

The Atomic Bomb

Background

By the summer of 1945, World War II appeared to be nearing its end. Germany had surrendered and U.S. ships and airplanes had blockaded Japan. In May, American troops captured Okinawa, just a few hundred miles from Japan. And, though the Soviet Union had not declared war on Japan, it was expected to do so soon. The U.S. and its allies demanded the Japanese government's "unconditional surrender." However, the Japanese government had not surrendered. Plans were made to invade Japan in the fall. In July, President Truman was informed that scientists had invented a new bomb, capable of destroying an entire city.

Drop the Bomb by "Enola May"

The U.S. has been at war for 3½ years. More than 250,000 American soldiers have died fighting Germany and Japan. Despite our recent victories, the Japanese government has not surrendered.

The Japanese have demonstrated a willingness to fight to the death. This is because they consider it shameful to surrender to an enemy. In the past several months, the Japanese have even organized squadrons of *kamikaze* pilots. These are people who load their planes with bombs and then crash them into American ships.

In the last battle, we invaded and captured the island of Okinawa. It was defended by 100,000 Japanese soldiers. Very few of them surrendered. Capturing Okinawa resulted in 12,000 Americans being killed and 36,000 wounded.

There are still 2,000,000 Japanese soldiers defending the homeland. An invasion of Japan would result in at least 250,000 Americans being killed and wounded, because the Japanese will fight to the last man.

It is fortunate that we developed the technology for the Atomic Bomb. We can now convince Japan to surrender without having to invade. We must use it. And, we must use it on a legitimate military target, even if civilians will be killed.

There are no other reasonable options. We could try a blockade of Japan, but that would take years. Plus, since Japan has been blockaded for nearly a year and has not surrendered, there is no guarantee that they will ever surrender.

We could drop the bomb on a deserted island or at least a target that has no civilians. But, then the Japanese will believe we are not willing to use it to destroy human life on a large scale. If that happens, we will have completely wasted the bomb's ability to convince Japan to surrender. Plus, there are just two bombs so we have to make each of them count.

We could offer them lenient surrender terms. But, that will send a terrible message to the world. Within a decade, we will be at war again, defending democracy from another dictator.

There is another consideration. The use of the Atomic Bomb will display to the world its awesome power. Since we are the only nation with the technology to make one, we can ensure peace in the post-war world. It is possible that this new weapon will make war obsolete. But the world will only believe what it sees.

To win this war and to prevent future wars, we must use the Bomb.

Choose Another Way to End the War by "Bob Heimer"

We should not use the Atomic Bomb on Japan until we have tried all other options. Killing civilians is an immoral way to try to win the war. It is also ineffective. Earlier in the year, we fire-bombed Tokyo and killed 80,000 people. But, this did not convince Japan to surrender. The Atomic Bomb will probably not kill more people, so we can expect the same result.

We must try other options. For example, we have not done all we can through diplomacy. The Soviet Union is the only major power not to declare war on Japan. The Japanese government may hope the Soviet Union will join them and swing the tide in their favor. Or it may believe the Soviet Union will try to mediate some effort at peace. If we can get the Soviet Union to publicly join our side, it may cause the Japanese government to surrender.

We could also negotiate better. For example, we should not demand 'unconditional surrender.' The U.S. will eventually compromise with the Japanese anyway, so the demand that they surrender unconditionally is just rhetoric. Maybe if we agreed to some minor conditions about how the Japanese will be governed after the war, they would surrender. We should end our silly and unreasonable demand for unconditional surrender and negotiate.

We could also consider other military options. We have just begun a blockade so we do not know how effective it could be. Japan has few natural resources. For all we know, the blockade could convince Japan to surrender in a month.

We should not rule out an invasion. Military experts believe we could capture the island of Kyushu with less than 30,000 American casualties. This might convince the Japanese government we are willing to invade the main island and may lead to its surrender.

If these options are all tried and they all fail, then we should drop the Atomic Bomb. But, we should only use it as a demonstration, on a deserted island, for example.

There is another consideration when making this decision. The Atomic Bomb will have an important role in the post-war world. Do we want to be the only country that ever used it against another people? What precedent will that set for others who learn the technology?

We have always felt that America is great because we are morally good. Dropping the Atomic Bomb on a civilian target, when we have not tried all other options to end the war, is not morally good.