Nuclear Energy and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman

Edited by
J. Samuel Walker

Nuclear Energy and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman
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General Editor's Preface

Nothing in the Truman presidency remains as controversial as his decision to use nuclear weapons in August 1945 to bring about the surrender of Japan and the end of World War II. To present current scholarship on Truman's action and explore the lasting impact of the world's entry into the nuclear age, the twelfth, and final, Truman Legacy Symposium called on a range of scholars to reexamine Truman's fateful authorization of the use of atomic weapons and assess the evolution of the military and domestic uses of atomic energy since Hiroshima. In addition, two survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki attended the Key West program as guests of Clifton Truman Daniel, President Truman's eldest grandson. Setsuko Thurlow and Yasuaki Yamashita shared their personal reminiscences (Hibakusha Stories) of survival and living with the aftermath of the nuclear bombings.

For twelve years, the Truman Library has worked closely with the Truman Little White House in Key West, Florida, to review the most recent scholarship on various aspects of the Truman administration and the enduring legacy of one of the most significant presidencies in American history. The Truman era continues to be a rich field for scholars throughout the United States and abroad, and our current policy makers are clearly influenced by the critical decisions Truman made and the ambitious domestic and foreign policy agenda he set for the nation more than six decades ago. Each year, a dozen or more scholarly monographs are published by major presses on President Truman and his era, and our national leaders (including every president since Eisenhower) have quoted the "man from Independence" and cited instances of his political courage and wisdom.

The early Key West symposia were enthusiastically encouraged and supported by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under the leadership of Archivists of the United States John Carlin and Alan Weinstein. In addition, the Truman Library Institute for National

and International Affairs provided significant funding and logistical assistance from 2001 to 2009. In recent years, however, both NARA and the board of the Institute have become more inward-looking; and conferences offering academic exploration and support for endeavors to publish new research are no longer priorities. Fortunately, the Truman Little White House and its foundation, along with Historic Tours of America and various partners in Florida have picked up the slack. Furthermore, C-SPAN has invested in the Key West symposia by taping the programs for broadcast, thereby allowing the presentations to reach a wide and diverse international audience. Skilled editor Barbara Smith-Mandell of the Truman State University Press has been a thoughtful and patient partner from the very initiation of this endeavor; and the Press's publication of the papers from each symposium, along with related essays and documents, has added to our understanding of the Truman era and its legacy.

Dr. Samuel Walker, the editor of this volume, pulled together the academic component of the Key West event. Dr. Walker sought to go beyond a reexamination of President Truman's fateful decision to authorize the U.S. military to strike Japanese targets with the new atomic weapons in order to end World War II as rapidly as possible. With the experts he assembled, Dr. Walker focused also on reviewing the legacy of that momentous decision on American military and domestic affairs.

As with all the previous Key West symposia, the twelfth resulted from the outstanding efforts of many individuals. Bob Wolz, director of the Truman Little White House in Key West, and Dr. Ray Geselbracht, special assistant to the director of the Truman Library, have provided essential organizational and editorial skills from the very beginning of the series. Clifton Truman Daniel has likewise played a central role in every symposium and has assisted in securing funding. Historic Tours of America, under the leadership of President Ed Swift and CEO Chris Belland, provided valuable logistic and financial support for all twelve symposia. Delia Rios of C-SPAN arranged the taping and production of the broadcasts that made the presentations of recent symposia available to a vast public audience. Dr. Robert Watson of Lynn University played an important role in initiating the Truman Legacy series. And, of course, dozens of folks in Key West, Florida, have assisted in providing hospitality and logistical support for each symposium, beginning with the first in 2003. I am sincerely grateful to all.

Michael J. Devine
Independence, MO
October 2014

Nuclear Energy and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman

Introduction

J. Samuel Walker

Harry S. Truman's nuclear policies and programs rank high among the most significant, controversial, and enduring aspects of his presidency. He not only authorized the use of atomic weapons against Japan in 1945 but also decided in favor of a crash effort to build vastly more powerful hydrogen bombs five years later. He presided over the origins of the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union. And he took preliminary steps to make possible the development of civilian uses of nuclear energy, including the wide distribution of radioisotopes for medical and other purposes and early work on the promise and the perils of nuclear power. Truman's nuclear legacy is a subject of immense importance, and this book highlights several key aspects of the reasons for and outcomes of his decisions.

The issue that has commanded the most attention and incited the most controversy is, of course, Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb. In 1999, a poll of journalists ranked the atomic bombing of Japan as the top news story of the twentieth century, placing it ahead of the landing on the moon, the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Wright brothers' first flight, and other prominent events. The dispute among scholars over the atomic attacks is arguably the most contentious in all of American history, because of both the length of time it has raged and the intensity of the acrimony it has generated.

The controversy over Truman's decision is centered on two fiercely competing interpretations of why the bomb was used and whether it was necessary to end the Pacific war on terms satisfactory to the United States. The traditional interpretation insisted that the bomb was necessary to avoid an invasion of the Japanese mainland that would have cost hundreds

of thousands of American lives. Scholars who advanced this position generally suggested that Truman faced a categorical choice between the bomb and an invasion that was forced on him by Japan's refusal to surrender.

The revisionist interpretation that rose to prominence in the mid-1960s took sharp exception. It held that the bomb was not necessary to win the war because Japan was teetering on the verge of surrender. In this view, Japan was seeking a way to end the war on the sole condition that the emperor be allowed to remain on his throne, presumably as a constitutional monarch. Truman and his advisers were well aware of Japan's desperate straits and desire to quit the war, but they still elected to use the bomb. Among differing revisionist explanations for the atomic attacks, the predominant one is that Truman authorized the bomb to impress, and indeed, intimidate the Soviet Union in the emerging Cold War. In this view, the bomb was not used for military reasons to win the war against Japan but for diplomatic reasons in the growing rivalry with the Soviet Union.

The contrast between the two conflicting interpretations could hardly be more stark. Traditionalists regarded the bomb was absolutely necessary to bring a prompt conclusion to the war and save huge numbers of American lives. Revisionists claimed that the bomb was unnecessary to win the war, and many argue that it was used instead for sordid diplomatic purposes. The question of whether the use of the bomb was necessary, and by extension, justifiable and moral, has long been the focus of the highly polarized debate over Truman's decision.

While scholars at the poles of the debate over the dropping of the bomb continue to fight this battle, sometimes in a decidedly uncharitable tone, other experts have moved beyond the poles, or more precisely, between the poles, to find answers to the questions surrounding the use of the bomb in a broad middle ground. Middle-grounders have found that neither the traditional nor the revisionist position is convincing in its pure form. Contrary to traditionalist assertions, for example, it is clear that Truman did not face an either/or choice between the bomb and an invasion. There were other means of ending the war, and contemporary evidence strongly suggests that American policy makers did not regard an invasion of Japan as inevitable. Several middle-grounders, with varying degrees of certitude, have suggested that victory over Japan would have been achieved before a landing became necessary (the first phase of the invasion was scheduled for November 1, 1945). Some have also expressed grave doubts that had an invasion occurred, the costs in American lives would have been in the range of hundreds of thousands, as Truman and other officials claimed after the war. This does not mean, however, that

U.S. leaders were not committed to saving American lives by using the bomb to shorten the war, even if the numbers were far smaller than they cited at a later time.

The findings of recent scholarship have done serious, and perhaps fatal, damage to the revisionist position. The opening of important Japanese sources over the past several years has shown, seemingly beyond question, that Japan was not on the verge of surrender at the time of Hiroshima. The argument that Japan was actively seeking an honorable and reasonable way to end the war, a cornerstone to the viability of revisionism, has been effectively refuted. As a corollary, it is also apparent that American leaders did not believe that Japan had opted for surrender and would quit the war if only the status of the emperor was assured. Documentary sources leave little doubt that Truman and his top advisers remained deeply concerned about how the war would end and how long it would take.

In addressing the critical issue that has been at the heart of the debate over Hiroshima, scholars of a middle-ground persuasion generally agreed that the bomb was necessary to end the war at the earliest possible moment and in that way to carry out Truman's primary goal of saving American lives. They also affirmed that he had other, subsidiary motives as well, including impressing the Soviet Union with America's atomic might. Despite wide concurrence among middle-grounders on those matters, other questions continued to stir debate. One source of division was the relative influence of the bomb and the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, which occurred two days after Hiroshima. Another was the effect of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Assessments of the impact of the second bomb on Japan's leaders ranged from considerable to none whatsoever. Finally, a debate over projected casualty figures for an invasion of Japan and their influence on Truman aroused great passion among some writers.[1]

The articles in this book, which were originally presented at a conference on Truman's nuclear legacy that was sponsored by the Harry S. Truman Little White House Foundation in Key West, Florida, shed light on important aspects of Truman's nuclear legacy. The first three essays focus on the use of the bomb, and it is safe to suggest that they will not resolve the debate on the subject. But they contribute substantially to our knowledge of the events that led to Hiroshima and the Japanese surrender.

Richard B. Frank addresses the question of the relative weight of the atomic bomb and Soviet entry into the war against Japan. He offers the conclusion that both the bomb and the Soviet invasion were essential to convince different and not necessarily compatible elements of the Japanese leadership to surrender. The attack on Hiroshima was instrumental in forcing Hirohito to recognize that the war must end. The Soviet attack was

Ending the War with Japan
The Agony of 1945

Richard B. Frank

Grand Strategy: American

President Franklin Roosevelt publicly articulated the national political goal of the United States at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 as the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers. As it evolved over the next two years, unconditional surrender was not simply a slogan about victory but also a policy about peace. It provided the legal authority for the extensive plans to renovate the internal structures of the Axis nations.[1] Those who mistakenly regard unconditional surrender as merely a disposable propaganda cry fail to grasp its indispensable role in implementing the occupation reforms that fundamentally transformed Japan.[2]

The American military strategy forged by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in the spring of 1945 to secure that national political goal marked an unstable compromise of two conflicting visions. Those visions arose not from purely military considerations but from a question with profound political origins: What factor was most likely to undermine the will of the American people to see the war through to unconditional surrender? The U.S. Navy, led by Fleet Admiral Ernest King, had studied war with Japan since 1906. From these decades of analysis, naval officers distilled a number of principles about defeating Japan. None of these axioms was more deeply ingrained than the conviction that an invasion of the Japanese home islands represented absolute folly. Naval planners calculated that Japan would muster larger ground forces for defense than the United States could ever deploy across the Pacific and that Japan's terrain would

negate American advantages of firepower and mobility. At the nub, naval leaders placed casualties as the factor most likely to undermine popular commitment to unconditional surrender. Thus, they advocated ending the war by a campaign of blockade and bombardment, including intense aerial bombardment by sea- and land-based aircraft.[3] The U.S. Army, led by General of the Army George C. Marshall, had never invested the same intellectual capital in examining a conflict with Japan. It had, however, explored the prospect of war with Japan in the late 1930s and concluded that invasion might be necessary. Thus, when the army turned its attention to the problem of ending hostilities with Japan in 1944, it swiftly adopted a strategy of invasion of the home islands. This choice reflected the bedrock army conviction that time was the critical challenge to public support for unconditional surrender—and thus an enduring peace.[4]

The JCS merged these two conflicting views into a strategic plan in May 1945. The Chiefs authorized the continuation and intensification of the strategy of blockade and bombardment until November 1, 1945. At that point, the United States would launch a two-phase invasion of the Japanese homeland under the overall code name Operation Downfall. The first step, Operation Olympic, involved the Sixth Army's seizing approximately the southern third of Kyushu, the southernmost main Japanese home island, starting on November 1, 1945. Olympic would obtain air and naval bases to support a second phase, Operation Coronet, tentatively set for March 1, 1946, involving three armies to secure the Tokyo-Yokohama region.

As the JCS pointed out in the policy paper they adopted to support this strategy, the overall Allied war aim remained unconditional surrender. This would provide the legal authority to execute the far-ranging political changes in Japan that were designed to assure that it never again posed a threat to peace. As the JCS acknowledged, however, in some two thousand years, no Japanese government had ever surrendered to a foreign power. Moreover, throughout the entire course of the Pacific war, no Japanese unit had ever surrendered. Thus, the JCS cautioned that there was no guarantee that the surrender of the Japanese government could be obtained, or that, even if the Japanese government capitulated, Japanese armed forces would comply with that surrender.[5] Consequently, the JCS recognized that the ultimate, dire situation the United States faced was not Operation Downfall, the two-phase initial invasion, but the absence of an organized capitulation of Japan's armed forces. In the latter case, the United States would face the prospect of defeating in detail four to five million Japanese men under arms in the home islands, on the Asian continent, and across the Pacific Ocean. This made even the potential casualties in Downfall only a down payment on the ultimate cost of the complete defeat of Japan.

President Harry S. Truman reviewed the invasion strategy in June 1945. He authorized Olympic—the invasion of Kyushu—but withheld sanction for Coronet. American naval and ground commanders drafted detailed plans for the invasion of Kyushu. All of these plans assumed a significant American superiority in ground and air forces at the time of the landings.[6]

GRAND STRATEGY: JAPANESE

New Year's Day 1945 found Japanese military and naval leaders sober but resolute. Their entrenched attitudes toward their American adversaries had remained constant since the summer of 1941; only their goals had altered. These men had plunged Japan into war with only a rough idea as to how it might end. None of them believed Japan could physically conquer the United States, and no Japanese leader questioned the ability of the United States to produce vast quantities of matériel. But they calculated that America would be compelled to divert much of it to Europe to counter Germany and Italy. The bedrock belief shared by almost all Imperial Army officers and many Imperial Navy officers, however, was that Americans, lacking the racial purity and spiritual stamina of the Japanese populace, possessed only brittle morale. A lengthy war with increasing losses would sap American will to see the war through and force American political leaders to negotiate an end to the conflict on terms favorable to Japan. Initially, those terms would include Japanese control of resource areas in Southeast Asia and a bristling defense perimeter to protect them. By 1945, Japanese militarists viewed the attainable terms as at least the preservation of the homeland, with a political order in which their position remained dominant. They also hoped that Japan might still retain important gains on the Asian continent.[7]

Officers at Imperial Headquarters held a chillingly acute appreciation of U.S. intentions. Americans lacked the patience for a protracted strategy of blockade and bombardment; they therefore would surely seek to end the war quickly by an invasion of the homeland.[8] That aim presented an opportunity. If the initial assault could be repulsed, or even if its cost could just be made prohibitive, Japan might yet extricate itself from the war with honor. Thus, with this goal in mind, the emperor sanctioned a new strategic directive published on January 20 that candidly declared that the homeland itself would be the arena for the "final decisive battle" of the war.[9]

Preparations for the defense of the homeland demanded new commands, plans, and forces. The Joint Army-Navy Air Agreement of February 6 resolved the acrimonious issue of command of aviation units. This pro-

Truman, Hiroshima, and the Morality of the Atomic Bomb

Wilson D. Miscamble

Anniversaries of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki have become occasions for moralizing condemnations of Harry Truman's decision to use the powerful weapons. The rush to judge Truman harshly is largely based on either limited or inaccurate historical knowledge of the basis for his decision and of the situation he confronted. It has been aided by the unfortunate influence of some poor and misleading accounts of Truman's actions written by Gar Alperovitz and other members of the so-called atomic diplomacy school. These historians mistakenly alleged that Truman proceeded to drop two atomic bombs on a Japan that he knew was on the verge of surrender so as to intimidate the Soviet Union in the already developing Cold War.[1] This flawed interpretation has led its proponents to deem the atomic attacks immoral. Yet, to reflect well on the morality of the atomic bombs, one must comprehend the issues surrounding the necessity of the weapons in ending the terrible war.

Subsequent to using the atomic bombs, Harry Truman always maintained that he had taken the necessary action in order to end the war quickly and to save American lives.[2] He authorized the bombs against what he took to be military-industrial targets, and indeed, both Hiroshima and Nagasaki were cities of industrial and military significance. A number of major military camps were located close to Hiroshima, including the headquarters of Field Marshal Shunroka Hata's Second General Army, which commanded the defense of all of southern Japan. Hiroshima also was a supply and logistics base for the Japanese military, a communications

center, and an assembly area for troops. Nagasaki was one of the largest seaports in southern Japan, and was of great wartime importance because of its wide-ranging industrial activity, including the production of ordnance, ships, and military equipment. These were the targets that Truman wanted to destroy. He did not deliberately seek the destruction of innocent civilians, whom, it should be added, had been warned regularly to evacuate Japanese industrial cities.

Key advisers endorsed the wisdom of Truman's decision. Notably, in the 1950s General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff during World War II and the great "organizer of victory," sat for a series of interviews with his biographer Forrest C. Pogue. When asked about the necessity of dropping the atomic bombs, Marshall replied, "I think it was quite necessary to drop the bombs in order to shorten the war." He explained that "what they [the Japanese] needed was shock action, and they got it. I think it was very wise to use it."[3] Marshall took no pleasure in their use, but the distinguished soldier-statesman correctly understood that the two terrible weapons had forced the Japanese surrender when it occurred.

By July of 1945 the Japanese had been subjected to months of devastating attacks by B-29s. Their capital and other major cities had suffered extensive damage, and the home islands were subjected to a naval blockade that made food and fuel increasingly scarce. The Japanese military and civilian losses had reached approximately three million, and there seemed no end in sight. Despite all this, however, Japan's leaders and especially its military clung to notions of Ketsu-Go (Decisive Battle), to the plan that involved inflicting such punishment on the invader in defense of the homeland that the invader would sue for terms. Even after Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Soviet attack in Manchuria on August 8, the Japanese military still wanted to pursue that desperate option, but Emperor Hirohito broke the impasse in the Japanese government and ordered surrender. He came to understand that the atomic bomb undermined "the fundamental premise" of Ketsu-Go "that the United States would have to invade Japan to secure a decision" in the war.[4] Ultimately the atomic bombs allowed the emperor and the peace faction in the Japanese government to negotiate an end to the war.[5] George Marshall portrayed the matter correctly. The atomic bombs brought an end to the war in the Pacific.

Writers engaging in wishful thinking and fanciful re-creations have sought to fashion circumstances in which the A-bombs might be seen as unnecessary (and then as almost certainly wrong and immoral). Yet the painful reality that fair-minded observers must concede is that Japan most certainly would have fought on considerably longer unless the United States and its allies had accepted major changes to its Potsdam surrender

terms. "Those insisting that Japan's surrender could have been procured without recourse to atomic bombs," Richard Frank noted, "cannot point to any credible evidence from the eight men who effectively controlled Japan's destiny."[6] The Japanese scholar Sadao Asada made essentially the same point in concluding that "given the intransigence of the Japanese military, there were few 'missed opportunities' for earlier peace and that the alternatives available to President Truman in the summer of 1945 were limited."[7] Of course, it is clear that the United States eventually could have defeated Japan without the atomic bomb, but one must appreciate that all the alternate scenarios to secure victory—continued obliteration bombing of Japanese cities and infrastructure, a choking blockade, the fearsome invasions—would have meant significantly greater Allied casualties as well as much higher Japanese civilian and military casualties.[8]

Those who rush to condemn Truman's decision to use the atomic bombs must hesitate a little so as to appreciate that had he not authorized the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thousands of American and Allied soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen would have been added to the lists of those killed in World War II. This would have included not only those involved in the planned invasions of the home islands but also American, British, and Australian ground forces in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific who expected to engage the Japanese in bloody fighting in the months preceding such assaults. Added to their number would have been the thousands of Allied prisoners of war whom the Japanese planned to execute. Could an American president have survived politically and personally knowing that he might have used a weapon that could have avoided their slaughter? To complicate further the rush to judgment, one must acknowledge that Truman was most likely correct in March of 1958 when he told Tsukasa Nitoguri, the chairman of the Hiroshima City Council, that the A-bombs prevented a quarter of a million Japanese deaths in an invasion.[9] Hard as it may be to accept when one sees the visual record of the awful destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japanese losses probably would have been substantially greater without the A-bombs. Furthermore, the atomic attacks changed the whole dynamic of the occupation of Japan. Ironically, they facilitated a quick, easy surrender and a broadly cooperative populace in a way that no other method of military victory could have guaranteed.

Moreover, the use of the awful weapons abruptly ended the death and suffering of innocent third parties throughout Asia. Rather surprisingly, the enormous wartime losses of the Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, and Javanese at the hands of the Japanese receive little attention in weighing the American effort to shock the Japanese into surrender.

On President Truman's Use of the Atomic Bomb

Momentum, Timing, and General Groves

Robert S. Norris

The subdiscipline of President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb needs fundamental reexamination. This chapter is not concerned with the traditional issues raised in the extensive literature about Truman's decision.[1] These include, among other things, the morality of its use, whether it was necessary, and whether it was the first shot of the Cold War directed toward the Soviet Union. Rather it focuses on whether there was any decision at all and whether the word "decision" is the appropriate word to describe what happened, and concerns the timing of the bombings and the role of General Leslie R. Groves, commanding general of the Manhattan Engineer District (MED), or Manhattan Project.

The simple fact is that Truman never made a decision to use the atomic bomb. He acquiesced in the decisions and actions of others, went with the momentum of events that culminated in the bomb's use, and only in retrospect, in interviews and in his memoir, did he put himself more decisively directing the use of the bomb in July and August 1945, more involvement than was actually the case.

Almost fifty years ago, two authors set out to write about the decision to use the bomb. They came to this conclusion:

> There seems no doubt that by noon on Sunday, July 22, the decision had been made. What is not clear, what remains a puzzle clouded by lack of documented evidence, the passing

> of years, the dimming of memories, is *how* that decision was made. Was it even made at Potsdam? Or was it perhaps made by not being made at all, by allowing the machinery already in motion to continue in the direction and on the schedule that had been set long before?[2]

We are no closer today to determining precisely how that decision was made, or when it was made, and for good reason. Even to use the word "decision" distorts the process by which the use of the bomb occurred. "Decision" implies thought, analysis, and discussion about a range of possible courses of action, a weighing of alternatives, and then, after the deliberation of the pros and cons of each, a choice being made. Clearly this is not what happened with regard to use of the atomic bomb.[3] As General Groves said,

> One detail, and it seems to me just a detail, has been discussed by writers of recent years who were familiar with the workings of the project, and that was the directive for the actual use of the weapon. They have seemed to think that there would be a formal paper on which the President of the United States wrote: "The bomb will be dropped on such and such a place after such and such a date." *That is not the way it was done*.[4]

Of the seventy-some documents posted on a section of the Truman Library website entitled "The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb," not one contains any language by Truman authorizing the use of the bomb before August 6, an odd omission.

Truman was not totally ignorant of the bomb even in the first few days after Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945. After the first cabinet meeting, on the evening he became president, Secretary of War Henry Stimson asked to speak to Truman "about an immense project that was underway—a project looking to the development of a new explosive of almost unbelievable destructive power." The following day, Secretary of State Jimmy Byrnes provided a few details "about perfecting an explosive great enough to destroy the whole world."[5]

On the morning of April 25, 1945, almost two weeks after Roosevelt's death, Secretary Stimson and General Groves went to the White House to brief the president about the status of the bomb. Groves presented a twenty-five-page memorandum, dated April 23, to the president. Truman said he did not have time to read reports, but after some gentle urging, read it in its entirety. The information was staggering in its scale; indeed, the bomb's far-reaching implications for the future concerned no less a matter than the very survival of modern civilization. After reading the

memo, Truman said he approved of what they had done; at no time did he criticize the weapon itself or plans for its use. He asked some questions, and as Groves noted later, "A great deal of emphasis was placed on foreign relations and particularly on the Russian situation."[6]

In the minds of responsible officials, bombing civilians and cities was already routine. For many this was just a bigger bomb that was more efficient at doing its work. One plane and one bomb might do the job of hundreds of planes and hundreds of bombs.

Conceivably, the war in the Pacific against Japan might have ended before the atomic bomb was ready, as was the case in Europe. As it turned out, one bomb was ready on the last day of July 1945 and a second one in early August. They were used soon after when the weather allowed. The weather over Japan during the first few days of August was overcast and rainy. The attack plan called for visual acquisition of the target with no use of radar. Finally, on August 4, the weather was improving and the next day General Curtis LeMay gave the order for an attack on the sixth (Tinian time). The plane took off at 2:45 a.m. on Monday, August 6, and dropped the Little Boy bomb on Hiroshima at 9:15 a.m. (8:15 a.m. Hiroshima time).

It was largely through the administrative and managerial skills of General Groves that the bombs were finished when they were. While it is easy to imagine how it could have taken longer, it is hard to see how the feat could have been accomplished any more quickly.

It was clear from the outset that when there was enough material for a bomb it would be used soon afterwards. Why research, develop, and test a weapon if it was not intended to be used in war? As stated in the Manhattan District History,

> Reduced to its simplest terms, the mission of the Manhattan District was to develop and manufacture atomic bombs for combat use, at the earliest possible date, and ahead of the enemy, in order to help the United States and its Allies bring World War II to a successful conclusion with the least delay and the greatest possible conservation of life.[7]

In an amazing coincidence, a bomb's worth of highly enriched uranium (HEU) (62 kilograms of HEU) and six kilograms of plutonium, for two quite different bomb designs, were ready on almost the same day. It could have turned out differently. For example, had the schedule been left to DuPont, the contractor at Hanford, plutonium for a test bomb would not have been ready until mid-October and a combat-ready bomb not ready until mid-November or later; had that been the case, the postwar geopolitical situation would have been quite different.

Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the Nuclear Arms Race

Martin V. Melosi

The nuclear arms race began with the Manhattan Project in World War II. The determination of the United States to beat Nazi Germany in developing an atomic bomb was the impetus. When the United States accomplished that task first, circumstances changed and so did the goals. More than six months prior to the surrender of Germany on May 8, 1945, the Allies knew that the Third Reich had not developed a bomb.[1] The possible use of the new weapon on Japan introduced different and weightier goals than simply getting to the finish line ahead of Germany. President Harry S. Truman and his advisers made a decision in the heat of battle to up the ante in destructiveness of the war, and to quickly end the conflict that engulfed the world. Such a choice had impacts well beyond the fatal days in August when inhabitants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki became the first casualties of a new kind of total war. The bombings and their aftermath redefined the prosecution of war and the definitions of vulnerability and security for all people.

Whether contemporaries realized it or not, the Trinity detonation—the first test of a plutonium bomb on July 16, 1945—was a dividing line in history. Scientific theory became physical reality. For many years the National Park Service hoped to make the Trinity site into a national monument, but resistance came from government officials concerned about security or questions of health and safety. The area was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1965 but was open to the public only twice a year. Trinity became one of the first "nuclear landscapes" in the late

twentieth century. For historian Ferenc Szasz, "What happened at Trinity that Monday morning must go down as one of the most significant events in the last thousand years."[2]

Other choices and decisions of the Truman administration, aside from stockpiling atomic bombs and using them in war, helped define their tactical and strategic role in the American arsenal and how that related to American postwar association with a new rival, the Soviet Union. The Truman administration left a legacy for the nuclear arms race that established a baseline moving forward into future generations. Between the Potsdam Conference in 1945 and the *Sputnik* launch in 1957, the Truman administration helped define and shape the nuclear arms race (along with their Soviet counterparts) in its early years especially. Key stages that set precedents for the nuclear arms race include (1) Truman's mention of the Trinity test to Joseph Stalin at Potsdam; (2) the postwar debate over the U.S. nuclear monopoly; (3) the Soviets' successful test of an A-bomb in 1949; (4) the establishment of U.S. containment policy and its initial nuclear strategy; (5) Truman's decision to develop the H-bomb and the first test in 1952 (possibly the single most important decision in the arms race); (6) the role, or lack thereof, of atomic weapons in the Korean conflict; and (7) Dwight Eisenhower's New Look policy and its relationship to Truman-era nuclear strategy. The Soviet launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 was the symbolic beginning of a sea change in delivering nuclear warheads—from bombers to missiles. Such a dramatic shift altered the nature of nuclear warfare in levels of destructiveness, in geographic range, and particularly in time of delivery. The contributions of the Truman administration to the nuclear arms race faded as a radically new phase emerged, focusing on new strategies, a new scale, and style of defense.

Truman's First Encounters with the Bomb

The Manhattan Project scientists concluded their work in July 1945. At that point, the atomic bomb, and the crucial decisions about it, passed into the hands of politicians and the military. For General Leslie R. Groves, who headed the project, the most important duty was to notify President Truman about the successful detonation and to apprise him about the delivery of bombs to the war front. On April 12, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt had died, leaving his relatively inexperienced vice president in charge of the American war effort. The former U.S. senator from Missouri was FDR's third vice president, and had held that position less than three

months when he was elevated to the country's highest office. In fact, not until Roosevelt's death did anyone inform Truman of the exact nature of the work of the Manhattan Project.[3] Less than a month later, on May 8, German Admiral Karl Donitz signed the unconditional surrender documents ending World War II in Europe. One day after the Trinity test, Truman arrived in Potsdam, Germany, to meet with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The chief item on the agenda for the United States was the Pacific war against Japan.

Truman had agreed to meet with the Allied leaders on July 1, and the White House was pressuring Groves to arrange for the test of the plutonium bomb as quickly as possible. The president had been reluctant, and even nervous, to confer with the more seasoned leaders, who might be able to grab control of events leading up to the end of the war. Truman clearly wanted the leverage of a successful test to bolster U.S. bargaining power before meeting with Stalin and Churchill, and thus postponed the conference until the Trinity test could be scheduled. Even with that strategy in place, he arrived in Germany determined to coax the Soviets into participating in the defeat of Japan.[4] In Truman's first meeting with Stalin on July 17, the Soviet leader pledged to have his country enter the Pacific war on August 15. The president was relieved and presumed that he had achieved his primary goal. He believed that the Soviet promise, along with the availability of the atomic bomb, would secure a victory over the Japanese. Truman's view of the bomb, however, grew more ambivalent as the conference proceeded. The new president was enthusiastic about the achievement, but also noted in his diary that "It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful."[5]

When the details of the Trinity test arrived in Potsdam, Truman appeared self-assured and more aggressive in dealing with his fellow leaders. Churchill later recalled that after the U.S. president read Groves's full report on the test he was a "changed man." The prime minister received a full description of the Trinity test on July 22, and he enthusiastically noted that the atomic bomb was "the Second Coming in wrath." As a savvy realist, Churchill also viewed it as a potentially effective tool against future Soviet ambitions in the Far East and elsewhere.[6] Truman did not tell his Soviet ally about the atomic bomb until July 24. Stalin openly reacted almost indifferently to the disclosure, but privately he was very troubled about the American advances in atomic energy and the possibility that its use of the bomb would limit his country's options in Asia. Stalin's lack of surprise was a result of Soviet spying within the Manhattan Project and related ventures in England and Canada well in advance of Potsdam. At least since 1940, Stalin had pushed the Soviets to develop their own bomb,

Radioisotopes as Political Instruments from Truman to Eisenhower

Angela N. H. Creager

In the initial years of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), radioisotopes—produced and distributed by the agency for civilian use—became political instruments in struggles over the control of the atom. Even as the atomic bomb became the currency of the Cold War, radioisotopes represented the U.S. government's efforts to harness the power of the atom for peace. In this respect, radioisotopes were promotional tools of a new agency seeking to legitimate its civilian status. By the same token, politicians and journalists critical of the AEC (and of its chair, David Lilienthal) inflamed anxieties that the circulation of isotopes beyond the country's borders would undermine national security. These concerns resulted in a yearlong embargo on AEC-produced isotopes to foreign institutions, and continued to reverberate in congressional politics and the national press into the early 1950s. In short, the nationalization of radioisotopes resulted in their politicization.

The Atomic Energy Act of 1946 was aimed at protecting or at least prolonging the American atomic monopoly; to this end it prohibited the export of "fissionable" materials. At the same time, the bill charged the new agency with promoting civilian uses of atomic energy, authorizing the distribution of reactor "byproduct materials" (namely, radioisotopes) for peaceful uses.[1] Since the 1930s, the development of medical therapies and diagnostic tools with radioisotopes had led to great demand for these

materials, but the cyclotrons that produced them could not keep pace with demand. Nuclear reactors, first constructed to generate material for atomic weapons, could. Leaders of the Manhattan Project decided that reactor-produced radioisotopes would be available for civilian institutions to purchase. Their announcement referred to "national distribution," and there was also a general assumption that domestic needs were to be filled first.[2] Foreign purchasers were not simply at the back of the line; they could not purchase the AEC's isotopes at all. As one physicist reported at the end of 1946, "Although no one in this country knows of any regulations against sending isotopes to foreign users, the conviction is wide spread abroad that scientists in this country are unwilling to share their materials."[3] Access to the bountiful radioisotopes generated by the former bomb project infrastructure was entangled in the politics of national security, in which the ideals of internationalism in science vied with American suspicions of communists abroad.[4]

Restrictions against sending radioisotopes abroad did not come from the leadership of the Manhattan Project; the U.S. Army was inclined to share the fruits of government reactors, at least with British and Canadian wartime collaborators. The Truman administration, however, took a dim view of the prospect of continuing any nuclear exchanges after the war. In the summer of 1947, the issue of foreign distribution came to a head among the five AEC commissioners, who voted—without achieving unanimity—to allow export. They justified their decision by appealing to the Marshall Plan, not Anglo-American military cooperation. In announcing the program, President Harry S. Truman spoke of the foreign shipments as securing "greater international cooperation in the field of medical and biological research."[5] The first shipments of radioisotopes reached foreign hospitals and laboratories in the fall of 1947.

As the Cold War intensified, conservative watchdogs of the AEC monitored the agency's foreign radioisotope shipments with suspicion. In 1949, they alleged that shipments of isotopes to Norway and Finland were undermining national security. The commission never altered its policy—in fact, the agency expanded the purview of exports to include industrial shipments in the early 1950s—but these shipments were featured in 1949 congressional investigative hearings of the agency as purported evidence of the AEC's lax oversight. Just a few months later, the explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb shattered any illusions that the U.S. could maintain its nuclear monopoly.[6] In addition, the governments of Britain and Canada began selling radioisotopes to foreign purchasers, with fewer restrictions than the AEC. U.S. policy based on denying radioactive materials and nuclear technology to other nations had become pointless. In

the early 1950s, President Dwight D. Eisenhower took a new approach to American nuclear supremacy in his Atoms for Peace program, shifting the emphasis from guarding secrets to sharing technology. His depiction of radioisotopes as tools of international diplomacy, in conjunction with 1954 revisions to the Atomic Energy Act permitting greater (though controlled) access to nuclear materials and technology, finally quelled suspicions about foreign shipments.[7]

Two features of the politicization of radioisotopes in the immediate postwar years stand out. First is a recurrent symbolism that divided civilian uses from military uses along disciplinary lines, with biomedicine perceived as inherently civilian and physics and engineering as military. The popular perception that nuclear physics research was unavoidably related to atomic weapons development led the AEC to prioritize medical therapy and biological research in the export program, which the agency represented as a humanitarian endeavor.[8] Nonetheless, a few shipments to foreign physical scientists, especially those to countries in Russia's sphere of influence, alarmed the agency's congressional critics. They alleged that these radioisotopes could end up in the hands of Soviet government to further military developments, undermining American national security. Second (and related), critics of these shipments, including dissenting Commissioner Lewis Strauss, insinuated that the sharing of nuclear materials in the form of isotopes was equivalent to the dissemination of nuclear information to foreign powers in a way prohibited under the 1946 Atomic Energy Act. Conservatives used anxieties about the loss of the country's nuclear secrets to denounce the international circulation of the AEC's radioisotopes.

The Politics of Foreign Distribution of "American" Isotopes

From the fall of 1945 to the spring of 1946, legislation over atomic energy stalled in Congress. One of the sticking points concerned the level of scientific and technical exchange that the U.S. would have with its former allies.[9] President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill had negotiated the so-called Quebec Agreement in 1943, enabling exchanges of technical information among the American, British, and Canadian participants in the bomb project.[10] The British government hoped to continue Anglo-American cooperation in the postwar period. Truman's administration, however, viewed the sharing of technical information as antithetical to the American aim of maintaining a nuclear

Triumph and Trouble in the First Temple of the Atom

The Atomic Energy Commission and the Raleigh Research Reactor

Thomas R. Wellock

In April 1950, the acting president of the University of North Carolina system sent a novel proposal to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), one that he hoped would overcome the South's uninspiring academic history. "All too long," he wrote, "the South has been laggard in its participation in and contribution to scientific developments. Some of us connected with universities and colleges in this area are determined to correct this situation." He requested permission to build a research reactor at the campus of North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering (NC State) in Raleigh. NC State intended to use it for radiation research and as the foundation for the nation's first nuclear engineering program. It would be the world's first reactor not under the control of a national government.[1]

NC State's bid to build a research reactor was audacious. It was a relatively unknown and little-regarded technical school from a southern state so impoverished that mules were still the chief source of farm power.[2] The AEC considered the technical competence of southern universities as so weak that Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee established on-site training schools for its staff rather than rely on regional education programs.[3] At the federal level, NC State faced many obstacles. The technical information it needed was still classified, and the AEC had no system to review the application or to offer financial assistance. Nevertheless, the "Raleigh Research Reactor" achieved a sustained

chain reaction in September 1953 and set off an educational chain reaction as dozens of colleges scrambled to get their own reactor.[4]

NC State achieved this coup because its proposal helped fulfill the goals of officials in the Truman administration to promote civilian nuclear energy. It also received strong backing from southern politicians and academics anxious to transcend a backward past. The Raleigh reactor project opened a new market for university research reactors and provided a rationale to declassify atomic secrets just when the Soviets' successful detonation of a fission bomb threatened to derail the drive to "free the atom" for civilian applications. It spurred interest in research reactors around the world, served as an important tool in the Atoms for Peace program, and set several precedents for the AEC's approach to civilian reactor regulation. In tapping the expertise of the AEC's national laboratories, NC State showed how federal support could lift southern higher education out of its doldrums and reorient part of its economy toward high technology industries.

The Raleigh reactor is also a cautionary tale. It foreshadowed the AEC's later dilemma of how to execute a conflicting mission of promoting nuclear energy uses while striving to be an independent safety regulator. Eager to encourage reactor development, the AEC cleared many obstacles for the Raleigh reactor. It expended considerable effort to ensure that the reactor had a safe design, but it provided limited guidance on operational safety. Designed and operated by NC State's faculty in their free time, reactor construction and operation required substantially more effort than initially recognized. Controversial leadership in the physics department created tensions among the faculty that erupted into conflict when radioactive leaks in the reactor were discovered in 1955. The conflict ended when the reactor director resigned. NC State discovered that even a small reactor demanded considerable attention to safety, adherence to procedures, and investment in staffing.

Postwar North Carolina—Growth and Ambition to Leave an Agricultural Past

The proposal to build a research reactor at NC State emerged from the forces that were remaking the postwar southern economy. Defense spending during World War II had disproportionately stimulated the economies of the South and West, but economic development was uneven, of low quality, and had not yet stemmed the exodus of southerners from

the region. The South's growth was mostly in its traditional lower-skilled industries even in North Carolina, the manufacturing powerhouse of the region. In 1948, for the first time more people in the Tar Heel State worked in industry than agriculture, but these low-paying jobs did not raise the standard of living. North Carolina had the third lowest per capita income in the nation.[5]

Higher education in the Tar Heel State was a similar mix of backwardness and progress. Like many public university systems, North Carolina's looked to aid in the state's economic modernization, but it started far behind higher education in the Northeast, Midwest, and West. UNC's acting president was not exaggerating when he lamented the "scientific poverty" of his state. In the decades prior to World War II, even the main campus at Chapel Hill could boast of graduating few notable scholars in the sciences. The region imported its scholarly talent, and southerners typically headed north to get their graduate degrees.[6]

At NC State, North Carolina's industrial growth represented an opportunity to step out from the shadow of Chapel Hill as a research institution in its own right. In 1933, the state had consolidated engineering programs at the Raleigh campus, and UNC's president spoke of turning the college into "the MIT of the South." In reality, NC State and most other technical schools in the South were dominated by a "shop culture" that focused on providing foremen to local industry rather than engineers with analytical design skills. There was little research done by faculty, and the college did not begin awarding PhDs until 1948.

By the end of World War II, NC State's administration saw an opportunity for the engineering college. In 1944, the governor and industry leaders established an engineering fund to raise the salary of engineering faculty. Harold Lampe, the new dean of the engineering college, concluded that an upgraded physics department was essential to developing graduate programs in the college. He needed a new department chair with "industrial physics experience" who could focus the department on practical research.[7]

Lampe's search for the right person took him to Oak Ridge—the most industrially oriented of the national laboratories and fittingly run by Union Carbide Corporation. In the spring of 1949, he landed Clifford Beck, the director of the laboratory at the K-25 gaseous diffusion plant. A North Carolina native with a doctorate from Chapel Hill, Beck brought to NC State an entrepreneurial recognition that by doing good for the AEC, the college could do well.[8] Beck's idea to create a nuclear engineering program and build a research reactor offered three things the AEC wanted: to spur civilian reactor construction, to produce nuclear engineering grad-

The Decision to Drop the Bomb and Truman's Nuclear Legacy
Concluding Remarks

William Lanouette

The essays in this volume have all profoundly advanced our understanding of two important, and still contentious, historical topics: the decision to drop the bomb, and Harry S. Truman's nuclear legacy. In making some concluding remarks, what first comes to mind is that sign on President Truman's Oval Office desk—"The Buck Stops Here!"—because in this volume, I have the last word. Rather than attempting to summarize the essays in this volume, instead I hope to highlight some noteworthy perspectives about these two critical topics.

I'm grateful to have spent some time in Hungary doing research for my biography of the physicist, biologist, and arms-control activist Leo Szilard.[1] Why? Well, as Hungarian historians like to say about their country's political history, "The past is *less* certain than the future." On the subject of Truman's nuclear legacy, our history is constantly rewritten, reinterpreted, and rediscovered, and our understanding of the past continues to deepen with research and reflection.

President Truman loved reading history, but seemed uncomfortable about the way he was later said to have made it. Beginning in 1945, he first took proud credit for having used A-bombs on Japanese cities at the end of World War II. But as scholars in this text have noted, within days after Hiroshima and Nagasaki were leveled Truman was also disturbed, ambivalent, and conflicted—first about what had just happened, then about his own role in these historic events.

I have long wondered about Truman's A-bomb role, seeking to know how and why those bombs leveled two cities. Popular history and Truman's own claims clearly credit him with the "decision" to drop two A-bombs on the Japanese. Sometimes anniversaries help us take stock of our own history and in 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki raised and redefined decades of controversy. To mark that milestone, the Library of Congress magazine *Civilization* convened a roundtable discussion of historians with wideranging views about "Why We Dropped the Bomb." And, after hours of discourse, we agreed on *five* major reasons for why A-bombs were used on Hiroshima—and then on Nagasaki. It's no surprise that the authors in this text raised those same reasons.[2]

1. *To end the fighting quickly*. The United States and the Allies were war-weary by the summer of 1945. Victory won against Italy and Germany in Europe still eluded them in the Pacific. Against the vicious and determined Japanese, anything was worth a try just to stop the fighting.
2. *Postwar diplomacy*. Truman's new secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, and some military leaders saw the awesome weapon as a way to make the Soviet Union "more manageable"—first, by using the bomb to end the Pacific war before Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had promised to join it in mid-August; second, by countering political gains the Soviets had already made in Eastern Europe.
3. *Bureaucratic momentum*. Fearing that Germany was working on an A-bomb, President Franklin D. Roosevelt began America's research in 1939, and he agreed to make it a high-priority project just before Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. This initiative became the Manhattan Project, a secret $2 billion effort—worth more than $20 billion today. In the end, the commitment to *build* the bomb produced a powerful impulse to *use* it.
4. *Political justification*. The impulse to *use* the bomb came also from American military and civilian leaders to justify all that was spent without Congress's knowledge or approval. As one War Department aide said, "If this thing works, they won't investigate anything and if it doesn't work . . . they won't investigate anything else." Truman himself made this point on August 6 when he declared, "We have spent two billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history—we won."[3]
5. *Psychological factors*. After four bloody years of war, Americans in high office were eager to crush Japan and bring the boys home.

> Public feeling was running so high against the Japanese and their barbaric wartime behavior that many American leaders were in no mood to take any additional casualties. In the eyes of war-weary Americans, the enemy had become merely "Japs" who needed to be blasted and burned out of island caves and firebombed nightly in their homes.

The *Civilization* panel agreed on these five reasons, but most historians continue to argue about which of these reasons might have been dominant, or perhaps even decisive, at the time. Yet few dispute they were all influential.

But there is something missing from the historians' list of five reasons. And that missing reason is the one that today we hear most often to explain those two atomic bombings: to save American and Japanese lives and casualties from an Allied invasion. Why didn't historians in 1995 consider an invasion as a major factor, and why does it have even less importance today? As Sam Walker and others noted, when those first A-bombs fell in early August 1945, the need for a costly invasion seemed possible, but not inevitable. America's leaders knew something the American public didn't: Stalin had promised President Roosevelt, at the February Yalta Conference. that the Soviet Union would declare war on Japan and join the Allies three months after Germany surrendered. Germany surrendered on May 8, meaning that Stalin would likely break his neutrality pact with Japan (well before it was to expire in the spring of 1946) and attack in mid-August.

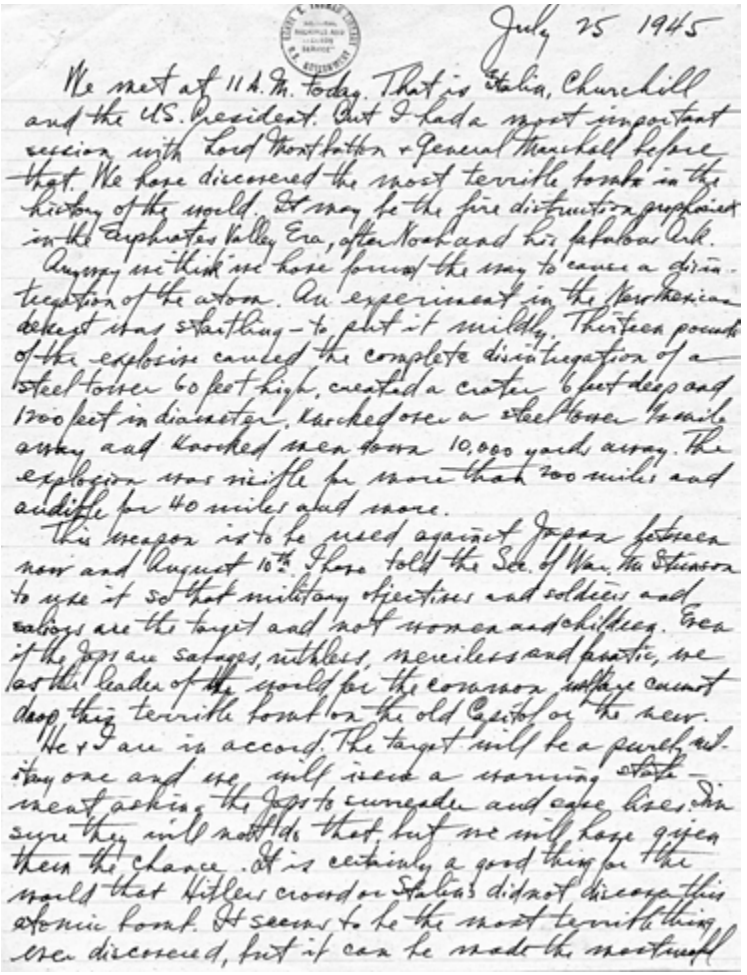
Stalin confirmed with Truman this intention and the timetable to attack Japan at their Big Three meeting with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at Potsdam in July 1945. Allied invasions weren't planned for Japan's south island of Kyushu until November 1945, and for the main island of Honshu until March 1946, giving Truman the confidence that once Stalin attacked Japan, the war in the Pacific could have ended well before then. In fact, at Potsdam after Stalin assured Truman he would declare war on Japan as promised, Truman jotted in his diary, "Fini Japs."[4]

Thus, as we weigh the pros and cons of the atomic bombings today, it is worth recalling that in the summer of 1945, an invasion of Japan was a possibility but not an either/or alternative that many today consider it to be. One reason for the public's continued misunderstanding of this point is the difference in knowledge within the military chain of command: between the very bottom and the very top. At the bottom, soldiers in the trenches and aboard troop ships sailing to the Pacific only knew that to finally defeat Japan it would likely take both a naval blockade

Nuclear Energy and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman

A Graphic Essay

Randy Sowell



July 25 1945

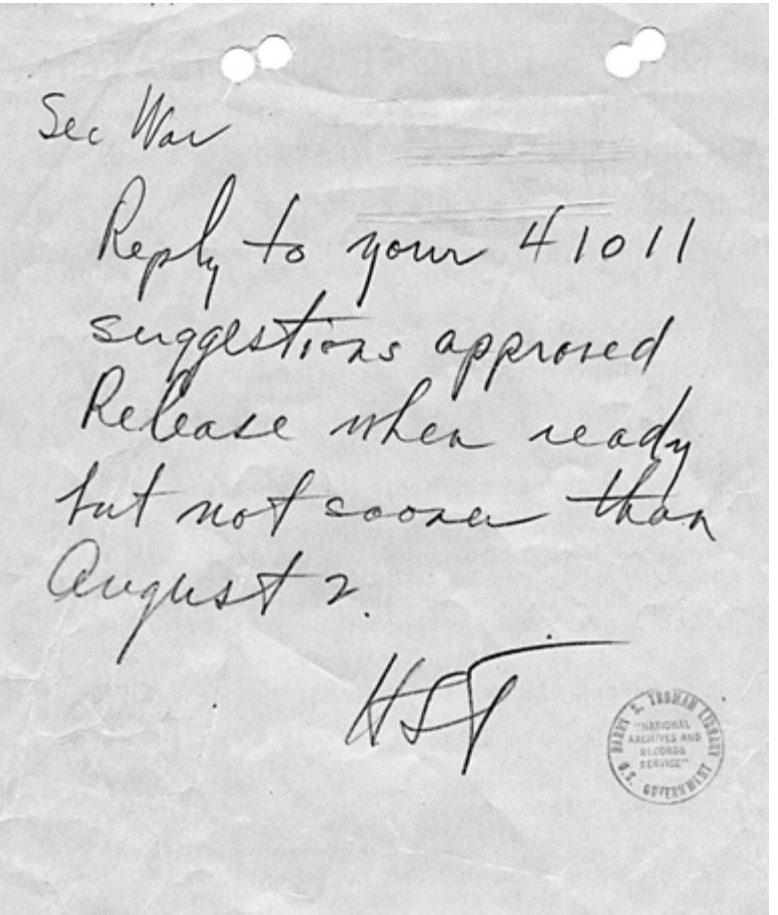
We met at 11 A.M. today. That is Stalin, Churchill and the U.S. President. But I had a most important session with Lord Mountbatten + General Marshall before that. We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire distruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark.

Anyway we think we have found the way to cause a disintegration of the atom. An experiment in the Mexican desert was startling – to put it mildly. Thirteen pounds of the explosive caused the complete disintegration of a steel tower 60 feet high, created a crater 6 feet deep and 1200 feet in diameter, knocked over a steel tower ½ mile away and knocked men down 10,000 yards away. The explosion was visible for more than 200 miles and audible for 40 miles and more.

This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th. I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old Capitol or the new.

He + I are in accord. The target will be a purely military one and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I'm sure they will not do that but we will have given them the chance. It is certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler's crowd or Stalin's didn't discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful

President Harry S. Truman was at the Potsdam Conference in Germany when he learned of the successful test of the atomic bomb on July 16, 1945. His diary entry of July 25 reflects his mixed emotions on the occasion. Deeply troubled by the creation of "this terrible bomb" and its implications for humanity, Truman was also hopeful that it could bring an early end to the war against Japan, and grateful that Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union had not developed the bomb first. Insisting that the weapon would not be used against "the old Capitol or the new" (Japan's historical capital, Kyoto, or its modern capital, Tokyo), the president also expressed his intention that "military objectives and soldiers and sailors" would be targeted, "not women and children"—a desire completely inconsistent with the actual destructive power of the atomic bomb. (President Truman's Diary Entry, July 25, 1945, President's Secretary's Files, Truman Papers, Truman Library)


Sec War

Reply to your 41011 suggestions approved Release when ready but not sooner than August 2.

HST

On July 30, 1945, Secretary of War Henry Stimson sent War Department Telegram No. 41011 to President Truman, who was still attending the Potsdam Conference in Germany. With preparations for use of the atomic bomb against Japan almost completed, Stimson sought the president's approval of a White House statement announcing that the bomb had been dropped on a Japanese city. That statement—the first public announcement of the existence of the Manhattan Project—had been carefully drafted over a period of weeks. Truman turned Stimson's telegram over and wrote his reply, seen here, on the back. The phrase "release when ready" in his reply did not refer to the bomb itself, but to the statement announcing its use against Japan. Truman also specified that no action be taken until August 2, the day the Potsdam Conference ended. (Message from President Truman to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, ca. July 30, 1945, George M. Elsey Papers, Truman Library)

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