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Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower

THE HIROSHIMA DECISION

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Gen. William D. Leahy

cluded, "Certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

While this after-the-fact assessment cannot tell us what policy makers understood at the time, it does give a sense of how badly Japanese strength had deteriorated. It also brings into focus three crucial dates: First, the invasion of Japan, which was estimated to cost between 500,000 and a million lives, was not scheduled until March 1946, roughly eight months after the Potsdam Conference and the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6. There is little doubt that President Truman and his top advisers knew at the time that the full invasion of Japan was extremely unlikely. The real issue was whether the war could be ended before November 1, the date fixed for an initial preliminary landing on the island of Kyushu. This was scheduled to occur three full months after the meeting at Potsdam, and one week shy of three months after Hiroshima was bombed.

A specific question we need to answer is whether American policy makers understood that there were ways to end the war without using the atomic bombs and without either a landing or an invasion which would cost significant numbers of American lives. And this question itself needs to be refined. It is, for instance, clear from the record that planning for an invasion had to go forward whatever the top policy makers hoped or believed; and, furthermore, troops in the field, the American public, and, above all, the Japanese, were given no inkling that an invasion might not be necessary. As Gen. George C. Marshall put it: "Every individual moving to the Pacific should be indoctrinated with a firm determination to see it through." This understandably led many veterans to believe that had Hiroshima not been destroyed, they might have had to risk or lose their lives in an invasion. However, it is not clear that the president believed the planned invasion would actually be launched, quite the contrary.

The Japanese communications code had been broken early in the war. Faint Japanese peace feelers appeared as early as September 1944. In April 1945 the advice of the Joint Staff planners on the invasion included the possibility that a "threat [of a landing] in itself might even bring about surrender. On June 14, 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked the Pacific commanders to prepare for the possibility of a "sudden collapse or surrender" (though they did not say this was imminent as yet).

UNTIL ABOUT MID-JUNE, it may still have been possible to believe an invasion was highly likely. At this time, however, six members of the Japanese Supreme War Council authorized Foreign Minister Togo

AN INTRODUCTION TO ATOMIC DIPLOMACY

by Gar Alperovitz

Atomic Diplomacy, by Gar Alperovitz, was first published in 1965. Immediately upon publication it became the subject of considerable debate. Focused on the few months of 1945 immediately before and after the atomic bombings of Japan, Atomic Diplomacy examined the historical record and argued that the possession of the atomic bomb profoundly affected U.S. postwar policy toward the Soviet Union even before the bomb was used.

The book showed that the atomic secret figured heavily in U.S. strategy at the Potsdam Conference, a key meeting at which the Big Three allies—Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—negotiated the disposition of spoils in postwar Europe. Among other things, Alperovitz found that President Harry Truman had postponed the Potsdam meeting until July 17, 1945, so that it would come after the July 16 bomb test near Alamogordo, New Mexico, that assured the effectiveness of the new secret weapon.

The item of greatest controversy in Atomic Diplomacy was its tentative argument that considerations related to the Soviet Union played a role in the final U.S. decision to bomb Japan.

This month, on the 40th anniversary of the atomic bombings, Atomic Diplomacy is being reissued by Viking Penguin. The following article is adapted from Alperovitz's introduction to the new edition. In it he examines the historical evidence that has emerged since 1965, focusing particularly on the question of why the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

—The Editors

To Save American Lives?

It is important at the outset to define the question with some precision. If one asks very generally, "Why were the atomic bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki?" it is obvious that one reason was to end the war against Japan, since that is what they accomplished (at least in part). But this line of inquiry does not get us very far. To see why, it is necessary to ask several more narrowly focused questions. The first is, "From the military point of view, was the use of atomic weapons necessary to end the war without an invasion?" This is the justification President Harry Truman repeatedly offered: "The dropping of the bombs stopped the war, saved millions of lives."

Shortly after World War II ended, the official U.S. Strategic Bombing survey con-

to approach the Soviet Union "with a view to terminating the war if possible by September." By July 13, 1945, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal described the latest intercepted cables as "real evidence of a Japanese desire to get out of the war." This was a message from Japanese Foreign Minister Togo to his ambassador in Moscow, instructing him to see Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov if possible before the Potsdam Conference "to lay before him the Emperor's strong desire to secure a termination of the war." Forrestal notes: "Togo said further that the unconditional surrender terms of the Allies was about the only thing in the way of termination of the war."

Apparently frustrated with difficulties they were having in Moscow, the Japanese also tried the direct approach. Allen Dulles, overseeing secret Office of Strategic Services (OSS) operations in Switzerland, had helped arrange the Italian surrender. Dulles reports that as early as April 1945, he and his associates were approached "by Japanese army and navy spokesmen there and also by some Japanese officials at the Bank for International Settlements in Basel [Switzerland]. They wished to determine whether they could not also take advantage of [Dulles'] secret channels to Washington...to secure peace for Japan."

After an active exchange of messages and a number of secret meetings, Dulles reported to Secretary of War Henry Stimson at Potsdam, "On what I had learned from Tokyo—they desired to surrender if they could retain the Emperor and the constitution as a basis for maintaining discipline and order in Japan after the devastating news of surrender became known to the Japanese people."

As important as these approaches were, they were less significant than a major development that occurred within Japan at this time—the highly unusual decision of the emperor himself to become personally involved in the surrender process. The intercepted messages revealed the emperor's urgent effort to open a direct negotiating channel through Moscow. During the last days of July 1945, for instance, an intercepted cable instructed the Japanese ambassador in Tokyo to arrange a Moscow visit for the emperor's personal envoy, Prince Konoye.

The mission...was to ask the Soviet Government to take part in mediation to end the present war and to transmit the complete Japanese case in this respect.... Prince Konoe [sic] was especially charged by His Majesty the Emperor to convey to the Soviet Government that it was exclusively the desire of His Majesty to avoid more bloodshed.

This message was given directly to President Truman by Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin as well as intercepted directly. We have had access to some, but not all, of the intercepted cables U.S. officials saw at the

time only since 1979. Materials at certain key points in the cable-related documents at the National Archives are still not available to the public.

Did Truman understand that he could in all likelihood end the war without using the atomic bombs and without resorting to an invasion? It is very difficult to believe he did not.

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was also at Potsdam. When Secretary of War Stimson told him atomic weapons were to be used against the Japanese, this was his reaction:

During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of 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.

In Eisenhower's judgment, "Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of face." The language he used at other times was more straightforward: "It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."

Until very recently we knew only that Eisenhower had expressed these views to Secretary of War Stimson. However, we now know that he also expressed them to the president in a meeting on July 20. Gen. Omar Bradley confirms that in his presence at lunch that day, when Truman said he was going to use the atomic weapons, Eisenhower challenged him directly.

Truman also worked very closely with the highly regarded chief of staff he inherited from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Adm. William D. Leahy. There is no question about Leahy's view of the situation:

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.... My own feeling is that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages.

Leahy also later observed, "I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children."

MANY ACCOUNTS OF THE Hiroshima decision neglect the fact that moral arguments were presented at the time. They tend to isolate the key decision makers from such concerns, as if they played no role in the thinking of men in positions of authority. Moreover, in recent years we have forgotten that the worries evident in the comments of Eisenhower and Leahy were not unique

(though perhaps surprising to some coming from military men). It was a common belief that killing large numbers of civilians, of women and children, by indiscriminately destroying a whole city (even one like Hiroshima, which included modest military installations) was "barbarian."

While it is true that the United States used conventional bombs to destroy Japanese cities well before Hiroshima (the fire bombing of Tokyo on March 9 to 10, 1945, was particularly devastating), we can also regain some sense of how news of the first atomic bombs was received by recalling one or two commentaries directly concerned with the ethical issues. For instance, the response of the Catholic weekly *Commonweal* in an editorial entitled "Horror and Shame" was:

We will not have to worry any more about keeping our victory clean. It is defiled.... The name Hiroshima, the name Nagasaki are names for American guilt and shame.... We have reached the point where we say that anything goes. That is what the Germans said at the beginning of the war.

The Protestant journal *Christian Century* reported in an essay on "America's Moral Atrocity" that the magazine had been flooded with letters denouncing the use of "this incredibly inhuman instrument." The essay stated, "Our leaders seem not to have weighed the moral considerations involved. No sooner was the bomb ready than it was rushed to the front and dropped on two helpless cities, destroying more lives than the United States has lost in the entire war."

Eisenhower and Leahy were not minor figures; they were, respectively, the triumphant supreme commander of the Allied Forces in Europe and one of Roosevelt's most respected advisers. Moreover, they were military men, individuals whose views on military matters could not be easily dismissed.

Leahy, a five-star admiral, was the senior military officer of the United States as well as chief of staff to the president. He presided over all meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, conveying the president's orders to it and bringing its recommendations to the president.

I have cited Leahy's general comment made after the war, but here is how he recorded his views in his private diary on June 18, 1945: "It is my opinion at the present time that a surrender of Japan can be arranged with terms that can be accepted by Japan and that will make fully satisfactory provision for America's defense against future trans-Pacific aggression."

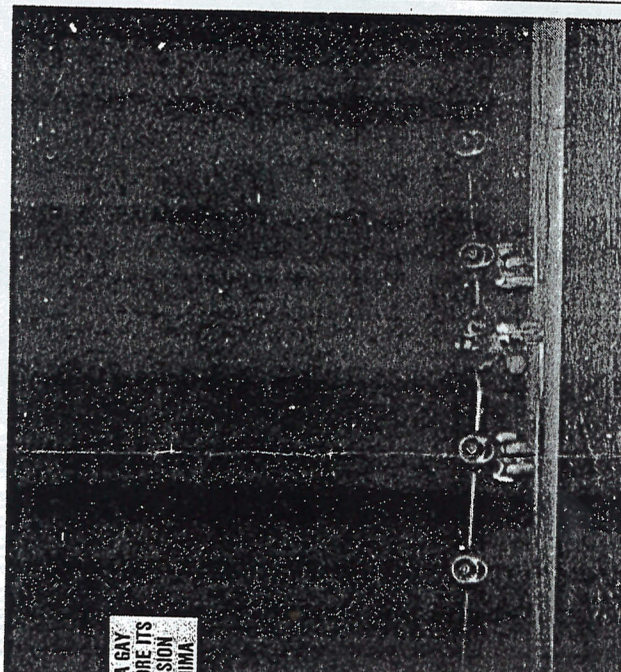
Recognition that the bomb was not essential to victory was not isolated. Gen. Curtis LeMay is reported to have felt that even without the atomic bomb and the Russian entry into the war, Japan would have surrendered in two weeks ("...the atomic bomb had nothing to do with the

end of the war.") Top Navy officials were generally convinced that the sea blockade alone would force Japan to capitulate. Although the Army favored full preparations for an invasion, Gen. Marshall, in an interview he gave on this subject before his death, commented that the bomb shortened the war only "by months."

Nor did Air Force leaders think the atomic bomb essential: As early as April, LeMay argued that the war could be ended

arguments presented to them. Perhaps. But then why is it that military people were the ones who asked some of the toughest questions?

There is no doubt, of course, that the military figures went along with the presidential decision. They also approved planning for an invasion. However, the invasion itself was never authorized, and even the planning went forward on the demanding assumption of "unconditional surrender."



THE ENOLA GAY JUST BEFORE ITS NIGHT MISSION TO HIROSHIMA.

by September or October without an invasion. When called back to Washington from Europe for consultations in June, representatives of the Strategic Bombing Survey also stressed that an invasion was unnecessary.

The view that Japan would collapse in September or October seems to have been consistently held throughout the spring and summer. It was confirmed at Potsdam on July 16 when Army Air Force Chief Gen. Henry H. Arnold made a specific point of reading into the record his judgment that Japan could be compelled to surrender without the bomb a month before the landing, i.e. in October. Consider the words of Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "It would be a mistake to suppose that the fate of Japan was settled by the atomic bomb. Her defeat was certain before the first bomb fell."

It is possible, as some have suggested, that the president and his closest aides simply got caught up in an overwhelming drive to end the war, that they were swept away with the idea that the long and costly worldwide hostilities would finally end, that they were not thinking about anything else, that they could not comprehend the

nation) proposed to Secretary Forrestal that the bomb be demonstrated in a way that would not kill a large number of civilians.

Gen. Marshall also raised the idea early on that the bomb not be first used on a civilian area. After a meeting on May 29 with John McCloy, the assistant secretary of war—as McCloy recorded in a memorandum—Marshall said that he "thought these weapons might first be used against straight military objectives such as a large naval installation and then if no complete result was derived from the effect of that, he thought we ought to designate a number of large manufacturing areas from which people would be warned to leave—telling the Japanese that we intend to destroy such centers." Marshall also proposed that instead of surprising the Russians with the combat use of the atomic bombs, they be invited to send observers to the atomic test in New Mexico's Alamogordo desert.

Numerous scientists, of course, urged that a demonstration be arranged so the bomb's power would be clear to the Japanese before it was used against them. It is sometimes suggested that a demonstration might not have worked, or that American prisoners might have been brought into the area. Again, perhaps there was no way to arrange a demonstration. But the overwhelming fact is no one in a high official position had any serious interest in attempting to devise a workable demonstration. Only a very few minutes were spent even discussing it—compared with the hours, weeks, even months of staff work that went into other important military projects.

The Russians Are Coming

Another way to get at the question of whether during July and early August atomic weapons were still believed to be absolutely necessary to prevent an invasion is to attempt to define precisely how Truman and his top advisers viewed other options. The most important of these was a Russian declaration of war.

The United States recognized that since the focus of the Japanese diplomatic effort was the Soviet Union, a Soviet declaration of war had become extremely important—especially to the Japanese military, which held on to the hope that the one remaining major power might remain neutral. For most of the war U.S. diplomacy had made every effort to ensure that the Russians would enter the war, securing Stalin's pledge at Yalta to begin a Far Eastern campaign three months after Germany's surrender.

In early April the Soviet Union gave public notice of its intention to terminate its neutrality pact with Japan, and throughout

The unformed military figures who felt the war could be ended without the use of atomic bombs were not alone. Undersecretary of the Navy Ralph Bard was deeply disturbed at the prospect of the weapon's use. Bard had also become convinced that "the Japanese war was really won." As early as May 31, Bard, a member of the Interim Committee considering the new weapon, submitted a 42-page memorandum on the subject. However, his views got little hearing in the committee deliberations.

On June 27 he submitted another top secret memorandum, this one registering his formal dissent from the committee's recommendation that the bomb be used without specific warning. Unwilling to let the matter drop, the undersecretary secured a meeting with the president and pressed his case for warning the Japanese of the nature of the new weapon with Truman before he left for Potsdam. Bard got nowhere; he resigned his official post on July 1.

Adm. Lewis L. Strauss, special assistant to Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, also believed "that the war was very nearly over. The Japanese were nearly ready to capitulate." Strauss (who replaced Bard on the Interim Committee after the latter's resign-

no doubt that Russia intended to attack as promised. Japanese intelligence, as Stalin pointed out, could hardly miss the huge Soviet troop shipments to the Far East and the massing of the Red Army near the Manchurian border.

Churchill believed as early as September 1944 that the Japanese might well capitulate when the Russians entered the war. U.S. officials knew that when the Red Army marched across the Manchurian border, it would drive home (again, especially to the Japanese military) the fact that Japan was defeated. On May 21, 1945, Secretary Stimson advised of "the profound military effect" of the Soviet declaration, and by early June the War Department Operations Division held that a Russian declaration of war might well produce surrender, either alone or in combination with a landing or "imminent threat of a landing." In mid-June Gen. Marshall offered this advice directly to the president, stating: "The impact of Russian entry on the already hopeless Japanese may well be the decisive action levering them into capitulation at that time or shortly thereafter if we land in Japan."

A point that has been missed in many studies of the Hiroshima decision is that the precise role a Russian declaration of war played in American thinking changed during the spring and summer of 1945. Up to mid-April the Russians were regarded as important because their entry would pin down the Japanese in Manchuria, preventing them from reinforcing the mainland during an invasion. However, the U.S. Navy had achieved such command of the sea lanes that by April it had become impossible for Japan to withdraw its armies from Manchuria in any event. Japanese morale and power had deteriorated to such an extent that the Russian declaration of war now came to be seen primarily in psychological terms—as a massive shock, which might in and of itself force Japan to capitulate.

There is in fact a precise parallel between the way U.S. leaders conceived of the Russian declaration of war and the atomic bombs. At first the bombs had also been expected to be used in conjunction with an invasion. But, by the late spring and into the summer of 1945, Japan's situation had become so impossible that the weapons, too, were viewed in psychological terms—as a profound shock that was likely in and of itself to bring about surrender. The idea of using the limited number of bombs on essentially civilian targets—rather than in direct support of the military landing—would have been unthinkable a few months earlier.

THE ARGUMENT THAT the atomic bomb had to be used to avoid an invasion turns in part on whether the Russian declaration of war was an available option, and understood as such. In attempting to clarify precisely what American decision makers

important, especially in establishing the attitude of the president himself. Though the official records tell us of his decisions, they do not fully illuminate how he understood the point about the Soviet Union.

The 1978 discovery of Truman's private diary, however, helps us clarify this issue. On July 17 Truman entered two important observations in his diary. (This is after the initial sketchy reports of the successful atomic test had arrived, but before the full report from Alamogordo had been received.) The first concerns the timing of Soviet entry into the war against Japan: "He'll be in the Jap War on August 15th." The second is Truman's confirmation of his understanding of the importance of the Soviet declaration: "Fiji Japs when that comes about."

It is clear that American leaders preferred the use of the new weapon over other available options.

Clearly the Japanese were collapsing. The coup *de grace* could be administered either by the shock of a Soviet declaration or the atomic bomb. That by the end of July Truman preferred not to play the Soviet card is obvious; but that is not the issue. The question is whether top U.S. leaders understood that it was a very powerful card indeed. There is little doubt that they did; at the time they bombed Hiroshima, they chose not to test whether their best intelligence estimates were correct, namely that a Russian declaration of war seemed likely to precipitate a surrender without an invasion.

Indeed, although the United States had desperately wanted Russian participation in the war only a few weeks earlier, Japanese power had so deteriorated that U.S. decision makers knowingly and actively sought ways to avoid or slow down a Soviet declaration. The Russians had originally been included in the draft Potsdam Proclamation warning the Japanese to surrender—an inclusion which would have shown the unity of the Big Three and clearly indicated to the Japanese that any

was an illusion. On Secretary of State James Byrnes' recommendation, the Russians were cut out of the proclamation. The fact that this statement was issued from the site of the Big Three meeting but without Stalin's signature gave rise to a vain hope within Japan that indeed the Russians might not enter the war.

Churchill observed to his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, "It is quite clear that the United States do not at the present time desire Russian participation in the war against Japan." Secretary of the Navy Forrestal recorded in his diary on July 28, 1945, "Byrnes said he was most anxious to get the Japanese affair over with before the Russians got in."

Not only did the United States no longer want Russian participation in the war, it made every effort to end the hostilities as fast as possible before the Russians got in, or at least before they got very far into Manchuria. Top American leaders were almost frantic. "I have never known time to pass so slowly," Byrnes later recalled.

Indeed, even after the first intercepted Japanese message accepting the general terms of surrender came in, Truman ordered conventional military operations to continue full force. At the cabinet meeting on August 10, 1945, Stimson "suggested...that it would be a humane thing...that might affect the settlement if we stopped the bombing." However, his view was "rejected on the ground that it couldn't be done at once because we had not yet received in official form the Japanese surrender." Stimson's diary entry continues, "This of course was a correct but narrow reason, for the Japanese had broadcast their offer of surrender through every country in the world." Forrestal's diary shows that Stimson also "cited the growing feeling of apprehension and misgiving as to the effect of the atomic bomb even in our own country," and that the secretary of the Navy supported the advice that conventional bombing should cease.

Truman refused to let up the pace even after the Japanese accepted the final American message that implicitly acknowledged the position of the emperor. Well after Radio Tokyo had broadcast acceptance of the American terms (on August 14) but before the message had reached Washington through official channels, Gen. Arnold (who wished to stage as big a finale as possible) was permitted to send 1,014 fighters to drop 6,000 tons of conventional explosives on Honshu.

It is in the context of the tremendous rush to end the war before the Russians got very far into Manchuria, I believe, that we can understand how American leaders not only authorized the use of the second bomb against Nagasaki without, so far as we can tell, a moment's doubt—but also seem to have had no inclination whatsoever to reconsider the attack once Hiroshima was destroyed. One bomb alone suf-

the tremendous power of the new weapon in the American arsenal—both to the Russians and to the Japanese. Nor was there any longer any real question that the war would end without an invasion. The only important question was how quickly the important question was how quickly the war derived its particular urgency, in August, from American concern about the Soviet Union.

Again, the matter of dates should have been enough to stimulate obvious questions. The Russians were scheduled to enter the war three months after Germany's May 8 surrender—August 8 (amended at Potsdam to August 15). Hiroshima was bombed on August 6, and Nagasaki was bombed on August 9.

'Unconditional Surrender'

What of the question of "unconditional surrender"? We are still attempting to discern whether Truman understood that he was almost certainly not going to have to invade Japan at the time he authorized the use of the atomic bombs. Historians have written at length about the surrender formula ever since it was first revealed that the acting secretary of state during much of the period, Joseph Grew, advised Truman that a change in the unconditional surrender demand was likely to end the war.

The most important point to focus on from our point of view is that the intercepted cables clearly showed that by June and July the only real sticking point in the Japanese position had indeed to do with the role of the emperor.

Did top American leaders understand that if they altered the surrender formula to assure the Japanese they could keep the emperor there was a very high likelihood that the war would be ended long before a landing, to say nothing of an invasion? We are not interested here in whether they preferred not to offer the Japanese assurances for the emperor; we are trying to reconstruct their understanding of their options.

Some of the most powerful evidence we have on this point was fully declassified only in 1976. It is from an "Estimate of the Enemy Situation" (as of July 6, 1945) prepared for the Combined Chiefs of Staff meetings at Potsdam. Here are some of its conclusions:

We believe that a considerable portion of the Japanese population now consider absolute military defeat to be probable. The increasing effects of sea blockade and cumulative devastation wrought by strategic bombing, which has already rendered millions homeless and has de-

strayed from 25% to 50% of the built-up area of Japan's most important cities, should make this realization increasingly general. An entry of the Soviet Union into the war would finally convince the Japanese of the inevitability of complete defeat. Although individual Japanese willingly sacrifice themselves in the service of the nation, we doubt that the nation as a whole is predisposed toward national suicide.

The intelligence estimate pointed out: "Japanese ruling groups are aware of the desperate military situation and are increasingly desirous of a compromise peace, but still find 'unconditional surrender' unacceptable. Indeed the formal acceptance of 'unconditional surrender' by Japanese authority must be deemed basi-



AERIAL PHOTO OF HIROSHIMA BEFORE ATOMIC BOMBING

change. According to Grew, for instance, at this meeting Truman "immediately said that his own thinking ran along the same lines as mine." Truman asked Grew to discuss the proposal with the secretaries of war and Navy and the chiefs of staff. In a meeting the next day with Secretaries Stimson and Forrestal and Gen. Marshall, these men also stated their agreement with the principle, but "for certain military reasons, not then divulged," it was felt that a statement giving some form of assurance to the emperor was not advisable at that time.

The undisclosed military reasons, of course, concerned the atomic bomb. At this meeting Stimson confirmed that his understanding also was that Truman agreed in principle with the recommendation that the "unconditional surrender

formula" be changed as proposed by Grew. Again, the main issue, as Forrestal noted, was that he did not want to proceed "at this moment."

Another indication of the president's own view came in the June 18, 1945 White House military planning meeting. Here it was Adm. Leahy who raised the issue of altering the unconditional surrender formula, arguing that unless this was done it would make the Japanese desperate and increase American casualties. The official minutes of the meeting record: "The president stated that it was with that thought in mind that he had left the door open for Congress to take appropriate action with reference to unconditional surrender."

Again, Truman indicated, however that he did not wish to take action "at this time." Leahy also recalls that in private discussions the president indicated his support for Leahy's viewpoint: "He was completely favorable toward defeating our Far Eastern enemy with the smallest possible loss of American lives. It wasn't a matter of dollars. It might require more time—and more dollars—if we did not

cally unlikely, since the term probably implies to the Japanese mind the overthrow of the Emperor and the position of the Imperial House, and the abolition of the Japanese way of life, and the abolition of the Japanese constitution."

The significance of this document goes beyond its recognition of the strategic importance of the Russians and of a change in the surrender terms; it is a formal warning both to top U.S. military and to top political leaders that if the formula is not changed, the war will continue in a costly, bitter, and bloody fashion for a long time.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Truman was advised by a number of the highest officials about the importance of changing the unconditional surrender formula. Secretary Grew urged a change in the surrender terms in a meeting with Truman as early as May 28, 1945—more than two months before Hiroshima was destroyed.

Much more important is the fact that there is abundant evidence that the president had no objection in principle to the

lives." On July 24 Truman told Stimson, too, that he would reassure the Japanese about the emperor if, as Stimson put it, "they were hanging fire on that point."

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the information we now have on the intercepted Japanese cables, on what top American intelligence believed, on what top diplomatic and military leaders recommended, and what Truman himself had concluded has not been fully appreciated.

It is very clear that well before atomic weapons were used, both the Japanese and U.S. governments had arrived at the same understanding of acceptable terms of surrender. Truman knew, moreover, that a change in the surrender terms in favor of the emperor—on the best advice available at the time—was highly likely to end the war without an invasion.

Nor did the president have any fundamental objection to making this alteration. It is impossible to read the evidence of the time in a way that suggests Truman thought the unconditional surrender formula so important that he would stick to it to the end if that meant the United States would have to go through with an invasion.

Accordingly, at the time Truman permitted the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings he was aware that the war could in all likelihood be ended on terms that he had already deemed acceptable.

If this point were not clear from the documents of the time, we need only recall that, in fact, Truman did alter the surrender terms to allow the Japanese to keep their emperor. The unconditional surrender formula was simply adroitly abandoned when the time came. The emperor is still there.

It is quite true, as many have pointed out, that there was a debate over whether it was best to offer Japan assurances about the emperor before or after the atomic bombs were used. If he could, Truman apparently preferred to try to end the war without changing the surrender terms. Given that he had decided to use the atomic bomb, he also was advised (in the end especially by Byrnes) that the best time to offer assurances to the emperor was after its power had been demonstrated. It is, however, no longer possible to believe that the president was unaware that this option alone seemed likely to end the war well before an invasion.

It is sometimes argued that the Japanese military would have fought to the death to avoid surrender. Very often, however, the wrong question is asked, for in most studies the argument is that the officer groups would have fought to the death to avoid unconditional surrender. Moreover, the advice given to the president at the time did not emphasize this as a determinative consideration.

Truman must also have understood that the combination of the forthcoming Soviet

AERIAL PHOTO OF HIROSHIMA AFTER ATOMIC BOMBING



Toward the First Cold War

A one learns more about events surrounding the atomic bomb, it seems increasingly obvious that there were only two real insiders: Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes. Despite the records we have of Stimson's thinking, Truman did not share a close relationship with the important strategy sessions probably occurred between Byrnes and Truman in the privacy of the Oval Office and during the long conversations on the ship going to Potsdam.

Byrnes was a man who at the outset of his tenure as secretary of state believed it important to attempt to force the Russians to concede major points at issue in North China, Manchuria, and Central and Eastern Europe. Byrnes' views were later to change substantially. At the time, however, it is also clear that given his public position as the person who had conveyed to the American people the Yalta promise that no major concessions had been made to Stalin, Byrnes had made Eastern Europe a priority. Finally, Byrnes had the narrowest view of the atomic bomb—as an implied threat that would help him achieve his diplomatic goals.

Byrnes' view was consistent. In May atomic scientist Leo Szilard found that Byrnes "did not argue that it was necessary to use the bomb against the cities of Japan in order to win the war....Mr. Byrnes' view [was] that our possessing and demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe." After Hiroshima, Secretary Stimson also observed that "Byrnes was very much against any attempt to cooperate with Russia. His mind is full of his problems...and he looks to having the

speak, as a great weapon."

"The historic fact remains," Winston Churchill observed after the war, "that the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb...was never even an issue." President Truman also confirmed, "The atom bomb was no 'great decision....' That was not any decision that you had to worry about."

How could this be?

Twenty years ago *Atomic Diplomacy* traced the ins and outs of U.S. diplomacy leading up to Potsdam and proposed a tentative explanation that suggested the following sequence of events: It appeared, first, that in the early spring of 1945 (up to April at least) no one doubted that the atomic bomb, like any military weapon, would be used when it was ready. Thereafter, and quite naturally assuming that the bomb would be used, top U.S. officials began to realize it could strengthen their hand diplomatically against the Soviet Union, and they developed their strategy on the basis of this calculation, postponing major negotiations, and the Potsdam meeting itself, until the bomb could be tested. "It seems a terrible thing to gamble with such big stakes in diplomacy," Stimson noted, "without having your master card in your hand."

However, by mid-summer (especially in late June and July) the military reasons for using the weapon began to disappear as the intercepted cables demonstrating Japan's rapid deterioration flowed in. A number of the most important military officials clearly understood what was happening, and they recognized that from a strictly military point of view the bomb was not necessary to prevent an invasion.

The difficulty lay primarily with those who were deeply involved with diplomacy, for they had embraced the assumption that the bomb would be used and, indeed, developed an overall theory that it would be critical to their diplomacy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. It is not so much that top decision makers calculatedly decided to use the weapon, but rather that it became central to their thinking, probably in ways they did not fully understand themselves. It appears that some of them came to be so bound up in the idea the bomb would be the "master card" against the Russians that they simply could not grasp the implications of the evidence that Japan could be forced to surrender without the new weapons. Or, possibly, as suggested by Leo Szilard's report, that Byrnes at least knew full well that the war was over, but wanted to use the bomb anyway.

The belief of top U.S. officials that the bomb would help them achieve diplomatic objectives is very clear in connection with the Manchurian problem, but it is also obvious that they saw it as important to overall diplomacy in Europe. The Stimson diaries documented the general influence of the new weapon 20 years ago, and the newer information helps fill out the basic

last two decades strongly suggests that the above explanation roughly describes what probably happened, especially the information on what the key military figures believed, and on Byrnes' early and deep involvement in advising the president both on nuclear questions and Yalta-related issues after Roosevelt died.

We still do not have answers to all the questions, of course, and it is possible that the president and Byrnes simply got so carried away with their desire to end the war that they didn't stop to think. But it is hard to sustain this interpretation in the face of the evidence of Japan's attempt to surrender, of U.S. intelligence reports on that attempt, of the direct advice of men like Leahy, Eisenhower, Arnold, and others that the war could be ended without an invasion and that the bomb was not militarily necessary, of the repeated advice that a Russian declaration of war or a change in the surrender terms would end the fighting, and, finally, of Truman's acknowledgment to Leahy and others that a change in the unconditional surrender formula was not a matter of principle, and that he planned to exploit all other available opportunities, including such a change, even if it cost more time and money.

A case could always be made, of course, that the bomb would help the war effort. How could such a case not be made? But reflecting especially upon the difference between those deeply involved in diplomacy toward Russia and the various military figures who were not so involved, it is clear that military factors alone—and especially Truman's oft-repeated argument that the bomb was necessary to avoid an invasion—simply cannot explain the choice.

At Potsdam, American officials became very excited by the news from Alamogordo, enthusiastic even, in their estimation of how much the atomic bomb would help them with the Russians. Whatever doubts they might have had probably disappeared in the heady atmosphere. A recent report by one high-ranking member of the delegation is that even on the basis of the first skimpy news of the successful New Mexico test, Truman told reparations chief Edwin Pauley that the bomb "would keep the Russians straight." According to Pauley's deputy, J.R. Parten, "Everyone was pretty high."

Finally, it is simply a fact of history that neither President Truman nor Secretary Byrnes appear to have experienced the moral difficulties with killing a large number of civilians that so disturbed men like Eisenhower and Leahy.

IT IS 40 YEARS since Hiroshima and Potsdam. Both the United States and the Soviet Union now have massive arsenals of nuclear weapons. Is there a way forward to a less threatening international environment?

In connection with the most important

1945 helps us see an underlying logic that still dominates major power relations. In Europe the security problem is similar in many respects to what it was 40 years ago, except that it has been escalated hundredfold. There clearly will be no serious relaxation of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe so long as Germany is a potential threat. Conversely, strategic that reduce tensions in Central Europe are likely to open the way, if anything can, to change in Eastern Europe.

In connection with the problem of nuclear weapons itself, the arms race can only be moderated by a decision to make this a priority and by direct negotiation. And both of these are likely to occur only to the extent that ordinary citizens press top officials to consider the larger issues at stake. The Hiroshima story teaches how easy it is for decision makers to lose sight of deeper questions of ethical and global significance in the absence of expressed public concern and clear citizen constraint.

Perhaps two final, more personal, comments are in order during this 40th anniversary year of the bombing of Hiroshima. For most Americans Hiroshima is an abstraction; it represents either a gigantic mushroom cloud or a symbol of mass death and destruction. Even the number are beyond ordinary comprehension: more than 200,000 deaths in the final reckoning. We need to shake the hold of both concepts; only then can we return to the large implications with an adequate awareness of the true stakes.

John Hersey got it right in his book *Hiroshima*: The atomic bomb was first of all an intimate, personal, highly individual experience. To walk the streets of Hiroshima today is to be forced to recognize the obvious: a young housewife passes walking arm in arm with an elderly woman perhaps her mother-in-law; three school children, maybe 9 years old, scamper up the road; a tired, aged garbage collector makes his rounds. Such people today remind us that such people then, individuals, were the ones who felt the experience of Hiroshima, and it was a very, very direct one indeed.

We can do nothing today about Hiroshima; we can only look to ourselves, to our actions or our inactions, to whether we contribute by deed or by silence to fostering an environment that restrains or allows or promotes the next Hiroshima. □

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