

To End the War

Summer 1945



On April 12, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt died while in office. Three months after assuming office, President Harry Truman found himself in control of the most terrible weapon in the history of the world: the atomic bomb.

During the war President Roosevelt had funneled \$2 billion into the Manhattan Project, and on April 16, 1945, American scientists successfully exploded an atomic bomb in the deserts of New Mexico. The blast measured a force equal to 20,000 tons on TNT.

The completion of the Manhattan Project came at an opportune time. Germany and Italy had been defeated by the Allies and the tide was turning against the Japanese. Japan's industries and military had been devastated by the war, but the Japanese showed no signs of surrender. In light of Japan's disdain for surrender, a full-force invasion of Japan might be necessary to end the war. However, this would result in large-scale casualties on both sides. The military could use the traditional blockade and bomb option, but that too would take a long time and could inflict large casualties on Japanese civilians. Maybe the atomic bomb and its unimaginable power could bring Japan to its knees and force them to surrender.

Instructions:

In order to determine whether President Truman should utilize the atomic bomb in Japan you will be reading arguments for against the use of the bomb. As you read you will be organizing the arguments according to whether they support or oppose the use of the atomic bomb. You should fill in all of the spaces on the graphic organizer. When you have finished the readings you will need to select one side and explain why you chose that action.

THE DECISION IS YOURS.

What course of action will you take to force the Japanese to surrender?

Option 1 **Invade Japan.**

The traditional military approach to forcing the surrender of an enemy military force is to invade their territory, defeat their armies, and conquer their land. This is the most honorable method because it largely confines the killing to trained soldiers and spares innocent civilians.

Your generals have drawn up plans for an invasion of Japan. More than a million American soldiers will take part in the invasion. The schedule calls for an attack on the southern island of Kyushu in October 1945, followed by an invasion of the main Japanese island of Honshu in March 1946. Massive bombing against the Japanese

defensive positions will support both attacks. In fact, the United States military is stockpiling more bombs for the pre-invasion bombardment of Japan than were dropped on Germany during the entire war.

Even with such powerful support, however, military experts predict that American casualties will be severe. The closer Allied troops have drawn to the Japanese home islands, the more fierce the fighting has become. Earlier this year, more than 4,000 American marines died capturing the tiny island of Iwo Jima. That was followed by over 12,000 American dead and 36,000 wounded in the battle for Okinawa, an island nearly 400 miles from the main Japanese islands. More than 100,000 Japanese soldiers and a similar number of civilians lost their lives defending Okinawa.

Japan will have at least 20 times more soldiers defending the main islands than they had on Okinawa. Some of its military leaders are itching for one last chance to uphold their honor as fighting men. They will fight fanatically. Most observers expect the invasion to be the bloodiest assault of the war. Estimates for casualties that American troops will sustain range from 250,000 upward. Japanese casualties will likely be far greater.

Option 2 Bomb and blockade.

Bombing and blockading are twin methods of weakening an enemy's resolve. While blockading enemy ports to starve the opposing forces of supplies has been a traditional military strategy, the bombing of cities is something new. At the start of World War II, most nations considered the bombing of a city to be a despicable war crime.

But this war has changed all that. German planes bombed Warsaw in the early fighting of 1939. The British began bombing German cities in 1940, and the Germans upped the ante with a devastating bombing campaign against London. Although these attacks were primarily aimed at destroying industry, the bombings slaughtered civilians by the thousands. In February 1945, British and American air raids on the German city of Dresden set off an inferno that killed at least 35,000 people.

The bombing missions of your air force on Japan have been even more destructive. Unfortunately, Japanese factories are not concentrated in specific industrial areas within each city. Rather, the factories are scattered about the city and surrounded by the living quarters of the factory workers. This means that precise bombing of military targets without killing civilians is nearly impossible.

On the night of March 9, 1945, a bombing raid lasting just 30 minutes dropped more than 1,000 tons of incendiary bombs on Tokyo, killing over 83,000 Japanese, injuring another 41,000, and completely destroying 15.8 square miles of the city. In the past few months, similar attacks on Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe, and another on Tokyo killed thousands more civilians.

Despite the horrible losses these raids have inflicted on the Japanese, they have not produced any noticeable weakening in the country's determination to fight on. A continuation of this type of bombing may exact an enormous toll of death and destruction before it forces a surrender. The American public, bitter at the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor at the start of the war and at

reports of atrocities committed by Japanese forces, has little sympathy for Japan. Nevertheless, a continued wholesale slaughter of civilians might well repulse the American public. Further, much of the world has been at war for six years, and your own country has been fighting for more than three years. Americans are tired of war. Neither bombing raids nor blockades will end the war quickly, if at all.

Option 3 Demonstrate the power of your atomic bombs in an effort to persuade the Japanese to surrender.

You now have an awesome weapon that cost your country a fortune to develop. This may be the perfect time to use it. When the Japanese see that you have the power to obliterate an entire city with a single bomb, they will recognize that they have no choice but to stop fighting. If this strategy works, you will stop the war, save the lives of thousands of American soldiers, and avoid the shaky moral position of killing hundreds of thousands of civilians.

You can accomplish this demonstration in two ways. One way would be to drop the bomb on an unpopulated location. By so doing, you would demonstrate the bomb's power without harming anyone.

Most of your advisers, however, believe that the Japanese will not be impressed unless they see and feel the terrifying destruction that the bomb is capable of. If a bombing raid that killed over 80,000 people and injured 40,000 more did not intimidate the Japanese, how likely are they to be cowed by a harmless exhibition? Most of your advisers believe that there is no way to arrange a demonstration that would provide the kind of shock that would force the Japanese to surrender.

Furthermore, your scientists have not been able to mass-produce the uranium and plutonium needed for the bombs. At the moment, you have only two atomic bombs in your arsenal, and building more could take some time. If you use one in a harmless demonstration that does not bring about surrender, you've wasted half your atomic capability.

An alternate method of demonstration would be to drop a bomb on an industrial city in Japan but to warn the people ahead of time so they would leave the city. That would provide the spectacular destruction needed to shock the Japanese and force them to see reason without causing a tremendous loss of life. Your advisers point out a number of concerns with this option. The atomic bomb has never been tested under war conditions. What if your demonstration does not work? The fiasco might boost the enemy's spirits and actually prolong the war.

In addition, how do you warn the Japanese away from a target without exposing your bombers to risk? If the enemy knows when and where to expect the attack, your bombers will be sitting ducks for anti-aircraft fire. The possibility also exists that the Japanese would move American prisoners of war into the target areas.

Option 4 Drop atomic bombs on selected Japanese industrial cities.

Before American scientists even tested the first bomb, a joint panel of scientific and military experts had recommended that you use the new bombs as soon as they were ready.

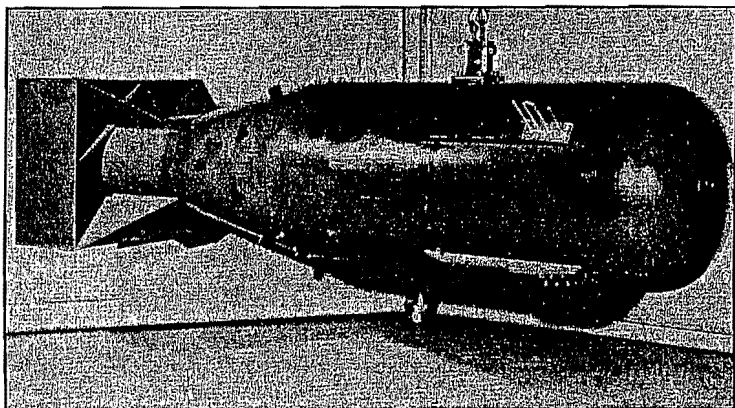
This may seem cruel. As mentioned before, Japanese industrial targets are often located among civilian centers and so your bombs would kill great numbers of civilians. But one or two devastating explosions is far more likely to shock Japan into surrendering than a mere demonstration would. Like *Option 3*, this would spare American and Japanese soldiers from a bloody battle for Japan and spare Japanese citizens a prolonged bombing campaign. *Option 4* simply has a greater chance of succeeding. Great Britain's leader, Winston Churchill, believes you should use your atomic bombs without hesitation. Most of your advisers agree.

Your country has invested a great deal of money and effort into developing this military advantage. Can you, in good conscience, send American soldiers into battle without providing them the greatest amount of firepower at your command?

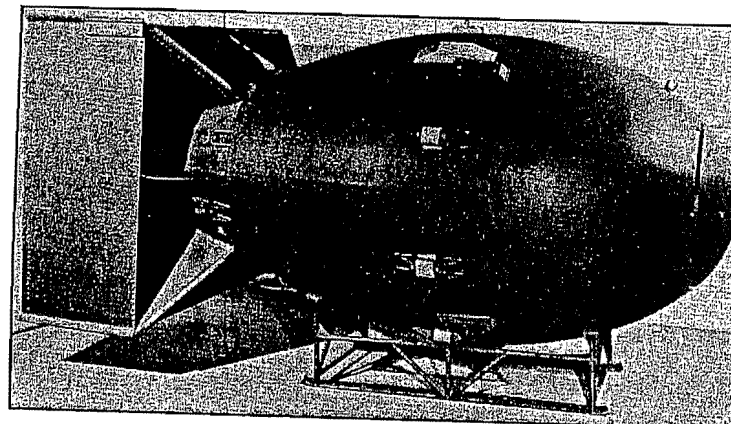
The disadvantage with this option is that you would be ushering into the world an entirely new weapon—one that could threaten the survival of the planet. One of

the engineers who worked on the Manhattan Project warned that using this bomb would set off a dangerous nuclear arms race among the nations. "As horrible as it may seem," he wrote, "I know it would be better to take greater casualties now in conquering Japan than to bring upon the world the tragedy of unrestrained competitive production of this material."

These doubts are not restricted to scientists. General Dwight Eisenhower, the commander of the Allied forces that overwhelmed Germany's western front, believes that Japan's position is already so hopeless that drastic action is not required, and he hopes that the United States is not the first to use such a horrible weapon. If you do use the bomb, history will remember you as the one who escalated war into the atomic age and who did so against innocent civilians, including children.



Atomic bombs nicknamed Little Boy . . .



. . . and Fat Man