

THE CONVERSION OF COMMANDER ROGERS

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GROWING UP IN THE SHADOW OF WORLD WAR II

Having been born in the early '50s, my earliest recollections are discussions of "the war", later popularized as "the big one" by TV's Archie Bunker. Being a "baby boomer" everyone's dad had been in the war and it was this fraternity of shared experience upon which most men of that era shared and reminisced about. My parents had been married during the war, and father soon shipped out for England where he served as a navigator in the U.S. 8th Air Force, flying bombers over Germany until VE Day.

Television was in its infancy and we were all unknowingly addicted. Much of the fare of early TV revolved around the Second World War, shows such as *Victory at Sea*, *Airpower*, *Navy Log*, *West Point* or *12 O'Clock High*. I remember the evening in 1958 when *Airpower* showed footage of father's 401st Bomb Group in action over Germany, up until that time I had never seen him get so emotional. Most of the time my dad's generation kept the lid on the dark side of what they had experienced during the "big war".

Each summer, in the early days of August, the news media made reference to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Discussion of 'the Bomb' was pretty much limited to a postscript on how the Pacific War had ended. After all, who would be crazy enough to keep a war going if the other side had a stockpile of nuclear weapons? My dad, like most everybody's of that era, viewed the employment of the atomic bombs as a necessary circumvention of what would otherwise have been "a million or more American casualties". I accepted this as fact. Dad had told us that General Doolittle had moved the 8th Air Force headquarters from England to Okinawa and that he had been waiting in the States for the word to move out, in support of the anticipated invasions of Japan in the fall of '45 and spring of '46. We were told: *"If those bombs hadn't been dropped, we boys might not be here today"*. That was about the scariest thought we pondered as kids growing up in the carefree '50s.

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS



As I recall, the veteran's view of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki drops being justified began to be challenged around the time of the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. The specter of nuclear war in our own back yard awoke us from the slumber of undisputed world leadership and prosperity that had typified the '50s. For us baby boomers, the wake-up call was personified by a new twist in our school day routine known as the air raid drill, and we heard our teachers whisper *"what good was it going to do to hide under our desks in the event of a nuclear attack?"* The indomitable entrepreneurs amongst our culture plied a sudden market for fallout shelters at the local County Fair.

The shelters were simply steel gasoline tanks with "fallout air filters". The more affluent among our community had these buried in their back yards, and within a decade these relics of a short-lived crisis became favorite hiding and make-out spots for us kids.



Civil Defense air raid warning placards like these were posted in every school room and public building around the time of the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, raising fears and anxiety about a nuclear holocaust.

One of my parent's closest friends was a teacher named Marguerite Swafford. Her husband had been military governor of Nagasaki after the war. Having lived there after the war, Mrs. Swafford gave a pretty eye-opening slide show on what life in Nagasaki had been like for her family and the Japanese during a special school-wide assembly that just happened to hit us a year or two after the missile crisis. What I remember most about the presentation was the absence of shoes on any of the Japanese children. Mrs. Swafford related how her son's shoes had repeatedly been stolen with a sense of joy, noting that the Japanese children "needed them more than we did." Mrs. Swafford's tender love for the Japanese people seemed awkward to me at the time, but then, she was the only person in our community who had actually lived in Japan. For the rest of us kids, the Japanese were still the sneaky guys with glasses and thin moustaches that bombed Pearl Harbor on a Sunday morning and executed prisoners of war.

The missile crisis passed, but the dark specter of nuclear holocaust had settled in to stay. During the 1964 presidential election the boomers were beginning to come of age. Still under the influence of our parents, we argued the pros and cons of Barry Goldwater, whose tough talk on things like Vietnam was going to get us all blown to hell in a nuclear holocaust with Russia if you talked to a democrat. That same summer Japan showcased her emergence as world power by hosting the Olympic Games in Tokyo, while more and more of our most treasured toys, like Tonka trucks, said "Made in Japan". Lyndon Johnson went on to win the presidential race handily, in part playing on people's fears about nuclear war.

A CONTROVERSY IS BORN

By the time of the 20th anniversary of the bomb drops arrived in August 1965, the "A-bomb controversy" seemed to be in full swing. One of the syndicate news stations in Los Angeles interviewed Thomas Ferebee, bombardier of the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 that made the Hiroshima drop (Ferebee was still on active duty in the Air Force). The journalist fired a barrage of moral virtue questions; asking Ferebee if he had nightmares and whether he felt remorse for what he had done. It was all my father could do to keep from throwing a brick at the TV set while we three sons listened in stone silence, pondering the same questions the interviewer had posed. We were quickly approaching the age of reckoning, where one questions their parents and the entirety of the establishment they comprised.

By the late 60s the lines on the A-bomb question were becoming more and more polarized. As the draft of young men into the military heated up and body bags began returning in ever greater numbers, the moral virtues of armed conflict began to be debated on college campuses across the country. The looming threat of "nuclear holocaust" added fuel to the anti-war juggernaut, which hadn't existed prior to the Tonkin Gulf 'incident' in August 1964. It was this questioning of authority, and the party line of patriotism our parents had built, that boiled over once the Vietnam war began to escalate. *"Why were we in this war anyway?"* The innocent materialism typifying our formative years in the world's richest kingdom began to manifest itself, we had become *'the me generation'*. Rejecting our parent's role models by rejecting military service we began to talk about the immorality of war.



Anti-nuclear protests became commonplace after 1965, and saw the emergence of organized groups such as Greenpeace, Mothers for Peace, and the Anti-Nuclear Alliance.

It was easy to throw up the morality argument if one spoke of nuclear war, after all, if we insulted the Soviets by crushing their cronies in Vietnam, wasn't that the next logical step? *"Who would be the winner in a nuclear exchange?"* we would ask. *"What kind of monster did we unleash?"* In my high school civics class we learned about a professor of international studies at Harvard named Kissinger who wrote about the *'balance of terror'* born of the nuclear age, where the two superpowers played out a chess game over world domination. Soon, we all believed there were enough nuclear weapons to kill everyone on the planet three times over and wondered, "why so much?" For the now middle-aged vets, who could all recall where they were on the day Pearl Harbor was bombed, there was a growing sense of frustration with the boomers and vice versa.

ENTERING THE DEBATE

Harboring great respect for my parents, I was nevertheless pulled by my generational roots, especially while attending college. The use of atomic weapons was an official debate topic during my freshman year of college, when the Vietnam War was still raging. Soon I was engaged in the requisite research, going through as much periodical literature as possible on the sequence of events leading to the employment of the atomic bombs in 1945 and the moral arguments filling the media ever since. I read everything the critics offered, never realizing how complicated the actual decisions had been, and that most of the critical pieces of "inside information" were then either still classified or buried in lengthy documents. Nevertheless, I argued both sides of the issues convincingly. I finished out my year of academic research with a number of troubling thoughts, curiosities that fascinated me more than I had realized at the time.

After 10 years of university study I left Berkeley with a Ph.D. in engineering. Wanting to serve my country

and see the world I surprised myself by volunteering for special duty as a naval intelligence officer. After the requisite training and duty periods, I was recalled to an active duty billet with Commander, Patrol Wings Pacific. It wasn't long before my team set off for Japan, as part of the admiral's staff. I was thrilled to visit the country I had researched so much that freshman year of college. During World War II Army Air Corps aviators had dubbed Japan "The Empire", and this nom de guerre has persisted ever since. We launched for The Empire at 28,000 feet altitude in a 4-engine Navy P-3 Orion patrol bomber. Our approach brought a rush on the first glimpse of Mt Fuji, from a good 300 miles out. For me it was déjà vu homecoming, there I was in the same position as all those B-29 aviators I had read about during my yearlong sojourn into the A-bomb debate. I could feel the goose bumps under my flight suit; I was going to finally see Japan.

We made landfall at Atsugi, outside the greater Tokyo-Yokohama metro area. Being on an Admiral's staff, we were accorded the courtesy of a visit to Tokyo hosted by our counterparts in the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force at the 7th Fleet ASW command post in Kamiseya. My host politely inquired where I would like to go in Tokyo, fully expecting my answer to be the raucous Rapungi nightclub district, where legalized prostitution was a socially acceptable diversion for visiting naval officers. I surprised and confounded them by asking to visit the Imperial Palace, where Emperor Hirohito was still residing at the time. After repeated entreaties to consider some other place, I held my ground, asserting I hadn't volunteered for duty in "The Empire" so I could visit smoky nightclubs, play golf, or watch the Japanese play baseball.

My exasperated, but thoroughly polite hosts eventually relented, made some calls, and while everyone else headed for the Rapungi, I alone was led to the Imperial Palace, full of anticipation. I knew from my reading that the palace dated back to the mid-1500s and that the grounds had purposefully been avoided by the American bombing in order to preserve this priceless centerpiece of Japanese culture and, hopefully, spare the Emperor's life. The pre-war American ambassador, Joseph Grew, had served Hoover and Roosevelt in pre-War Japan for 17 years. Quarantined after the Pearl Harbor attack, he was repatriated during the war in a diplomat exchange in early 1943. By 1945 he was serving as President Truman's Undersecretary of State. He painted Emperor Hirohito as a basically peaceful man who could figure dramatically in a post-war reconstruction of a Japan without militarists.



Left: Emperor Hirohito in his later years. He had a keen fascination of oceanography. Right: One of the gated entries across the great moat surrounding the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

That evening I entered the palace grounds I was afforded a glimpse of Japanese history and heritage few Americans ever saw. There were servants and staff then in residence that had served the Emperor all their

lives, back into the dark days of the fire bombings in 1945. My only knowledge of things Japanese emanated from my study of the B-29 raids and the A-bomb drops, and it was upon that subject that I began making polite inquiry, trying to demonstrate what little knowledge I had of things Japanese. My hosts were initially reserved in responding to such inquiries about the war, but when they discovered I was an intelligence officer with some manner of academic credentials, the cloak of formality gradually faded.

From that point forward I began to learn of our use of the A-bombs from the Japanese point-of-view. I was surprised to learn that much the same controversy existed in Japan in regards to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki drops, and that like America, the split was largely along generational lines. Many of the younger Japanese thought our motives for using the bomb were racially inspired, as we had not employed them against Germany. But, for those older Japanese who had lived through the bombings, the A-bombs and the abrupt end of the destructive B-29 raids were inseparably intertwined. According to the elders I interviewed, almost every Japanese city with a population more than about 35,000 people was completely destroyed during the 9-month period preceding the end of the war. The photos that survived were stark, and there was nothing discernibly different from a scene in Tokyo, Osaka or Yokohama from either Hiroshima or Nagasaki. The results were the same – complete and total annihilation. How the Japanese people had ever weathered such conflagration was beyond my comprehension. As an American growing up in the richest country in the world, I had no concept of such destruction and suffering. My rich roots were beginning to show.

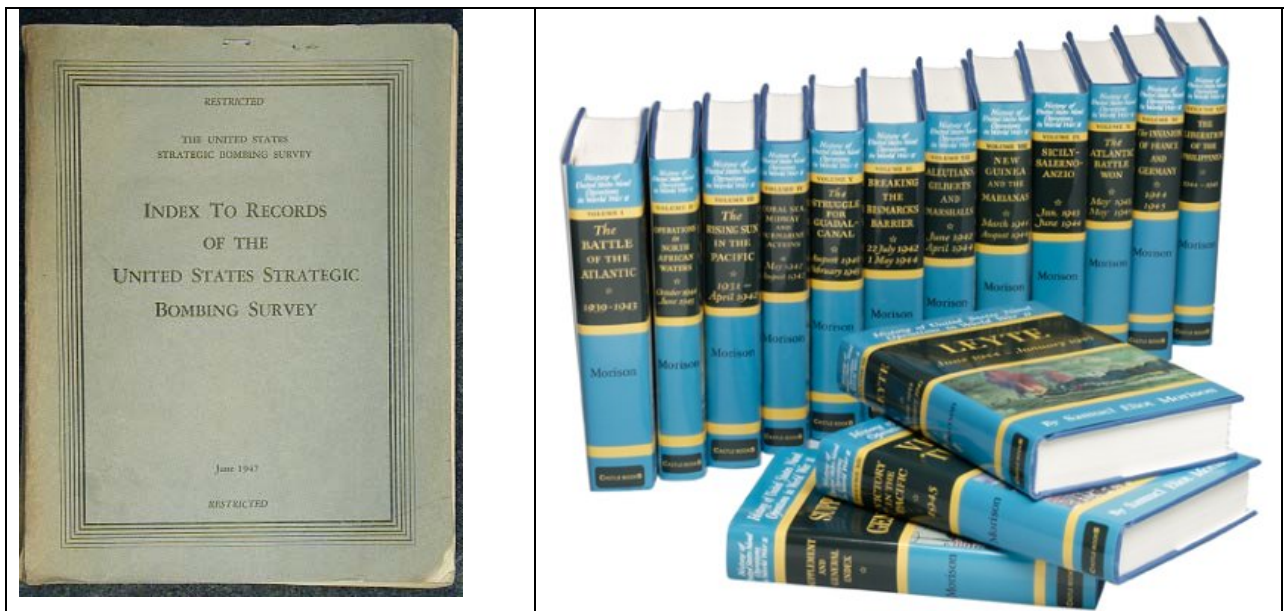
EXPLORING THE A-BOMB CONTROVERSY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The stark personal accounts of my Japanese hosts spirited me into further research. Upon my posting to Washington, D.C., I began researching intelligence files on the Pacific War, which my security clearances allowed. The “seminal documents” included our post-war strategic bombing surveys (which was slanted towards demonstrating that airpower was a significant determiner of the war’s outcome), and subsequent assessments of war material losses to all causes, including surface ships, submarines and aircraft. A significant number of American submarines were sunk before they could report the Japanese ships sunk on any given war patrol. It took Japanese records and years of painstaking effort to unravel what the contributions of our marauding submarines were in comparison to the vaunted aircraft carriers (the losses to Japanese shipping caused by submarines was actually slightly greater than that credited to aircraft, at a much lower cost of operation).

I soon discovered that a number of highly insightful and authoritative works on the Pacific War were compiled over many years of post-war research, and did not begin appearing until the 1960s, 15 years after the war ended. Many of these were compiled by naval intelligence officers like myself, most of whom were drawn from academic ranks. The Army’s team was led by Dr. Gordon W. Prange, professor of history at the University of Maryland, who served in the Navy during the Pacific War. After the war General MacArthur appointed him chief of his historical staff and he moved to Japan, performing interviews and collecting information from 1945-51. The Navy’s official histories were researched by a team directed by Dr. Samuel Eliot Morison, a Pulitzer Prize-winning professor of history at Harvard. The Navy’s principal researcher in post-war Japan was Captain Roger Pineau, an intelligence officer who, like Prange, spoke fluent Japanese and lived in occupied Japan after the war, between 1945-55. These small, but dedicated groups of historians and intelligence officers interviewed the principal Japanese leaders and decision makers and carried out hundreds of interviews with Japanese officers who were engaged in battles that had already reported upon by our own side. Many of the Japanese accounts would otherwise have been lost, as no one in Japan cared much to discuss 'responsibility' for various unsuccessful actions during the late war. Morison, Prange, and Pineau went on to write authoritative works on the Pacific War that included both the Allied and Japanese perspectives of the conflict, years afterwards (the most detailed account of the role played by intelligence in the Pacific was compiled by RADM Edwin T. Layton, Roger Pineau and John Costello in the book *And I Was There: Pearl Harbor and Midway Breaking the Secrets*, which did not appear until 1985).



Several of the principal investigators that researched Japanese operations, intelligence, and reactions to Allied operations during the Pacific War included, left to right: RADM Edwin T. Layton, Chief of Intelligence for the Pacific Theater during the war; Gordon W. Prange of the University of Maryland was retained by MacArthur's Command as chief historian soon after the war ended. Right: RADM Samuel E. Morison of Harvard University, wrote the 16 volume set that was published in December 1960, based on years of post-war interviews.

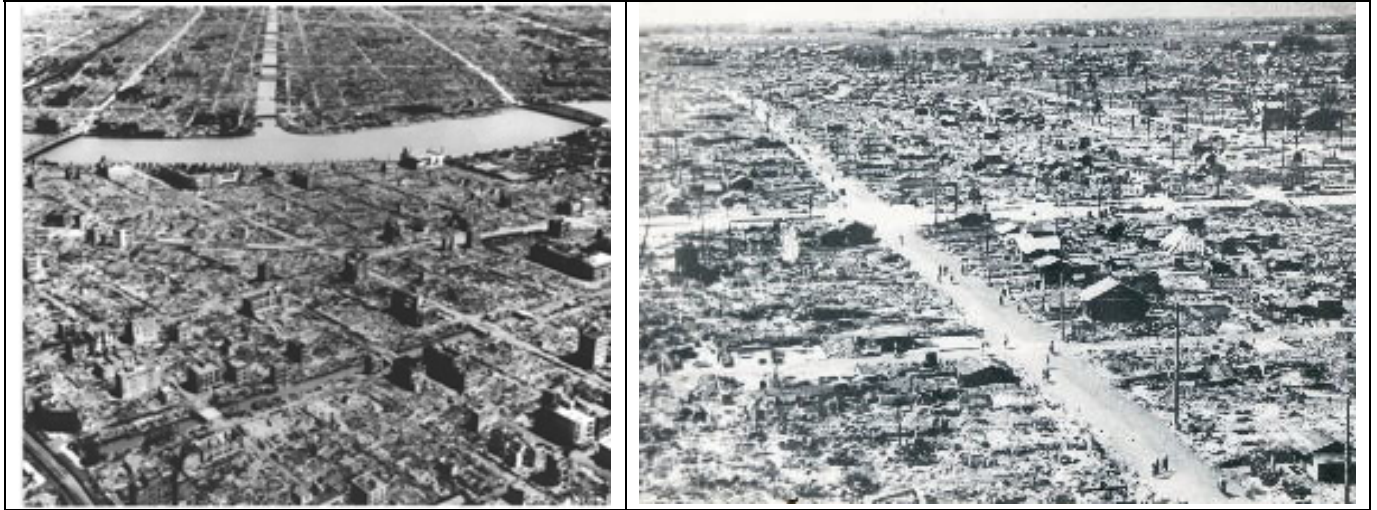


Left: The Index to the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (1947) and; Right: the 16 volume set of Morison's History of United States Naval Operations in World War II.

In this painstaking manner Morison succeeded in assembling a non-biased view of the Pacific campaigns, as seen from the eyes of the dueling participants, much like the volumes written about the American Civil War in the three decades following its conclusion. Language and cultural differences, compounded by enormous casualties and loss of records, stymied the American effort. After 15 years of work, the official 16 volume set was published. It was a monumental work, but the world didn't take much notice, the news was just too cold by the time it arrived in late 1960.

THE BOMBING CAMPAIGN AGAINST JAPAN

The story that unfolded before me was more terrible and graphic than my Japanese hosts had painted. Unlike any conflict involving America this century, the carnage amongst the Japanese civilian populace was severe and unrelenting. In the first four months of the 9-month bombing campaign against Japan, the proponents of American strategic bombardment had efficiently obliterated all industrial targets within range of the Marianas Islands-based B-29s. The B-29 was much larger and faster than its older cousins used in the European Theater. Unlike those operations, every home was deemed a target worthy of destruction because the Japanese were alleged to have mobilized their populace into "*cottage industries*", whereupon every Japanese citizen supported the war effort by doing jobs at home, such as sewing uniforms. This decided, it was thereby morally justified to attack residential areas, which were aiding and abetting the efforts of Japan's warlords to continue prosecuting the war.



Devastation of Tokyo and Osaka after the American fire bombing raids was thorough and complete, as shown in these views of Tokyo. In one night 16 square miles of Tokyo was burned to the ground.

In March 1945 the Americans began to experiment with 'fire raids', incited by incendiary bombs. Its success was so complete the Army Air Corps soon depleted all stockpiles of these bombs in the Pacific Theater. It was a massive effort aimed at eradicating the Japanese's ability to continue the war. From 300 to 875 B-29s would visit a target on any given night, trailing one behind another, dropping their lethal load on the ever-enlarging conflagration below. The firestorms thereby generated were so enormous there was nothing the Japanese could do, and thousands died of asphyxia, huddled near rivers. The heat waves rose to over 80,000 feet, causing many a late-arriving B-29 to go out of control.

By the middle of June 1945 American air superiority was so overwhelming the B-29s were dropping leaflets on all intended targets, warning the citizenry of impending destruction. I was surprised to find that such leaflets were actually dropped upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki in close advance of the nuclear drops. All the while, the Japanese militarists were powerless to stop the destruction. More B-29s were lost to mechanical and atmospheric problems than to enemy action. In fact, by July 1945 the Japanese leadership forbade further defensive sorties of their fighter aircraft against the American invaders, hoarding their remaining aircraft for suicide missions when the Americans invaded the home islands.

DID WE REALLY HAVE TO DROP THE BOMBS?

The underlying question in my enlarging study was simply: "Was the dropping of the atomic bombs really 'necessary' to end the war?" If you read what anti-nuclear critics offered in the 1970s one came away believing that the A-bomb drops were unnecessary, that Japan was completely defeated and on the verge of capitulation. Most of these critics quoted from the *Strategic Bombing Survey* published in 1947-49, which had estimated that Japan would have been forced to surrender by November 1, 1945, absent an invasion, A-bomb drops, or Russia's entry into the conflict. But, the Survey was based largely on then-incomplete statistical compilations, was limited to non-classified information, and was bereft of any inside information gleaned from interviews with key figures in the Japanese leadership. The task of interviewing Japanese decision-makers and key participants took another 12 years to complete. That the Japanese were logically defeated remains no question, but logic seldom enters into such an emotion-charged issue as global war; if it did, we wouldn't have such wars. As we will discuss shortly, what the Japanese leadership was looking for was an honorable way out that would preserve Japanese culture.

Those Japanese who were veterans of the conflict seemed to be of the opinion that the war's end came abruptly in response to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki drops. That anyone who argued otherwise simply weren't aware of the diplomatic situation that existed in the hierarchy of the Japanese Prime Minister's cabinet in early August 1945. This assertion, repeated again and again in my interviews with key Japanese officials was a complete surprise, and one that drew me into further study.

THE DIPLOMACY DEBATE



Casablanca Conference in January 1943 included (left to right) French General Henri Giraud, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, General Charles de Gaulle, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Roosevelt announced the Allies were now fighting for the "unconditional surrender" of Germany, Italy and Japan, a stand immediately endorsed by Churchill.

American critics were justified in their assertions that Japan was indeed defeated by early August 1945, and that the Japanese were well aware of this fact. The sticking point was "unconditional surrender". At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 Franklin Roosevelt had made headlines by declaring that the United States would do everything in its power to prosecute the European and Asian conflicts to nothing short of 'unconditional surrender'. The Japanese were keenly aware of this demand, but its literal misinterpretation varied according to one's social-political view, pride and dread of the unknown (what would actually happen if and when the Americans took over?).

The militarists had begun to lose grip on the government in the fall of 1944, when General Hideki Tojo resigned as Prime Minister after the Marianas Islands were occupied by the Americans, and he was succeeded

by a more moderate civilian politician, Suzuki Kantaro. Suzuki appointed a new Foreign Minister in April 1945, Togo Shigenori. Togo had served in the same position in 1941-42, but had been forced out because he was opposed to going to war with the United States. Both were faced with trying to make the best of an impossible position: that of gracefully losing while trying to maintain face. Their initial goals were to sue for a conditional peace accord wherein the Japanese would retain their protectorates (colonies), the emperor, and the Japanese way of life (Shinto-Buddhism). Their professional diplomats, being more well traveled and familiar with the "American way" of doing things, warned that the United States would institute a democratic form of government, as this had been their track record elsewhere (like the Philippines). Would their emperor be imprisoned, tried for war crimes, or have to run for elected office? Death seemed the preferred alternative to most steeped in the bushido (warrior) tradition.

Within days of taking over, the Suzuki government began to feel the stranglehold of B-29 raids. The noose got tighter and tighter, and when 20 to 60 square miles of key Japanese industrial cities succumbed to firestorms in each raid, the outcome became plain to see, but their militarists were not accepting of surrender. Surrender of any kind was not deemed heroic or responsible behavior by uniformed personnel in Japanese culture.

On June 8th the Japanese leadership convened a new imperial conference on the war, which adopted a "Fundamental Policy to Be Followed Henceforth in the Conduct of the War". That policy, among other things, pledged to *"prosecute the war to the bitter end in order to uphold the national polity, protect the imperial land, and accomplish the objectives for which we went to war"*. Seeking desperately to avert an unconditional surrender, Foreign Minister Togo initiated efforts aimed at negotiating a peace accord with the Americans on July 17th by issuing "peace feelers" to Ambassador Naotake Sato in Moscow, using the Soviets as intermediaries. This turned out to be a costly mistake for the Japanese, because the opportunistic Soviets were hoping to regain the territories lost in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War, when the opportunity presented itself. Togo told Sato he *"wasn't looking for anything like unconditional surrender"*, to which Sato responded on July 31st *"there is ... no alternative but immediate unconditional surrender"*, bluntly informing Togo that *"your way of looking at things and the actual situation in the Eastern Area may seem to be absolutely contradictory"*.

The Foreign Ministry ignored Togo's pleas and continued to seek Soviet help, even after the Hiroshima drop on August 6th. The Russians, seeing the surrender overtures as a green light, declared war on Thursday August 9th, shortly before the Nagasaki drop. American intelligence on Japanese diplomatic communications was ever present, beginning with our breaking of the cipher code-named MAGIC, in 1940. Being able to open your adversaries' secret mail provides a robust advantage in brokering negotiations. During July 1945 daily summaries of the Japanese diplomatic communiqués were passed onto Army Chief of Staff George Marshall, monitoring things in President Truman's absence at the Potsdam Conference near Berlin with Atlee, Churchill and Stalin. For the Japanese government, the next 7 days would bring a bitter struggle groping with an inevitable climax that few, if any, thought would be reached in such a short time.

CASUALTY DEBATE

I knew from my debate days that the strongest card in the pro A-bomb debate was the unprecedented level of Japanese and American casualties which would likely have occurred with planned invasions of Japan in November 1945 and March 1946. Critics of the A-bomb drops allege the American estimates of casualties were inflated after the war to help justify the decision to drop the bombs. In his memoirs Harry Truman had stated that he was told *"a million or more casualties"* could be expected if we invaded Japan, and that given this information, the decision to drop the bomb had not been a difficult one to make. But, critics have maintained that the "million casualty" figures was never mentioned in any official communiqués passed to the President during 1945, but was initially cited by Henry Stimson in a February 1947 article in *Harper's*

magazine, suggesting after-the-fact justification. Stimson recalled being told that one million casualties could be expected in a full scale invasion of Kyushu and Honshu, which would involve upwards of five million American servicemen. He stated that these dreadful predictions triggered his preparation of a memo to President Truman dated July 2, 1945, with the help of Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew and Navy Secretary James Forrestal. The memo warned Truman of unprecedented casualties that could be expected in an invasion of the Japanese home islands. Stimson's memo suggested that the Americans craft a final plea or warning to the Japanese people, detailing how their case was hopeless, and that it was not our purpose to eradicate the Japanese people, their culture or their homeland, but to remove the militarists from power and restore a peaceful co-existence with the western powers. Though the atomic bomb was not mentioned specifically in the July 2nd memo, the final warning was intended to convey that the Americans promised prompt and utter destruction if Japan resisted, and hope if she surrendered. President Truman adopted this policy and the atomic bombs formed the most important piece in the planning and execution of the new "surrender or else suffer annihilation" demand. Stimson wisely assuaged that timing would be critical to the success or failure of such demands, but everyone agreed that it should come on the heels of the upcoming Potsdam Conference in Berlin, scheduled for mid-July 1945. The declaration would be released afterwards, on July 26th and would become known as the Potsdam Declaration. If the Japanese rejected this ultimatum, we would proceed with a show of force, employing the two atomic bombs.



Left: Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew (1880-1965) spoke fluent Japanese and had served as American Ambassador to Japan for 17 years prior to America's entry into the Pacific War. Middle: Henry Stimson (1867-1950) served as Secretary of War under Presidents Taft and Roosevelt and Secretary of State under President Hoover. Right: Retired Admiral Suzuki Kantaro (1867-1948) served as Japan's Prime Minister between April and August 1945, when the Japanese surrender was elicited.

Was the figure of one million casualties true, or was it fabricated later, to justify the dropping of the atomic bombs? The most detailed assessment of this issue was carried out by CIA Deputy Director Douglas J. MacEachin in the 1990s, summarized in the CIA Intelligence Monograph "*The Final Months of the War with Japan: Signals Intelligence, U.S. Invasion Planning, and the A-Bomb Decision*", released in December 1998.

Reviewing piles of declassified documents detailing what was said at high level meetings with the President, MacEachin soon found that the casualty estimates changed on a weekly basis, depending on the latest intelligence, which wasn't always correct. For those of us who have produced classified intelligence products, this kind of number changing goes without question, but in the haze of time, someone external to the operation (especially those with legal training) could easily mistake changing data as "contradictory information".

Another complicating factor was that several invasions were planned. In a report prepared by the Joint War Plans Committee for the chiefs of staff meeting with Truman in early June 1945, the committee estimated a

total of 193,500 American casualties in the upcoming invasion of Japan's southern island of Kyushu. The Kyushu attack would commence on November 1, 1945 with 767,000 American troops. If necessary, an even larger invasion would be staged five months later against Japan's largest island Honshu, tentatively scheduled for April 1, 1946 (the day a significant tsunami struck the coast of Japan from an earthquake in the Aleutian Islands).

In mid-June 1945 American intelligence estimated 300,000 Japanese regulars garrisoning Kyushu. By mid-July 1945, our casualty estimates had inflated to 395,000, based on intelligence that the Japanese would be mustering 680,000 troops on Kyushu by November 1st. After the war we learned that these estimates were far below the actual figures; the Japanese actually had 900,000 troops digging in on Kyushu in July 1945. One of the prominent dissenters was Truman's personal military advisor, Admiral Leahy. He reminded the president's advisors that overly optimistic assessments had been prepared for all of the invasions carried out in 1945. Leahy reminded the Joint Chiefs that the invasion of Luzon in the Philippines had incurred 35% casualties and such figures should be assumed for the proposed Kyushu operation (the Americans planned on invading Kyushu with a force of 767,000 men).

It is pretty clear that by late July 1945 the rough estimate for American casualties risen to something between 500,000 and 1,000,000, based on the planned invasions of south Kyushu in early November 1945 and follow-up landings on Honshu in April 1946. Our war planners never attempted exacting estimates of how many casualties we might suffer in the invasion of Honshu because the decision to invade Honshu would wait until the outcome of the Kyushu operation was known. After the war ended and these shortcomings were realized, everyone involved in the decisions agreed that the estimates were unrealistically low, and most accepted the figure of "at least one million casualties" cited by Truman and Stimson.

WERE THESE HORRIFIC CASUALTY ESTIMATES JUSTIFIED?

The invasion of Kyushu in vicinity of Kagoshima Bay was seen by our military planners as a logical and necessary step to stage operations for invasion of Japan's largest island, Honshu, which contained the seats of industry and government. The smaller island of Okinawa, 1000 miles south of Tokyo, but only 430 miles from Kagoshima, had been taken specifically for the purpose of staging the Kyushu invasion. The Japanese correctly assessed this purpose and the intended targets, something we didn't realize until after the war. They purposefully masked their defensive build-up on Kyushu, hoping to lure the Americans into a costly bloodbath.

Just how severe would our casualties had been if we had invaded Japan's home islands? No one can ever say with absolute certainty, but the statistics pouring into the Pentagon that summer were frightening. In my years of research the toughest statistics to uncover on the Second World War are those relating to American casualties; they are rarely, if ever, cited in the established literature. The American losses during the first six months of 1945 were staggering. There were 37,870 ground casualties in the post-January operations in the Philippines; 26,028 killed and wounded taking tiny Iwo Jima, with another 49,450 ground casualties in the Okinawa campaign. At Okinawa the widespread employment of suicide airplanes (kamikazes) had served the defenders well, sinking 36 ships, damaging another 368, and killing more than 5,000 sailors. These gruesome statistics reveal that almost half (46%) of all American casualties in the Pacific War were suffered during the last seven months of the conflict, suggesting an increasing cost with proximity to the home islands. For example, the 404 naval vessels sunk or damaged in the Okinawa campaign almost equaled those lost or damaged in all previous naval engagements of the Pacific War. At war's end the United States had lost 405,400 killed or missing and 671,000 wounded in all theaters of action (including Europe and North Africa), with Okinawa and Iwo Jima costing the most as a percentage of the forces deployed.

Anyone at The Pentagon with a time line histogram on casualties could have painted what appeared to be a

picture of diminishing returns with time, although we were also deploying more combat troops with each passing week, so more troops were under fire. The Japanese militarists were reasonably aware of the escalating price they were making the Americans pay for Japanese soil. It was upon this fact that they pinned their hopes of suing for a conditional peace accord "after exacting a terrible toll on the invading Americans" when they landed on the home islands. It was their goal to make Okinawa look like a small prelude. Hundreds of midjet suicide submarines and human torpedoes would be added to the almost 40,000 suicide aircraft then being dispersed in rural corners of Japan to avoid destruction by the B-29s (these hidden aircraft were not discovered until after the war ended).

Studying the facts it's difficult to believe that we could have conquered Japan in a conventional manner without having sustained an unprecedented number of casualties. My dad's old argument about "not having been here to father us had we invaded Japan" wasn't just sounding like a lot of patriotic bravado anymore, it would have been the true for tens of thousands, maybe even millions, of boomers like myself.

Going back and reading the critic's manifestos 25 years later, it's startling how no mention is made of the combat then occurring outside the home islands. The Japanese still held most of mainland China, Manchuria, New Guinea, Indonesia, Taiwan, Korea, Indochina, the Kuril Islands, and Sakahlin. These areas were occupied and being contested in open armed conflict, incurring, on average, about 900 American casualties per day. Added to this were the more than 31,000 American prisoners-of-war who were suffering grievously; 40% of whom would die in Japanese hands (compared to just under 1% of American combatants held by the Germans). Lastly, the greatest toll would have been exerted upon the Japanese populace. On Okinawa, the Japanese losses had been 110,000 military and 80,000 civilians killed. These numbers would be diminutive in comparison to the home islands, where B-29 raids killed in excess of 50,000 to 100,000 people a night in several dozen fire raids, with Osaka losing upwards of 140,000 in a single evening. The Japanese suffered more losses in a few months of B-29 raids than America lost in all the wars it's ever fought, including both sides of the Civil War.

ADVICE AGAINST DROPPING THE BOMBS



Left: Admiral William D. Leahy was personal advisor to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman during the Second World War. Middle: Leo Szilard was a Hungarian émigré who sought asylum in the United States in 1938 because he was Jewish. He played a key role in the development of the first nuclear reactor and led the small group that opposed deployment of the weapons against the Japanese after Germany surrendered. Right: J. Robert Oppenheimer was scientific director of the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bombs between 1942-45.

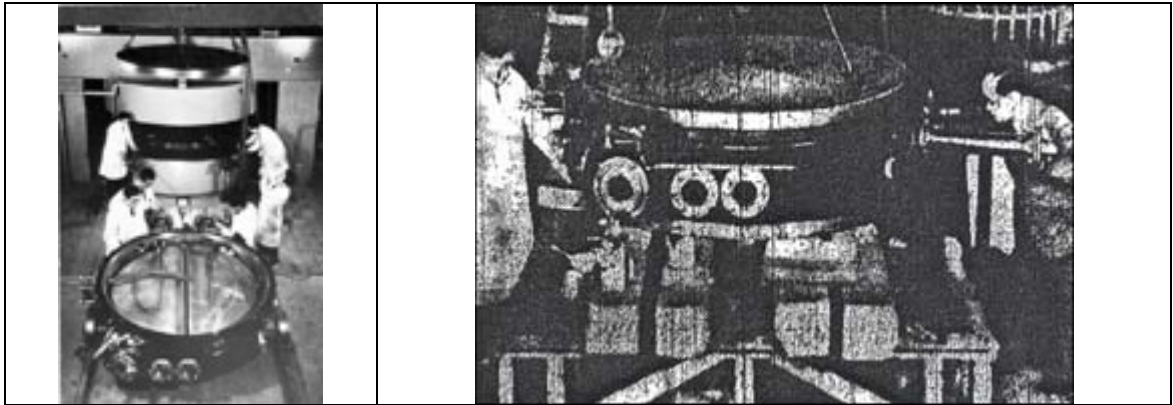
After Harry Truman passed away in December 1972, a new criticism of the A-bomb decision emerged. Critics now charged that several of the President's top military and civilian advisors had informed him that dropping the bombs was militarily unnecessary, immoral, or both. In all the declassified memoranda and

memoirs of the military joint chiefs there is absolutely no hint of such advice being posed. The one military critic in high circles appears to have been Admiral William D. Leahy, who had openly remarked that he didn't think such a "*supernatural device*" would ever work as advertised. Leahy had been Roosevelt's personal military advisor since 1939, and was senior to all the other service chiefs. But, Army Chief of Staff George Marshall seems to have held considerably greater influence with Truman, as the two had known each other for years. Truman was both a combat veteran of the First World War and a Colonel in the National Guard in the 1930s. He had served under Marshall during several of his active duty stints. Marshall and his Air Corps generals (Hap Arnold, Carl Spaatz and Curtis LeMay) were of the opinion to use the bombs in a concerted effort to "*bluff*" the Japanese into thinking we had stockpiles of them just like the incendiaries, and that to resist further would mean certain annihilation, in keeping with Stimson's July 2nd Memo and the Potsdam Declaration. This hunch turned out to be true.

Hungarian physicist Leo Szilard was working at the Manhattan Project's reactor research facility at the University of Chicago when the Germans capitulated on May 7, 1945. Szilard circulated an informal petition to stop nuclear weapons research, citing the lack of any equivalent threat from the Japanese (they were then unaware of the Japanese effort to build a similar device). There is no evidence that the existence of the petition filtered up to meetings with the President. The project's chief scientist, J. Robert Oppenheimer of U.C. Berkeley, attended the key policy meetings in Washington, where the bomb's employment was openly discussed, but he never brought the subject of a petition up. In six versions of the A-bomb development and deployment, Hollywood scriptwriters have stirred the pot of controversy by suggesting some manner of military subterfuge and cover-up was involved, putting a clamp on the scientist's wishes. In reality, the petition represented a tiny minority of the scientific participants, as more than 120,000 people spread over 37 facilities comprised the Manhattan Project. It was the single greatest expenditure on pure scientific research ever undertaken by this country, involving 17 then-current and future Nobel laureates. The attitude of most scientists at the time was simply to get the war over with in order to save as many lives as possible. Few were privy to information about the German efforts to develop a parallel device and none appears to have even dreamed the Japanese were well on the path to successfully completing a nuclear device when the war ended in August 1945.

WERE THE JAPANESE BUILDING AN ATOMIC BOMB?

One of the most tightly held secrets that evolved from detailed post-war intelligence assessments was that of Japan's own nuclear warhead development, which far exceeded anything we had assumed. Japanese physicist Yoshio Nishana of Tokyo University had visited and worked with Niels Bohr, the Danish Nobel Prize laureate who led the European effort to unravel nuclear fission in the 1930s. In 1931 Nishana was named head of the newly formed Institute of Physical and Chemical Research in Japan, called '*Rikken*' by the Americans. In 1936 the scientists at Rikken had successfully constructed a 26-inch cyclotron, patterned after the prototype device invented in 1927 by Ernest O. Lawrence at U.C. Berkeley (Lawrence completed a 27-inch version in December 1932). A year later the Rikken group fashioned a 220-ton 60-inch cyclotron, as large and sophisticated as anything the Berkeley scientists had going at the time. In October 1940, when Berkeley physicists Edwin McMillan and Glenn Seaborg were discovering plutonium, the Japanese scientists decided to pursue the construction of a U235 uranium isotope bomb. Though approved, governmental funding did not commence until July 1941, ahead of the American effort, which was not authorized until December 6th, the day before Pearl Harbor was attacked.



Left: Japanese assembling their first cyclotron in 1937. Right: Photo of the Japanese cyclotron taken in 1940, presumably, during maintenance. The Japanese managed to keep their nuclear weapons program secret from the west throughout the course of the war.

The Japanese physicists might have succeeded if not for an acute shortage of raw uranium and the near-complete loss of electrical power needed for the separation process, once B-29 raids began in earnest in November 1944. Foreseeing problems with security from allied bombing, Japanese industrialist Jun Noguchi had established large hydroelectric facilities in the north Korean peninsula, on the Fusen and Chosin Rivers (site of the great battles during the Korean War), well beyond the B-29's lethal range. Here in 1943 the Japanese began to pursue a heavy water program, much like that employed by the Germans at Vemork, Norway. The Japanese also pursued uranium hexafluoride as a source of U-235, identical to the effort then being undertaken by the Americans in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Both sides felt the other incapable of assembling the requisite quantities of enriched uranium to produce a bomb.



Many critical war industries, like these Kamakaze submarines, were built in Inchon, Korea to be out of lethal striking range of American bombing during the last year of the Pacific War.

The allies were unaware of the effort on the Korean peninsula until after the war, when the activity was revealed to us by Korean nationalists, and the heavy water electrolysis plants fell into communist North Korean hands before they could be fully assessed by our own scientists. The Atlanta Constitution featured

several articles by wartime correspondent David Snell reporting on the Japanese atomic bomb research in 1946, but this story was never followed up. Security concerns by the Pentagon precluded further mention of the Japanese program because we wanted to prevent the communists from developing atomic weapons. For this reason no mention of the Japanese effort was made in the Strategic Bombing Survey, the 'watershed document' cited by most A-bomb critics, published by the Department of Defense in 1949.

WHY NOT A DEMONSTRATION DROP?

My personal misgivings about the bombs finally boiled down to two questions: 1) why not a demonstration drop, including a warning of the civilian populace? and 2) why couldn't we have waited more than 3 days between the drops to give the Japanese leadership time to sort out just how horrible a weapon was being used? Wasn't a second drop just a senseless overkill? When I got into the story on our side of the ocean I was surprised to discover that these very points had undergone considerable scrutiny.

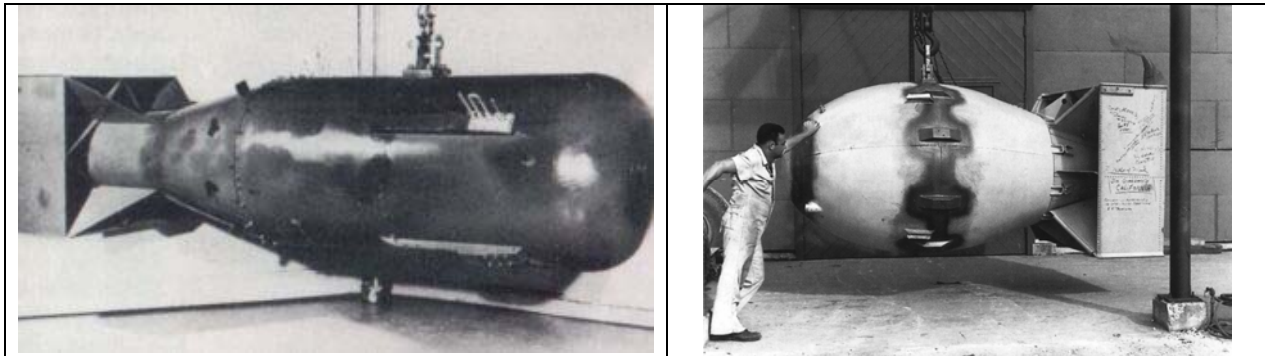
When the branch chiefs met to discuss the A-bombs' employment with President Truman, the possibility of a demonstration drop was openly discussed. The idea put forth was to inform the Japanese through an intermediary that a certain island would be selected and the date given during which the drop would take place, "*to demonstrate the terrible destructive power of preceding with further hostilities*". Leahy objected on grounds of the potentially disastrous consequences such a move would have if the bomb didn't work. He was confident it would not. Others objected on a variety of other rationales. Air Corps Generals Arnold and Spaatz worried that the Japanese could mass a force of suicide fighters to shoot down the lone B-29 before it made the drop, or at least disrupt it to the point that the delicacies of the drop and dive-away operation would ruin the targeting. Another group, mindful of past problems with warning the Japanese of impending raids, worried that POWs would be moved to the island in advance of the test. Still other critics assuaged that we could stage the test on an island already in our possession, such as one of the smaller islands off Okinawa. The problem would then consist of how to get the requisite numbers of Japanese militarists to the site to make the observations. The civilian scientists were concerned that insufficient quantities of the fissionable isotopes U-235 or P-239 would be available to test fire either device in advance of a "demonstration drop".

In the end two major objections could not be surmounted. First, there was the necessity to drop the bomb from 30,000 feet and be at least 8 miles away when it detonated 1800 feet above ground. This had never been accomplished, but was under development with the 509th Composite Group, working in the remote salt flats near Wendover, Utah. Still, if a suitable delivery tactic were developed, it remained untried. Second, the inadequate supply of enriched uranium and plutonium was available to fashion more than just one bomb apiece by mid-summer 1945, leaving no additional quantities of either for a test firing, which all the air chiefs agreed was an essential component before any contemplated deployment against the Japanese.

ONLY ENOUGH PLUTONIUM AND URANIUM FOR TWO BOMBS

The situation facing American strategists in May 1945 was tenuous at best. There was yet just enough enriched uranium 235 to fashion the critical mass for one bomb, and the requisite quantity of plutonium 239 would be available in about a month. A ground test was considered essential before deploying the most expensive weapon system ever employed in combat. The dilemma then arose as to which type to detonate, the plutonium or the enriched uranium? The separation and enrichment facilities at Hanford, Washington were scheduled to begin producing 250 parts per million of U238 into fissionable plutonium in January 1945. Problems with Xenon gas in the reactors delayed online production till mid-May 1945. The increased plutonium production levels made the ground test of a plutonium device possible. The 213-ton steel containment vessel fashioned in Cincinnati and towed to White Sands in the spring of 1945 was no longer needed to contain the precious plutonium in the event of a misfire or dud. The Manhattan scientists could now detonate a device by mid to late July 1945 and have a second one ready by early August, with follow-on

devices available in late August or September 1945, and possibly another before the end of 1945. One bomb every four to five months; that was all.



The U235 atomic bomb Little Boy (left) and the Pu239 bomb Fat Man (right). The imploding Fat Man became the prototype nuclear weapon after the Second World War, with all the plutonium being manufactured at Hanford, WA.

The U235 bomb, dubbed 'Little Boy' employed a gun barrel detonator to create a critical mass, a method thought sure to succeed. The plutonium bomb, known as 'Fat Man', employed a novel cage of shaped charges timed to explode simultaneously, creating critical mass to start the nuclear chain reaction, through implosion. In early August 1945 one of each bomb type comprised the nation's entire nuclear arsenal. Additional plutonium devices, if they proved workable, could be produced at a rate of 2 to 3 per year. This left the strategists with the problem of how to employ the two devices in a manner so as to create the greatest fear and paranoia possible. For, if the enemy knew the real quantity limitations, they might talk themselves into accepting just two more Japanese cities for annihilation.

I vividly recall the sunny afternoon following my duty day at Naval Intelligence Command in Washington, D.C. when I poured over memos written in those crucial days of July 1945, when these dilemmas were hashed out by men who had long since gone to their graves. Growing up bathed in the knowledge that we had enough nuclear warheads to destroy the world three times over, I had never imagined how tenuous the situation was that first summer of the nuclear age, when our nations' leaders gambled that peace might suddenly be realized through the detonation of two experimental bombs, the likes of which the world had never witnessed. That stinging criticism I had born as a spoiled baby boomer was beginning to wane in the light of this new information. I could see thousands of young men armed with nothing but M-1 rifles shipping out for amphibious landings that would certainly have taken countless lives.

We had resolved ourselves to defeating the Germans first, then taking on the Japanese. The army and navy felt that unconditional defeat of the Japanese militarists could only be achieved through massive armed invasion of the Japanese homeland. The Japanese had demonstrated that their military forces were not prone to surrender like our European adversaries. On Iwo Jima, only 216 Japanese were taken captive of the garrison of more than 20,000 (about 1% survival). By mid-1945 America had mustered 16.4 million of her 129 million population into the military, and the great majority of those had yet to taste combat. The landings on the Japanese home islands would involve upwards of 2.5 million men. The European campaign had taken 523,000 casualties (killed, wounded and captured), while all operations in the Pacific had cost 254,000 casualties, less than half that incurred in Europe. If the atomic bomb had not been dropped, and statistics of the Okinawa invasion were an accurate guide, a doubling could have been expected of the total casualties incurred by America during the Second World War. Likely something greatly in excess of 500,000 killed or wounded. Invading the Japanese home islands would have been a bloodbath of unprecedented proportions. In all the invasion planning, the lone dissenting votes came from proponents of strategic aerial bombardment, championed by Curtis LeMay. Young and of a newer breed, the air force generals believed Japan could be bombed into oblivion, and thereby, forced to surrender without an armed invasion.

THREE DAYS BETWEEN DROPS

My objections were now whittled down to one remaining aspect: the 3-day window between deployment of the bombs. Why so short? The answer I arrived upon came from examining the B-29 bombing campaign. The effective combat distance of the giant B-29s from their bases in the Marianas to "The Empire" was between 1,500 and 1,900 miles each way, requiring 14 to 16 hour mission profiles. The bombing campaign had shifted to nighttime missions utilizing radar for both navigation and bomb targeting to minimize suicide-ramming attacks by otherwise impotent Japanese day fighters. This meant crews went to briefings the afternoon before a mission, pre-flighted their aircraft, and took off around sunset, settling in for the 6 to 8-hour cruise to their release points. By the time the planes returned it was the next day and most crews had been up for 20 to 36 hours, necessitating another whole day of crew rest before scheduling the following mission. In this manner it required 3 days between missions for any given crew or for any particular maximum effort. I had experienced the same restrictions for combat aircrews while flying bombers in the Navy.

Fifteen specially modified B-29s of the secretive 509th Composite Group began arriving at North Field on Tinian Island in late May through early June 1945. The group began flying 'practice' missions to Japanese held islands in the Marianas and Japan itself, hoisting conventionally-armed 'Fat Man' bombs, like that used on Nagasaki. These "practice bombs" were filled with 5,500 pounds of torpex explosive. The 509th flew 16 "practice missions" with the conventional 'Fat Man' bombs, utilizing 3 to 8-plane elements. The small raids drew little attention from the Japanese defenders.

The plan in spacing the atomic bombs only three days apart was two fold: to take advantage of an anticipated break in the summertime weather, and to bluff the Japanese into thinking we had a large stockpile of the devices, when in fact, we only had two. The necessity for a second drop soon after the first was a key aspect of the deception. Our intelligence on the Japanese leadership indicated the militarists would attempt to pass off the first explosion as some sort of "extra-natural phenomena", which is exactly what they did. We hoped the Japanese would send their foremost nuclear physicist Yoshio Nishina (Director of the Rikken) to nuclear targets after-the-fact to confirm that atomic devices had been detonated. Sadly, Nishina would die of liver cancer in 1951 as a result of the high levels of gamma radiation he received during just such visits. The American ruse about a nuclear stockpile was played up in the wake of Hiroshima's destruction, in massive propaganda leaflet drops containing an official demand for Japan's surrender, which stated that a nuclear bomb had been used and it was futile for Japan to persist in resisting such a terrible weapon. The leaflets intimated that more atomic bombs would be dropped unless the Japanese capitulated immediately.

Interviewing the key members of Suzuki's cabinet after the war, Professor Morison found that the Americans gamble accomplished what it set out to. The American view was that the Japanese had been given unprecedented forewarning. On July 27th the demand for surrender fashioned by Truman, Churchill and Atlee at the Potsdam Conference (the Soviets had not declared war yet) was transmitted to the Japanese. Interpreting the word "*unconditional*" to mean 'no emperor', the following day Suzuki publicly stated that "*...the Joint Proclamation by the three countries is nothing but a rehash of the Cairo Declaration. As for the Government, it does not find any important value in it, and there is no other recourse but to ignore it entirely, and resolutely fight for the successful conclusion of this war*". Foreign Minister Togo Shinegori was helplessly furious, seeing yet another chance at stemming the hemorrhage going by the wayside. From the American point-of-view, the official Japanese response was so strongly worded that they had, in effect, signed their own 'nuclear death warrant'. Scholars would later debate the unfortunate translation of the Japanese word '*mokusatsu*' used in Suzuki's response, which could be interpreted as "*kill with silence*" or "*treat with silent contempt*".



One of the 4.5 million leaflets dropped by 21st Bomber Command on Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and 33 other Japanese cities on August 1, 1945. The Japanese text on the reverse side of the leaflet carried the following warning: "Read this carefully as it may save your life or the life of a relative or friend. In the next few days, some or all of the cities named on the reverse side will be destroyed by American bombs." The list of cities included Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Authorizing atomic drops after August 5th, the Americans forewarned the cities targeted for potential nuclear destruction with leaflet drops 10 to 14 days in advance of the actual missions. The countdown had begun. On Monday August 6th, just after 8:15 AM local time, Colonel Paul W. Tibbet's B-29 named *Enola Gay* dropped the 'Little Boy' U-235 device on downtown Hiroshima. Everything went according to plan, and the bomb tracked to within a few feet of the aiming point on the Aioi Bridge (it would have been impossible to actually hit the aim point because the bomb detonated 1,740 feet above ground). The bomb's explosive energy was estimated to have been approximately 12,500 tons of TNT. In an instant, approximately 4.7 square miles of the City was obliterated, killing 71,000 people (the official death toll was subsequently increased to 118,661, to account for radiation related deaths that have occurred since 1945). Tibbets and his instrument-carrying B-29 made the necessary dive-away maneuver and a photography plane orbited from a distance of 16 miles. Heat, blast and radiation effects were monitored from radio transmitted recorders dropped by parachute.

As the news of the blast trickled in to the Japanese leadership in Tokyo, the surrender debate erupted once again within Suzuki's embattled cabinet. The more rational elements clamored for accepting an immediate peace, but the militarists and hard-liners began to plan and stage coups of key peace sympathizers, aimed at derailing any peace overtures. The Hiroshima bomb was followed by an informational leaflet drop stating the nature of the vast destruction as "*newly developed atomic bombs*" with destructive "*power equivalent to 2,000 of our giant B-29s can carry on a single mission.*" Four million leaflets printed in Japanese concluded by asking the Japanese people to "*appeal to the Emperor to end the war.*" This was followed by transmissions in Japanese by armed forces radio informing the Japanese populace of the new device and its terrible destructive powers. As if this weren't sufficient, aircraft with large speakers were flown over key Japanese cities besieging the citizenry with the same message in Japanese.

What happened next has rarely been reported with any great degree of scholarship. A battle to end the war raged in the Japanese capital, with numerous mutinies and attempted coups. Worried about public panic, the militarists panned off the Hiroshima explosion as an unusual firestorm ascribable to unique atmospheric conditions, never mind the leaflets and radio transmissions broadcasting to the contrary. The diplomats were becoming increasingly frustrated. In the heat of the ongoing debate, things suddenly became even hotter.

On Thursday morning August 9th the Soviet government announced it was declaring war on Japan. Around 10:58 AM (local time) another B-29 dropped the Pu239 plutonium bomb on Nagasaki, a key port on the west side of Kyushu and home to a quarter million people. The bomb's explosive energy was equivalent to 22,000 tons of TNT, almost double that of the Hiroshima device. Even though much of the area was

protected by a series of river valleys, according to Japanese records, 25,680 were killed and 23,345 injured. These statistics were subsequently increased to 73,884 killed and 74,900 injured to account for post-war casualties from related illnesses, such as cancer.



Left: The difficult task of bringing the war to a close fell upon Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori, who was appointed in April 1945 after the militarists resigned. Shigenori had served as Foreign Minister in 1941-42, but was ousted because of his opposition to war with the United States. Middle: Emperor Hirohito inspecting bomb damage in Tokyo in 1945. His radio broadcast on August 14th was the first time Japanese soldiers or civilians ever heard his voice. Right: General MacArthur and Hirohito after the war. The Japanese leaders never imagined that the National Polity would be preserved when the Americans conquered their country.

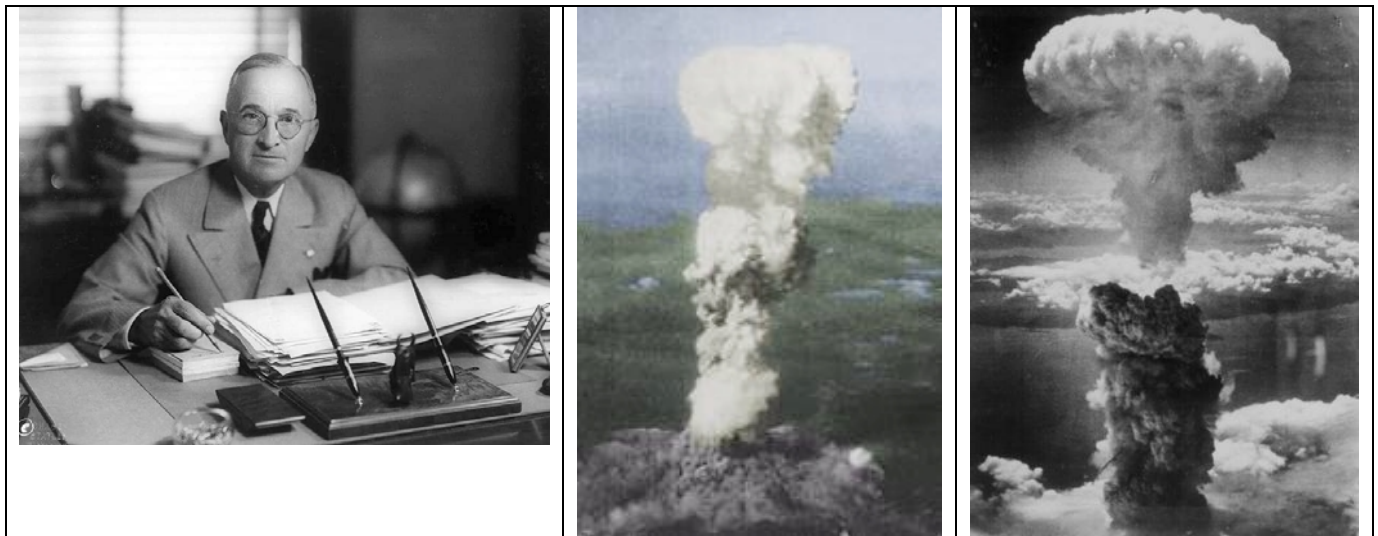
In Tokyo, August 9th was a day of nonstop conferences. The Supreme War Council was convened by Foreign Minister Togo Shinegori and by the afternoon Premier Suzuki Kantaro acceded to the previously unthinkable, stating "Let us, the present Cabinet, take the responsibility of seeing the country through the termination of the war". The Emperor gave audiences from 9 AM till 11:30 that evening, his longest working day of the war. The War Council had only one concern left, the preservation of the national polity - the Throne. The next day the foreign ministry issued a note to the Americans through the Swiss consulate asking for peace, and dearly hoping to avert another atomic blast. At 4 AM the following day (August 11th) the Soviet Army struck out across the Manchurian frontier. Later that day the Americans responded to the Japanese peace overture by demanding they publicly accept the tenants of the Potsdam Declaration. Still worried about the national polity, the Japanese cabinet stalled, again mired in a vicious internal fight.



One of the 5-1/2 million special leaflets dropped on Japan on August 14, 1945, announcing Japanese peace overtures through the Swiss Embassy and the American's reply. It urged the Japanese people to encourage their leaders to cease hostilities to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. These revelations were an enormous embarrassment to the Suzuki government.

The Americans tipped the scales by dropping a record 5-1/2 million leaflets on the 13th spelling out the Japanese surrender overtures to the Swiss embassy and the American reply. This exposed the cabinet's surrender overtures, and the Emperor was obliged to intercede, calling his people to lay down their arms and accept the unconditional surrender during a noontime radio broadcast on Tuesday August 14th, heard clearly by the allies. The Japanese pronouncement came just 194 hours after the Hiroshima drop. Regardless of one's political views, it's difficult to separate the atomic bombs from the Emperor's sudden decision to intervene, and surrender, unconditionally.

Two nuclear warheads had suddenly and irrevocably accomplished peace in a span of a week and a day. To those who were there and lived through those toilsome hours of agonizing how to end it, the connection between the events was as solid as an arc weld. The Japanese leadership, for their part, had reacted as we had hoped, and numerous internal memos attest to their misguided belief that the Americans had a sizable stockpile of nuclear bombs, and that certain and complete annihilation would ensue unless they acted quickly. In all my studies of the war with Japan this would be the only occasion where American efforts to coerce a particular Japanese reaction were completely successful. That it was so successful in bringing about such an abrupt end to the war seems providential. I came to appreciate the Japanese view that many more people would have died had the war dragged on, especially if any manner of invasion had been carried out.



President Harry S. Truman (1884-1972). The only president who served in the First World War, Truman maintained that the decision to drop the atomic bombs was not a difficult one for him to make, as his primary concern was to conclude the conflict with Japan as soon as possible, hoping to avert an Allied invasion of the Japan that would have cost innumerable American casualties. 250,000 to 500,000 casualties was the figure given to Truman in 1945, but after the war this was revised upward, to more than one million because our intelligence estimates on Japanese troop strengths and numbers of hoarded kamikaze aircraft on Kyushu were woefully inadequate. Middle and Right: the sinister mushroom clouds that formed above Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively.

EPILOGUE

Through my research, travels and personal experience with armed conflict I eventually came to a different conclusion about the Hiroshima and Nagasaki drops than my fellow baby boomers. Man's vanity changes little from generation to generation. If I were to be killed by a bow-and-arrow or a nuclear warhead, it really isn't going to matter to my loved ones, I'd still be dead. Could I support the use of nuclear weapons? I suppose I could, but only if I were thoroughly convinced such action would prevent more casualties from occurring. I had always admired Harry Truman for having restrained from employing nuclear weapons in Korea; but if I had been attached to the beleaguered 1st Marines at Chosin Reservoir in December 1950, I may not hold so tightly to my high moral ethos.

It's much easier to debate the morality of nuclear weapons if you've never been in combat. Armed conflicts force us to face our mortality in a way one can never comprehend standing safe and secure on the steps of Berkeley's Sproul Plaza. For the people who have to do the dying, it's hard to debate the morals of an immoral act such as war. War is the great equalizer, it can eclipse your life in an instant, regardless of talent, wealth or upbringing. War, at its essence, is about killing or being killed. It is man's most terrible invention, which has been with us since time began.

We do our soldiers, their families and our own society a disservice if we do not attempt everything in our power to avoid wars; but, once engaged, our country's leaders have a moral obligation to minimize our own casualties and resolve the conflicts, as soon as possible. Each day a war drags on, more lives are lost. This simple fact seems lost on many of my generation, and our children, who vigorously debate the morality of using nuclear weapons on Japan to save 500,000, instead of 1,000,000 men. One prominent historian even degraded Harry Truman for "using the bombs to end the war as quickly as possible, for political reasons". Only a moron who's never spent a day in uniform could write such an idiotic statement. Are we supposed to let wars drag on so we don't offend our critics? The tragic mistake of Vietnam was the attempt by this country's leadership to have a limited, conventional, and thereby "*politically-acceptable war*". I would contend war is like pregnancy: you either are - or you are not. During Vietnam the very thing politicians sought to avoid - unpopularity; eventually swallowed them. By stringing out the conflict instead of taking the necessary risks to seize complete military victory, a tragedy was inflicted upon those who did serve, because their sacrifice was not appreciated.

Winning wars also involves taking great risks, and the commodities traded by politicians who invoke such gambles are a country's youth: their irreplaceable future. One can't help but feel for the Suzuki Cabinet and their agonizing attempts to cede for an honorable peace. Few of the world's leaders this Century have been faced with a more difficult task, for it is much easier to be the triumphant winner than a graceful loser. Through their remarkable recovery from ashes a scant half-century ago, the Japanese have presented the world with a recipe for success; few can deny their influence on the world scene today. Give the Japanese credit for forgiving what so many of us have been unable to forgive or accept over this past half century. I wonder if we could ever usher the humility to do the same.

As we pass into the 21st Century it is becoming increasingly apparent that economic power is replacing military power in the role of coercing state policy on the world stage. Nuclear weapons present a terrible risk to mankind if they fall into the hands of unprincipled individuals. Let's hope we can settle international disputes collectively, with sparing use of military strength. The potential for nuclear holocaust will likely grow as the memory of 1945 fades.

LCDR J. David Rogers, USNR was commissioned as a Navy intelligence officer in 1984, following officer training with the Marine Corps in 1974-76. His formal education includes a bachelor's in geology and geophysics from California State Polytechnic University, and masters and doctorate degrees in civil and geological engineering from the University of California at Berkeley. Rogers was serving on the Tactical Training Team of Commander Patrol Wings Pacific during his duty in Japan. He is the recipient of 13 decorations and NAO wings. He entered the individual ready reserve in 1995 to pursue research and teaching at U. C. Berkeley, while maintaining a forensic engineering practice in Pleasant Hill, California.

