

## Additional Documents Relating to the Decision to Drop the Bomb

### Readings:

“Horrors of Hiroshima” reading (on the website)  
Horrors of Atomic War Powerpoint (on the website)

### Additional web resources:

[https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/bomb/large/](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/large/)  
<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB162/>  
<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/beyond-the-textbook/25484>

**Document A:** *Nuclear physicist Leo Szilard's recollection of a 1945 meeting between foreign policy advisor James Byrnes and a group of concerned atomic scientists.*

The question of whether the bomb should be used in the war against Japan came up for discussion. Mr. Byrnes did not argue that it was necessary to use the bomb against the cities of Japan in order to win the war. He knew at that time, as the rest of the Government knew, that Japan was essentially defeated and that we could win the war in another six months. At that time Mr. Byrnes was much concerned about the spreading of Russian influence in Europe... Mr. Byrnes' concern about Russia I fully shared, but his view that our possessing and demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe I was not able to share. Indeed I could hardly imagine any premise more false and disastrous upon which to base our policy, and I was dismayed when a few weeks later I learned that he was to be our Secretary of State.

**Document B:** *Report of a Scientific Panel (comprised of nuclear physicists) to the Secretary of War (June 16, 1945)*

The opinions of our scientific colleagues on the initial use of these weapons are not unanimous: they range from the proposal of a demonstration to that of the military [use] best designed to induce surrender. Those who advocate a demonstration wish to outlaw the use of atomic weapons.... Others emphasize the opportunity of saving American lives by immediate military use, and believe that such use will improve the international prospects....

**Document C:** *Leaflet dropped over Japan, 1945*

TO THE JAPANESE PEOPLE:

America asks that you take immediate heed of what we say on this leaflet.

We are in possession of the most destructive explosive ever devised by man. A single one of our newly developed atomic bombs is actually the equivalent in explosive power to what 2,000 of our giant B-29's can carry on a single mission. This awful fact is one for you to ponder and we solemnly assure you it is grimly accurate.

We have just begun to use this weapon against your homeland. If you still have any doubt, make inquiry as to what happened to Hiroshima when just one atomic bomb fell on that city.

Before using this bomb to destroy every resource of the military by which they are prolonging this useless war, we ask that you now petition the Emperor to end the war. Our President has outlined for you the thirteen consequences of an honorable surrender: We urge that you accept these consequences and begin the work of building a new, better, and peace-loving Japan.

You should take steps now to cease military resistance. Otherwise, we shall resolutely employ this bomb and all our other superior weapons to promptly and forcefully end the war.

EVACUATE YOUR CITIES

**Document D:** *Harry Truman, radio address (August 1945)*

I realize the tragic significance of the atomic bomb. Its production and its use were not lightly undertaken by this Government. But we knew that our enemies were on the search for it... That is why we felt compelled to undertake the long and uncertain and costly labor of discovery and production...

Having found the bomb, we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned the pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.

We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us.

**Document E:** Aftermath of the bomb

Within the first 2-4 months of the bombings, 90,000-166,000 people in Hiroshima and 60,000-80,000 people were killed in Nagasaki. Roughly half of those deaths in each city occurred on the first day. In the months after the bomb was dropped, large numbers of people died from the effects of flash or flame burns (20-30%), radiation sickness (15-20%), and other injuries compounded by illness (50-60%). Since then, more have died from leukemia and cancer attributed to exposure to radiation released by the bombs.

Survivors of the bombings are called "hibakusha," a Japanese word that literally means "explosion affected people." As of March 2009, 235,569 hibakusha were recognized by the Japanese govt.

In the book [The Last Train From Hiroshima](#), Charles Pellegrino writes about an interview with Yamaguchi in which Yamaguchi described injured survivors in the aftermath of the atomic bombs. Yamaguchi called the victims "ant-walking alligators" who "were now eyeless and faceless—with their heads transformed into blackened alligator hides displaying red holes, indicating mouths. [...] The alligator people did not scream. Their mouths could not form the sounds. The noise they made was worse than screaming. They uttered a continuous murmur—like locusts on a midsummer night. One man, staggering on charred stumps of legs, was carrying a dead baby upside down."



The hibakusha suffered from stigma and social discrimination at the hands of other Japanese citizens following the bombings.

They faced reduced chances of marriage, brought on by a fear among many Japanese that the health of children and grandchildren of 'hibakusha' would be affected by radiation. As radiation sickness was not really understood at the time that the bombs dropped, people were afraid that it was hereditary or contagious. One man describes his 'hibakusha' status as a "death penalty" because he did not know when he would be diagnosed with a radiation-related sickness. In the words of one survivor, "We were considered contaminated and therefore must be avoided."

Ultimately, many Hibakusha found themselves ostracized from society, and some kept their Hibakusha status secret so that they would not be discriminated against.

**Document F:** Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender. Issued, at Potsdam, July 26, 1945 (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Nihon Gaiko Nenpyo Narabini Shuyo Bunsho : 1840-1945" vol.2, 1966)

1. [We] have conferred and agree that Japan shall be given an opportunity to end this war.
2. [Our] forces are poised to strike the final blows upon Japan. This military power is sustained and inspired by the determination of all the Allied Nations to prosecute the war against Japan until she ceases to resist.
3. ... The full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland.
4. The time has come for Japan to decide whether she will continue to be controlled by those self-willed militaristic advisers whose unintelligent calculations have brought the Empire of Japan to the threshold of annihilation, or whether she will follow the path of reason.
5. Following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.
6. There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world.
7. Until such a new order is established and until there is convincing proof that Japan's war-making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth.
8. [Japan will be stripped of all territory acquired or conquered since 1914.]
9. The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.
10. We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners. The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.
11. Japan shall be permitted to maintain such industries as will sustain her economy and permit the exaction of just reparations in kind, but not those which would enable her to re-arm for war...
12. The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.
13. We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.