

America in World War II, 1941–1945

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion [Pearl Harbor], the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, War Message, 1941

Prologue: The nation was plunged into war by the worst military disaster in its history—the Japanese surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. Caught flat-footed, the United States quickly whipped itself into fighting shape. War production revived the depression-drugged economy, stimulating the growth of numerous “boomtowns,” many of them in the South and West. A panicky government interned some 110,000 Japanese Americans in so-called relocation centers, and a few race riots involving blacks and Latinos blotted the wartime record, but for the most part the United States’ many racial and ethnic minorities were willing and welcome partners in the war effort. Millions of new defense-related jobs created unprecedented employment opportunities for women. As the mighty U.S. economic machine went into high gear, the tide of battle slowly began to turn. U.S. troops fought their way agonizingly up the chains of Pacific islands from New Guinea toward Japan. In Europe the hard-pressed and ever-suspicious Soviet Union, eager to have the Western Allies share equally in the bloodletting, clamored ceaselessly for a second front. After frustrating postponements, the Western Allies at last invaded the northern French coast on D-Day, June 6, 1944. After Germany was hammered into inglorious defeat in May 1945, Japan was atom-bombed into submission in August 1945. World War II ended as the nuclear age dawned, ushered in by an ominous mushroom-shaped cloud.

A. War and American Society

I. The War Transforms the Economy (1943)

As war orders flooded the nation’s factories, the decade-old blight of depression was banished, and the face of the United States was transformed. Millions of workers pulled up stakes and moved to the bustling war production centers. Older cities were

¹Merlo J. Pusey, “Revolution at Home,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 42 (July 1943): 207–219, published by Duke University Press.

bursting with war workers, many of them desperate for housing. New towns appeared almost overnight, especially in the wide-open West. The billions of dollars of war contracts financed a virtual revolution in the U.S. economy, conferring enormous advantages on certain businesses and regions. In the selection that follows, which changes are deemed most beneficial and which most harmful? What factors most shaped the decisions about where and how to spend defense dollars? Which economic effects of the war proved most lasting? Which of the author's predictions turned out to be most accurate?

While big industry, fed by government capital and war orders, is growing bigger every day, small industry is being wrecked by the withholding of priorities and materials. The problem is clearly stated by investigators for the Senate Committee on Education and Labor:

Throughout the first two and a half years of our effort one hundred of America's largest corporations have received 75 per cent of all war contracts by dollar volume. To them has gone the bulk of new plants built at Government expense, over fourteen billions of dollars. To them are flowing in increasing numbers the workers seeking jobs in war industry. America, a land of giant corporations before the war, will emerge from this war with a larger share of its vastly expanded economy controlled by a smaller number of firms.

This situation . . . has been accompanied by the destruction of one small community after another through the shutting down of its factories and the migration of its people. The face of America is already greatly changed. If we continue destroying America's small business and uprooting smaller communities, and many of our large ones as well, we shall not recognize postwar America.

. . . Certain advantages will undoubtedly accrue from this new emphasis on bigness. In the housing industry, for example, inefficient contractors operating on a shoestring are being replaced by large companies building two hundred to a thousand dwelling units at one time. To keep under the \$6,000 ceiling on private homes built for war workers and at the same time make a profit, large-scale operations become imperative. Modern building methods are employed out of necessity. More important, large companies are learning that there are big opportunities in building houses which wage earners can afford to rent or buy. Here we have the nucleus of what may become a vast postwar industry capable of immeasurably improving the environment in which millions of our people live. . . .

We have built an enormous portion of our vast war plant within close range of big industries where expert management and skilled labor were at hand. Baltimore, Indianapolis, Buffalo, Hartford, St. Louis, Detroit, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, and numerous other cities find their manufacturing plants expanding at a rate that seemed impossible in peacetime. Detroit has sucked into its voracious mills enough manpower to make a new city much larger than Denver. Its satellite cities—Flint, Saginaw, Lansing, and Jackson—appear to have duplicated that feat on a smaller scale.

Of course, the lightning of war did not strike all the big cities with equal intensity. New York is suffering from a wave of unemployment because its consumer-goods industries are not readily adjustable to the making of tanks, airplanes, or ammunition. The jewelry industry in Providence is quietly starving for metal. But at

near-by Hartford, where typewriters have given way to pistols and machine-tool makers are enjoying their golden age, every foot of space and every ounce of energy is at a premium. War is pushing Hartford ahead as ruthlessly as it is shoving New York behind. . . .

One exception to the general trend stands out in striking contrast. That is the sudden spurt of industrialization in the West. Great Salt Lake and Utah valleys, for example, are undergoing the most profound changes they have experienced since Brigham Young's pioneers broke their parched soil nearly a hundred years ago. Great military establishments have taken the place of quiet farms. Peaceful landscapes have given way to smoke-belching behemoths of industry. Aluminum, radio parts, coke, steel, and other strategic products are beginning to pour out of an area that has heretofore been noted chiefly for the exportation of Mormonism. . . .

Taken as a unit, the West is feeling the stimulus of war industry more keenly than either the North or the South. In 1940 the West had only 10.5 per cent of the country's population. But more than 13 per cent of the government's war-plant fund is being spent there, chiefly for permanent assets. One explanation is the pull of power. Southern California, the beneficiary of Boulder Dam power, has become a seething caldron of war industry. San Diego was until recently known as the "hottest spot" in the whole national picture of wartime dislocations. Los Angeles has eclipsed even the fantastic peacetime records of that city. The Golden State as a whole is getting more than \$390,000,000 in Federal money for war plants. That gives it a sizable lead on the great industrial state of New York, and puts it far ahead of all New England in the wartime expansion of industrial capacity.

In the Northwest, Seattle is the hub of an amazing workshop for war. Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams are doing for the Northwest what Boulder Dam has done for Southern California and Nevada. Their great resources of power attract war industries as certainly as a bag of oats attracts a mule. The investment of Federal funds in war plants in the state of Washington will equal \$80 per capita (1940 census). That outpouring of funds added to previous investments in power has given the Columbia River Valley and Puget Sound region great opportunity to raid neighboring states for manpower. And they are making the most of it. War has thus thrown into double-quick pace the industrial revolution that was already under way in the West.

The meaning of these social and economic upheavals is plain. "The hand that signs the war contract," as a Senate committee said recently, "is the hand that shapes the future." Metal-ribbed Nevada has acquired new government-financed plants costing the equivalent of nearly \$600 for every resident. The agricultural Dakotas have no new war plants. In each case the consequences will be far-reaching. For in this nationwide mobilization there is no chance to maintain the status quo. If strategy and geography do not thrust a community into the maelstrom of war activity, its resources will be drained into other areas where they can better serve the national interest. So the whole pattern of our economic and social life is undergoing kaleidoscopic changes, without so much as a bomb being dropped on our shores.

2. A Japanese American Is Convicted (1943)

Fearing Japanese invasion and possible sabotage, the secretary of war in early 1942 ordered the removal of Japanese Americans from Arizona, California, Oregon, and Washington. Though later upheld by the Supreme Court, the constitutionality of the removal order was questioned at the time and has been hotly debated ever since. One young Japanese American citizen, Gordon K. Hirabayashi, refused to register for deportation and deliberately violated an 8:00 P.M. curfew imposed on Japanese Americans in his native city of Seattle. He was tried and convicted for both offenses, and the Supreme Court, in the decision excerpted here, upheld his conviction. What were Hirabayashi's principal reasons for denying the military orders? How does the Court justify the government's actions? Are the Court's arguments convincing? (In early 1985 a federal court in San Francisco overturned Hirabayashi's conviction of forty-three years earlier.)

Appellant asserted that the indictment should be dismissed because he was an American citizen who had never been a subject of and had never borne allegiance to the Empire of Japan, and also because the Act of March 21, 1942, was an unconstitutional delegation of Congressional power. On the trial to a jury it appeared that appellant was born in Seattle in 1918, of Japanese parents who had come from Japan to the United States, and who had never afterward returned to Japan; that he was educated in the Washington public schools and at the time of his arrest was a senior in the University of Washington; that he had never been in Japan or had any association with Japanese residing there. . . .

Appellant does not deny that he knowingly failed to obey the curfew order as charged in the second count of the indictment. . . . His contentions are only that . . . even if the regulation were in other respects lawfully authorized, the Fifth Amendment prohibits the discrimination made between citizens of Japanese descent and those of other ancestry. . . .

The war power of the national government is "the power to wage war successfully." It extends to every matter and activity so related to war as substantially to affect its conduct and progress. The power is not restricted to the winning of victories in the field and the repulse of enemy forces. It embraces every phase of the national defense, including the protection of war materials and the members of the armed forces from injury and from the dangers which attend the rise, prosecution and progress of war. . . .

. . . [O]ur inquiry must be whether in the light of all the facts and circumstances there was any substantial basis for the conclusion, in which Congress and the military commander united, that the curfew as applied was a protective measure necessary to meet the threat of sabotage and espionage which would substantially affect the war effort and which might reasonably be expected to aid a threatened enemy invasion. The alternative which appellant insists must be accepted is for the military authorities to impose the curfew on all citizens within the military area, or on none. In a case of threatened danger requiring prompt action, it is a choice between inflicting obviously needless hardship on the many, or sitting passive and unresisting in the presence of the threat. We think that constitutional government, in time of

²Hirabayashi v. United States, 320 U.S. 83 (1943).

war, is not so powerless and does not compel so hard a choice if those charged with the responsibility of our national defense have reasonable ground for believing that the threat is real. . . .

There is support for the view that social, economic and political conditions which have prevailed since the close of the last century, when the Japanese began to come to this country in substantial numbers, have intensified their solidarity and have in large measure prevented their assimilation as an integral part of the white population. In addition, large numbers of children of Japanese parentage are sent to Japanese language schools outside the regular hours of public schools in the locality. Some of these schools are generally believed to be sources of Japanese nationalistic propaganda, cultivating allegiance to Japan. Considerable numbers, estimated to be approximately 10,000, of American-born children of Japanese parentage have been sent to Japan for all or a part of their education.

Congress and the Executive, including the military commander, could have attributed special significance, in its bearing on the loyalties of persons of Japanese descent, to the maintenance of Japan by its system of dual citizenship. Children born in the United States of Japanese alien parents, and especially those children born before December 1, 1924, are under many circumstances deemed, by Japanese law, to be citizens of Japan. No official census of those whom Japan regards as having thus retained Japanese citizenship is available, but there is ground for the belief that the number is large.

The large number of resident alien Japanese, approximately one-third of all Japanese inhabitants of the country, are of mature years and occupy positions of influence in Japanese communities. The association of influential Japanese residents with Japanese Consulates has been deemed a ready means for the dissemination of propaganda and for the maintenance of the influence of the Japanese Government with the Japanese population in this country.

As a result of all these conditions affecting the life of the Japanese, both aliens and citizens, in the Pacific Coast area, there has been relatively little social intercourse between them and the white population. The restrictions, both practical and legal, affecting the privileges and opportunities afforded to persons of Japanese extraction residing in the United States, have been sources of irritation and may well have tended to increase their isolation, and in many instances their attachments to Japan and its institutions.

. . . These are only some of the many considerations which those charged with the responsibility for the national defense could take into account in determining the nature and extent of the danger of espionage and sabotage, in the event of invasion or air raid attack. The extent of that danger could be definitely known only after the event and after it was too late to meet it. Whatever views we may entertain regarding the loyalty to this country of the citizens of Japanese ancestry, we cannot reject as unfounded the judgment of the military authorities and of Congress that there were disloyal members of that population. . . . [and] that in a critical hour such persons could not readily be isolated and separately dealt with, and constituted a menace to the national defense and safety, which demanded that prompt and adequate measures be taken to guard against it.

Appellant does not deny that, given the danger, a curfew was an appropriate measure against sabotage. . . .

But appellant insists that the exercise of the power is inappropriate and unconstitutional because it discriminates against citizens of Japanese ancestry, in violation of the Fifth Amendment. The Fifth Amendment contains no equal protection clause and it restrains only such discriminatory legislation by Congress as amounts to a denial of due process. . . . Congress may hit a particular danger where it is seen, without providing for others which are not so evident or so urgent. . . . Distinctions between citizens solely because of their ancestry are by their very nature odious to a free people whose institutions are founded upon the doctrine of equality. For that reason, legislative classification or discrimination based on race alone has often been held to be a denial of equal protection. . . . [Yet, b]ecause racial discriminations are in most circumstances irrelevant and therefore prohibited, it by no means follows that, in dealing with the perils of war, Congress and the Executive are wholly precluded from taking into account those facts and circumstances which are relevant to measures for our national defense and for the successful prosecution of the war, and which may in fact place citizens of one ancestry in a different category from others. "We must never forget, that it is *a constitution* we are expounding," "a constitution intended to endure for ages to come, and, consequently, to be adapted to the various *crises* of human affairs."* The adoption by Government, in the crisis of war and of threatened invasion, of measures for the public safety, based upon the recognition of facts and circumstances which indicate that a group of one national extraction may menace that safety more than others, is not wholly beyond the limits of the Constitution and is not to be condemned merely because in other and in most circumstances racial distinctions are irrelevant. . . .

3. A Black American Ponders the War's Meaning (1942)

Blacks had bitter memories of World War I, when they had clamored in vain to play a major role in the "war to make the world safe for democracy." Despite urgent manpower needs, in 1917-1918 African Americans had been deemed unfit for combat assignments and relegated mostly to "labor battalions" in the army. At home they won only limited access to war-related jobs and were the victims of several bloody race riots at war's end. In the light of this sorry record, it was an open question whether blacks would support the Allied cause in World War II. Japanese propagandists tried to exploit the United States' vexed history of race relations by claiming brotherhood with African Americans as another "people of color" oppressed by white rule. On what grounds did the black author of the following essay decide to support the war? Was he being realistic? Might he have been disillusioned or pleased with the course of the civil rights movement after the war?

War had no heroic traditions for me. Wars were white folks'. All wars in historical memory. The last war, and the Spanish-American War before that, and the Civil War. I had been brought up in a way that admitted of no heroics. I think my parents were right. Life for them was a fierce, bitter, soul-searching war of spiritual and eco-

*The quotation is from John Marshall's decision in *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819). See Vol. I, p. 217.
³J. Saunders Redding, "A Negro Looks at This War," *American Mercury* 55 (November 1942): 585-592.

A. War and American Society

conomic attrition; they fought it without heroics, but with stubborn heroism. Their heroism was screwed up to a pitch of idealism so intense that it found a safety valve in cynicism about the heroics of white folks' war. This cynicism went back at least as far as my paternal grandmother, whose fierce eyes used to lash the faces of her five grandchildren as she said, "An' he done som'pin big an' brave away down dere to Chickymorgy an' dey made a iron image of him 'cause he got his head blowed off an' his stomick blowed out fightin' to keep his slaves." I cannot convey the scorn and the cynicism she put into her picture of that hero-son of her slave-master, but I have never forgotten.

I was nearly ten when we entered the last war in 1917. The European fighting, and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, had seemed as remote, as distantly meaningless to us, as the Battle of Hastings. Then we went in and suddenly the city was flag-draped, slogan-plastered, and as riotously gay as on circus half-holidays. I remember one fine Sunday we came upon an immense new billboard with a new slogan: GIVE! TO MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY. My brother, who was the oldest of us, asked what making the world safe for democracy meant. My father frowned, but before he could answer, my mother broke in.

"It's just something to say, like . . ."—and then she was stuck until she hit upon one of the family's old jokes—"like 'Let's make a million dollars.'" We all laughed, but the bitter core of her meaning lay revealed, even for the youngest of us, like the stone in a halved peach. . . .

And so, since I have reached maturity and thought a man's thoughts and had a man's—a Negro man's—experiences, I have thought that I could never believe in war again. Yet I believe in this one.

There are many things about this war that I do not like, just as there are many things about "practical" Christianity that I do not like. But I believe in Christianity, and if I accept the shoddy and unfulfilling in the conduct of this war, I do it as voluntarily and as purposefully as I accept the trash in the workings of "practical" Christianity. I do not like the odor of political pandering that arises from some groups. I do not like these "race incidents" in the camps. I do not like the world's not knowing officially that there were Negro soldiers on Bataan with General Wainwright.* I do not like the constant references to the Japs as "yellow bastards," "yellow bellies," and "yellow monkeys," as if color had something to do with treachery, as if color were the issue and the thing we are fighting rather than oppression, slavery, and a way of life hateful and nauseating. These and other things I do not like, yet I believe in the war. . . .

This is a war to keep men free. The struggle to broaden and lengthen the road of freedom—our own private and important war to enlarge freedom here in America—will come later. That this private, intra-American war will be carried on and won is the only real reason we Negroes have to fight. We must keep the road open. Did we not believe in a victory in that intra-American war, we could not believe in nor stomach the compulsion of this. If we could not believe in the realization of democratic freedom for ourselves, certainly no one could ask us to die for the preservation of that ideal for others. But to broaden and lengthen the road of freedom

*Bataan was an area in the Philippines through which Jonathan Wainwright's captured American garrison was cruelly forced to march to prisoner-of-war camps in May 1942—the "Bataan Death March."

is different from preserving it. And our first duty is to keep the road of freedom open. It must be done continuously. It is the duty of the whole people to do this. Our next duty (and this, too, is the whole people's) is to broaden the road so that more people can travel it without snarling traffic. To die in these duties is to die for something. . . .

I believe in this war, finally, because I believe in the ultimate vindication of the wisdom of the brotherhood of man. This is not foggy idealism. I think that the growing manifestations of the interdependence of all men is an argument for the wisdom of brotherhood. I think that the shrunk compass of the world is an argument. I think that the talk of united nations and of planned interdependence is an argument.

More immediately, I believe in this war because I believe in America. I believe in what America professes to stand for. Nor is this, I think, whistling in the dark. There are a great many things wrong here. There are only a few men of good will. I do not lose sight of that. I know the inequalities, the outraged hopes and faith, the inbred hate; and I know that there are people who wish merely to lay these by in the closet of the national mind until the crisis is over. But it would be equally foolish for me to lose sight of the advances that are made, the barriers that are leveled, the privileges that grow. Foolish, too, to remain blind to the distinction that exists between simple race prejudice, already growing moribund under the impact of this war, and theories of racial superiority as a basic tenet of a societal system—theories that at bottom are the avowed justification for suppression, defilement and murder.

I will take this that I have here. I will take the democratic theory. The bit of road of freedom that stretches through America is worth fighting to preserve. The very fact that I, a Negro in America, can fight against the evils in America is worth fighting for. This open fighting against the wrongs one hates is the mark and the hope of democratic freedom. I do not underestimate the struggle. I know the learning that must take place, the evils that must be broken, the depths that must be climbed. But I am free to help in doing these things. I count. I am free (though only a little as yet) to pound blows at the huge body of my American world until, like a chastened mother, she gives me nurture with the rest.

4. A Woman Remembers the War (1984)

With millions of men in the armed forces and the nation's factories straining to keep them supplied, women were drawn by the millions into nontraditional jobs. For many of those women, the war represented not simply a bloody conflict of global proportions, but also an unanticipated opportunity for economic freedom and personal growth. In the following selection, one war worker looks back on her experience in a plant in California. What does she remember most and least fondly about her wartime job? What aspects of it challenged her most? What was most fulfilling about it? What were the war's principal effects on her?

⁴From Mark Jonathan Harris, Franklin D. Mitchell, and Steven J. Schecter, *The Homefront: America During World War II*, pp. 126–129. Copyright © 1984. Reprinted by permission of the author.

When the war started I was twenty-six, unmarried, and working as a cosmetics clerk in a drugstore in Los Angeles. I was running the whole department, handling the inventory and all that. It seemed asinine, though, to be selling lipstick when the country was at war. I felt that I was capable of doing something more than that toward the war effort.

There was also a big difference between my salary and those in defense work. I was making something like twenty-two, twenty-four dollars a week in the drugstore. You could earn a much greater amount of money for your labor in defense plants. Also it interested me. There was a certain curiosity about meeting that kind of challenge, and here was an opportunity to do that, for there were more and more openings for women.

So I went to two or three plants and took their tests. And they all told me I had absolutely no mechanical ability. I said, "I don't believe that." So I went to another plant, A.D.E.L. I was interviewed and got the job. This particular plant made the hydraulic-valve system for the B-17. And where did they put women? In the burr room. You sat at a workbench, which was essentially like a picnic table, with a bunch of other women, and you worked grinding and sanding machine parts to make them smooth. That's what you did all day long. It was very mechanical and it was very boring. There were about thirty women in the burr room, and it was like being in a beauty shop every day. I couldn't stand the inane talk. So when they asked me if I would like to work someplace else in the shop, I said I very much would.

They started training me. I went to a blueprint class and learned how to use a micrometer and how to draw tools out of the tool crib and everything else. Then one day they said, "Okay, how would you like to go into the machine shop?"

I said, "Terrific."

And they said, "Now, Adele, it's going to be a real challenge, because you'll be the only woman in the machine shop." I thought to myself, Well, that's going to be fun, all those guys and Adele in the machine shop. So the foreman took me over there. It was a big room, with a high ceiling and fluorescent lights, and it was very noisy. I walked in there, in my overalls, and suddenly all the machines stopped and every guy in the shop just turned around and looked at me. It took, I think, two weeks before anyone even talked to me. The discrimination was indescribable. They wanted to kill me.

My attitude was, "Okay, you bastards, I'm going to prove to you I can do anything you can do, and maybe better than some of you." And that's exactly the way it turned out. I used to do the rework on the pieces that the guy on the shift before me had screwed up. I finally got assigned to nothing but rework.

Later they taught me to run an automatic screwing machine. It's a big mother, and it took a lot of strength just to throw that thing into gear. They probably thought I wasn't going to be able to do it. But I was determined to succeed. As a matter of fact, I developed the most fantastic biceps from throwing that machine into gear. Even today I still have a little of that muscle left.

Anyway, eventually some of the men became very friendly, particularly the older ones, the ones in their late forties or fifties. They were journeymen tool and die makers and were so skilled that they could work anywhere at very high salaries. They were sort of fatherly, protective. They weren't threatened by me. The younger men, I think, were.

Our plant was an open shop, and the International Association of Machinists was trying to unionize the workers. I joined them and worked to try to get the union in the plant. I proselytized for the union during lunch hour, and I had a big altercation with the management over that. The employers and my lead man and foreman called me into the office and said, "We have a right to fire you."

I said, "On what basis? I work as well or better than anybody else in the shop except the journeymen."

They said, "No, not because of that. Because you're talking for the union on company property. You're not allowed to do that."

I said, "Well, that's just too bad, because I can't get off the grounds here. You won't allow us to leave the grounds during lunch hour. And you don't pay me for my lunch hour, so that time doesn't belong to you, so you can't tell me what to do." And they backed down.

I had one experience at the plant that really made me work for the union. One day while I was burring I had an accident and ripped some cartilage out of my hand. It wasn't serious, but it looked kind of messy. They had to take me over to the industrial hospital to get my hand sutured. I came back and couldn't work for a day or two because my hand was all bandaged. It wasn't serious, but it was awkward. When I got my paycheck, I saw that they had docked me for time that I was in the industrial hospital. When I saw that I was really mad.

It's ironic that when the union finally got into the plant, they had me transferred out. They were anxious to get rid of me because after we got them in I went to a few meetings and complained about it being a Jim Crow union. So they arranged for me to have a higher rating instead of a worker's rating. This allowed me to make twenty-five cents an hour more, and I got transferred to another plant. By this time I was married. When I became pregnant I worked for about three months more, then I quit.

For me defense work was the beginning of my emancipation as a woman. For the first time in my life I found out that I could do something with my hands besides bake a pie. I found out that I had manual dexterity and the mentality to read blueprints and gauges, and to be inquisitive enough about things to develop skills other than the conventional roles that women had at that time. I had the consciousness-raising experience of being the only woman in this machine shop and having the mantle of challenge laid down by the men, which stimulated my competitiveness and forced me to prove myself. This, plus working in the union, gave me a lot of self-confidence.

B. The Second-Front Controversy

1. Eisenhower Urges the Earliest Possible Second Front (1942)

The German "blitzkrieg" invasion of the Soviet Union was six months old by the time the United States entered World War II in December 1941, and by that date the Soviets had already suffered hundreds of thousands of casualties. From the outset, the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, emphasized that what he most urgently needed from his British and American allies was for them to open a second front in Western Europe that would

¹Eisenhower, Dwight D., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years, Vol. I*, p. 151, copyright © 1970 The Johns Hopkins University Press.

help to reduce the ferocious German pressure on the Soviets in the East. American military planners agreed, though political considerations, logistical bottlenecks, and strategic disagreements with the British combined to delay a full-scale second front for two and one-half more years, until D-Day, June 6, 1944—just eleven months before the conclusion of the war in Europe. The simmering controversy over the second front exacerbated Soviet suspicions of the West and significantly soured U.S.-Soviet relations, helping to set the stage for the Cold War that followed. In the following document from February 28, 1942, Dwight D. Eisenhower, then the head of the army's War Plans Division and soon to become supreme allied commander in Europe (and later president of the United States), laid out the strategic case for the earliest possible second front. What are his chief points? What are his principal worries about the Soviet Union?

... The task of keeping Russia in the war involves, in the opinion of the War Plans Division, immediate and definite action. It is not sufficient to urge upon the Russians the indirect advantages that will accrue to them from Allied operations in distant parts of the world, although these operations may be designed to free our forces for a later offensive against Germany, or to keep Japan from immediately attacking Siberia. Russia's problem is to sustain herself during the coming summer, and she must not be permitted to reach such a precarious position that she will accept a negotiated peace, no matter how unfavorable to herself, in preference to a continuation of the fight.

There are two important ways in which this result can probably be brought about. The first is by direct aid through lease-lend; the second is through the early initiation of operations that will draw off from the Russian front sizable portions of the German Army, both air and ground. Such an operation must be so conceived, and so presented to the Russians, that they will recognize the importance of the support rendered. Air, possibly ground, attack from England is indicated. Air operations can be initiated long before a sizable land attack could be staged. . . .

2. Churchill Explains to Stalin That There Will Be No Second Front in 1942 (1942)

Stalin sent his foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, to London and Washington, D.C., in May 1942 to secure agreement on an early second front. Winston Churchill tried to dampen Soviet hopes, but Roosevelt assured Molotov that the Americans would open such a front in 1942—a promise that Churchill almost immediately persuaded Roosevelt to break. It fell to Churchill to carry that discouraging news to Stalin. The British prime minister wrote that his mission to Moscow was “like carrying a large lump of ice to the North Pole.” Churchill later reported to Roosevelt on his meeting with the Soviet leader in August 1942. How does he characterize Stalin's reaction? What seem to be Churchill's underlying anxieties about the British-American-Soviet alliance?

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... [W]e all repaired to the Kremlin at eleven P.M. and were received only by Stalin and Molotov with the interpreter. Then began a most unpleasant discussion. Stalin handed me the enclosed document to which see also my reply. When it was translated I said I would answer it in writing and that he must understand we have made up our minds upon the course to be pursued and that reproaches were vain. Thereafter we argued for about two hours, during which he said many disagreeable things, especially about our being too much afraid of fighting the Germans, and if we tried it like the Russians we should find it not so bad, that we had broken our promise about Sledgehammer [a proposed Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France, planned for 1942], that we had failed in delivering the supplies promised to Russia and only sent remnants after we had taken all we needed for ourselves. Apparently these complaints were addressed as much to the United States as to Britain.

I repulsed all his contentions squarely but without taunts of any kind. I suppose he is not used to being contradicted repeatedly but he did not become at all angry or even animated. On one occasion I said, "I pardon that remark only on account of the bravery of the Russian troops." Finally he said we could carry it no further. He must accept our decision and abruptly invited us to dinner at eight o'clock tonight.

Accepted the invitation [but] said I would leave by plane at dawn the next morning, i.e., fifteenth. Joe seemed somewhat concerned at this and asked could I not stay longer. I said certainly, if there was any good to be done, and that I would wait one more day anyhow. I then exclaimed there was no ring of comradeship in his attitude. I had travelled far to establish good working relations. We had done our utmost to help Russia and would continue to do so. We had been left entirely alone for a year against Germany and Italy. Now that the three great nations were allied, victory was certain provided we did not fall apart, and so forth. I was somewhat animated in this passage and before it could be translated he made the remark that he liked the temperament or spirit of my utterance. Thereafter the talk began again in a somewhat less tense atmosphere.

He plunged into a long discussion of two Russian trench mortar-firing rockets which he declared were devastating in their effects and which he offered to demonstrate to our experts if they could wait. He said he would let us have all information about them, but should there not be something in return. Should there not be an agreement to exchange information of inventions. I said that we would give them everything without any bargaining except only those devices which, if carried in aeroplanes over the enemy lines and shot down, would make our bombing of Germany more difficult. He accepted this. He also agreed that his military authorities should meet our generals and this was arranged for three o'clock this afternoon. ... All this part of the talk was easier, but when [special American emissary to the Soviet Union Averell] Harriman asked about the plans for bringing American aircraft across Siberia, to which the Russians have only recently consented after long American pressing, he replied, curtly, "Wars are not won with plans." Harriman backed me up throughout and we neither of us yielded an inch nor spoke a bitter word. ...

It is my considered opinion that in his heart so far as he has one Stalin knows we are right and that six divisions on Sledgehammer would do him no good this year. Moreover I am certain that his sure-footed and quick military judgement makes him a strong supporter of Torch. I think it not impossible that he will make amends. In that hope I persevere. Anyhow I am sure it was better to have it out this way than

B. The Second-Front Controversy

any other. There was never at any time the slightest suggestion of their not fighting on and I think myself that Stalin has good confidence that he will win. . . .

3. Stalin Resents the Delay of the Second Front (1943)

At their meeting in Casablanca, Morocco, in January 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill announced their intention to invade Italy later that year, thus postponing the planned major attack across the English Channel until 1944. As the second front continued to be delayed, Stalin grew increasingly embittered. In this secret message to Churchill on June 24, 1943, he gave full vent to his anger. From the viewpoint of the Western Allies, what part of Stalin's attitude might have been most alarming?

. . . When you now write that "it would be no help to Russia if we threw away a hundred thousand men in a disastrous cross-Channel attack," all I can do is remind you of the following.

First, your own Aide-Mémoire of June 1942, in which you declared that preparations were under way for an invasion, not by a hundred thousand, but by an Anglo-American force exceeding one million men at the very start of the operation.

Second, your February [1943] message, which mentioned extensive measures preparatory to the invasion of Western Europe in August or September 1943, which, apparently, envisaged an operation, not by a hundred thousand men, but by an adequate force.

So when you now declare: "I cannot see how a great British defeat and slaughter would aid the Soviet armies," is it not clear that a statement of this kind in relation to the Soviet Union is utterly groundless and directly contradicts your previous and responsible decisions, listed above, about extensive and vigorous measures by the British and Americans to organize the invasion this year, measures on which the complete success of the operation should hinge?

I shall not enlarge on the fact that this responsible decision, revoking your previous decisions on the invasion of Western Europe, was reached by you and the President without Soviet participation and without inviting its representatives to the Washington conference, although you cannot but be aware that the Soviet Union's role in the war against Germany and its interest in the problems of the second front are great enough.

There is no need to say that the Soviet Government cannot become reconciled to this disregard of vital Soviet interests in the war against the common enemy.

You say that you "quite understand" my disappointment. I must tell you that the point here is not just the disappointment of the Soviet Government, but the preservation of its confidence in its Allies, a confidence which is being subjected to severe stress. One should not forget that it is a question of saving millions of lives in the occupied areas of Western Europe and Russia, and of reducing the enormous sacrifices of the Soviet armies, compared with which the sacrifices of the Anglo-American armies are insignificant.

³Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, *Correspondence Between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945* (1957), vol. 2, pp. 75-76.

4. Roosevelt and Stalin Meet Face-to-Face (1943)

At the Iranian capital of Teheran, Roosevelt and Stalin met face-to-face at last in November 1943, for the first of just two such occasions (the other was at Yalta, in the Soviet Crimea, in early 1945). Talk of the second front dominated much of the discussion among Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. In the following exchange, how does the second-front question reveal the tensions in the "Grand Alliance"? How does the second-front issue foreshadow U.S.-Soviet problems in the postwar era?

Bohlen Minutes

Secret

The President said that since there was no agenda for the conference he thought it would be a good idea to have a report from the military staffs who had met this morning, and if there was no objection they might hear from General Brooke, Marshal Voroshilov and General Marshall. . . .

[The three generals—representing Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, respectively—addressed various issues relating to the planned Allied invasion of northern France, which they code-named "Overlord." The first stage of that operation would commence six months later on "D-Day," June 6, 1944.]

Marshal Stalin then inquired who will command Overlord.

The President replied that it had not yet been decided. . . .

Marshal Stalin stated that the Russians do not expect to have a voice in the selection of the Commander-in-Chief; they merely want to know who he is to be and to have him appointed as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister expressed agreement and said that he thought the appointment could be announced within a fortnight. He then went on to say that he was a little concerned at the number and complexity of the problems which were before the conference. He said many hundreds of millions of people are watching this conference, and he hoped that it would not break up until an agreement had been reached on big military, political and moral questions. He said that the British Staff and himself had given prolonged thought to the Mediterranean theater and that they were most anxious to have the armies there fight against the enemy and not have them stripped of essential elements. . . . The operation into southern France from northern Italy had been mentioned but not studied and should, therefore, be explored more fully between the United States and British Staffs. Mr. Churchill said that Marshal Stalin had correctly stressed the value of pincers movement *[implying the need for a second, western front to serve as the complementary "pincer" to the Red Army in the East]* but that the time element was important and a premature subsidiary attack might be wiped out. He went on to say that personally all he wanted was landing craft for two divisions in the Mediterranean and that with such a force many operations would be feasible, for example, it could be used to facilitate the operations in Italy or to take the island of Rhodes if Turkey will enter the war, and could be used for these purposes for at least six months and then employed in sup-

⁴*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), pp. 533-539.

port of Overlord. He pointed out that this force of landing craft could not be supplied for the forces in the Mediterranean without either delaying Overlord six to eight weeks or without withdrawing forces from the Indian theater. That is the dilemma. . . . [Churchill went on to discuss at length the importance of several matters in the Mediterranean theater—namely, the value of Marshal Tito's "Partisan" resistance in Yugoslavia and the potential impact of a Turkish decision to join the Allied effort.] Mr. Churchill proposed that the two foreign secretaries and the representative of the President meet to discuss the political aspects of the Turkish question as well as other political questions involving the Balkans area. Mr. Churchill said that he had asked some questions yesterday regarding Bulgaria, in particular if Bulgaria attacked Turkey would the Soviet Government consider Bulgaria as a foe. . . .

Marshal Stalin said that Mr. Churchill need have no worry about the Soviet attitude toward Bulgaria; that if Turkey entered the war the Soviet Union would go to war with Bulgaria, but even so he did not think Turkey would come in. He continued that there was no difference of opinion as to the importance of helping the Partisans, but that he must say that from the Russian point of view the question of Turkey, the Partisans and even the occupation of Rome were not really important operations. He said that Overlord was the most important and nothing should be done to distract attention from that operation. He felt that a directive should be given to the military staffs, and proposed the following one:

- (1). In order that Russian help might be given from the east to the execution of Overlord, a date should be set and the operation should not be postponed.
- (2). If possible the attack in southern France should precede Overlord by two months, but if that is impossible, then simultaneously or even a little after Overlord. An operation in southern France would be a supporting operation as contrasted with diversionary operations in Rome or in the Balkans, and would assure the success of Overlord.
- (3). The appointment of a Commander-in-Chief for Overlord as soon as possible. Until that is done the Overlord operation cannot be considered as really in progress. Marshal Stalin added that the appointment of the Commander-in-Chief was the business of the President and Mr. Churchill but that it would be advantageous to have the appointment made here.

The President then said he had been most interested in hearing the various angles discussed from Overlord to Turkey. . . . The President then said he was in favor of adhering to the original date for Overlord set at Quebec, namely, the first part of May.

Marshal Stalin said he would like to see Overlord undertaken during the month of May; that he did not care whether it was the 1st, 15th or 20th, but that a definite date was important.

The Prime Minister said it did not appear that the points of view were as far apart as it seemed. The British Government was anxious to begin Overlord as soon as possible but did not desire to neglect the great possibilities in the Mediterranean merely for the sake of avoiding a delay of a month or two.

Marshal Stalin said that the operations in the Mediterranean have a value but they are really only diversions.

The Prime Minister said in the British view the large British forces in the Mediterranean should not stand idle but should be pressing the enemy with vigor. He added that to break off the campaign in Italy where the allied forces were holding a German army would be impossible.

Marshal Stalin said it looked as though Mr. Churchill thought that the Russians were suggesting that the British armies do nothing.

The Prime Minister said that if landing craft is [are] taken from the Mediterranean theater there will be no action. He added that at Moscow the conditions under which the British Government considered Overlord could be launched had been fully explained, and these were that there should not be more than 12 mobile German divisions behind the coastal troops and that German reinforcements for sixty days should not exceed 15 Divisions. He added that to fulfill these conditions it was necessary in the intervening period to press the enemy from all directions. He said that the Divisions now facing the allies in Italy had come from the most part in France [for the most part from France?], and to break off the action in Italy would only mean that they would return to France to oppose Overlord. Turning again to the question of Turkey, The Prime Minister said that all were agreed on the question of Turkey's entrance into the war. . . .

Marshal Stalin interposed to ask how many French Divisions were being trained in North Africa.

General Marshall replied that for the present there were five Divisions ready and four in training, and that one of these five was in Italy with the American Fifth Army and another was en route. He said that from the battle experience gained it would be possible to decide how best to utilize the other French Divisions.

The President then proposed that instead of three directives to the three Staffs that one directive be agreed upon here. He then proposed a joint directive as follows: (1). That the military staffs should assume that Overlord is the dominating operation. (2). That the Staffs make recommendations in regard to other operations in the Mediterranean area, having carefully in mind the possibility of causing a delay in Overlord.

Marshal Stalin said he saw no need for any military committee here, that the questions involved should be decided at the conference. He also saw no need for any political sub-committee. Marshal Stalin then said he wished to ask Mr. Churchill an indiscreet question, namely, do the British really believe in Overlord or are they only saying so to reassure the Russians. . . .

5. Politics (1943)

Roosevelt was especially concerned at Teheran to temper the Soviet leader's frustration with the failure of the British and the Americans to play a larger role in the war. Having at this point few other resources at his disposal (the Americans were still not prepared to undertake the large-scale invasion of Western Europe for which Stalin was clamoring), the president was obliged to rely on personal charm. "I can handle that old buzzard," Roosevelt allegedly boasted in private. Roosevelt later reported his experience at Teheran to his secretary of labor, Frances Perkins. How ef-

⁵From *The Roosevelt I Knew* by Frances Perkins. Copyright 1946 by Frances Perkins; © renewed 1974 by Susanna W. Coggeshall. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Putnam, Inc.

fective were Roosevelt's tactics on this occasion? What might Churchill's reaction have been?

"You know [reported Roosevelt], the Russians are interesting people. For the first three days I made absolutely no progress. I couldn't get any personal connection with Stalin, although I had done everything he asked me to do. I had stayed at his Embassy, gone to his dinners, been introduced to his ministers and generals. He was correct, stiff, solemn, not smiling, nothing human to get hold of. I felt pretty discouraged. If it was all going to be official paper work, there was no sense in my having made this long journey which the Russians had wanted. They couldn't come to America or any place in Europe for it. I had come there to accommodate Stalin. I felt pretty discouraged because I thought I was making no personal headway. What we were doing could have been done by the foreign ministers.

"I thought it over all night and made up my mind I had to do something desperate. I couldn't stay in Teheran forever. I had to cut through this icy surface so that later I could talk by telephone or letter in a personal way. I had scarcely seen Churchill alone during the conference. I had a feeling that the Russians did not feel right about seeing us conferring together in a language which we understood and they didn't.

"On my way to the conference room that morning we caught up with Winston [Churchill] and I had just a moment to say to him, 'Winston, I hope you won't be sore at me for what I am going to do.'

"Winston just shifted his cigar and grunted. I must say he behaved very decently afterward.

"I began almost as soon as we got into the conference room. I talked privately with Stalin. I didn't say anything that I hadn't said before, but it appeared quite chummy and confidential, enough so that the other Russians joined us to listen. Still no smile.

"Then I said, lifting my hand up to cover a whisper (which of course had to be interpreted), 'Winston is cranky this morning, he got up on the wrong side of the bed.'

"A vague smile passed over Stalin's eyes, and I decided I was on the right track. As soon as I sat down at the conference table, I began to tease Churchill about his Britishness, about John Bull, about his cigars, about his [drinking?] habits. It began to register with Stalin. Winston got red and scowled, and the more he did so, the more Stalin smiled. Finally Stalin broke out into a deep, hearty guffaw, and for the first time in three days I saw light. I kept it up until Stalin was laughing with me, and it was then that I called him 'Uncle Joe.' He would have thought me fresh the day before, but that day he laughed and came over and shook my hand.

"From that time on our relations were personal, and Stalin himself indulged in an occasional witticism. The ice was broken and we talked like men and brothers.

"You know . . . he was deeply touched by the presentation of the sword which Churchill brought him from the British people."

[Relations between Roosevelt and Stalin remained friendly until several weeks before Roosevelt's death in April 1945. Then Stalin abusively charged bad faith in connection with the surrender of German troops in Italy, and Roosevelt came back with protests against Stalin's violations of his Yalta pledges, notably in connection with Poland.]

C. The "Unconditional Surrender" Controversy

I. Robert Sherwood Defends FDR (1948)

Late in 1942 the Allies launched a side-issue invasion of French North Africa, but Stalin refused to recognize it as a genuine second front. Shortly after, Roosevelt flew to Casablanca, in French Morocco, for a conference with Prime Minister Churchill, his eighth cousin once removed. Roosevelt knew that the embittered Stalin was deeply suspicious of a possible deal between Hitler and the Allies. The Soviet Union might even make a separate peace with the Germans, as it had done, with disastrous effect, in 1918. At Roosevelt's instigation, the Casablanca conference proclaimed a policy of "unconditional surrender"—that is, the unconditional surrender of the Axis regimes but not "the destruction of the German populace, nor of the Italian or Japanese populace." Robert E. Sherwood, the ghostwriter associate of Roosevelt, here gives his version. Note how many different objectives the president had in view. Why can one argue that "unconditional surrender" did not prolong German resistance?

There were many propaganda experts, both British and American, who believed that the utterance of these words ["unconditional surrender"] would put the iron of desperate resistance into the Germans, Japanese, and Italians and thereby needlessly prolong the war and increase its cost; there are some who still believe that it did so. These critics were not necessarily opposed to the principle of total defeat—but they considered it a disastrous mistake for the President to announce it publicly. . . .

I wrote Winston Churchill asking him if he had discussed the unconditional surrender statement with Roosevelt before the press conference at Casablanca, and his reply was as follows: "I heard the words 'Unconditional Surrender' for the first time from the President's lips at the Conference. It must be remembered that at that moment no one had a right to proclaim that Victory was assured. Therefore, Defiance was the note. I would not myself have used these words, but I immediately stood by the President and have frequently defended the decision. It is false to suggest that it prolonged the war. Negotiation with Hitler was impossible. He was a maniac with supreme power to play his hand out to the end, which he did; and so did we."

Roosevelt himself absolved Churchill with all responsibility for the statement. Indeed, he suggested that it was an unpremeditated one on his own part. He said, "We had so much trouble getting those two French generals together that I thought to myself that this was as difficult as arranging the meeting of Grant and Lee—and then suddenly the press conference was on, and Winston and I had had no time to prepare for it, and the thought popped into my mind that they had called Grant 'Old Unconditional Surrender' and the next thing I knew, I had said it."

Roosevelt, for some reason, often liked to picture himself as a rather frivolous fellow who did not give sufficient attention to the consequences of chance remarks.

¹From *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*. Copyright © 1948, 1950 by Robert E. Sherwood. Copyright renewed © 1976, 1978 by Robert E. Sherwood. Reprinted by permission of Brandt and Hochman Literary Agents, Inc.

In this explanation, indicating a spur-of-the-moment slip of the tongue, he certainly did considerably less than justice to himself. For this announcement of unconditional surrender was very deeply deliberated. Whether it was wise or foolish, whether it prolonged the war or shortened it—or even if it had no effect whatsoever on the duration (which seems possible)—it was a true statement of Roosevelt's considered policy and he refused all suggestions that he retract the statement or soften it and continued refusal to the day of his death. In fact, he restated it a great many times. . . .

What Roosevelt was saying was that there would be no negotiated peace, no compromise with Nazism and Fascism, no "escape clauses" provided by another Fourteen Points which could lead to another Hitler. (The Ghost of Woodrow Wilson was again at his shoulder.) Roosevelt wanted this uncompromising purpose to be brought home to the American people and the Russians and the Chinese, and to the people of France and other occupied nations, and he wanted it brought home to the Germans—that neither by continuance of force nor by contrivance of a new spirit of sweet reasonableness could their present leaders gain for them a soft peace. He wanted to ensure that when the war was won it would stay won.

2. Cordell Hull Opposes Unconditional Surrender (1948)

"Unconditional surrender" had its warm supporters. In addition to the advantages already indicated, it would hearten German-conquered peoples like the Poles; it would key the Allies up for greater sacrifices; it would postpone disruptive arguments among the Allies over surrender terms; it would avert a quarrel like that with Germany after 1918 over the armistice terms. Yet critics like Senator Burton Wheeler of Montana branded "unconditional surrender" as "brutal" and "asinine." It was vague and easily misinterpreted; it would provide ammunition for enemy propagandists; it would close the door to negotiations with Germany; it would pave the way for Soviet ascendancy in Eastern Europe. Secretary of State Hull, somewhat miffed, advanced additional arguments in his Memoirs. Notice what he reveals about relations between the president and the State Department. Would the alternative policy that he suggests have made more sense?

The principle of unconditional surrender overshadowed our policy toward the Axis and their satellites and our planning for their future.

Originally this principle had not formed part of the State Department's thinking. We were as much surprised as Mr. Churchill when, for the first time, the President, in the Prime Minister's presence, stated it suddenly to a press conference during the Casablanca Conference in January, 1943. I was told that the Prime Minister was dumbfounded.

Basically, I was opposed to the principle for two reasons, as were many of my associates. One was that it might prolong the war by solidifying Axis resistance into one of desperation. The people of the Axis countries, by believing they had nothing to look forward to but unconditional surrender to the will of their conquerors, might

²From Cordell Hull, *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. II. Copyright © 1948. Reprinted by permission of the Estate of Cordell Hull.

go on fighting long after calmer judgment had convinced them that their fight was hopeless.

The President himself had qualified his unconditional surrender phrase by stating at Casablanca that this did not mean the destruction of the people of Germany, Japan, and Italy, but the ending of a philosophy based on conquest and subjugation of other peoples. Nevertheless the phrase itself spread more widely than the qualification, and it became a weapon in the hands of Nazi propagandists.

The second reason was that the principle logically required the victor nations to be ready to take over every phase of the national and local Governments of the conquered countries, and to operate all governmental activities and properties. We and our Allies were in no way prepared to undertake this vast obligation.

I thought that our principle of surrender should be flexible. In some cases the most severe terms should be imposed. I had Germany and Japan in mind in this connection. In other cases we would have preliminary informal conversations that would result in substantial adjustments away from the terms of unconditional surrender. Here I had in mind Italy and the Axis satellite states, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Finland.

In our postwar-planning discussions in the State Department, which had begun more than three years prior to the Casablanca Conference, we had not embraced the idea of unconditional surrender. In the United Nations Declaration of January 1, 1942, each Government simply pledged itself not to make a separate armistice or peace with the enemies. Nevertheless, after the President had stated the principle so emphatically at Casablanca, there was nothing we could do except to follow it at least in form. It was to rise on numerous occasions to plague us and to require explanation.

[Ironically, Japan did not surrender unconditionally in 1945 but held out for the retention of the emperor.]

D. Dropping the Atomic Bomb

I. Japan's Horrified Reaction (1945)

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

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

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

difference between atomic bombing and large-scale incendiary bombing of civilian centers. (The Japanese had already bombed civilian centers, beginning with Shanghai in 1932.) Did the Japanese refusal to respond to the Potsdam ultimatum justify the bombing?

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. The Christian Century Deplores the Bombing (1945)

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

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

We do not propose to debate the issue of military necessity, though the facts are clearly on one side of this issue. The atomic bomb was used at a time when Japan's navy was sunk, her air force virtually destroyed, her homeland surrounded, her supplies cut off, and our forces poised for the final stroke. Recognition of her imminent defeat could be read between the lines of every Japanese communiqué. Neither do we intend to challenge Mr. Churchill's highly speculative assertion that the use of the bomb saved the lives of more than one million American and 250,000 British soldiers.

We believe, however, that these lives could have been saved had our government followed a different course, more honorable and more humane. Our leaders seem not to have weighed the moral considerations involved. No sooner was the bomb ready than it was rushed to the front and dropped on two helpless cities, destroying more lives than the United States has lost in the entire war.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the bomb would ultimately be employed to bring Japan to the point of surrender. . . . But there was no military advantage in hurling the bomb upon Japan without warning. The least we might have done was to announce to our foe that we possessed the atomic bomb; that its destructive power was beyond anything known in warfare; and that its terrible effectiveness had been experimentally demonstrated in this country. We could thus have warned Japan of what was in store for her unless she surrendered immediately. If she doubted the good faith of our representations, it would have been a simple matter to select a

²"America's Atomic Atrocity." Copyright 1945 Christian Century Foundation. Reprinted by permission from the August 29, 1945, issue of the *Christian Century*.

D. Dropping the Atomic Bomb

demonstration target in the enemy's own country at a place where the loss of human life would be at a minimum.

If, despite such warning, Japan had still held out, we would have been in a far less questionable position had we then dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At least our record of deliberation and ample warning would have been clear. Instead, with brutal disregard of any principle of humanity, we "demonstrated" the bomb on two great cities, utterly extinguishing them.* This course has placed the United States in a bad light throughout the world. What the use of poison gas did to the reputation of Germany in World War I, the use of the atomic bomb has done for the reputation of the United States in World War II. Our future security is menaced by our own act, and our influence for justice and humanity in international affairs has been sadly crippled.

3. Harry Truman Justifies the Bombing (1945)

German scientists were known to be working on an atomic bomb, and Roosevelt was persuaded to push forward with an ultrasecret competing project that ultimately cost some \$2.5 billion. The charge was made—without proof—that Truman had to use the new weapon or face an investigation of squandered money. More probable was his desire to end the Far Eastern war speedily, before the bothersome Russians came in. The evidence is strong that they hurried up their six-day participation following the dropping of the first bomb. At all events, President Truman accepted full responsibility for his decision and later defended it in his Memoirs, as excerpted here. Did he make the decision by himself? Did he try to use the bomb as a lawful weapon? In the light of conditions at the time, rather than hindsight, was he justified in his action?

My own knowledge of these [atomic] developments had come about only after I became President, when Secretary [of War] Stimson had given me the full story. He had told me at that time that the project was nearing completion, and that a bomb could be expected within another four months. It was at his suggestion, too, that I had then set up a committee of top men and had asked them to study with great care the implications the new weapon might have for us. . . .

It was their recommendation that the bomb be used against the enemy as soon as it could be done. They recommended further that it should be used without specific warning, and against a target that would clearly show its devastating strength. I had realized, of course, that an atomic bomb explosion would inflict damage and casualties beyond imagination. On the other hand, the scientific advisers of the committee reported, "We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use." It was their conclusion that no technical demonstration they might propose, such as over a deserted island, would be likely to bring the war to an end. It had to be used against an enemy target.

The final decision of where and when to use the atomic bomb was up to me. Let there be no mistake about it. I regarded the bomb as a military weapon, and

*Hiroshima was about three-fourths devastated; Nagasaki, one-third.
³*Memoirs of Harry S. Truman*, vol. 1: *Years of Decisions*. Doubleday & Co., Inc. Copyright © 1955 by Time Inc., renewed 1983 by Margaret Truman Daniel. Reprinted by permission of Margaret Truman Daniel.

never had any doubt that it should be used. The top military advisers to the President recommended its use, and when I talked to Churchill, he unhesitatingly told me that he favored the use of the atomic bomb if it might aid to end the war.

In deciding to use this bomb I wanted to make sure that it would be used as a weapon of war in the manner prescribed by the laws of war. That meant that I wanted it dropped on a military target. I had told Stimson that the bomb should be dropped as nearly as possibly upon a war production center of prime military importance. . . .

Four cities were finally recommended as targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata, and Nagasaki. They were listed in that order as targets for the first attack. The order of selection was in accordance with the military importance of these cities, but allowance would be given for weather conditions at the time of the bombing.

[The devastating impact of the atomic bomb, together with the Soviet Union's sudden entry into the war against Japan, undoubtedly forced the Japanese surrender sooner than would otherwise have been possible. Even so, the fanatical military men in Tokyo almost won out for a last-ditch stand.]

In 1959, during interchanges with the students of Columbia University, former president Truman vigorously justified his action. He noted that "when we asked them to surrender at Potsdam, they gave us a very snotty answer. That is what I got. . . . They told me to go to hell, words to that effect." Mr. Truman insisted that the dropping of the bomb was "just a military maneuver, that is all," because "we were destroying the factories that were making more munitions." He then concluded: "All this uproar about what we did and what could have been stopped—should we take these wonderful Monday morning quarterbacks, the experts who are supposed to be right? They don't know what they are talking about. I was there. I did it. I would do it again." (Truman Speaks [New York: Columbia University Press, 1960], pp. 73–74.)

Thought Provokers

1. It has been said that the four years of World War II did more to transform U.S. society than twelve years of the Great Depression and eight years of the New Deal. Comment.
2. If the situation had been reversed, would Stalin have been more willing than the other Allies to open a second front? Explain.
3. Wilsonian propaganda in 1917–1918 drove a wedge between the German people and their government. Why was this technique less effective in World War II? On balance, and with the benefit of hindsight, was the policy of unconditional surrender "perhaps the biggest political mistake of the war" (Hanson W. Baldwin)?
4. Does the probability that the Germans or the Japanese would have used the atomic bomb against the United States, if they had developed it first, strengthen the moral position of the United States? If Truman had announced at Potsdam that the United States had the atomic bomb, would the Japanese have been likely to surrender at once? Was the United States shortsighted in establishing a precedent that might one day be used against it? Comment on Secretary Stimson's view that the dropping of the bomb would prove war to be so horrible that there could never be another.