



THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

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On the 6th and 9th of August 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and became the first and only nation to use such weapons in recorded warfare. Harry Truman, a veteran of the United States Senate and with only four months of vice presidential tenure, unexpectedly took office after Franklin Roosevelt's death on April 12th that same year. Then, in the next four months leading up to the atomic bombings, he learned of the extent of the Manhattan Project, deliberated with his advisors and staff on the use of the bomb, and finally made the decision that would define an era. It did not take long for that decision to come under fire with doubts as to whether or not the bombs were truly necessary in the defeat of Japan, or if they were at all morally justifiable. Under this scrutiny, Truman maintained that he was the one to make the decision, that it was necessary in the defeat of Japan, and that the moral weight of it fell upon him. What factors, political and military, led to the atomic bombs and Harry Truman's decision? Was it truly even his decision, or, with his relative inexperience, was the decision made for him by men around him? Truman trusted the advice of the diverse men who had worked around the Manhattan Project, and like them, expected that if the project were successful, it should be used. The decision to use the atomic bomb was that of a nuclear family, the group of gentlemen surrounding the bomb's use, and not just one man.¹

¹ There is enough literature on the bombings to fill a large library. These range from historical analyses to nonfiction accounts of the destruction, such as *Hiroshima* by John Hersey. Other notable books include *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima & Potsdam* by Gar Alperovitz and *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb* by Ronald Takaki. These two authors encompass what historians would call the "New Left" on the subject matter, which views the bomb as unnecessary and a purely diplomatic weapon against the Soviet Union. I often cite Wilson Miscamble's *The Most Controversial Decision*, whose conclusion is that the bombs were ultimately necessary. Many of my sources are straight from those surrounding the bomb's usage. I poured through committee minutes, interviews, and quotes from biographies.

"Harry, the President is dead." Eleanor said quietly to Truman in her calm and characteristic graceful dignity, as Truman described. Leading up to Roosevelt's death, Truman expressed deep concern for the President's well being in his memoirs, and also seemed to know no more about him or his plans than any average citizen. He wrote that the he and the President did have private meetings, but Truman would not learn of the full extent of the Manhattan Project until after his death. "Is there anything I can do for you?" Truman asked, and wrote that he would never forget her deeply understanding reply, "Is there anything *we* can do for *you*? For you are the one in trouble now."²

It was after his first cabinet meeting that Truman learned of the atomic bomb. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson asked to speak to Truman and informed him of, "An immense project that was under way, a project looking to the development of a new explosive of almost unbelievable destructive power." Director of War Mobilization, Jimmy Byrnes, who would soon become Secretary of State, met with Truman the next day and said that, "the bomb was great enough to destroy the whole world."³ Byrnes and Stimson would prove to be important figures in the decision making process of dropping the atomic bombs, but perhaps the most important figure for President Truman was President Roosevelt.

In the context of Truman's final decision, Roosevelt's deliberations around the production of the atomic bomb are important, because they provided to Truman a foundation of thought to work off of. In his memoirs, Truman writes, "It was my intention... to continue both the foreign and the domestic policies of the Roosevelt administration."⁴ If Truman thought that Roosevelt intended to utilize the bomb, then, a driving factor for Truman to give the final order would've been him seeking to not interfere with his predecessor's plans. However, it is absolutely uncertain how, exactly, Roosevelt would have desired to utilize atomic bombs diplomatically.

2 Truman, Harry. *Year of Decisions Volume 1*. p. 15.

3 Truman, Harry. *Year of Decisions Volume 1*. p. 20.

4 Truman, Harry. *Year of Decisions Volume 1*. p. 19.

Roosevelt, after all, did authorize— and saw for almost its full duration— a project that ultimately cost two billion dollars, so unless he foresaw the possible civilian uses of atomic energy, he certainly thought to use the bomb.⁵

The first step in the American production of the atomic bomb came from none other than celebrity theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein. On August 2nd, 1939, Einstein, after conferences with Alexander Sachs— a wall street economist and political associate— signed a letter to Roosevelt informing him that the element of uranium could be used to create a weapon, that, if "carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of its surrounding territory." In the same letter, Einstein suggested to Roosevelt that the administration entrust someone to keep them informed on the subject and assists and speeds up the experimental work being done, because some of the American work on uranium was being repeated in Germany. On October 19th of the same year, Sachs delivered the letter to Roosevelt and read it aloud to him. At the conclusion of the interview, Roosevelt called for his aid and said, "This requires action." Roosevelt responded, informing Einstein that he "found this data of such import that I have convened a Board consisting of the head of the Bureau of Standards and a chosen representative of the Army and Navy to thoroughly investigate the possibilities of your suggestion regarding the element of uranium."⁶ These were the first steps to the Manhattan Project.

The Einstein letter itself is profound because at the time it was written to Roosevelt, and only until before it was delivered to his desk, Europe had not yet been plunged into war. Given the nature of the letter, Einstein had the foresight to see that the United States would eventually enter the mounting conflict in Europe, and, given Roosevelt's response, he took the possibility very seriously as well, as so

5 Miscamble cites Kort, *Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, p.17.

6 Einstein, Albert, Roosevelt, Franklin, and Archivists of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum . FDR Library Digital collections. "Selected Documents on the Topic of the Atomic Bomb, 1935-1976 | Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum".

to begin to actively work on developing a bomb of unheard of proportions, operating under the fear that the Germans might develop the bomb first, and likely use it to hold the world hostage.

In July 1941, the British MAUD Committee provided a report to FDR that spoke to the practicality of an atomic bomb being finished as soon as 1943, and that it would prove decisive in the war. In response, Roosevelt wrote to Churchill to further cooperate their efforts, and four days after Germany declared war on the United States, Roosevelt authorized Dr. Vannevar Bush, head of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, to develop an atomic bomb. The effort subsequently became known as the Manhattan Project when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assigned it to the Manhattan Engineering District.⁷

The two men who would eventually take direct command of the project were Brigadier General Leslie Groves, who had also just overseen the construction of the Pentagon, and Dr. Julius Robert Oppenheimer, a Berkley Physicist with leftist political sympathies. Army counterintelligence objected because Oppenheimer had, "former friends" in the Communist Party.⁸ Despite this, and although they were nearly opposite men, Groves selected Oppenheimer because he believed he could lead what was a very diverse group of scientists, consisting of America's best minds, as well as those who fled fascist Europe. Secretary Stimson, who supervised the project, gave orders to Groves to produce a bomb, "at the earliest possible date so as to bring the war to a conclusion."⁹ Stimson and Groves knew the significance of what they were creating, and that using it may end the war. Oppenheimer could not have possibly been naive to its potential as well, even years before the Trinity Test, however, he is remembered for his deep regret surrounding the atomic bomb, famously quoting Hindu scripture with a look of sadness in his eyes, "Now I am become death, destroyer of worlds... I suppose

7 Miscamble, Wilson. *The Most Controversial Decision*, p. 7-8.

8 Mayse, Chris. "The Story of the Atomic Bomb". Air Force Historical Support Division. (2011).

9 Miscamble cites Groves quoted in Kort, *Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*. p.19

we all thought that one way or another."¹⁰ Harry Truman and other members of the Interim Committee on Atomic Energy, understood the power of the bomb as well.

While in Potsdam, meeting with Churchill and Stalin, Truman learned of the successful Trinity test, the first detonation of an atomic bomb in history. In his diary for July 25, 1945, he wrote, "It may be the fire destruction prophesied by the Euphrates Valley era, after Noah and his fabulous ark," and he further wrote, "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 the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful."¹¹ In the months before dropping the bomb, the discussion around its utilization occurred in an advisory group, the Interim Committee, appointed by Truman and chaired by Secretary Stimson. Its first meeting was on May 9th, and in it Stimson established the membership of the committee, which included several members of Truman's cabinet, leftover from Roosevelt's administration, such as Dr. Bush and, notably, James Byrnes as a, "Special Representative of the President."¹² Truman clearly displays a lot of trust in James Byrnes, shown here, and in his appointment as Secretary of State in July before the Potsdam meetings.

James Byrnes is perhaps one of the most under-recognized figures in United States history. In his long political career which started at the age of twenty-nine, he served as a member of the U.S. House, U.S. Senate, as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Directors of the Office of Economic Stabilization and War Mobilization, Secretary of State, and finally as Governor of South Carolina.¹³ According Wilson D. Miscamble, author of *The Most Controversial*

10 PlenilunePictures. J. Robert Oppenheimer: "I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." (Youtube: 2011).

11 Found in Madison, James. *World War II A History in Documents*. (New York, 2010). p. 106-107.

12 Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. "Notes of Meeting of the Interim Committee, May 9, 1945. Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection. 736." (1945).

13 Wikipedia contributors. (2018, November 26). James F. Byrnes. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 23:28, December 7, 2018,

Decision, Roosevelt and Byrnes were close colleagues, and Roosevelt even brought him to Yalta, but despite Byrnes excellent capabilities, he was passed up for the Vice Presidential nomination and Secretary of State appointment. Miscamble writes, "the president judged Byrnes too independent for that task and picked the more malleable Edward Stettinius," for Secretary of State.¹⁴ On this point, it is important to realize that Roosevelt practiced dividing overlapping authority between subordinates in order to ensure he made final decisions.¹⁵ This certainly displays a mastery over the White House, but also shows that Roosevelt always sought to ensure that he was making the final calls on important decisions. Byrnes political excellence matched Roosevelt's and could have proved to be a difficult force for the President to work with. Truman, however, relied on Byrnes to provide much needed context around foreign policy decisions.

Truman clearly recognized his limitations, and only a day after Roosevelt's death, told reporters, "I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."¹⁶ That same day, April 13th, Truman called for Byrnes to meet him to discuss the Yalta conference proceedings, wanting to learn more of the agreements that Roosevelt made and the policies he intended to pursue.¹⁷ These were the first steps towards Byrnes becoming Secretary of State, and more immediately, Truman's representative on the Interim Committee. In the past, Truman had a friendly relationship with Byrnes in the U.S. Senate, so familiarity was likely very appealing to the new President. Later, and leading up to the Potsdam meeting, Truman wanted Byrnes to be at his side, and announced Secretary of State Edward Stettinius's resignation. Shortly after, he nominated Byrnes for the position and it sailed through the Senate by unanimous vote on July 3rd.¹⁸

14 Miscamble, Wilson. *The Most Controversial Decision*. p. 40.

15 Miscamble cites Maney, Patrick. *The Roosevelt Presence: A Biography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York, 1992), p. 191.

16 Friedman, Ian. "Words Matter The Quotations that Shape, Reflect, and Explain America"

17 Miscamble, Wilson. *The Most Controversial Decision*. p. 30.

18 Miscamble, Wilson. *The Most Controversial Decision*. p. 39.

In the second meeting of the Interim Committee, members agreed that a scientific panel should be established to advise the Committee, not only on technical matters, but, "also on any other phase of the subject on which the panel might care to express its views." Its membership included Drs. A. H. Compton, E. O. Lawrence, Enrico Fermi, and notably Oppenheimer. In the meetings Oppenheimer attended, he as well as the other scientists seemed to show absolutely no reservation about the usage of the bombs, unless the secretary of the committee did not include such comments in the notes. Considering that the use of the bomb is often cited as military necessity, the fact that the committee agreed that no panel should be formed out of membership of high levels in the Army and Navy, and only the views of those, "most directly concerned with the project should be obtained," is also quite compelling.¹⁹ In the meeting of May 31st, Stimson expressed the view that, "this project should not be considered simply in terms of military weapons, but as a new relationship of man to the universe."²⁰ Byrnes, Oppenheimer, and Groves all attended that meeting.

These men, the scientists, politicians, generals, and presidents Roosevelt and Truman, all of the primary figures around the atom bomb, absolutely understood the capacity of the weapon they were going to utilize, and what it was going to mean for the world. It was absolutely unavoidable to take into consideration how the atomic bomb would affect Soviet-Anglo-American relations. Even before Groves and Oppenheimer took on the Manhattan Project, Roosevelt and Churchill held a series of meetings devoted to the project. At these meetings, they agreed the bomb would be joint British and American project, exchanging information freely between one an-

19 Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. "Log of the Interim Committee of the Manhattan Project, May 9, 1945. Arneson Papers, Subject File. Interim Committee on Atomic Energy--Notes of Meetings." (1945).

20 Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. "Notes of Meeting of the Interim Committee, May 31, 1945. Arneson Papers, Subject File. Interim Committee on Atomic Energy--Notes of Meetings (May 9 to July 19, 1945) and Log (May 9 to November 16, 1945).

other.²¹ The Soviet Union was left out of this agreement, but they began work on a bomb in 1939, and carried out espionage on the Manhattan Project.²²

The May 31st Interim Committee meeting also had the attitude of the Soviet Union as a primary topic of discussion. In the notes, "Dr. Oppenheimer pointed out that Russia had always been very friendly to science and suggested that we might open up this subject with them... without giving them any details of our productive effort." Considering his leftist sympathies were well known, Oppenheimer was probably not the best suited to bring about this topic of discussion. Byrnes, still Director of War Mobilization, rebutted, "if information were given to the Russians, even in general terms, Stalin would ask to be brought into the partnership... (and) that the most desirable program would be to push ahead as fast as possible... and at the same time make every effort to better our political relations with Russia."²³ Byrnes comments seem contradictory in nature, but, perhaps to be more accurate, Byrnes should have said, "to make our political relations with Russia more clear." Here, Byrnes was dipping his toes into the work he would eventually do as Secretary of State, and displayed a more hard-line approach to the Soviet Union that may have rubbed off on Truman.

It should be noted that in no time during these meetings was there any doubt among members of this 'nuclear family' that if the bombs were developed as planned then they would be used. Louis Morton makes this observation in *Command Decisions: The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb*, and further details the thoughts of major figures well after the bomb was used. "At no time from 1941 to 1945 did I ever hear it suggest by the President, or by another responsible member of the Government, that atomic energy should not be used

21 Miscamble, Wilson. *The Most Controversial Decision*. p. 11.

22 Mayse, Chris. "The Story of the Atomic Bomb". Air Force Historical Support Division. (2011).

23 Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. "Notes of Meeting of the Interim Committee, May 31, 1945. Arneson Papers, Subject File. Interim Committee on Atomic Energy--Notes of Meetings (May 9 to July 19, 1945) and Log (May 9 to November 16, 1945).

in the war," Secretary Stimson declared. In 1954, Oppenheimer recalled that "we always assumed if they were needed, they would be used."²⁴ In all of the pre-Hiroshima research looked at for this writing, there appears to be no reservation about using the bomb, only disagreement about how and where to use it, up until a petition was sent on July 17th to President Truman from scientists who worked on the project. The signing scientists before felt that, "the United States might be attacked by atomic bombs and that her only defense might lie in a counterattack by the same means," but with the defeat of Germany, that particular danger was averted. They understood the war needed to be ended quickly, and that the atomic bombs may accomplish that, but also felt that Japan must be absolutely warned of its destructive capabilities and be given assurances that they could, "look forward to a life devoted to peaceful pursuits." Then if the Japanese still did not surrender, they felt that, "in certain circumstances," the United States may resort to using atomic weapons.²⁵ There is no evidence in Truman's memoirs that he got the petition before he finally made the call, and that the decision had already been made by the time Truman arrived at Potsdam.²⁶

Upon the completion of the Interim Committee work, the membership recommended unanimously to the President that: "1. The bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible. 2. It should be used against a military target surrounded by other buildings. 3. It should be used without prior warning of the nature of the weapon."²⁷ At Potsdam, Truman does issue a warning statement, without mention of the atomic bomb, asking the Japanese to surrender, which he did not expect them to accept.²⁸ The Japanese referred

24 Morton, Luis. *Command Decisions: The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb*. p. 494.

25 Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. "Petition to the President of the United States, July 17, 1945. Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection. 345."

26 MacEachin, Douglas. "The Final Months of the War with Japan". (2007). Central Intelligence Agency Library.

27 Morton, Luis. *Command Decisions: The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb*. p. 497.

28 Found in Madison, James. *World War II A History in Documents*. (New York, 2010). p. 107.

the proclamation as "unworthy of consideration, absurd, and presumptuous." Stalin committed to entering the Pacific theater three months after the German defeat, and refused an offer from Japan to mediate a truce between American and Japanese forces.²⁹ Truman also casually informed Stalin on July 24th of a weapon "of unusual destructive force," and all Stalin said was, "that he was glad to hear it, and hoped we would make 'good use of it against the Japanese,'" according to Truman.³⁰ Stalin certainly not only knew of the possibility of an atomic bomb, but had his own in development. Two weeks later, on August 6th, the Enola Gay carried out its mission over Hiroshima, a target that Truman described as, "a purely military one," deciding against dropping the bomb in Kyoto and Tokyo.³¹

The same day the bomb was dropped, the White House did a press release informing the world of the destructive capabilities of the atomic bomb. "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," and the press release further declared, "They (the Japanese) have been repaid many fold."³² The press release gives some background around the bomb's destruction, but gives no further justification to its use other than what appears to be revenge for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It was on August 8th that the Soviet Union invaded Manchuria, Japan's largest colonial possession, and on the 9th that the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 15th, the people of Japan heard the voice of their Emperor Hirohito in a radio broadcast. He announced that, "the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage," and further, "Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would be the total extinction of human civilization..."³³ Hirohito, a direct descendant of the sun-goddess in

29 Truman, Harry. *Year of Decisions Volume I*, p. 437-438.

30 Truman, Harry. *Year of Decisions Volume I*, p. 458.

31 Found in Madison, James. *World War II A History in Documents*, p. 107.

32 Found in Madison, James. *World War II A History in Documents*, p. 107.

33 Found in Madison, James. *World War II A History in Documents*, p. 107.

the Japanese state religion Shinto, had surrendered. Truman would be criticized for the rest of his life and to today for his decision. Earlier, it was noted that the Interim Committee agreed that no panel should be formed out of membership of high levels in the Army and Navy. General Dwight Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur, and Admiral William Leahy all disagreed with the use of the bomb.

In July 1945, Secretary Stimson went to inform Eisenhower of the bomb's planned use, and Eisenhower replied, "I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of 'face'."³⁴ Stimson was unsettled by his attitude, and it is important to note that this opinion was expressed before the bombs use, so not to think that Eisenhower would later use it to his advantage politically. Admiral Leahy thought of the bombs use as barbarous writing that, "The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons."³⁵

It is strange that the Interim Committee did not want the insight of American high command on the use of a military weapon. Although the bomb may have been dropped regardless, it would seem that the nuclear family would have benefited from additional membership, especially those who are directly in charge of the combat theaters where they sought to use the weapon. It is evident that there was not much resistance to using the bomb, and there was a general assumption that if it was made, then it would be used. Some may stereotype military men as being the most hawkish, but in this case it would appear that if Eisenhower and Leahy were involved in discussions, then there would at the very least be some resistance to

34 Eisenhower, Dwight, *Mandate For Change*, p. 380

35 Leahy, William. *I Was There*, p. 441.

the idea of using the bomb. General Douglas MacArthur was particularly taken aback by demanding the unconditional surrender of Japan.

MacArthur biographer William Manchester described MacArthur's reaction to the Potsdam proclamation to Japan, "MacArthur was appalled. He knew that the Japanese would never renounce their emperor, and that without him an orderly transition to peace would be impossible anyhow, because his people would never submit to Allied occupation unless he ordered it. Ironically, when the surrender did come, it was conditional, and the condition was a continuation of the imperial reign. Had the General's advice been followed, the resort to atomic weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki might have been unnecessary."³⁶ Norman Cousins, a consultant to General MacArthur during the American occupation of Japan, writes that in his conversations with him, "MacArthur's views about the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were starkly different from what the general public supposed," and he later writes that, "When I asked General MacArthur about the decision to drop the bomb, I was surprised to learn he had not even been consulted. What, I asked, would his advice have been? He replied that he saw no military justification for the dropping of the bomb. The war might have ended weeks earlier, he said, if the United States had agreed, as it later did anyway, to the retention of the institution of the emperor."³⁷

Secretary Stimson and Harry Truman expressed that they would find it acceptable to retain the Emperor after the bombs had been dropped, although Truman writes that Stimson always maintained that view, because the Emperor would be necessary in effecting a surrender.³⁸ It was the one condition in a otherwise unconditional surrender, a condition that critics like MacArthur expressed that if it were put on the table much sooner, opposed to the Potsdam

36 Manchester, William. *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964*. p. 512.

37 Cousins, Norman. *The Pathology of Power*. p. 65, 70-71.

38 Truman, Harry. *Year of Decisions Volume 1*. p. 472

demand, then the Japanese would have been willing to surrender. This presents many challenges to the idea that the bombs were necessary in effecting a Japanese surrender, and lends credence to the view that the atomic bombs were a diplomatic weapon against the Soviet Union. Truman messaged Stalin covering the details of the surrender of Japanese Armed Forces, and Stalin replied with the recommendation, "To include in the area to be surrendered... to Soviet troops the northern half of the Island of Hokkaido (Japan's northernmost main island)." He further wrote, "I am most anxious that the modest suggestions set forth should not meet with any objections."³⁹ Truman responded to this demand that, "It is my intention and arrangements have been made for the surrender of Japanese forces on all the islands of Japan proper... to General MacArthur."⁴⁰ Stalin simply responded, "I must say that I and my colleagues had not anticipated that such would be your reply."⁴¹

It is arguable whether or not the atomic bombs were at the back of the minds of these men when that request was made and refused. The early events of the Cold War that drove the wedge between the West and the Soviet Union still had not occurred, and Stalin, Truman, and Churchill were overseeing the transition into a post-war world. Although Truman did not outright wave the atomic bomb in Stalin's face as a reply, the Truman administration, like the Roosevelt, did not see the Soviet Union as close of an ally as the United Kingdom. Had Truman accepted Stalin's recommendation, it would have likely led Japan to a similar state, albeit not as extreme, as Germany, where there would be Soviet and American occupied zones. This is an example of the Truman Doctrine being utilized before it was coined as a foreign policy stance, as Truman absolute-

39 Stalin, Joseph. "Personal And Secret From Premier J. V. Stalin To The President H. Truman. No. 363." Found in Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Atlee, Roosevelt, and Truman 1941-1945. p. 266.

40 Stalin, Joseph. "For Generalissimo Stalin From President Truman. No. 364." Found in Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Atlee, Roosevelt, and Truman 1941-1945. p. 267.

41 Stalin, Joseph. "Personal And Secret From Premier J. V. Stalin To The President H. Truman. No. 365." Found in Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Atlee, Roosevelt, and Truman 1941-1945. p. 267.

ly sought to minimize Soviet geopolitical expansion and influence around the world. The fact that the United States was the first to obtain nuclear weapons gives Truman this political room to flex on Stalin, and given Stalin's simple response, despite how anxious he said he was about it, it is clear that he knew that he was not in a position to oppose Truman at the very least, in the Pacific.

In the face of all of this criticism, Truman maintained that the bomb was dropped purely to force a Japanese surrender. In an interview he stated, "as far as the bomb is concerned I ordered its use for a military reason - for no other cause and it saved the lives of a great many of our soldiers. That is all I had in mind."⁴² In Hirohito's radio broadcast, he did state that, "the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is indeed incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives."⁴³ This shows that the bomb was indeed a major consideration in the Japanese surrender, and furthermore, Hirohito had to take the unprecedented step of calling an Imperial Conference to produce an agreement amongst Japanese leadership on how to continue the war. When that failed, Hirohito simply expressed to his minister that he wished the war to end.⁴⁴ They then accepted the Potsdam Declaration, provided that the one condition of the Emperor retaining his position was met.

The bomb was ultimately a primary consideration for Emperor Hirohito to make the final call to surrender. It did bring the war to a more swift end, but how swift remains debatable. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey concluded that Japan would have surrendered by the end of the year, without invasion and the atomic bomb.⁴⁵ MacArthur believed they were only weeks away from surrender. The Soviet entry, continuous air bombardment, and naval

42 Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. "Excerpt from Transcript of Interview with former President Truman, ca. 1955. Truman Papers, Post-Presidential File. Foreign Policy."

43 Found in Madison, James. *World War II A History in Documents*. p. 107.

44 Morton, Luis. *Command Decisions: The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb*. p. 517.

45 Morton, Luis. *Command Decisions: The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb*. p. 517.

power all numbered the days of the Japanese Empire. The atomic bomb may have prevented a split occupation of Japan between Soviet and American forces, however, many maintain that a land invasion would not have been necessary at all. The decision making process behind the dropping of the bomb does not appear to be so much a process, but an assumption that it needed to be used, perhaps because of how much money and time was poured into it, and that its power alone could bring the war to an end. Truman trusted the advice of the diverse men who had worked around the Manhattan Project, and like them, expected that if the project were successful, it should be used. The decision to use the atomic bomb was that of a nuclear family, not just one man, but perhaps that nuclear family could have been larger, extended, to include the insights from high level Army and Navy commanders, such as Eisenhower, Leahy, and MacArthur.

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