

- The Japanese had demonstrated near-fanatical resistance, fighting to almost the last man on Pacific islands, committing mass suicide on Saipan and unleashing kamikaze attacks at Okinawa. Fire bombing had killed 100,000 in Tokyo with no discernible political effect. Only the atomic bomb could jolt Japan's leadership to surrender.
- With only two bombs ready (and a third on the way by late August 1945) it was too risky to "waste" one in a demonstration over an unpopulated area.
- An invasion of Japan would have caused casualties on both sides that could easily have exceeded the toll at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- The two targeted cities would have been firebombed anyway.
- Immediate use of the bomb convinced the world of its horror and prevented future use when nuclear stockpiles were far larger.
- The bomb's use impressed the Soviet Union and halted the war quickly enough that the USSR did not demand joint occupation of Japan.

POINT

"The only way to end the war against Japan was to bomb the Japanese mainland."

Many advisors to President Truman, including Secretary of War Henry Stimson, had this point of view. They felt the bomb would end the war and save American lives. Stimson said, "The face of war is the face of death."

Some scientists working on the bomb agreed—even more so as the casualty figures from Iwo Jima and Okinawa sank in. "Are we to go on shedding American blood when we have available a means to a steady victory?" they petitioned. "No! If we can save even a handful of American lives, then let us use this weapon—now!"

Two other concerns pushed Americans to use the bomb. Some people feared that if the bomb were not dropped, the project might be viewed as a gigantic waste of money.

The second consideration involved the Soviet Union. Tension and distrust were already developing between the Western Allies and the Soviets.

Some American officials believed that a successful use of the atomic bomb would give the United States a powerful advantage over the Soviets in shaping the postwar world.

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. **CONNECT TO HISTORY**
main arguments for and against the atomic bomb on Japan?

SEE SKILLBUILDER

2. **CONNECT TO TODAY** Even today, some people think the United States was right to use the atomic bomb against the Japanese? In what ways? Why not?

- Japan was ready to call it quits anyway. More than 60 of its cities had been destroyed by conventional bombing, the home islands were being blockaded by the American Navy; and the Soviet Union entered the war by attacking Japanese troops in Manchuria.
- American refusal to modify its "unconditional surrender" demand to allow the Japanese to keep their emperor needlessly prolonged Japan's resistance.
- A demonstration explosion over Tokyo harbor would have convinced Japan's leaders to quit without killing many people.
- Even if Hiroshima was necessary, the U.S. did not give enough time for word to filter out of its devastation before bombing Nagasaki.
- The bomb was used partly to justify the \$2 billion spent on its development.
- The two cities were of limited military value. Civilians outnumbered troops in Hiroshima five or six to one.
- Japanese lives were sacrificed simply for power politics between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.
- Conventional firebombing would have caused as much significant damage without making the U.S. the first nation to use nuclear weapons.

COUNTERPOINT

"Japan's staggering losses were enough to force Japan's surrender."

Many of the scientists who had worked on the bomb, as well as military leaders and civilian policymakers, had doubts about using it. Dr. Leo Szilard, a Hungarian-born physicist who had helped President Roosevelt launch the project and who had a major role in developing the bomb, was a key figure opposing its use. A petition drawn up by Szilard and signed by 70 other scientists argued that it would be immoral to drop an atomic bomb on Japan without fair warning. Many supported staging a demonstration of the bomb for Japanese leaders, perhaps by exploding one on a deserted island near Japan, to convince the Japanese to surrender.

Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower agreed. He maintained that "dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary" to save American lives, and that Japan was already defeated, like told Secretary of War Henry Stimson, "I was against it [the bomb] on two counts. First the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing. Second, I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon."

Summarizing What were the gains dropping the atomic

HANDBOOK, PAGE R4.

Justifying Decisions Do you is justified in using the bomb a paragraph, explain why or