

the others being, say, a German alien enemy, an Italian alien enemy, and a citizen of American-born ancestors, convicted of treason but out on parole—only Korematsu's presence would have violated the order. The difference between their innocence and his crime would result, not from anything he did, said, or thought, different than they, but only in that he was born of different racial stock.

Now, if any fundamental assumption underlies our system, it is that guilt is personal and not inheritable. Even if all of one's antecedents had been convicted of treason, the Constitution forbids its penalties to be visited upon him, for it provides that "no attainder of treason shall work corruption of blood, or forfeiture except during the life

of the person attainted." But here is an attempt to make an otherwise innocent act a crime merely because this prisoner is the son of parents as to whom he had no choice, and belongs to a race from which there is no way to resign.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Justice Black object to calling relocation centers concentration camps?
2. What did Justice Murphy mean when he stated that "individual guilt is the sole basis for deprivation of rights?" Do you agree?

HARRY S. TRUMAN

The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb (1945)

President Truman recorded in his diary on July 25, 1945, that he had approved the use of an atomic bomb on Japan. Truman hoped that the bomb would be dropped on a "purely military" target, so that "military objectives and soldiers and sailors [would be] the target and not women and children."

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We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction 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 New Mexico 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 1,200 feet in

diameter, knocked over a steel tower 1/2 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 can-

not drop that terrible bomb on the old capital or the new.¹

He and 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 did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be

¹ Tokyo is the new capital, Kyoto the old.

the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful. . . .

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Given Japan's small size and dense population, was finding a "purely" military target realistic?
2. What did Truman's remark about the Soviet Union suggest about the status of Soviet-American relations at the end of the war?

HARRY S. TRUMAN

The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima— The Public Explanation (1945)

The following selection is Truman's public announcement on August 6, 1945, of the dropping of the atomic bomb. His comments were directed as much to the political and military leaders in Japan as they were to the American public.

From U.S., Department of State, Publication No. 2702, *The International Control of Atomic Energy: Growth of a Policy* (Washington, D.C., n.d. [1947]), pp. 95-97.

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam," which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present forms these bombs are now in production and even more

powerful forms are in development. It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe.

The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East. Before 1939, it was the accepted belief of scientists that it was theoretically possible to release atomic energy. But no one knew any practical method of doing it. By 1942, however, we knew that the Germans were working feverishly to find a way to add atomic energy to the other engines of war with which they hoped to enslave the world. But they failed. . . . The battle of the laboratories held fateful risks for us as well as the

battles of the air, land, and sea. We have won the battle of the laboratories. . . .

With American and British help, together we entered the atomic age. We and the Germans. The United States has a large number of scientists and engineers. Many needed areas of knowledge in the tremendous industrial and scientific effort necessary for the project are being filled. It is to it without undue impatience that we must work. In the United States, the production plant start had already been made. The reach of enemy bombing in Japan was exposed to constant threat. . . .

For these reasons President Truman and President Roosevelt have decided to carry on the project here. The production of atomic power will be on a peak construction number of 65,000 individuals are employed in operating the plants. Many of these plants are two and a half years. They have been producing. . . .

What has been done in the field of organized science under high pressure and now prepared to obliterate completely every productive plant that has above ground in all their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no doubt that we will completely destroy Japan's power.

It was to spare the Japanese from total destruction that the ultimatum was issued.

KARL T. COMPTON

If the Atomic Bomb Had Not Been Used (1946)

Winston Churchill declared that the atomic bomb was "a miracle of deliverance" that ended the war and thereby saved over a million lives. Not everyone agreed. In fact, wartime documents reveal that some military analysts predicted that an amphibious invasion of Japan would have resulted in approximately 46,000 deaths—slightly more than those suffered during the Normandy invasion. Thus, critics then and since have argued that Allied casualties during an invasion of Japan would have been high but acceptable and that the atomic bombs were unnecessary because the Japanese would have soon surrendered anyway. In 1946 physicist Karl T. Compton, who had worked on various scientific projects during World War II, defended the use of the atomic bomb. After reading Compton's article, President Truman wrote him a letter in which he agreed with his account. "The Japanese," he stressed, "were given fair warning and were offered the terms, which they finally accepted, well in advance of the dropping of the bomb. I imagine the bomb caused them to accept the terms."

From Karl T. Compton, "If the Atomic Bomb Had Not Been Used," *Atlantic Monthly* 178 (December 1946):54–56.

About a week after V-J Day I was one of a small group of scientists and engineers interrogating an intelligent, well-informed Japanese Army officer in Yokohama. We asked him what, in his opinion, would have been the next major move if the war had continued. He replied: "You would probably have tried to invade our homeland with a landing operation on Kyushu about November 1. I think the attack would have been made on such and such beaches."

"Could you have repelled this landing?" we asked, and he answered: "It would have been a very desperate fight, but I do not think we could have stopped you."

"What would have happened then?" we asked.

He replied: "We would have kept on fighting until all Japanese were killed, but we would not have been defeated," by which he meant that they would not have been disgraced by surrender.

It is easy now, after the event, to look back

and say that Japan was already a beaten nation, and to ask what therefore was the justification for the use of the atomic bomb to kill so many thousands of helpless Japanese in this inhuman way; furthermore, should we not better have kept it to ourselves as a secret weapon for future use, if necessary? This argument has been advanced often, but it seems to me utterly fallacious.

I had, perhaps, an unusual opportunity to know the pertinent facts from several angles, yet I was without responsibility for any of the decisions. I can therefore speak without doing so defensively. While my role in the atomic bomb development was a very minor one, I was a member of the group called together by Secretary of War Stimson¹ to assist him in plans for its test, use, and subsequent handling. Then, shortly before Hiro-

¹ Henry L. Stimson (1867–1950).

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shima, I became attached to General MacArthur² in Manila, and lived for two months with his staff. In this way I learned something of the invasion plans and of the sincere conviction of these best-informed officers that a desperate and costly struggle was still ahead. Finally, I spent the first month after V-J Day in Japan, where I could ascertain at first hand both the physical and the psychological state of that country. Some of the Japanese whom I consulted were my scientific and personal friends of long standing.

From this background I believe, with complete conviction, that the use of the atomic bomb saved hundreds of thousands—perhaps several millions—of lives, both American and Japanese; that without its use the war would have continued for many months; that no one of good conscience knowing, as Secretary Stimson and the Chiefs of Staff did, what was probably ahead and what the atomic bomb might accomplish could have made any different decision. Let some of the facts speak for themselves.

Was the use of the atomic bomb inhuman? All war is inhuman. Here are some comparisons of the atomic bombing with conventional bombing. At Hiroshima the atomic bomb killed about 80,000 people, pulverized about five square miles, and wrecked an additional ten square miles of the city, with decreasing damage out to seven or eight miles from the center. At Nagasaki the fatal casualties were 45,000 and the area wrecked was considerably smaller than at Hiroshima because of the configuration of the city.

Compare this with the results of two B-29 incendiary raids over Tokyo. One of these raids killed about 125,000 people, the other nearly 100,000.

Of the 210 square miles of greater Tokyo, 85 square miles of the densest part was destroyed as completely, for all practical purposes, as were the centers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; about half the buildings were destroyed in the remaining 125 square miles; the number of people driven homeless out of Tokyo was considerably larger than the

population of greater Chicago. These figures are based on information given us in Tokyo and on a detailed study of the air reconnaissance maps. They may be somewhat in error but are certainly of the right order of magnitude.

Was Japan already beaten before the atomic bomb? The answer is certainly "yes" in the sense that the fortunes of war had turned against her. The answer is "no" in the sense that she was still fighting desperately and there was every reason to believe that she would continue to do so; and this is the only answer that has any practical significance.

General MacArthur's staff anticipated about 50,000 American casualties and several times that number of Japanese casualties in the November 1 operation to establish the initial beachheads on Kyushu. After that they expected a far more costly struggle before the Japanese homeland was subdued. There was every reason to think that the Japanese would defend their homeland with even greater fanaticism than when they fought to the death on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. No American soldier who survived the bloody struggles on these islands has much sympathy with the view that battle with the Japanese was over as soon as it was clear that their ultimate situation was hopeless. No, there was every reason to expect a terrible struggle long after the point at which some people can now look back and say, "Japan was already beaten."

A month after our occupation I heard General MacArthur say that even then, if the Japanese government lost control over its people and the millions of former Japanese soldiers took to guerrilla warfare in the mountains, it could take a million American troops ten years to master the situation.

That this was not an impossibility is shown by the following fact, which I have not seen reported. We recall the long period of nearly three weeks between the Japanese offer to surrender and the actual surrender on September 2. This was needed in order to arrange details of the surrender and occupation and to permit the Japanese government to prepare its people to accept the capitulation. It is not generally realized that there was

² General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964).

threat of a revolt against the government, led by an Army group supported by the peasants, to seize control and continue the war. For several days it was touch and go as to whether the people would follow their government in surrender.

The bulk of the Japanese people did not consider themselves beaten; in fact they believed they were winning in spite of the terrible punishment they had taken. They watched the paper balloons take off and float eastward in the wind, confident that these were carrying a terrible retribution to the United States in revenge for our air raids.

We gained a vivid insight into the state of knowledge and morale of the ordinary Japanese soldier from a young private who had served through the war in the Japanese Army. He had lived since babyhood in America, and had graduated in 1940 from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This lad, thoroughly American in outlook, had gone with his family to visit relatives shortly after his graduation. They were caught in the mobilization and he was drafted into the Army.

This young Japanese told us that all his fellow soldiers believed that Japan was winning the war. To them the losses of Iwo Jima and Okinawa were parts of a grand strategy to lure the American forces closer and closer to the homeland, until they could be pounced upon and utterly annihilated. He himself had come to have some doubts as a result of various inconsistencies in official reports. Also he had seen the Ford assembly line in operation and knew that Japan could not match America in war production. But none of the soldiers had any inkling of the true situation until one night, at ten-thirty, his regiment was called to hear the reading of the surrender proclamation.

Did the atomic bomb bring about the end of the war? That it would do so was the calculated gamble and hope of Mr. Stimson, General Marshall,³ and their associates. The facts are these. On July 26, 1945, the Potsdam Ultimatum called on Japan to surrender unconditionally. On July 29 Premier Suzuki issued a statement, purportedly at

³ General George Marshall (1880-1959).

a cabinet press conference, scorning as unworthy of official notice the surrender ultimatum, and emphasizing the increasing rate of Japanese aircraft production. Eight days later, on August 6, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima; the second was dropped on August 9 on Nagasaki; on the following day, August 10, Japan declared its intention to surrender, and on August 14 accepted the Potsdam terms.

On the basis of these facts, I cannot believe that, without the atomic bomb, the surrender would have come without a great deal more of costly struggle and bloodshed.

Exactly what role the atomic bomb played will always allow some scope for conjecture. A survey has shown that it did not have much immediate effect on the common people far from the two bombed cities; they knew little or nothing of it. The even more disastrous conventional bombing of Tokyo and other cities had not brought the people into the mood to surrender.

The evidence points to a combination of factors. (1) Some of the more informed and intelligent elements in Japanese official circles realized that they were fighting a losing battle and that complete destruction lay ahead if the war continued. These elements, however, were not powerful enough to sway the situation against the dominating Army organization, backed by the profiteering industrialists, the peasants, and the ignorant masses. (2) The atomic bomb introduced a dramatic new element into the situation, which strengthened the hands of those who sought peace and provided a face-saving argument for those who had hitherto advocated continued war. (3) When the second atomic bomb was dropped, it became clear that this was not an isolated weapon, but that there were others to follow. With dread prospect of a deluge of these terrible bombs and no possibility of preventing them, the argument for surrender was made convincing. This I believe to be the true picture of the effect of the atomic bomb in bringing the war to a sudden end, with Japan's unconditional surrender.

If the atomic bomb had not been used, evidence like that I have cited points to the practical cer-

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tainty that there would have been many more months of death and destruction on an enormous scale. Also the early timing of its use was fortunate for a reason which could not have been anticipated. If the invasion plans had proceeded as scheduled, October, 1945, would have seen Okinawa covered with airplanes and its harbors crowded with landing craft poised for the attack. The typhoon which struck Okinawa in that month would have wrecked the invasion plans with a military disaster comparable to Pearl Harbor.

These are some of the facts which led those who know them, and especially those who had to base decisions on them, to feel that there is much delusion and wishful thinking among those after-the-event strategists who now deplore the use of the atomic bomb on the ground that its use was inhuman or that it was unnecessary because Japan was already beaten. And it was not one atomic bomb, or two, which brought surrender; it was the experience of what an atomic bomb will actually do to a community, plus the *dread of many more*, that was effective.

If 500 bombers could wreak such destruction

on Tokyo, what will 500 bombers, each carrying an atomic bomb, do to the City of Tomorrow? It is this deadly prospect which now lends such force to the two basic policies of our nation on this Subject: (1) We must strive generously and with all our ability to promote the United Nations' effort to assure future peace between nations; but we must not lightly surrender the atomic bomb as a means for our own defense. (2) We should surrender or share it only when there is adopted an international plan to enforce peace in which we can have great confidence.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that there was no fundamental difference between fire bombing Tokyo and dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?
2. Should the United States have shared the technical information about atomic bombs with other nations or kept it a secret?

the American raiders had already shown how completely they violate in their actual deeds the principles of humanity which they mouth in conspicuous pretense.

But now beside the latest technique of total destruction which the Americans have adopted, their earliest crimes pale into relative insignificance. What more barbarous atrocity can there be than to wipe out at one stroke the population of a whole city without distinction*—men, women, and children; the aged, the weak, the infirm; those in positions of authority, and those with no power at all; all snuffed out without being given a chance of lifting even a finger in either defense or defiance!

The United States may claim, in a lame attempt to raise a pretext in justification of its latest action, that a policy of utter annihilation is necessitated by Japan's failure to heed the recent demand for unconditional surrender. But the question of surrendering or not surrendering certainly can have not the slightest relevance to the question of whether it is justifiable to use a method which under any circumstance is strictly condemned alike by the principles of international law and of morality. For this American outrage against the fundamental moral sense of mankind, Japan must proclaim to the world its protest against the United States, which has made itself the archenemy of humanity.

2. The Christian Century Deplores the Bombing (1945)

The use of the atomic bomb was reluctantly but overwhelmingly recommended by Truman's large corps of expert advisers. Some of the scientists at first proposed test demonstrations in an uninhabited place, but the United States had only two bombs, and they might prove to be humiliating duds. They could not wreak much damage in desert areas and might leave the Japanese unimpressed. If the cities to be bombed were warned in advance, the Japanese might move American prisoners of war to them and at the same time ambush the U.S. bombers. Japan was reeling, but it perhaps had enough suicide resistance left to exact a million casualties, while losing more than a million of its own people. The atomic bomb, indicating that awesome forces were working against the Japanese, might stun them into a quick surrender—as it did. (A dry-run demonstration would have weakened this effect.) The cost was perhaps 150,000 Japanese lives, as against 2 million—Japanese, American, and British. The Christian Century, a prominent Protestant journal published in Chicago, did not accept the philosophy of a "mercy bombing." Which, if any, of its suggestions would have strengthened the moral position of the United States?

Something like a moral earthquake has followed the dropping of atomic bombs on two Japanese cities. Its continued tremors throughout the world have diverted attention even from the military victory itself. . . . It is our belief that the use made of the atomic bomb has placed our nation in an indefensible moral position.

*At Hiroshima about 150,000 people were killed and wounded out of a total population of some 350,000. The firebomb raid on Tokyo of March 10, 1945, killed an estimated 83,000 people.

²⁶"America's Atomic Atrocity." Copyright 1945 Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission from the August 29, 1945, issue of *The Christian Century*.

D. Dropping the Atomic Bomb

I. Japan's Horrified Reaction (1945)

With Germany knocked out of the war, President Truman journeyed to Potsdam, near Berlin, in July 1945, to concert plans with Stalin and the British leaders. He was there informed that U.S. scientists had experimentally detonated the first atomic bomb in history. The conferees now called on the Japanese to surrender or be destroyed, although the Potsdam ultimatum made no reference, as perhaps it should have, to the existence of the fantastic new weapon. When Tokyo brushed aside the demand for surrender, Truman ordered the dropping of atomic bombs (the only two the United States then had) on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9). The horrified reaction of the Nippon Times is herewith given. Determine whether there was force in the Japanese charge of hypocrisy, and whether there is any moral difference between atomic bombing and large-scale incendiary bombing of civilian centers. (The Japanese had already bombed civilian centers, beginning with Shanghai in 1932.) Did the Japanese refusal to respond to the Potsdam ultimatum justify the bombing?*

How can a human being with any claim to a sense of moral responsibility deliberately let loose an instrument of destruction which can at one stroke annihilate an appalling segment of mankind? This is not war; this is not even murder; this is pure nihilism. This is a crime against God and humanity which strikes at the very basis of moral existence. What meaning is there in any international law, in any rule of human conduct, in any concept of right and wrong, if the very foundations of morality are to be overthrown as the use of this instrument of total destruction threatens to do?

The crime of the Americans stands out in ghastly repulsiveness all the more for the ironic contradiction it affords to their lying pretensions. For in their noisy statements, they have always claimed to be the champions of fairness and humanitarianism. In the early days of the China Affair [beginning in 1937], the United States repeatedly protested against the bombing operations of the Japanese forces, notwithstanding the fact that the Japanese operations were conducted on a limited scale against strictly military objectives. But where its own actions are concerned, the United States seems to see no inconsistency in committing on an unimaginably vast scale the very same crime it had falsely accused others of committing.

This hypocritical character of the Americans had already been amply demonstrated in the previous bombings of Japanese cities. Strewing explosives and fire bombs indiscriminately over an extensive area, hitting large cities and small towns without distinction, wiping out vast districts which could not be mistaken as being anything but strictly residential in character, burning or blasting to death countless thousands of helpless women and children, and machine-gunning fleeing refugees,

¹*Nippon Times* (Tokyo), August 10, 1945.

*The third bomb was not scheduled to be ready until about August 24, two weeks after the dropping of the second one.