but would assure them that we would permit the Emperor to remain as head of the state. Grew backed this with arguments taken from his ten years' experience as our Ambassador in Japan, and I told him that I had already given thought to this matter myself and that it seemed to me a sound idea. Grew had a draft of a proclamation with him, and I instructed him to send it by the customary channels to the Joint Chiefs and the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee in order that we might get the opinions of all concerned before I made my decision.

On June 18 Grew reported that the proposal had met with the approval of his Cabinet colleagues and of the Joint Chiefs. The military leaders also

8. Admiral Ernest J. King (1878-1956) was chief of naval operations. He favored using the bomb on Hiroshima.

9. This was the important May 28 meeting. See Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 1421-1428.

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discussed the subject with me when they reported the same day. Grew, however, favored issuing the proclamation at once, to coincide with the closing of the campaign on Okinawa, while the service chiefs were of the opinion that we should wait until we were ready to follow a Japanese refusal with the actual assault of our invasion forces.

It was my decision then that the proclamation to Japan should be issued from the forthcoming conference at Potsdam. This, I believed, would clearly demonstrate to Japan and to the world that the Allies were united in their purpose. By that time, also, we might know more about two matters of significance for our future effort: the participation of the Soviet Union and the atomic bomb. We knew that the bomb would receive its first test in mid-July. If the test of the bomb was successful, I wanted to afford Japan a clear chance to end the fighting before we made use of this newly gained power. If the test should fail, then it would be even more important to us to bring about a surrender before we had to make a physical conquest of Japan. General Marshall told me that it might cost half a million American lives to force the enemy's surrender of his home grounds. . . .

At Potsdam, as elsewhere, the secret of the atomic bomb was kept closely guarded. We did not extend the very small circle of Americans who knew about it. Churchill naturally knew about the atomic bomb project from its very beginning, because it had involved the pooling of British and American technical skill.

On July 24 I casually mentioned to Stalin that we had a new weapon of unusual destructive force. The Russian Premier showed no special interest. All he said was that he was glad to hear it and hoped we would make "good use of it against the Japanese." . . .

On July 28 Radio Tokyo announced that the Japanese government would continue to fight. There was no formal reply to the joint ultimatum of the United States, the United Kingdom, and China. There was no alternative now. The bomb was scheduled to be dropped after August 3 unless Japan surrendered before that day.

On August 6, the fourth day of the journey home from Potsdam, came the historic news that shook the world. I was eating lunch with members of the *Augusta's* crew when Captain Frank Graham, White House Map Room watch officer, handed me the following message:

TO THE PRESIDENT

FROM THE SECRETARY OF WAR

Big bomb dropped on Hiroshima August 5 at 7:15 PM. Washington time. First reports indicate complete success which was even more conspicuous than earlier test.

I was greatly moved. I telephoned Byrnes aboard ship to give him the news and then said to the group of sailors around me, "This is the greatest thing in history. It's time for us to get home." . . .

Source 2 from Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), pp. 613-633.

2. Henry L. Stimson (Secretary of War, 1941-1945).¹⁰

The policy adopted and steadily pursued by President Roosevelt and his advisers was a simple one. It was to spare no effort in securing the earliest possible successful development of an atomic weapon. The reasons for this policy were equally simple. The original experimental achievement of atomic fission had occurred in Germany in 1938, and it was known that the Germans had continued their experiments. In 1941 and 1942 they were believed to be ahead of us, and it was vital that they should not be the first to bring atomic weapons into the field of battle. Furthermore, if we should be the first to develop the weapon, we should have a great new instrument for shortening the war and minimizing destruction. At no time, from 1941 to 1945, did I ever hear it suggested by the President, or by any other responsible member of the government, that atomic energy should not be used in the war. All of us of course understood the terrible responsibility involved in our attempt to unlock the doors to such a devastating weapon; President Roosevelt particularly spoke to me many times of his own awareness of the catastrophic potentialities of our work. But we were at war, and the work must be done. I therefore emphasize that it was our common objective, throughout the war, to be the first to produce an atomic weapon and use it. The possible atomic weapon was considered to be a new and tremendously powerful explosive, as legitimate as any other of the deadly explosive weapons of modern war. The entire purpose was the production of a military weapon; on no other ground could the wartime expenditure of so much time and money have been justified. The exact circumstances in which that weapon might be used were unknown to any of us until the middle of 1945, and when that time came, as we shall presently see, the military use of atomic energy was connected with larger questions of national policy. . . .

10. Parts of this chapter appeared earlier as "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb" in the February 1947 issue of *Harper's* magazine.

As time went on it became clear that the weapon would not be available in time for use in the European theater, and the war against Germany was successfully ended by the use of what are now called conventional means. But in the spring of 1945 it became evident that the climax of our prolonged atomic effort was at hand. By the nature of atomic chain reactions, it was impossible to state with certainty that we had succeeded until a bomb had actually exploded in a full-scale experiment; nevertheless it was considered exceedingly probable that we should by midsummer have successfully detonated the first atomic bomb. This was to be done at the Alamogordo Reservation in New Mexico. It was thus time for detailed consideration of our future plans. What had begun as a well-founded hope was now developing into a reality.

On March 15, 1945 I had my last talk with President Roosevelt. . . .

I did not see Franklin Roosevelt again. The next time I went to the White House to discuss atomic energy was April 25, 1945, and I went to explain the nature of the problem to a man whose only previous knowledge of our activities was that of a Senator who had loyally accepted our assurance that the matter must be kept a secret from him. Now he was President and Commander-in-Chief, and the final responsibility in this as in so many other matters must be his. President Truman accepted this responsibility with the same fine spirit that Senator Truman had shown before in accepting our refusal to inform him. . . .

[Here Stimson summarizes his report to Truman and reproduces a nine-point memorandum on postwar atomic policy, the high points of which were Stimson's belief that atomic bomb secrets should not be shared with any other nation and his corresponding fear that eventual nuclear proliferation constituted a serious threat to civilization. Stimson then summarizes the work and recommendations of the Interim Committee, which agree with Truman's recollections on page 207.]

In reaching these conclusions the Interim Committee carefully considered such alternatives as a detailed advance warning or a demonstration in some uninhabited area. Both of these suggestions were discarded as impractical. They were not regarded as likely to be effective in compelling a surrender of Japan, and both of them involved serious risks. Even the New Mexico test would not give final proof that any given bomb was certain to explode when dropped from an airplane. Quite apart from the generally unfamiliar nature of atomic explosives, there was the whole problem of exploding a bomb at a predetermined height in the air by a complicated mechanism which could not be tested in the static test of New Mexico. Nothing would have been more damaging to our effort to obtain surrender than a warning or a demonstration followed by a dud—and this was a real

possibility. Furthermore, we had no bombs to waste. It was vital that a sufficient effect be quickly obtained with the few we had. . . .

The principal political, social, and military objective of the United States in the summer of 1945 was the prompt and complete surrender of Japan. Only the complete destruction of her military power could open the way to lasting peace.

Japan, in July, 1945, had been seriously weakened by our increasingly violent attacks. It was known to us that she had gone so far as to make tentative proposals to the Soviet Government, hoping to use the Russians as mediators in a negotiated peace. These vague proposals contemplated the retention by Japan of important conquered areas and were therefore not considered seriously. There was as yet no indication of any weakening in the Japanese determination to fight rather than accept unconditional surrender. If she should persist in her fight to the end, she had still a great military force. . . .

[Here Stimson summarizes the military strength of the Japanese, which was believed to include an armed force of 5 million men and 5,000 suicide aircraft. Stimson then recalls that his military advisers estimated that an assault on the Japanese mainland would result in more than 1 million casualties to American forces alone. With those considerations in mind, Stimson wrote a memorandum to President Truman on July 2 reporting that Japan might be close to surrender and that a properly worded call to Japan to lay down its arms (and including an American promise that Emperor Hirohito could remain on his throne) might avoid the inevitably bloody combat on the Japanese mainland. The atomic bomb, untested as of July 2, was not mentioned in the memorandum for security reasons.]

The adoption of the policy outlined in the memorandum of July 2 was a decision of high politics; once it was accepted by the President, the position of the atomic bomb in our planning became quite clear. I find that I stated in my diary, as early as June 19, that "the last chance warning . . . must be given before an actual landing of the ground forces in Japan, and fortunately the plans provide for enough time to bring in the sanctions to our warning in the shape of heavy ordinary bombing attack and an attack of S-1." S-1 was a code name for the atomic bomb.

There was much discussion in Washington about the timing of the warning to Japan. The controlling factor in the end was the date already set for the Potsdam meeting of the Big Three. It was President Truman's decision that such a warning should be solemnly issued by the U.S. and the U.K. from this meeting, with the concurrence of the head of the Chinese Government, so that it would be plain that *all* of Japan's principal enemies were in entire unity. This was done, in the Potsdam Ultimatum of July 26,

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which very closely followed the above memorandum of July 2, with the exception that it made no mention of the Japanese Emperor.¹¹

On July 28 the Premier of Japan, Suzuki, rejected the Potsdam ultimatum by announcing that it was "unworthy of public notice." In the face of this rejection we could only proceed to demonstrate that the ultimatum had meant exactly what it said when it stated that if the Japanese continued the war, "the full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland." . . .

As I read over what I have written, I am aware that much of it, in this year of peace, may have a harsh and unfeeling sound. It would perhaps be possible to say the same things and say them more gently. But I do not think it would be wise. As I look back over the five years of my service as Secretary of War, I see too many stern and heartrending decisions to be willing to pretend that war is anything else than what it is. The face of war is the face of death; death is an inevitable part of every order that a wartime leader gives. The decision to use the atomic bomb was a decision that brought death to over a hundred thousand Japanese. No explanation can change that fact and I do not wish to gloss it over. But this deliberate, premeditated destruction was our least abhorrent choice. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki put an end to the Japanese war. It stopped the fire raids, and the strangling blockade; it ended the ghastly specter of a clash of great land armies. . . .

Source 3 from Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1963), pp. 312-313.

3. General Dwight D. Eisenhower (Supreme Commander, Allied Military Forces in Europe).

. . . The incident took place in 1945 when Secretary of War Stimson, visiting my headquarters in Germany, informed me that our government was preparing to drop an atomic bomb on Japan. I was one of those who felt that there were a number of cogent reasons to question the wisdom of such an act. I was not, of course, called upon, officially, for any advice or

11. Keep this point in mind, for it will be very important later.

counsel concerning the matter, because the European theater, of which I was the commanding general, was not involved, the forces of Hitler having already been defeated. But the Secretary, upon giving me the news of the successful bomb test in New Mexico, and of the plan for using it, asked for my reaction, apparently expecting a vigorous assent.

During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of "face." The Secretary was deeply perturbed by my attitude, almost angrily refuting the reasons I gave for my quick conclusions. . . .

Source 4 from William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950), pp. 440-442.

4. Admiral William D. Leahy (Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman).

In the spring of 1945 President Truman directed Mr. Byrnes to make a special study of the status and prospects of the new atomic explosive on which two billion dollars already had been spent. Byrnes came to my home on the evening of June 4 to discuss his findings. He was more favorably impressed than I had been up to that time with the prospects of success in the final development and use of this new weapon.

Once it had been tested, President Truman faced the decision as to whether to use it. He did not like the idea, but was persuaded that it would shorten the war against Japan and save American lives. It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons.

It was my reaction that the scientists and others wanted to make this test because of the vast sums that had been spent on the project. Truman knew that, and so did the other people involved. However, the Chief Executive made a decision to use the bomb on two cities in Japan. We had only

produced two bombs at that time. We did not know which cities would be the targets, but the President specified that the bombs should be used against military facilities. . . .

One of the professors associated with the Manhattan Project told me that he had hoped the bomb wouldn't work. I wish that he had been right. . . .

Source 5 from Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945*, ed. Walter Johnson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 1421-1428.

5. Joseph C. Grew (Former Ambassador to Japan and in 1945 Under Secretary of State and Briefly Acting Secretary of State).

For a long time I had held the belief, based on my intimate experience with Japanese thinking and psychology over an extensive period, that the surrender of the Japanese would be highly unlikely, regardless of military defeat, in the absence of a public undertaking by the President that unconditional surrender would not mean the elimination of the present dynasty if the Japanese people desired its retention. I furthermore believed that if such a statement could be formulated and issued shortly after the great devastation of Tokyo by our B-29 attacks on or about May 26, 1945, the hands of the Emperor and his peace-minded advisers would be greatly strengthened in the face of the intransigent militarists and that the process leading to an early surrender might even then be set in motion by such a statement. Soviet Russia had not then entered the war against Japan, and since the United States had carried the major burden of the war in the Pacific, and since the President had already publicly declared that unconditional surrender would mean neither annihilation nor enslavement, I felt that the President would be fully justified in amplifying his previous statement as suggested. My belief in the potential effect of such a statement at that particular juncture was fully shared and supported by those officers in the Department of State who knew Japan and the Japanese well. . . .

In my own talk with the President on May 28, he immediately said that his own thinking ran along the same lines as mine, but he asked me to discuss the proposal with the Secretaries of War and Navy and the Chiefs of Staff and then to report to him the consensus of that group. A conference was therefore called and was held in the office of the Secretary of War in the Pentagon Building on May 29, 1945, and the issue was discussed for an hour. According to my memorandum of that meeting it became clear in the course of the discussion that Mr. Stimson, Mr. Forrestal, and General

Marshall (Admiral King was absent) were all in accord with the principle of the proposal but that for certain military reasons, not then divulged, it was considered inadvisable for the President to make such a statement at that juncture. It later appeared that the fighting on Okinawa was still going on, and it was felt that such a declaration as I proposed would be interpreted by the Japanese as a confession of weakness. The question of timing was the nub of the whole matter, according to the views expressed. I duly reported this to the President, and the proposal for action was, for the time being, dropped.

When Mr. Byrnes became Secretary of State over a month later, I endeavored to interest him in the importance and urgency of a public statement along the lines proposed, but during those few days he was intensely occupied in preparing for the Potsdam Conference, and it was only on the morning of his departure for Potsdam that I was able to hand him a draft on which a declaration might be based. This was the draft I had shown to the President. Mr. Byrnes was already on his way out of his office to drive to the airport, and his last action before leaving was to place our draft in his pocket. Mr. Stimson was then already in Europe and I urged Jack McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War, when he met him over there, to tell Mr. Stimson how strongly I felt about the matter.

Mr. Stimson did take energetic steps at Potsdam to secure the decision by the President and Mr. Churchill to issue the proclamation. In fact, the opinion was expressed to me by one American already in Potsdam, that if it had not been for Mr. Stimson's wholehearted initiative, the Potsdam Conference would have ended without any proclamation to Japan being issued at all. But even Mr. Stimson was unable to have included in the proclamation a categorical undertaking that unconditional surrender would not mean the elimination of the dynasty if the Japanese people desired its retention.

The main point at issue historically is whether, if immediately following the terrific devastation of Tokyo by our B-29s in May, 1945,¹² "the President had made a public categorical statement that surrender would not mean the elimination of the present dynasty if the Japanese people desired its retention, the surrender of Japan could have been hastened.

"That question can probably never be definitively answered but a good deal of evidence is available to shed light on it. From statements made by a number of the moderate former Japanese leaders to responsible Americans after the American occupation, it is quite clear that the civilian advisers to the Emperor were working toward surrender long before the Potsdam

12. The following quotation is taken from a letter from Grew to Stimson, February 12, 1947.

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Proclamation, even indeed before my talk with the President on May 28, for they knew then that Japan was a defeated nation. The stumbling block that they had to overcome was the complete dominance of the Japanese Army over the Government, and even when the moderates finally succeeded in getting a decision by the controlling element of the Government to accept the Potsdam terms, efforts were made by the unreconciled elements in the Japanese Army to bring about nullification of that decision. The Emperor needed all the support he could get, and in the light of available evidence I myself and others felt and still feel that if such a categorical statement about the dynasty had been issued in May, 1945, the surrender-minded elements in the Government might well have been afforded by such a statement a valid reason and the necessary strength to come to an early clear-cut decision.

"If surrender could have been brought about in May, 1945, or even in June or July, before the entrance of Soviet Russia into the war and the use of the atomic bomb, the world would have been the gainer.

"The action of Prime Minister Suzuki in rejecting the Potsdam ultimatum by announcing on July 28, 1945, that it was 'unworthy of public notice' was a most unfortunate if not an utterly stupid step.¹³ Suzuki, who was severely wounded and very nearly assassinated as a moderate by the military extremists in 1936, I believe from the evidence which has reached me was surrender-minded even before May, 1945, if only it were made clear that surrender would not involve the downfall of the dynasty. That point was clearly *implied* in Article 12 of the Potsdam Proclamation that 'the occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as . . . there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.' This however was not, at least from the Japanese point of view, a categorical undertaking regarding the dynasty, nor did it comply with your [Henry L. Stimson's] suggestion that it would substantially add to the chances of acceptance if the ultimatum should contain a statement that we would not exclude a constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty. Suzuki's reply was typical of oriental methods in retaining his supposed bargaining position until he knew precisely what the Potsdam Proclamation meant in that respect. The Asiatic concern over the loss of assumed bargaining power that might arise from exhibiting what might be interpreted as a sign of weakness is always uppermost in Japanese mental processes. He can seldom be made to realize that the time for compromise has passed if it ever

13. See Truman memoirs, p. 209, and Stimson memoirs, p. 212.

existed. This explains but certainly does not excuse Suzuki's reply, and the result of his reply was to release the atom bomb to fulfill its appointed purpose. Yet I and a good many others will always feel that had the President issued as far back as May, 1945, the recommended categorical statement that the Japanese dynasty would be retained if the Japanese people freely desired its retention, the atom bomb might never have had to be used at all. . . ."

Source 6 from John L. McCloy, *The Challenge to American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 40-44.

6. John L. McCloy (Assistant Secretary of War, 1941-1945).

[McCloy was present at the meeting of Truman and his military advisers in late June. As he recalled, the "prospect of an attack on the main Japanese islands, even at that late date, was not too attractive." Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously recommended an amphibious assault on the islands of Kyushu and Honshu, and Truman gave his tentative approval, even though the president had been sobered by the estimates of American casualties.]

After the President's decision had been made and the conference was breaking up, an official, not theretofore participating,¹⁴ suggested that serious attention should be given to a political attempt to end the war. The meeting fell into a tailspin, but after control was recovered, the idea appealed to several present. It appealed particularly to the President, and to one member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who, by the way, was the one member of that body who had no responsibility to a particular service.

It was also at this meeting that the suggestion was first broached that warning be given the Japanese of our possession of the bomb before we dropped it. Although all present were "cleared," the uninhibited mention of the "best-kept secret of the war" caused a sense of shock, even among that select group.

Now this incident indicates that at this time everyone was so intent on winning the war by military means that the introduction of political considerations was almost accidental. It cannot be charged against the military that they did not initially put forward the suggestion of political action. It was not their job to do so. Nor did any one of them oppose the thought of political action, though several of the Chiefs were not too happy about it. Not one of the Chiefs nor the Secretary thought well of a bomb warning,

14. As it turns out, "an official" was McCloy himself. See Forrestal memoirs, p. 223.

an effective argument being that no one could be certain, in spite of the assurances of the scientists, that the "thing would go off." At that time, we had not yet had the benefit of the Alamogordo test.

As a result of the meeting, a rather hastily composed paper was drawn up. It embodied the idea which later formed the basis of the appeal to the Japanese to surrender. That proposal, it will be recalled, was refused brusquely by the Japanese Government. Yet, as we now know, it did provoke considerable discussion and divergence of opinion among the Japanese military leaders and politicians. It is interesting to speculate whether, better prepared, this proposal might not have included statements of the policy which we put into effect in Japan almost immediately after the war ended. Such a proposal might well have induced surrender without the use of the bomb. What effect that might have had on postwar developments is a subject worthy of conjecture.

Although no one from the State Department was present at the conference which has been described, Mr. Joseph Grew for some time had been most energetically urging a political approach to the Japanese, but his thoughts never seemed effectively to have gotten to the White House, at least prior to the June meeting. . . .

Source 7 from James F. Byrnes, *All in One Lifetime* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), pp. 282-287, 290-291, 300-301.

7. James F. Byrnes (Secretary of State, 1945-1947).

[Byrnes was Truman's personal representative on the Interim Committee, and Truman soon would name him secretary of state. Byrnes's recollections begin with the formation and work of the Interim Committee.]

As I heard these scientists and industrialists predict the destructive power of the weapon, I was thoroughly frightened. I had sufficient imagination to visualize the danger to our country when some other country possessed such a weapon. Thinking of the country most likely to become unfriendly to us, I asked General Marshall and some of the others at the meeting how long it would take the Soviets to develop such a bomb. The consensus was that they would have the secret in two or three years, but could not actually produce a bomb in less than six or seven years. One or two expressed the opinion that Soviet progress would depend upon whether or not they had taken German scientists and production experts as prisoners of war for the purpose of having them work on such weapons. No one seemed too alarmed at the prospect because it appeared that in seven years we should be far

ahead of the Soviets in this field; and, of course, in 1945 we could not believe that after their terrible sacrifices, the Russians would think of making war for many years to come.

A few days after the committee was appointed, President Truman referred to me a letter addressed to President Roosevelt by Dr. Albert Einstein, dated March 25, which was in President Roosevelt's office at the time of his death at Warm Springs. In it Dr. Einstein requested the President to receive Dr. L. Szilard,¹⁵ "who proposes to submit to you certain considerations and recommendations." After citing Dr. Szilard's reputation in the scientific field, Dr. Einstein went on to say that Dr. Szilard was concerned about the lack of adequate contact between the atomic scientists and the Cabinet members who were responsible for determining policy. Dr. Einstein concluded with the hope that the President would give his personal attention to what Dr. Szilard had to say.

President Truman asked me to see Szilard, who came down to Spartanburg, bringing with him Dr. H. C. Urey and another scientist. As the Einstein letter had indicated he would, Szilard complained that he and some of his associates did not know enough about the policy of the government with regard to the use of the bomb. He felt that scientists, including himself, should discuss the matter with the Cabinet, which I did not feel desirable. His general demeanor and his desire to participate in policy making made an unfavorable impression on me, but his associates were neither as aggressive nor apparently as dissatisfied. . . .

[Here Byrnes recalls that, with the exception of Robert Oppenheimer, Szilard was critical of the scientific consultants to the Interim Committee, presumably because of what Szilard feared was their overenthusiasm to use the bomb. Byrnes reported to General Leslie Groves (director of the Manhattan Project) the visit of Szilard and his colleagues, whereby Groves replied that he already knew of the meeting, because he had had the scientists followed. Byrnes then summarizes the recommendations of the Interim Committee, recalls plans to cover up the test firing of the atomic bomb at Alamogordo, New Mexico, voices his concern about the estimated losses an assault on the Japanese mainland would inflict, and remembers Stimson arguing at Potsdam for an ultimatum to the Japanese before either an assault or the dropping of an atomic bomb.]

15. Leo Szilard was a physicist working on the Manhattan Project. According to Szilard's reminiscences, Byrnes was especially concerned about the Soviet Union's postwar behavior and believed that a show of America's nuclear power would frighten the Soviets and make them "more manageable" after the war was over. Szilard recalled that he was "flabbergasted" by Byrnes's "rattling the bomb" as a diplomatic weapon. See Leo Szilard, "Reminiscences," in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 122-133.

On our arrival¹⁶ we were informed that Stalin, who traveled by train for health reasons, would be delayed for a day. However, the Prime Minister was already in residence; his quarters, about a mile away, he had designated as "10 Downing Street, Potsdam," this address appearing on the dinner menus when he entertained. Stalin's quarters were more remote, located in the vast wooded park surrounding Cécilienhof Palace, where the meetings were to be held. Though we received official invitations to visit his quarters on several occasions, it was obvious that their location was a well-guarded secret to the Conference personnel generally.

We spent a morning with our military advisers, and in the afternoon the President, Admiral Leahy, and I drove into Berlin. Here we saw what remained of the German Chancellery and other relics of the broken regime. But our small party had no monopoly on sightseeing. On our return I heard from Will Clayton and Ed Pauley (our representative on the reparations Committee) that they had seen machinery from a manufacturing plant which had been moved from the U.S. zone of Germany into the Soviets' shortly before our arrival. It was now standing in an open field. They also had heard stories of all kinds of materials and even herds of cattle being taken to Russia. We knew that in our quarters the original bath fixtures had vanished, others having been hurriedly substituted for our use, and there was plain evidence that the Soviets were unilaterally awarding themselves reparations, both in large and small quantities.

About noon the next day, July 17, Stalin called on the President. It was, of course, their first meeting. Molotov accompanied him and from that moment things began to happen. For more than an hour the four of us remained in conference, Chip Bohlen and Pavlov doing the interpreting. After an exchange of greetings, and some remarks on his long and tiresome train journey, Stalin launched into a discussion of Russia's entry into the Japanese war. He reported that the Japanese had already made overtures to him to act as mediator, to which he had given no definite reply since they did not provide for an unconditional surrender. But he left me with the distinct impression that he was not anxious to see an end to the fighting until Soviet entry into the war could help secure the concessions he expected of China. He said he had not yet reached an agreement with the Chinese Premier, T. V. Soong, on certain matters, and that this was necessary before he could declare war. Negotiations had been halted until after the Potsdam meeting, he said, and mentioned, among other unsettled questions, arrangements for the Port of Dairen. The President commented that the United States wanted to be certain that Dairen was maintained as an

16. At the Potsdam Conference, July 1945.

open port, and Stalin said that would be its status, should the Soviets obtain control of it.

Not having been at Yalta on the day the so-called secret agreement was arrived at, and having been out of government service for three months, I could make no statement of my own knowledge, but having heard a few days before that there had been an understanding between President Roosevelt and Stalin that Dairen should be an open port, I supported the President's statement in a general way, saying that our people understood that at Yalta President Roosevelt had taken the same position. Stalin merely repeated that that would be its status under Soviet control. Nevertheless, I was disturbed about what kind of bargain he might coerce China into making, for the very fact that they had not reached agreement made me suspect that Stalin was increasing his demands. The President told Stimson that night that "he had clinched the Open Door in Manchuria." I was encouraged but not quite that confident. However, the President and I felt that, without appearing to encourage Chiang to disregard any pledges made by Roosevelt at Yalta, we should let him know that the United States did not want him to make additional concessions to the Soviets. Then the President received from Chiang a cable stating that China had gone the limit to fulfill the Yalta agreement. I prepared a message which the President approved and on the 23rd sent to Chiang Kai-shek: "I asked that you carry out the Yalta agreements, but I have not asked that you make any concessions in excess of that agreement. If you and Generalissimo Stalin differ as to the correct interpretation of the Yalta agreement, I hope you will arrange for Soong to return to Moscow and continue your efforts to reach complete understanding."

Our purpose was stated in the first sentence. The second sentence was to encourage the Chinese to continue negotiations after the adjournment of the Potsdam Conference. I had some fear that if they did not, Stalin might immediately enter the war, knowing full well that he could take not only what Roosevelt and Churchill, and subsequently Chiang, had agreed to at Yalta, but—with China divided and Chiang seeking Soviet support against Chinese Communists—whatever else he wanted. On the other hand, if Stalin and Chiang were still negotiating, it might delay Soviet entrance and the Japanese might surrender. The President was in accord with that view. . . .

The President and I discussed whether or not we were obligated to inform Stalin that we had succeeded in developing a powerful weapon and shortly would drop a bomb in Japan. Though there was an understanding that the Soviets would enter the war with Japan three months after Germany surrendered, which would make their entrance about the middle of August,

with knowledge of the Japanese peace feeler and the successful bomb test in New Mexico, the President and I hoped that Japan would surrender before then. However, at luncheon we agreed that because it was uncertain, and because the Soviets might soon be our allies in that war, the President should inform Stalin of our intention, but do so in a casual way.

He then informed the British of our plan, in which they concurred. Upon the adjournment of the afternoon session, when we arose from the table, the President, accompanied by our interpreter, Bohlen, walked around to Stalin's chair and said, substantially, "You may be interested to know that we have developed a new and powerful weapon and within a few days intend to use it against Japan." I watched Stalin's expression as this was being interpreted, and was surprised that he smiled blandly and said only a few words. When the President and I reached our car, he said that the Generalissimo had replied only, "That's fine. I hope you make good use of it against the Japanese."

I did not believe Stalin grasped the full import of the President's statement, and thought that on the next day there would be some inquiry about this "new and powerful weapon," but I was mistaken. I thought then and even now believe that Stalin did not appreciate the importance of the information that had been given him; but there are others who believe that in the light of later information about the Soviets' intelligence service in this country, he was already aware of the New Mexico test, and that this accounted for his apparent indifference. . . .

Source 8 from James Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis and E. S. Duffield (New York: Viking Press, 1951), pp. 55, 70-71, 74-78, 80-81.

8. James Forrestal (Secretary of the Navy).

[Forrestal recalls a meeting that took place on May 11, 1945, between himself, a few high-ranking naval officers, and United States ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman, the main topic of which was the threat of the Soviet Union's postwar power in Asia. There was some talk of making a separate peace with Japan before the Soviets entered the Pacific war (as they had promised to do at Yalta). The fear that a weak postwar China would be an invitation to the Russians to "move in quickly" also was expressed.]

8 March 1947

Meeting with McCloy

. . . McCloy recalled the meeting with President Truman at the White House at which the decision was taken to proceed with the invasion of Kyushu. He said this for him illustrated most vividly the necessity for the civilian voice in military decisions even in time of war. He said that what

he had to say was pertinent not merely to the question of the invasion of the Japanese mainland but also to the question of whether we needed to get Russia in to help us defeat Japan. At this particular meeting, which occurred in the summer of 1945, before the President went to Potsdam, where, under the pressure of Secretary Byrnes, he states his principal mission would be to get the Russians into the war against the Japs, the President made the rounds of his military advisers and asked them to tell him whether the Japanese mainland invasion was necessary. They all agreed it was. He finally left it that they would proceed with the plannings for the invasion of Kyushu but that they were to raise the question with him again before its execution and he would reserve decision on whether or not the attack should be carried into the Tokyo plan [plain?].

As the meeting broke up, McCloy said he had not been asked but wanted to state his views.¹⁷ (Neither Stimson nor I was at this meeting.) He said that he thought before the final decision to invade Japan was taken or it was decided to use the atomic bomb political measures should be taken; the Japanese should be told of what had happened to Germany, particularly in view of the fact that some of their people who had been in Germany were back in Japan and would be able to report on the destruction and devastation which they had witnessed; that the Japs should be told, furthermore, that we had another and terrifyingly destructive weapon which we would have to use if they did not surrender; that they would be permitted to retain the Emperor and a form of government of their own choosing. He said the military leaders were somewhat annoyed at his interference but that the President welcomed it and at the conclusion of McCloy's observations ordered such a political offensive to be set in motion.

13 July 1945

Japanese Peace Feeler

The first real evidence of a Japanese desire to get out of the war came today through intercepted messages from Togo, Foreign Minister, to Sato, Jap Ambassador in Moscow, instructing the latter to see Molotov if possible before his departure for the Big Three meeting [the Potsdam Conference], and if not then, immediately afterward, to lay before him the Emperor's strong desire to secure a termination of the war. This he said arose not only out of the Emperor's interest in the welfare of his own subjects but out of his interest toward mankind in general. He was anxious, he said, to see cessation of bloodshed on both sides. Togo said to convey to the Russians the fact that they wanted to remain at peace with Russia, that the Japanese did not desire permanent annexation of any of the territories they had

17. See McCloy memoirs, p. 218.

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conquered in Manchuria. Togo said further that the unconditional surrender terms of the Allies was about the only thing in the way of termination of the war and he said that if this were insisted upon, of course the Japanese would have to continue the fight.

Sato's response . . . was to protest that the proposals were quite unrealistic; looked at objectively it was clear that there was no chance now of dividing Russia from the other Allies.

15 July 1945

Japanese Peace Feeler

Messages today on Japanese-Russian conversations. Togo, Foreign Minister, insisted that Sato present to Molotov the request of the Emperor himself. Sato's replies insistently pointed out the lack of reality in Togo's apparent belief that there is a chance of persuading Russia to take independent action on the Eastern war. He stated very bluntly and without any coating how fantastic is the hope that Russia would be impressed by Japanese willingness to give up territory which she had already lost. . . . Throughout Sato's message ran a note of cold and realistic evaluation of Japan's position; and he said that the situation was rapidly passing beyond the point of Japan's and Russia's cooperating in the security of Asia but [that the question was] rather whether there would be any Manchukuo or even Japan itself left as entities. The gist of his final message was that it was clear that Japan was thoroughly and completely defeated and that the only course open was quick and definite action recognizing such fact. . . .

It is significant that these conversations began before there could have been much effect from the thousand-plane raids of the Third Fleet and several days before the naval bombardment of Kamaishi.

24 July 1945

Japanese Peace Feeler

. . . Finally, on the first of July, Sato sent a long message outlining what he conceived to be Japan's position, which was in brief that she was now entirely alone and friendless and could look for succor from no one. . . . He strongly advised accepting any terms, including unconditional surrender, on the basis that this was the only way of preserving the entity of the Emperor and the state itself. . . .

The response to his message was that the Cabinet in council had weighed all the considerations which he had raised and that their final judgment and decisions was that the war must be fought with all the vigor and bitterness of which the nation was capable so long as the only alternative was the unconditional surrender.

28 July 1945

... Talked with Byrnes [now at Potsdam as American Secretary of State, having succeeded Mr. Stettinius on the conclusion of the San Francisco Conference]. ... Byrnes said he was most anxious to get the Japanese affair over with before the Russians got in, with particular reference to Dairen and Port Arthur. Once in there, he felt, it would not be easy to get them out. ...

29 July 1945

... On the way back to our headquarters we passed the equipment of an American armored division drawn up alongside the road. It included tanks and light armored vehicles and must have extended for about three miles. Commodore Schade said the Russians were much impressed by it. There came back to my mind the President's remark about Stalin's observation about the Pope: When Churchill suggested that the Pope would still be a substantial influence in Europe, Stalin snorted and said, "How many divisions has the Pope got?" ...

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The selections begin with the memoirs of President Harry S Truman because he ultimately had to make the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. According to Truman, what figures were most influential in his thinking? What alternatives did Truman himself think he had?

Truman's July 26 proclamation calling on the Japanese to surrender is a crucial piece of evidence. According to Truman (based on his conversations with Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew), what was the nature of the proclamation to be? Did Truman offer any more details about that proclamation? Keep these points in mind because they will be of some importance later. Secretary of War Henry Stimson

was one of Truman's key advisers. How did Stimson enhance Truman's memories with regard to the April 25 meeting (where the president received his first full briefing on the bomb)? Did Stimson add important information about the Interim Committee?

Stimson's recollection of the July 26 proclamation to Japan (he called it the Potsdam Ultimatum) adds one vital piece of information Truman does not mention. What is it? How important was this piece of information? How important was its omission by Truman?

The memoirs of Eisenhower and Leahy were included to give you the views of two military men concerning the detonation of the atomic bomb. Both men seem to have been opposed.

Why? According to Eisenhower, what was Stimson's reaction? Why? According to Leahy, who was "pushing" the bomb? Why?

Joseph Grew probably knew Japanese thinking better than anyone in Truman's inner circle, having been ambassador to Japan for several years. According to Grew, what was the situation in Japan in early July 1945? In his view, would Japan have surrendered if the atomic bomb had not been dropped? What did Grew think of the July 26 Potsdam Ultimatum (it was, after all, his idea)?

According to John McCloy, how did the Potsdam Ultimatum originate? McCloy calls the document a "rather hastily composed paper." Why? Did McCloy see any alternatives? More important, how influential did McCloy think Grew was in Truman's "inner circle"? Why? In a larger sense, what point was McCloy trying to make?

James Byrnes was Truman's personal observer on the Interim Committee and soon after his secretary of state. What apparently was one of Byrnes's important concerns with regard to dropping the bomb? How influential would you say this view was?

Byrnes's meeting with scientist Leo Szilard and H. C. Urey apparently went badly, a fact corroborated by

Szilard's reminiscences. Why? What does this tell you about Byrnes?

According to Byrnes, what were the United States' alternatives in July 1945? Reporting on the Potsdam Conference, how did Byrnes portray Stalin? Furthermore, Byrnes raised a key point with regard to the Soviet Union's entrance into the war against Japan. It had been agreed earlier that the Soviets would reach an agreement with the Chinese *before* entering the war. How did Byrnes view these negotiations? Why did he hope the Soviets and the Chinese would take a long time in reaching an agreement? What does this tell you about Byrnes's thinking? His biases? How does Forrestal's diary help us understand Byrnes's thinking? How did Forrestal clarify the situation in Japan? Did he offer any clues as to how United States officials believed the Soviet Union should be dealt with?

Now return to the central questions. Why did President Truman decide to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima? What factors went into his decision? Were there any alternatives to dropping the bomb? If so, why did Truman not pursue them? What advisers were and were not influential with Truman? Finally, do you think Truman's decision was the proper one?

❧ EPILOGUE ❧

Two days after the United States dropped the uranium bomb on Hiroshima, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. Meanwhile, Japanese scientists, realizing the magnitude of what had hap-

pened at Hiroshima, begged their government to surrender. Japanese military leaders stubbornly refused. Therefore, the next day (August 9), the United States dropped a second atomic bomb (this one using plutonium instead of uranium) on Nagasaki, with equally devastating results. On August 10, the Japanese emperor asserted himself against the military and agreed to surrender on the terms announced in the Potsdam Ultimatum of July 26. On September 2, the formal surrender took place, and the Second World War came to an end, with a total loss of life of approximately 50 million military personnel and civilians.

The scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project were of two minds concerning Hiroshima and Nagasaki. American physicist Robert Brode probably spoke for the majority when he said, "But if I am to tell the whole truth I must confess that our relief was really greater than our horror," principally because the war at last was over. Yet American electronics specialist William Higinbotham spoke for others when he wrote to his mother, "I am not a bit proud of the job we have done . . . perhaps this is so devastating that man will be forced to be peaceful." As for Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos operation and popularly known as the "father of the bomb," he feared that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were only the beginning and that a nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union was almost inevitable.

Most other Americans also were of

two minds about the bomb. Even as they enthusiastically celebrated the end of the war, at the same time the atomic bomb frightened them and made their collective future insecure. A few years later, when *Time* magazine asked an eight-year-old boy what he wanted to be when he grew up, the boy replied, "Alive!"

Some Americans criticized Truman's decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Several African American newspaper editors were especially critical, claiming that no such horrible device would ever have been dropped on "white" Germans and that Japanese were victims because they were not Caucasians. For example, the *Chicago Defender*, a weekly newspaper with a national circulation primarily to African American readers, reacted angrily to a public opinion poll that reported a 12 to 1 margin in favor of dropping more atomic bombs on Japan: "Would the people . . . have voted 12 to 1 for the use of the bomb against Germany or any other white race?" the newspaper asked. For the most part, however, African Americans were more worried about keeping their newly won jobs once white veterans returned from the war. And, like white Americans, African Americans rejoiced at the war's end, even as they feared the weapon that had ended it.

Oppenheimer was prophetic that the postwar years would witness a nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both nations had scooped up as many German scientists as they could to supplement their own atomic weapons research.

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Moreover, the Soviet Union tried to pierce American atomic secrecy through espionage. Neither side seems to have been fully committed to international control (through the United Nations) of atomic research. The Soviets rejected such a plan in 1946,¹⁸ and in 1947 President Truman issued his "loyalty order," which placed government employees, including nuclear scientists, under rigid scrutiny.

In August 1949, a United States Air Force "flying laboratory" picked up traces of radioactive particles in the atmosphere in East Asia, a clear indication that the Soviet Union had detonated an atomic device. In January 1950, Truman gave orders for the United States to proceed with the development of a hydrogen bomb, nicknamed "Super" by some scientists. That bomb was tested on November 1, 1952. By 1953, however, the Soviet Union had announced that it, too, possessed such a bomb. The nuclear arms race was well under way, given even more urgency by the cold war mentality that gripped both superpowers in the late 1940s and 1950s.¹⁹

By the 1980s, several other nations possessed atomic devices, thus in-

creasing world tensions. Yet the two superpowers appeared to be acting more responsibly, gradually moving toward arms limitation treaties and agreements providing for the elimination of certain weapons in their nuclear arsenals. In December 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev signed a historic treaty that eliminated enough medium- and short-range nuclear missiles to have destroyed Hiroshima thirty-two thousand times. Moreover, the successors to these two men, President George Bush and Russian president Boris Yeltsin, acted with equal responsibility in decreasing nuclear arms, even in the face of political opposition (in Bush's case, a negative reaction by conservatives in his own party; in Yeltsin's case opposition from a strong but frustrated military establishment).

In spite of those initiatives, tensions remain. The collapse of the Soviet Union has created the troubling possibility that nuclear scientists from the former superpower might sell their technology, secrets, and services to less responsible nations, thereby heightening the threat of nuclear proliferation. Indeed, the concern that Iraq was close to developing a nuclear device was one of the major factors behind Operation Desert Storm in early 1991.

18. The plan, conceived by the United States, forbade the Soviet Union from developing its own atomic weapon and would have created an international agency to control nuclear raw materials.

19. Robert Oppenheimer had opposed the development of the hydrogen bomb. In late 1953, he was accused of having had "associations" with Communists and of being disloyal. A closed-door hearing (April 12 to May 6, 1954) ended with Oppenheimer's security clearance being removed.