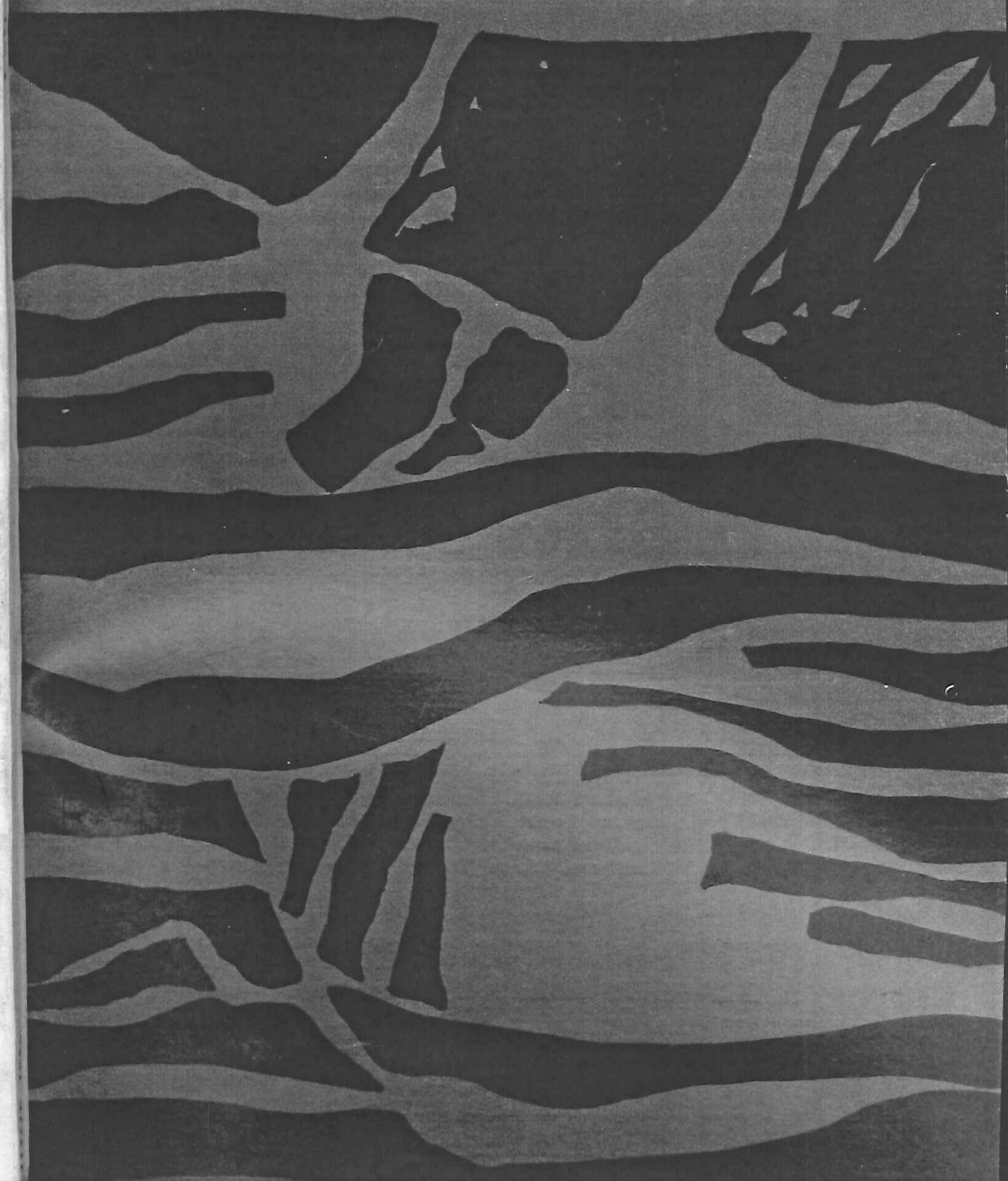


Landfall 86

A NEW ZEALAND QUARTERLY JUNE 1968



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You were right, of course. Already
it's sprung more leaks than I can caulk.
There are no paddles and no sail,
and your talk of provisions was so much talk.

Between the trough of one wave and the next
I see you up on the headland, waving—
goodbye or encouragement, I can't tell which.
Your mouth moves still.
You'll go on shouting about love.

III

Entering stark as a candle, you pipe
'Poor Tom's a-cold' and weave
a nest of straw for your own head
garlands of flowers for mine. The attitudes
of love concern you. So you are always
the lover lost in grief: I must be always
calm and, should you wish, compliant.

How many mouths has your wound?
You staunch one here, one there
and open every time new sorrows.
Turn and turn, my dear, but not to me again.

ELSIE LOCKE

The Human Conveyor-Belt

While making preparations for the 1967 commemoration of Hiroshima Day, I was taken off-guard by a leading citizen backed by half a century of activity in public affairs and education. With a cheerful smile he said, 'I don't think it was wrong to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima. It ended the war. Think of the millions of lives it saved.'

I had thought it was widely known that Japan was beaten to her knees before the bomb was used. But afterwards I reminded myself that the shock effect of great events will often remain with a person, or a nation, more intensely than the many-sided picture which becomes available more gradually. As an old campaigner against nuclear weapons it behoved me to take a fresh look, and discover if the story was perhaps more complex than I had supposed.

My trail of enquiry left no dispute over the bones of the story behind the making of the bomb. In 1939 a small group of physicists headed by Leo Szilard prevailed upon Albert Einstein to write to President Roosevelt telling him that an atomic bomb was a possibility and that Germany could be amassing supplies of uranium with the intention of making it.¹ These worried scientists were Hungarians, passionately anti-fascist and sharply aware of the consequences if the Nazis, who had driven them from Europe, should obtain such a

¹ Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden (eds), *Einstein on Peace*, p. 295. Sources in the footnotes marked * are easily read and comprehensive accounts of these events. The later the date of publication, the wider the sources of information are likely to be, although much relevant material is still not available to historians.

power. The only apparent counter was that the Americans should be first in the race for the atomic bomb.

From this beginning grew the 'Manhattan Project', which has gained a romantic aura because despite the 150,000 people employed, two billion dollars spent and the whole new towns constructed, the secret was kept to the very end. Harry S. Truman went from Vice-President to President before he knew of it; Generals MacArthur and Eisenhower and others led their armies in ignorance of it; and the U.S. delegates went to San Francisco to help found the United Nations in May 1945 quite unaware that the world for which they were planning had been revolutionized by the harnessing of atomic energy. The Counter-Intelligence Corps attached to the project did its job with unflinching thoroughness.

Top leaders in Great Britain were in on the scheme from the start, and British scientists joined the most international team ever assembled. American research went marching on long after it was known that the Nazis were nowhere near on the trail; Germany collapsed before the Manhattan Project could display its prize.

Those who wish can read for themselves the moving story of how the most far-sighted of the scientists tried passionately to prevent their demon being let loose on the world.² The international vision of these men saw clearly the long-range benefits and dangers which could flow, in contrary directions, from the application of nuclear energy. But the disposal of their brain-child was not in their hands. The politicians, the military, the managers had taken over. Each group or subgroup or even individual among these had a more limited concern, and none of them could rise to the objectivity and humanity of an Einstein, a Szilard or a Franck.

Years later, Einstein wrote:

I have never said that I would have approved the use of the atomic bomb against the Germans. I did believe that we had to avoid the contingency of Germany under Hitler being in *sole* possession of this weapon. This was the real danger at the time.

² Alice Kimball Smith in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, October 1958; Robert Jungk, *Brighter than a Thousand Suns* (1956)*; *Einstein on Peace*; Michael Amrine, *The Great Decision**; Herbert Feis, *Japan Subdued* (1961)*, pp. 40-5.

And again, still more sadly:

You have asked what I thought about your articles concerning the situation of scientists in America. Instead of trying to analyze the problem, I should like to express my feeling in a short remark: If I were a young man again and had to decide how to make a living, I would not try to become a scientist or scholar or teacher. I would rather choose to be a plumber or a pedlar, in the hope of finding that modest degree of independence still available under present circumstances.³

The concluding stages of a bitter war create the worst conditions for making decisions about the future. This has been seen recently, on a smaller scale, in the Middle East where a victorious Israel insists upon making it more difficult for Israelis and Arabs to live alongside one another in the future. The confusion of fast-moving events, hatred, inflated nationalism, conflicts over post-war national interest, a growing callousness towards the toll of death and suffering, a lack of sound information about happenings within the enemy country, and a general desire to see the war ended as quickly as possible—all these are obstacles in the making of judgements.

The following chart shows how swiftly situations had to be grasped and decisions taken.

In February 1945 the Emperor of Japan privately agreed with his closest advisers that defeat was in sight and peace must be looked for. Guam, Tinian and Saipan Islands were airbases in American hands. Really big air raids operated from February 15 onwards.

February 11 The Yalta agreement, made at the conference attended by Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin and their advisers.

February 24 Re-occupation of Manila, Philippine Islands.

March 9-10 Massive air raid on Tokyo; 83,000 killed, 102,000 injured; quickly followed by bombing of Kobe, Osaka and Nagoya.

March 16 Conquest of Iwo Jima island completed.

April 1 Landing on Okinawa.

April 5 U.S.S.R. gives a year's notice of intention to terminate its non-aggression pact with Japan.

April 8 Important changes in the Japanese Government.

³ *Einstein on Peace*, p. 589, p. 613.

Admiral Susuki becomes Premier. Peace feelers directed to Moscow and to the Soviet Ambassador in Japan.

April 12 Sudden death of President Roosevelt. Harry S. Truman becomes President of the U.S.A.

April 25 San Francisco Conference meets to form the United Nations.

May 8 Germany surrenders to the Allies.

May 9 'Interim Committee' has its first meeting.

June 1 'Interim Committee' recommends use of the bomb.

June 18 Joseph C. Grew urges realistic approach to Japan without success.

July 16 Successful atomic bomb test at Alamogordo, New Mexico

July 17-26 Potsdam Conference, attended by Truman, Stalin and Churchill, the latter replaced after British election by Clement Attlee. Stalin tells Truman about the peace feelers; Truman mentions the bomb. Potsdam Proclamation calls upon Japan to surrender unconditionally.

July 28 Japanese Premier announces he will 'ignore' the proclamation.

August 6 Atomic bomb falls on Hiroshima.

August 8 U.S.S.R. enters the war, invading Manchuria.

August 9 Atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

August 10 Japanese Premier decides to accept Potsdam Proclamation.

August 14 End of the war.

In February 1945 when the Emperor of Japan agreed with his close advisers that the war was lost,⁴ he did not tell the Allies. But the military situation might have produced a guess—together with the fact that an unofficial peace feeler had been extended to the Swedish minister in Tokyo five months earlier.⁵ The fall of Germany was in sight. 'Island-hopping' had brought the Allies past Palau, Bougainville, Guadalcanal, Leyte and Guam to the Mariana Islands and troops had landed on Iwo Jima in the Bonins. Superfortress raids were operating from three island bases and from several aircraft carriers. Manila was being re-occupied. The only remaining island

⁴ U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey report: *Japan's Struggle to End the War*. (The original was not available but this has been frequently quoted by other authors, e.g. Teller, *The Legacy of Hiroshima*, p. 18).

⁵ Louis Morton, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb' in the periodical *Foreign Affairs*, January 1957*, p. 343. This comprehensive article is excellent.

objective was Okinawa. Although Japan held large areas on the mainland of Asia, she could not maintain supplies or receive raw materials without command of the sea. Her navy was reduced from 10,000,000 to 1,000,000 tons; she had only five battleships, three carriers and twelve cruisers.

However, it is one thing to know that you are beaten and another to be ready to accept peace terms; especially when the only terms offered are unconditional surrender.

This formula, which emerged from the Casablanca Conference of February 1943, became a rallying-cry for the Allies. The original declaration did indeed explain that the victorious powers did not intend the destruction of any nation, but qualifications are quickly forgotten while slogans are easily remembered. Any criticism of unconditional surrender among the Allies was likely to be dubbed appeasement; and 'appeasement' directed at a politician was a lethal word, for everyone had felt on his flesh the consequences of the appeasement of Hitler.

But how did unconditional surrender look to the Japanese? Did it mean simply the submission of the Japanese armed forces; or did it include the submission of the Japanese State to every demand of the victors, perhaps even the removal, imprisonment and finally the execution of the Emperor Hirohito? For years Allied propaganda had depicted three villains who must be destroyed: Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito. The Japanese people were convinced that this was the unshakeable intention of their enemies. Admiral Halsey might not have realized what he was saying when he boasted that he would ride the Emperor's white horse down the streets of Tokyo.⁶ But American experts on the Far East were well aware that Hirohito's position was not comparable with that of Hitler or Mussolini. His constitutional powers were limited; but the institution of the Emperor was a focal point for nationhood in a mystical and religious way. The Japanese would endure a great deal before they gave up hope of protecting their Emperor. And this lent strength to the fanatical military group who, of course, would lose all their power and position once they admitted defeat.

Joseph C. Grew, former Ambassador to Japan and Acting-Secretary of State for a part of 1945, worked hard to persuade the United States Government to modify the unconditional

⁶ Michael Amrine op. cit. p. 79.

surrender formula so that the Japanese would be clearly reassured about their Emperor. He received strong support including that of Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson (who, like Grew, knew the Far East); but the Potsdam Conference was coming up, and consideration of Grew's compromise was first postponed and then overwhelmed.⁷

Yet, almost at the same time, the Emperor, on June 20, suggested to his Cabinet that they make an emergency plan for surrender. This was not admitted publicly for fear of a military take-over and civil war. Less than ten years earlier the Tokyo Garrison had mutinied, surrounded the palace, killed government leaders and wounded Admiral Susuki—who was now Prime Minister. As always while a war continues, official propaganda was aimed at cheering the war effort, but hints of change were not missing from public statements.

The outside 'image' of Japan, however, did not take account of any 'peace party' or of influential leaders who saw the writing on the wall and desired to save their country from complete ruin. Those were the days of the *kamikaze* or suicide pilots who crashed their bomb-laden planes on to American ships. The Japanese were thought to be so infected with military fanaticism that reason would not enter into their calculations. Winston Churchill put into graphic words what most of his followers believed, when he produced this apology for the bomb:

Up to this moment we had shaped our ideas towards an assault upon the homeland of Japan by terrific air bombing and by the invasion of very large armies. We had contemplated the desperate resistance of the Japanese fighting to the death with Samurai devotion, not only in pitched battles, but in every cave and dugout. I had in my mind the spectacle of Okinawa Island, where many thousands of Japanese, rather than surrender, had drawn up in line and destroyed themselves by hand-grenades after their leaders had solemnly performed the rite of *hara-kiri*. To quell the Japanese resistance man by man and conquer the country yard by yard might well require the loss of a million American lives and half that number of British—or more if

⁷ Richard G. Hewlett and Oscar E. Anderson, *The New World*, Vol. 1 of the history of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, chapter 11; Amrine, op. cit., pp. 80-1; Feis, op. cit. pp. 15-27; Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era*, pp. 1420-31.

we could get them there; for we were resolved to share the agony. Now all this nightmare picture had vanished. In its place was the vision—fair and bright indeed it seemed—of the end of the whole war in one or two violent shocks. I thought immediately myself of how the Japanese people, whose courage I had always admired, might find in the apparition of this almost supernatural weapon an excuse which would save their honour and release them from their obligation of being killed to the last fighting man.

This is wonderful rhetoric—and thoroughly dishonest. In the same volume Churchill also said:

It would be a mistake to suppose that the fate of Japan was settled by the atomic bomb. Her defeat was certain before the first bomb fell, and was brought about by overwhelming maritime power.⁸

The United States Strategic Bombing Survey made a thorough study of the condition of Japan just after the war ended, and concluded that 'certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.'⁹

A recent judgement by W. W. Rostow put it this way: 'The bomb evidently sufficed to administer the *coup de grace* to a Japan whose allies had unconditionally surrendered, whose navy and merchant marine were decimated, whose major cities were in ashes, whose industries were functioning at about one-third capacity, and most of whose politicians had been seeking a formula for ending the war for almost a year.'¹⁰

No serious historian has differed from this pattern and the dates of probable surrender have often been placed even earlier than the official estimate.

Were the Allies, particularly the Americans, fully aware of the situation within Japan?

One of the tragedies of wartime is that, with all normal channels of communication broken or unreliable, national leaders find it difficult to follow changes in the mind and

⁸ Winston Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Vol. VI of *Memoirs*), p. 552, p. 559.

⁹ Feis, op. cit., p. 178.

¹⁰ W. W. Rostow, *The U.S. in the World Arena*, p. 76.

situation of the enemy. Nevertheless, American intelligence reports of June 1945 were sufficiently accurate. They indicated that

. . . the Japanese leaders were fully aware of their desperate situation, but would continue to fight in the hope of avoiding complete defeat by securing a better bargaining position. Allied war-weariness and disunity, or some miracle, they hoped, would offer them a way out. . . . [They believed] 'that unconditional surrender would be the equivalent of national extinction, and there are as yet no indications that they are ready to accept such terms.' It appeared also to the intelligence experts that Japan might surrender at any time 'depending upon the conditions of surrender' the Allies might offer. Clearly these conditions, to have any chance of acceptance, would have to include retention of the Imperial system.¹¹

This information was backed up by the knowledge of several 'peace feelers'. Or to be more accurate, *some* people in high places knew of them, although how widely the news was divulged it is not possible to know. Given a real desire to bring the war to an end with the minimum loss of life and without having to invade Japan, the Allies would have supported the efforts of Grew. Stimson, the Secretary of War and the man of key importance next to the President, evidently realized that the sticking point was unconditional surrender linked to the position of the Emperor, but saw no way of getting round a term so firmly rooted in the Allied war aims.¹²

Allied leaders, however long-sighted, would have had to reckon with a population so stuffed with war-time propaganda and passions that they might have needed miracles of persuasion to win endorsement of a policy other than of unconditional surrender. However, from twenty-three years' perspective, we can only marvel that responsible men should doubt their own ability to sway public opinion over such a modest change of front. Towards the end, the Allied leaders saw the simple point that the Emperor *had* to be there to pass on the news of surrender, for no one less had enough author-

¹¹ Louis Morton in *Foreign Affairs* p. 343. He quotes the G-2 Memo prepared for the OPD; Ray S. Cline, *The United States Army in World War II*, p. 347.

¹² *ibid*, p. 344.

ity. As for the rank and file of Allied soldiers and civilians, once the war ended they did not seem to care two hoots whether the Emperor remained or not.

Perhaps Stimson and others were not really troubled about public reaction but feared their own political associates, in America and abroad. There were too many traps awaiting a man who laid himself open to attack by that word-grenade 'appeaser'.

But what about those peace feelers? They were of two kinds. Initiatives were taken by individuals at least three times. Yoshira Fujimira, Ambassador in Switzerland, tried to persuade both his own Government and the American Organization of Strategic Services (i.e. wartime intelligence, headed by Allen Dulles) to negotiate for peace. His cable went to Japan on 9 May, the day after Germany capitulated. The military attache in Zurich, Lieut.-General Seigo Okamoto, used the good offices of a Swede for a similar approach to Dulles. Late the same month, newspaperman Jiro Taguchi approached the U.S. Ambassador in Switzerland and offered to find neutral intermediaries to work out a peace; he was supported by Japanese businessmen in Berne.

Although these individual efforts could not be regarded as offers to surrender and were not approved in Tokyo, they were a clear indication of the way the wind was blowing.

All the official approaches were made to diplomats of the Soviet Union. Several times the matter was raised with the Ambassador in Tokyo, Jacob Malik. Following changes in the Japanese Government, the Ambassador in Moscow, Naotake Sato, was instructed to tell Foreign Commissar Molotov that the Emperor wanted the war to end immediately and wished to send the distinguished Prince Konoye as a special envoy for discussions. The Ambassador met Vice-Foreign Commissar Lozovsky on July 13, but the Soviet authorities continued to play cool. Stalin waited until after the Potsdam Conference opened on July 16 before mentioning these overtures. He did not report a more urgent and definite Japanese approach until three days after its receipt, by which time the Potsdam Declaration had already been issued; and he explained that since unconditional surrender was not offered, his answer was 'no'. The Americans accepted this information lightly. Since the attack on Pearl Harbour they were suspicious of negotiations which might be a cover for some trickery or other. In any case Stalin was not springing any surprises—U.S.

intelligence had already intercepted and decoded the cables between Tokyo and Moscow.¹³

It was the Japanese who were in ignorance of the vital facts. They patiently continued putting their eggs into the one basket without suspecting the hole in the bottom of it. The U.S.S.R. was neutral and had a non-aggression pact with Japan. The Japanese saw nothing ominous when notice was served on April 5 that the U.S.S.R. would terminate the pact in a year's time. They did not know that at the Yalta Conference in February, it had been agreed that the U.S.S.R. should enter the war against them after the defeat of Germany, the time interval being later fixed at three months. This intervention was much desired by the Americans at that time if only to reduce their appalling losses of men.

The military reasons for keeping this plan 'top secret' are obvious. There were diplomatic reasons too.

Stalin held the box seat in Moscow quite untrammelled by Communist Party control or by any Leninist principles about the rights of all nations and the wrongs of secret treaties which carve up other people's territories or set aside spheres of influence. The Yalta Agreement delineated 'spheres of influence' in post-war Europe and the secret protocol promised that 'the former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 should be restored'. The U.S.S.R. was to have the southern part of Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands, a special position in the port of Dairen and a lease of Port Arthur as a naval base, and joint ownership and control with China on the railway ending at Dairen. China (that is, the Government of Chiang Kai Shek) was to be talked into accepting this, and also a pact of friendship with the U.S.S.R.¹⁴

Stalin was not likely to lose the chance of such gains by promoting peace with Japan, but the U.S.S.R. only just succeeded in staking its claim by entering the war two days after the first bomb fell on Hiroshima and five days before the war ended. However, this was precisely according to plan, exactly three months after the defeat of Germany and at the time anticipated by the Americans. The Red Army was already drawn up on the Manchurian frontier and if the Hiroshima bombing hurried them up at all, it could only have been by a day or two.

¹³Feis, op. cit., pp. 65, 68-9, 98; Robert C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, p. 129.

¹⁴Reprinted in Butow, op. cit., and other places.

In any case, the Soviet leaders could have known nothing in advance about this bombing unless through espionage. We have no direct account of how Truman 'told' Stalin, except Truman's own, plus Churchill's approving reference to Truman's resolve 'at all costs to refuse to divulge any particulars'.¹⁵ It happened at Potsdam after the formal session had closed; and in a studied effort to be unsensational, the President did not even call his own Russian interpreter to his side. Here is Truman's description:

On July 24 I casually mentioned to Stalin that we had a new weapon of unusual destructive force. The Russian Premier showed no special interest. All he said was that he was glad to hear it and hoped we would make 'good use of it against the Japanese.'¹⁶

This incident has been quoted to show that the Russians approved of using the bomb, but Stalin would have needed to be clairvoyant to deduce from such a remark that this was atomic power. If in fact he did know, through espionage, he was playing possum very expertly.

No other open communication passed between these two nations until the secret was exploded to the whole world. At this stage it does seem that Stalin raised no criticism of the use of the bomb.¹⁷

On July 26 the Potsdam Proclamation was issued over the names of the President of the United States, the President of China and the Prime Minister of Great Britain. It promised Japan 'a peacefully inclined and responsible government' established in accord with 'the freely expressed will of the Japanese people', but made no reference whatever to the position of the Emperor. It called for 'the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces', otherwise there would be 'prompt and utter destruction'.

The Japanese leaders too, would have needed to be clairvoyant to know by what means they could be utterly destroyed so promptly.

Language differences play a part in diplomacy and there has been argument as to whether the Japanese Premier really

¹⁵Churchill, op. cit., p. 554.

¹⁶Harry S. Truman, *Year of Decisions* (Vol. 1 of *Memoirs*), Doubleday ed., p. 416.

¹⁷Feis, op. cit., pp. 115-6.

meant, in his statement to the Japanese Press, that the proclamation would be 'ignored' completely. At any rate this was taken as a full rejection (made on July 28 Japanese time, July 29 Potsdam time) and the machine was set in motion for the use of the atomic bomb, which had been placed in readiness at Tinian in the Mariana Islands.

It seems that no one other than a few of the scientists clung to the idea that the purpose of making the bomb was to prevent Germany having sole possession of it. Some military leaders expressed misgivings. On hearing at Potsdam about the successful test, General Eisenhower said he 'hoped that we would never have to use such a thing against any enemy, because I disliked seeing the United States take the lead in introducing into war something as horrible and destructive as this new weapon was described to be.'¹⁸ Admiral Leahy, who had known of the project for a long time and never expected it to work, commented: 'My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion. . . .'¹⁹

The political leaders for their part were pleasantly unanimous.

Stimson: 'At no time from 1941 to 1945 did I ever hear it suggested by the President, or by any other responsible member of the Government, that atomic energy should not be used in the war.'²⁰

Truman: 'Let there be no mistake about it. I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used.'²¹

Churchill: 'British consent in principle to the use of the weapon had been given on July 4, before the test had taken place. The final decision now lay in the main with President Truman, who had the weapon; but I never doubted what it would be, nor have I ever doubted since that he was right. The historic fact remains, and must be judged in the after-time, that the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb to compel the surrender of Japan was never even an issue. There was unanimous, automatic, unquestioned agreement

¹⁸Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, p. 483.

¹⁹Quoted by Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey II in *No High Ground* (1960)*, p. 244; probably from Leahy's reminiscences, *I Was There*.

²⁰Article in *Harper's Magazine*, February 1947, p. 98.

²¹Truman, op. cit., p. 419.

around our table; nor did I ever hear the slightest suggestion that we should do otherwise.'²²

When the climax of the Manhattan Project was approaching, an advisory body called the 'Interim Committee' was selected to consider 'atomic energy not simply in terms of military weapons but also in terms of a new relationship of man and the universe'. Stimson, who had lived with this prospect for years, had already emphasized in a memo to Truman:

The world . . . would be eventually at the mercy of such a weapon. [Its control] will undoubtedly be a matter of the greatest difficulty and would involve such thorough going rights of inspection and internal controls as we have never heretofore contemplated. . . . The question of sharing it with other nations, and, if so shared, upon what terms, becomes a primary question of our foreign relations. Also our leadership in the war and in the development of this weapon has placed a certain moral responsibility upon us which we cannot shirk without very serious responsibility for any disaster to civilization that it would further. On the other hand, if the problem of the proper use of this weapon can be solved, we should have the opportunity to bring the world into a pattern in which the peace of the world and our civilization can be saved.²³

Stimson impressed all of this on the Interim Committee, which first met on May 9 and resumed for two days' discussion three weeks later. Understandably, the committee was much at variance on these weighty issues but really got down to tin-tacks on the use of the bomb which was actually being made. Here they were given the clear question of *how*, not *whether*, the bomb should be used in respect of Japan.²⁴

The committee recommended that the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible, that it should be directed at a military target with houses adjacent, and that no prior warning of its nature should be given. A panel of four scientific advisers helped to consider an alternative proposal—that a demonstration of the bomb, perhaps on an uninhabited island, might be sufficient to cause the Japanese to throw in their hand. The idea was abandoned because no one could be

²²Churchill, op. cit., p. 553.

²³Feis, op. cit., p. 31, quoting from Stimson in *Harper's Magazine*.

²⁴Feis, op. cit., p. 36, quoting from Stimson Diary, May 30, 1945.

sure that the bomb would not prove a dud, and the demonstration a fizzer.

Dr Edward Teller, one of the Hungarian scientists who initially approached Albert Einstein, and later became well known as the 'father of the H-bomb', still maintains that a way could have been found to meet this difficulty.

I can appreciate the reasons for the fateful decision to drop an atomic bomb without warning. . . . But I do regret that decision. I am convinced that the tragic surprise bombing was not necessary. We could have exploded the bomb at a very high altitude over Tokyo in the evening. Triggered at a very high altitude, the bomb would have created a sudden, frightening daylight over the city. But it would have killed no one. After the bomb had been demonstrated—after we were sure that it was not a dud—we could have told the Japanese what it was and what would happen if another atomic bomb were detonated at a low altitude.

Implicit in our decision to drop the atomic bomb without warning was the hope that a surprise attack of such magnitude would frighten the Japanese into surrender. A night-time atomic explosion high over Tokyo, in full sight of Emperor Hirohito and his Cabinet, would have been just as terrifying as Hiroshima. And it would have frightened the right people.²⁵

Dr Teller added the sad comment: 'But to my knowledge, such an unannounced, high-altitude demonstration over Tokyo at night was never proposed.' He apparently did not propose it himself at the time, but he had no connection with the Interim Committee either.

Everything now seems to tie up: the recommendation to use the bomb 'as soon as possible' made on June 1, the successful test on July 16, the Potsdam Proclamation with its last chance for Japan on July 26 and its rejection two days later, the Hiroshima bombing on August 6, the Nagasaki bombing on August 9 and the Japanese capitulation on August 14. It looks like a chain of cause and effect, but one important link is missing: the entry of the Soviet forces on August 8.

It is easy to be cynical about this and to judge that the U.S.S.R. gained itself a lot of advantage for very little sacri-

²⁵ Edward Teller, *The Legacy of Hiroshima*, p. 14. Repeated in a speech reported in *Christchurch Press*, 10 February, 1967.

ifice. However, the invasion was strictly in accordance with an agreement sought, in the first place, by the Americans; and it was a shock to the Japanese as unexpected and disastrous as the bomb itself. They already knew their situation was hopeless. They could have hardly failed to see that it was now desperate: they might very well have decided to throw in the towel because of this and because of the 'conventional bombing' that continued without cease, quite apart from Hiroshima. As it happened, the leaders in Tokyo had scarcely time to assimilate and respond to the news before the second bomb fell on Nagasaki; and the end was only a matter of days.

Now we come to a question which is not often asked: supposing the bombs had failed to work out, what were the plans for a knock-out blow to Japan?

At no stage in the war did the military planners take the new weapon into their calculations. Even after the successful test from a tower at Alamogordo, New Mexico, there was uncertainty as to whether the bomb would explode when dropped from an aircraft.

Invasion plans had been worked out in detail. The Soviet forces were to take care of Manchuria and China; the Americans with the British, Australian and New Zealand forces were to begin on the southern island of Kyushu, followed five months later by the main island of Honshu and the Tokyo plain. This 'D-Day' was November 1.

If, then, the purpose of using the bomb was to save lives by avoiding an invasion, what was the hurry to use it in early August? At that date only two bombs were ready (another was expected by August 20) and these were of two different types, only one of which had been tested. A few more in hand would surely have been a wise precaution? Very few Americans were going down to the feeble anti-aircraft defence; and the *kamikazes*, though frightening in their desperation, were not a serious threat. Nobody was being very tender about Japanese lives: indeed, 'conventional' bombing on a mass scale continued, alongside the atom bombs and the Soviet invasion, to the bitter end.

The United States could easily have given more time for the Japanese to reconsider. They could have waited for the effect of the Red Army's rapid advance through Manchuria into North China. They could even have made a specific bomb warning by presenting Tokyo with photographic evidence of the Alamogordo test, which was horrifying enough in all conscience, judging by the comments of eye-witnesses

at the time. Whatever they did, the Japanese were powerless to retaliate.

A clear-cut answer was given back in 1948 by P. M. S. Blackett, a noted British writer on strategic topics, and he was not the only one. His conclusion was that the bomb had a diplomatic purpose: to forestall the Russians and check their power in Asia and elsewhere.²⁶

There is of course no documentary confirmation that this was *the* purpose behind the use of the bomb, but there are many indications of this factor in top-level political thought and action. Roosevelt had formerly placed great hopes in the alliance with the Soviet Union and considered a Soviet presence in China and eastern Asia would be a good thing. During 1945, when each of the three powers was thinking of its post-war situation, differences grew wider and wider between the U.S.S.R. on the one hand, and the U.S.A. and Great Britain on the other. The Americans were not without reason for their apprehensions after events in Poland and Germany.

Churchill, commenting on the elation felt when the news came to Potsdam of the successful test at Alamogordo, recalled:

Moreover, we should not need the Russians. The end of the Japanese war no longer depended upon the pouring in of their arms for the final and perhaps protracted slaughter. We had no need to ask favours of them. A few days later I minuted to Mr Eden: 'It is quite clear that the U.S. do not at the present time desire Russian participation in the war against Japan.'²⁷

The Chairman of the British Chiefs of Staff, Lord Alanbrooke, after lunching with the Prime Minister, noted in his diary Churchill's reaction:

... We now had something in our hands which would redress the balance with the Russians. The secret of this explosive and the power to use it would completely alter the diplomatic equilibrium which was adrift since the defeat of Germany. Now we had a new value which redressed our position (pushing out his chin and scowling);

²⁶ P. M. S. Blackett, *The Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy*, Ch. 16.

²⁷ Churchill, op. cit., p. 553.

now we could say, 'If you insist on doing this or that, well. . . .' And then where are the Russians!²⁸

James F. Byrnes, Truman's Secretary of State, has left his position quite clear in his book *Speaking Frankly*, and is reported to have told Leo Szilard that the bomb was needed 'to make Russia more manageable in Europe'.²⁹

The scientist Robert Oppenheimer later said concerning the Interim Committee, to which he was a scientific adviser: 'Much of the discussion revolved around the question raised by Secretary Stimson as to whether there was any hope at all of using this development to get less barbarous relations with the Russians.'³⁰

General Eisenhower told President Truman at Potsdam that 'since reports indicated the imminence of Japan's collapse I deprecated the Red Army's engaging in that war. I foresaw certain difficulties arising out of such participation. . . . It was my personal opinion that no power on earth could keep the Red Army out of that war unless victory came before they could get in.'³¹

Stimson revealed in his diary a second reason why he had not fully pushed Grew's proposals for helping the Japanese to surrender by providing reassurances about the Emperor. He wanted to see the bomb tested first: with this new weapon the U.S.A. would be in a stronger position in the event of a conflict with Russia in the Far East, it would put 'a master card in our hand'.³²

The theme was repeated by Averell Harriman, Ambassador in Moscow, Patrick J. Hurley, Ambassador to China, and others.

And yet, American and British attitudes were not as widespread and clear-cut as these quotations, standing alone, might suggest. Political leaders are not different from other men. Their views and motives have a certain firm basis, but also a measure of mixing and shifting amongst fast-moving events. Stimson, for one, held hopes of improvement for relations with the U.S.S.R., and at the war's end urged an enlightened

²⁸ Sir Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West* (based on the Alanbrooke diaries), p. 477.

²⁹ Louis Morton, op. cit., p. 347, quoting Leo Szilard in *The Atlantic Community Faces the Bomb*, pp. 14-5, University of Chicago Roundtable No. 601, 25 September 1949.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 337, quoting from the *Oppenheimer Hearings*, p. 257.

³¹ Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 482.

³² Herbert Feis, *Between War and Peace* (the Potsdam Conference), p. 80.

and open approach for future control of the bomb, 'to make sure that when [the Russians] do get it they are willing and co-operative partners among the peace-loving nations of the world. . . . For if we fail to approach them now and merely continue to negotiate with them, having this weapon rather ostentatiously on our hip, their suspicions and their distrust of our purposes and motives will increase.'³³

It would be stretching the evidence too far to conclude that the sole reason for using the bomb was a studied, deliberate attempt to create a diplomatic check to the U.S.S.R. Had this been the case, more serious attempts to procure an earlier Japanese surrender would surely have been attempted. Agreement that the bomb might perhaps be used against the Japanese was made between Roosevelt and Churchill back in September 1944; military preparations were begun soon afterwards, and this was before relations with the U.S.S.R. began to deteriorate.

Diplomatic conflict was one reason among many for pushing on to the Hiroshima climax; one reason among many which told against the wiser counsels of delay. And however commonsense it might seem to us now, there were very few who advocated any delay at the time.

In a certain sense, the bomb carved its own track when it entered a society so short-sighted, so divided into compartments, so rampant with individual and group ambitions, so imbued with the assumption that Americans were equipped to make the best choices for the world, and so constricted by the limited perspectives of victory in the war. These conditions were not created by Messrs Churchill, Roosevelt, Stimson, Truman or any one else; such men were the prisoners as well as the administrators of their social order.

The bomb was made on a human conveyor-belt to which each contributor added his part, unable to see the final product in its wholeness against the backdrop of the world into which it would fall, and increasing the acceleration towards a disaster which few had the motive, and none the power, to avert.

Two billion dollars were spent and 150,000 people employed in a project which was bound to reach public scrutiny in the end. Many careers were at stake in its success or failure.

Even after the Germans, who seem to have worried the

³³ Feis, *Japan Subdued*, p. 160; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, pp. 642-6.

army much more than the Japanese, surrendered, one fear remained. 'Supposing,' the Colonel said, 'we hadn't been able to make the bomb before the war ended. Why, we'd have been called a two-billion dollar boondoggle.'³⁴

The administrators of the two nations were incredibly busy men in a tense situation, with many things on their minds. The secret nature of the Manhattan Project obliged them to be reticent and so to deprive themselves of outside critical opinion which, in any case, was under numerous handicaps in wartime. Roosevelt died without briefing his Vice-President. Both Truman and Attlee took over in circumstances where they were bound to slip into the grooves already made for them. They were all guided by conservative national assumptions and by the impress of past lessons which were stronger than foresight about their own completely new situation.

The members of the Interim Committee came fresh to the consideration of this weapon with its revolutionary social implications. They had less than a month to think about it before they recommended the use of the bomb without delay and without warning. One of them, the Under Secretary of the Navy, Ralph A. Bard, had after-thoughts and produced his own memorandum, which objected to the lack of a warning and suggested various ways of inducing a surrender first.³⁵ He was too late to make much impression.

One of the scientific advisers, Dr Oppenheimer, said later:

We didn't know beans about the military situation. We didn't know whether they could be caused to surrender by any other means or whether the invasion was really inevitable. But in back of our minds was the notion that the invasion was inevitable because we had been told that. . . . We said that we didn't think our being scientists especially qualified us to answer this question of how the bombs should be used or not; opinion was divided among us as it would be among other people if they knew about it. We thought the two over-riding considerations were the saving of lives in the war and the effects of our actions on the strength and stability of the post-war period.³⁶

³⁴ Daniel Lang, *From Hiroshima to the Moon*, p. 18.

³⁵ Hewlett and Anderson, op. cit., pp. 369-70; Knebel and Bailey, op. cit., pp. 109-10.

³⁶ *Oppenheimer Hearings*, p. 34, quoted by Louis Morton, op. cit., p. 338; also Feis, *Japan Subdued*, p. 44.

Clearly the Interim Committee knew nothing, either, about the Japanese political situation and the peace feelers. What happened to those intelligence reports? Did they stop in the pigeonholes of the State Department or even of the Organization of Security Services? General Leslie R. Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, was equally in ignorance of this vital information.

Although the principal military planning went ahead without reliance on or, till a late stage, even knowledge of the new weapon, by the end of 1944 a list of possible targets had been made and a B-29 squadron specially trained. After the successful test in July, the two bombs were carefully shipped across to Tinian Island and made ready for action. Once the Potsdam Proclamation had been 'ignored', the dates and timing were left to two generals on the spot.

This helps to explain the bombing of Nagasaki, which came so soon after Hiroshima (and the Russian intervention) that it appears criminally irresponsible. True, the political decision was to keep on bombing (of all kinds) until Japan surrendered; but humanity could surely have expected a pause long enough for Japanese leaders to absorb and respond to this double blow. One is left with the uncomfortable feeling that there was an extra factor—the difference in type of the two bombs. Was Japan a testing ground, using living people?

President Truman accepted the responsibility but according to General Groves he was 'like a little boy on a toboggan. He never had an opportunity to say "we will drop the bomb". All he could do was say "no".'³⁷

Not one of the men who advised him had more than limited information, limited vision and a limited sphere of action. This revolutionary discovery needed a world view; but in the decisions of 1945, only some of the scientists could reach so high; and they were not realistic politicians.

Can we dare to believe, with childlike innocence or desperate faith, that the men at the top may be relied upon to deal wisely with great arsenals of the H-bomb? Since Hiroshima the world has known only local and limited wars; but should the H-bomb be set on the conveyor-belt of wartime, would we be in any better position to control its course?

We had better make sure that the conveyor-belt is not set in motion.

³⁷ Knebel and Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

Reviews

THE FULL CIRCLE OF THE TRAVELLING CUCKOO. Renato Amato. *Whitcombe & Tombs*. \$1.95.

In acquiring a number of writers, we have also achieved a few who have died young. There have been posthumous small collections before. None has come with quite such a fresh impact as this. I had perhaps not pursued Renato Amato's stories assiduously enough through the little magazines. My impression of his work was shadowy; I had no idea it was so substantial and, in a way, complete. The substance is not heavy. He had been a writer in English for a short time, only five years; his talent was still tentative and apparently tied to autobiographical elements. Not everything Ian Cross and Maurice Shadbolt have chosen to print is of equal merit, though even fragments not very satisfactory in themselves cast light on the rest.

The two compilers have arranged the stories according to the chronology of their themes, which unifies the book and comprises the 'full circle' of the title. If it is regarded as an autobiographical outline, this arrangement is no doubt too neat. Mr Shadbolt says in his introductory memoir that 'There was no clear development or sequence in his writing. Italian stories followed those with an unmistakable New Zealand setting.' The arrangement is legitimate and makes for a coherent and easily grasped book, but there is some falling-off towards the end which may give the false impression that Amato himself fell off latterly. It may also lead to some disappointment with Amato as a New Zealand writer, which is hardly relevant to Amato as a writer, period, except as helping to define the kind of writer he was. His stories with an Italian setting are superior to those with a New Zealand setting, as well as being more attractive (which, however, can be regarded as reflecting the two settings). This is hardly surprising. His stories were derived from his experience, not in the sense of being reportage since they were nearly all re-imagined, but in the sense that his imagination needed some experience even to be detached from. Naturally the earlier experience was more deeply embedded, the environment native, quite apart from any difference in the quality of the environments. This is to be noted but scarcely to be regretted