

# THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

A Unit of Study for Grades 9–12

LISA KING

PREVIEW COPY  
INCLUDING THE COMPLETE FIRST LESSON

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## INTRODUCTION

### APPROACH AND RATIONALE

*The Origins of the Cold War* is one of over sixty teaching units published by the National Center for History in the Schools that are the fruits of collaborations between history professors and experienced teachers of both United States and World History. The units represent specific issues and dramatic episodes in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying crucial turningpoints in history, the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected issues and dramatic moments that best bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history in an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow's history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, journals, diaries, newspapers, magazines, literature, contemporary photographs, paintings, and other art from the period under study. What we hope to achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to remove the distance that students feel from historical events and to connect them more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of "being there," a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian's craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

### CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Within this unit, you will find: Teaching Background Materials, including Unit Overview, Unit Context, Correlation to the National Standards for History Unit Objectives, and Introduction to *The Origins of the Cold War*; A Dramatic Moment; and Lesson Plans with Student Resources. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for use by grades 9–12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

## Introduction

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The Teacher Background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the historical information and context necessary to link the specific **Dramatic Moment** to the larger historical narrative. You may consult it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The Lesson Plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, any handouts or student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.

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## Teacher Background

### I. Unit Overview

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped one atomic bomb on Hiroshima that destroyed the city and half of its population. Two days later the Russians declared war on Japan. At the Teheran Conference in 1943, the Soviet Union reaffirmed its pledge to enter the war against Japan after the defeat of Germany. Russian entry into the war in Asia was again confirmed at both the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. The following day, August 9, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Japanese capitulation on August 15 made the Russian invasion unnecessary. Stalin was convinced that the United States and Britain had contrived a plan to use the atomic bomb to force Japan out of the war before the Russians were able to comply with their promise to join the war against Japan and avoid agreements turning over territory held by the Japanese since their victory over Imperial Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. The Soviets likewise believed that the bombs were also meant to intimidate the Russians, who had, like the Germans, experimented with atomic energy but were well behind perfecting an atomic weapon. When the Americans offered a plan for sharing nuclear capability among the great powers after the war, the Russians rejected what they regarded as unfair or suspicious conditions. Thus, the bomb that ended one war marked the beginning of another—The Cold War.

The events of 1945 are widely regarded as a turning-point in twentieth-century history, a point when the United States unequivocally took its place as a world power, at a time when Americans had a strong but war-oriented economy and a long-standing suspicion of Europeans in general. This unit explores the decisions of key policy-makers at this crucial moment in modern history.

### II. Unit Context

These lessons deal with American foreign policy from 1945 to 1950, on the eve of the outbreak of the Korean War. The material should be introduced after a study of World War II. This unit would also serve as part of a thematic approach to United States foreign policy. After studying the ideological differences between Americans and Russians and the use of “atomic diplomacy,” students should have some basic background for the study of the Korean War, the “brinkmanship” policy of President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the Cuban Missile Crisis during the Kennedy administration, and other events that brought the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of war.

### III. Correlation to National History Standards

*The Origins of the Cold War* provides teaching materials to support the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996). Lessons within this unit assist students in attaining **Standard 3B** of **Era 8** through an investigation of wartime aims and strategies hammered out at conferences among the Allied powers and by evaluating the controversies over surrounding the use of nuclear weapons. Analyze the different motives of the United States and the Soviet Union at the close of World War II. The central focus of the lesson supports **Standard 2A** of **Era 9**, “How the Cold War influenced international politics.”

The unit likewise integrates a number of **Historical Thinking Standards** by challenging students to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations; analyze cause-and-effect relationships; and, consider multiple perspectives.

### IV. Unit Objectives

1. To analyze the different motives of the United States and the Soviet Union at the close of World War II.
2. To analyze the cultural, historical, economic and political factors that propelled the United States and the Soviet Union into the Cold War.
3. To examine “atomic diplomacy” in the early Cold War years and to determine the extent to which acquisition of atomic weaponry caused or affected the Cold War.
4. To examine a variety of primary sources and distinguish between unsupported expression of opinion and informed hypotheses grounded in historical evidence.

## V. Introduction to the Origins of the Cold War

On September 1, 1939, Nazi troops invaded Poland beginning World War II. On August 23 the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed a non-aggression pact. The public text simply indicated that Germany and the Soviet Union would abide by the neutrality pact they had signed in 1926. The secret protocol however divided Eastern Europe into Nazi and Soviet spheres.

Britain and France declared war on Germany shortly after the invasion of Poland. By mid-September Soviet armies had crossed into eastern Poland. After capitulation, Poland was divided between the Nazis and Soviets. In June, 1940, Nazi troops swept into France and within six weeks France petitioned for an armistice. The battle for Britain began in earnest after the fall of France. On June 22, 1941, German troops invaded the Soviet Union and were at the outskirts of Leningrad by early September. The United States, professing neutrality, sent massive quantities of supplies to Britain and later to Russia through a Lend-Lease program pushed through by the Roosevelt administration. The United States entered the war against Germany and Italy a few days after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The Big Three powers, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union formed an alliance against the Axis Powers in Europe while Britain and the U.S. joined forces against the Japanese in the Pacific theater of the war.

The anti-fascist alliance in Europe was strained throughout the war because the United States and Britain delayed attacking the Germans in an all-out assault in Europe while the Russians carried the brunt of the fighting in Eastern Europe. Stalin urged an invasion of “Fortress Europe” to force German armies to shift their strength from the Eastern front to the west. Although the invasion was promised for some time it finally occurred in June 1944 at Normandy.

Matters of postwar policy were discussed at diplomatic meetings during the course of the war, specific policies were not thoroughly discussed in order to avoid a rupture in the alliance. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Premier Josef Stalin had made an informal agreement at the Second Moscow Conference, October 1944, that would divide the Balkans into British and Russian spheres of influence after the war. Roosevelt was not a party to this agreement and soon let it be known that he would not be bound by the decision reached at the Moscow Conference. The issue of Poland appeared to be the breaking point of the grand alliance. Roosevelt and Churchill acquiesced to most of Stalin’s demands at Yalta in exchange for a Russian pledge to enter the war against Japan shortly after the war in Europe was brought to a close. Churchill and Roosevelt did get Stalin to agree to “free and unfettered elections” in Poland and Eastern Europe based on universal suffrage and secret ballot. A few months later at Potsdam, the Polish issue and Soviet interest in Eastern Europe were to again be the focal points of discussion. Truman had become President in April

## Teacher Background Materials

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following Roosevelt's death and Churchill, who attended the first sessions of the conference, was defeated in the British election and was succeeded by Clement Attlee.

Roosevelt's death in April 1945 was cause for alarm in the Soviet Union. Roosevelt's vice president was virtually unknown to the Russians; however, they were aware that when German armies invaded Russia in June 1941, then Senator Truman was quoted in the press as having said, "If we see Germany is winning we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kill as many as possible. . . ." In April, Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov met with Truman at the White House before traveling to San Francisco for the United Nations Conference. Truman was reported to have given Molotov a tongue-lashing and Molotov stormed out of the meeting. Hostility between the U.S. and Soviet Union intensified during the San Francisco conference. It appeared to the Russians that the U.S. was determined to form a bloc of anti-Soviet nations. U.S. insistence of the admission of Argentina, a nation that had strong German ties during the war, confirmed Soviet suspicions. In May, Truman and his cabinet adopted a policy of abruptly ending the lend-lease program to Russia, criticized the Soviets for taking over the Eastern European countries, and condemned them for removing German factories to Russia to replace some destroyed in the war.

The Soviets were suspicious of Truman's request to postpone the Potsdam meeting that had been originally scheduled for June. Stalin and Molotov were convinced that Truman wanted a delay in order to test the atomic bomb before attending the Big Three conference. Soviet spies operating in the United States had passed on information regarding the Manhattan Project and were aware of work on the atom bomb. It therefore, came as no big surprise, when Truman informed Stalin that the U.S. had a secret weapon of great destructive power. Molotov expressed the Soviet view after the war when he remarked that, "The bombs dropped on Japan were not aimed at Japan but rather at the Soviet Union."

Secretary of State Byrnes was among Truman's advisors who wanted Truman to adopt a "get tough" policy. Two members of the American delegation at Potsdam, Secretary of War Henry Stimson and former ambassador to Moscow Joe Davies, expressed concern that Byrnes was brandishing the bomb in order to get the Soviets to fall in line. Truman's altercation with Molotov, the San Francisco Conference, and confrontations at Potsdam over Poland, peace treaties with Axis powers, and German reparations all seemed to confirm that the U.S. had embarked on a new policy in dealing with the Russians.

Given the evident enthusiasm of Americans for a war of ideology, Stalin enthusiastically declared one openly on February 9, 1946, by asserting in a speech that the contradictions of capitalism would tear the capitalists countries apart and communism would become the reigning system in the world. In the speech Stalin

implied that future wars were inevitable until communism was triumphant over capitalism.

The major response by Americans to Stalin's posture was to "contain" what was regarded as a worldwide conspiracy to spread communism. On February 22, 1946, George Kennan, the American chargé d'affaires in Moscow, sent a confidential cable to the State Department. In this so-called "Long Telegram" Kennan outlined Soviet policy and concluded that the USSR was on a fanatical crusade to obliterate the West. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal had the Long Telegram reproduced and made it required reading for higher officers in the armed services. In his *Memoirs* published in 1967, Kennan remarked that the telegram read "like one of those primers put out by alarmed congressional committees or by the Daughters of the American Revolution, designed to arouse the citizenry to the dangers of the Communist conspiracy."<sup>1</sup> In March, Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech solidified opposition to Soviet encroachments in Europe. In 1947, Greece was convulsed by a civil war supported by neighboring Communist states. At the same time the Soviet Union, to secure its position in the Eastern Mediterranean, was putting pressure on Turkey. Faced with what was perceived as a Soviet takeover of both Greece and Turkey, President Truman announced his "Truman Doctrine" that the United States was pledged to preventing such takeovers, and the first of several similar interventions was launched there at a cost of several hundred million dollars. In April 1948, the Marshall Plan to reconstruct Europe was also conceived as primarily an "anti-communist" measure to insure the rapid recovery of European economies devastated by the war.

By 1949, the Russians had tested a nuclear bomb. The arms race was on and would continue for nearly half a century.

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<sup>1</sup> George Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 294–95

## **VI. Lesson Plans**

1. The Atomic Bomb and the Effect on International Relations
2. The Policy of Containment
3. The Practice of Containment

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## Dramatic Moment

The war in Europe officially ended on May 8, 1945. On July 17 the heads of state of the “Big Three” powers met in Potsdam, a suburb of Berlin, to discuss a number of pressing issues in post-war Europe and the war in the Pacific. After the close of the July 24 session of the conference, Truman casually walked over to Stalin and informed him that the United States had just tested a new and extremely powerful weapon. Truman recorded the account in his memoirs.

At Potsdam, as elsewhere, the secret of the atomic bomb was kept closely guarded. We did not extend the very small circle of Americans who knew about it. Churchill naturally knew about the atomic bomb project from its very beginning, because it had involved the pooling of British and American technical skill.

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.”

Source: *Memoirs of Harry S. Truman: Volume I, Year of Decisions* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), p. 416.



President Truman and Soviet Union Prime Minister Josef Stalin on the lawn in front of Prime Minister Stalin's residence during the Potsdam Conference, Potsdam, Germany.

National Archives, NLT-AVC-PHT-63(1453)2

Russian ambassador to the United States Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko in his memories, written years after the Potsdam conference, gives his version and describes the discussion of Soviet officials shortly after Truman's announcement.

... On 24 July, as Stalin was making his exit after the session, the President held him back and said: "I have something to tell you in confidence."

Stalin stopped and waited. Truman said, "The United States has built a new weapon of great destructive power which we intend to use against Japan."

Stalin took the news calmly, showing no emotion—a reaction which apparently disappointed Truman.

Very soon afterwards, however, a meeting took place in Stalin's residence at Potsdam which has etched itself in my mind. Only Stalin, Molotov, [F. T.] Gusev (the Soviet ambassador to Britain) and I were present. When we entered, Stalin and Molotov were waiting, and it was evident that they had already been discussing the questions to be raised with us two ambassadors. . . .

Stalin . . . raised the matter which turned out to be the main point of our meeting.

"Our allies have told us that the USA has a new weapon, the atom bomb. . . . We will no doubt have our own bomb before long. But its possession places a huge responsibility on any state. The real question is, should the countries which have the bomb simply compete with each other in its production, or should they, and any other countries that acquire it later, seek a solution that would mean the prohibition of its production and use? It's hard at this moment to see what sort of agreement there could be, but one thing is clear: nuclear energy should only be allowed to be used for peaceful purposes."

Molotov agreed and added: "And the Americans have been doing all this work on the atom bomb without telling us."

Stalin said tersely: "Roosevelt clearly felt no need to put us in the picture. He could have done it at Yalta. He could simply have told me the atom bomb was going through its experimental states. We were supposed to be allies."

It was noticeable that, even though Stalin was annoyed, he spoke calmly. He continued: "No doubt Washington and London are hoping we won't be able to develop the bomb ourselves for some time. And meanwhile, using America's monopoly, in fact America's and Britain's, they want to force us to accept their plans on questions affecting Europe and the world. Well, that's not going to happen!" and now, for once, he cursed in ripe language. A broad grin appeared on the face of my good friend Gusev.

Source: Andrei Gromyko, *Memories*, Translated by Harold Shukman (London: Century Hutchinson, Ltd., 1989), pp. 108–109.

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## Lesson One

### THE ATOMIC BOMB AND ITS EFFECT ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### A. Objectives

- ◆ To explain reasons for the growing hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union at the close of World War II.
- ◆ To analyze the arguments on possible use of the atomic bomb.
- ◆ To define and discuss the idea of “atomic diplomacy” on post-World War II relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

#### B. Lesson Activities

1. Have students review textbook readings on World War II. Remind students that Hitler and Stalin had, in 1939, signed a non-aggression pact and that a little over two weeks after Nazi troops began their blitzkrieg in Poland, Soviet troops invaded Poland. On June 22, 1941, Germany violated the non-aggression treaty and invaded the Soviet Union. Have students read **Document A**, a report in the *New York Times* regarding the response of some Congressional leaders on the Nazi invasion of Russia. Discuss how the Soviets would respond to these comments. Would Senator Harry Truman’s statement haunt Soviet American relations at the close of the war?
2. Review text readings of the major wartime conferences and their objectives. Have students compile a list of the points of agreement among the Big Three powers at Yalta. Discuss the outcome of the Yalta Conference, February 4–11, 1945, in context of the war and basic goals of the allied powers. Likewise prepare a list of the topics discussed at the Potsdam Conference, July 17–August 2, 1945. Discuss the basic issues that divided the United States and Britain on one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. What was the issue over Poland and Eastern Europe at Potsdam? Had Stalin violated the Yalta agreement regarding Eastern Europe as Britain and the United States claimed? Had the new American administration of Harry Truman reneged on the Yalta agreement as the Soviets claimed? To what extent had the spirit of allied cooperation eroded by the Potsdam conference?
3. Have students read **Document B**, Truman’s diary entries during the Potsdam conference. What did Truman mean by “I have some dynamite

too which I'm not exploding now" in his July 17 diary entry? To what extent do the entries for July 18 and 25 show a different attitude towards the Russians? How important was it for the United States to get the Soviets to declare war on Japan? Would the use of atomic weapons make it unnecessary for Russian entry into the war? Once the power of the bomb was confirmed, what would you have advised President Truman to do at Potsdam?

4. Read aloud, or have a student read the **Dramatic Moment**. Discuss how the withholding of information on the development of the atomic bomb may have added to a growing conflict between East and West at the end of the war in Europe. Extend the lesson by having students investigate charges that the Soviets were aware of the development of the bomb because of a network of spies operating in the United States.
5. Assign the following documents for homework and have students write a brief summation of the major arguments presented in each document.

**Document C**, Report of the Interim Committee on Military Use of the Atomic Bomb

**Document D**, Report of the Franck Committee on a Noncombat Atomic Demonstration

**Document E**, Henry L. Stimson's Appeal for Atomic Talks with Russia

6. Divide the class into six groups and assign each group one of the three documents (**C**, **D**, or **E**) so that there are two separate groups for each document. Have students share their arguments from the previous night's homework pertaining to their assigned document and make a composite list of common points. They should then collaborate and come up with a paragraph summing up the arguments of their document.
7. Assign one student to act as a class recorder and list the major arguments on the board for each document as a spokesperson from each group read the collective paragraph. Ask students if there are any additions to the lists. This may be done on an individual rather than group basis since all students should have come prepared to discuss each document. Discuss the documents considering the following points:
  - a. Which alternative did the United States government pursue?
  - b. Evaluate the impact of this decision on superpower relations in the immediate post-war years. What might have been the outcome if other options had been chosen? Explain your reasoning.

## Lesson One

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- c. Define “atomic diplomacy.” What was the effect of this policy in the late 1940s?

### **C. Evaluating the Lesson**

1. Check for understanding during discussion or assign a writing assignment based on the three documents. Students could be asked to write an essay according to the following directions:
  - a. Modeling your writing on the documents discussed, create your own “document” as if you were an analyst for the State Department.
  - b. Advise the President on the use of the atomic bomb. Consider, foremost, the idea of “atomic diplomacy.”

## Nazi Invasion of the Soviet Union June 1941

(Primary Source)

Congressional reaction to the German invasion of Russia on June 22 was generally reserved. The Roosevelt administration's official policy was that Nazi aggression was a threat to the security of the United States and must be stopped. Some members of Congress, however, broke with the administration's argument that any rallying of force against Hitler, from whatever source, was welcomed. On June 24, two days after the Nazi invasion began Representative Martin Dies (D-Texas) and Senator Harry Truman (D-Missouri) were quoted in two articles in the *New York Times*.

### *Congressman Martin Dies*

The severance of the Soviet-Nazi alliance will mean that many people who quit the Communists after the alliance of Germany and Russia was formed will return to their first affection.

The influence of the Communist party in America will increase tremendously as a result of the break between Hitler and Stalin. All of those gullibles and fellow travelers in America who aided the

Communist cause prior to the alliance may be expected to resume their activities in behalf of Moscow. . . .

All strikes and sit-downs must cease. Several hundreds of thousands of fifth columnists now working in defense industries must be fired without delay. At least 1,000 government employees sympathetic with totalitarian ideology must be discharged.

Source: *New York Times*, June 24, 1941, p. 3.

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### *Senator Harry S Truman*

If we see Germany is winning we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kill as many as possible,

although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances. Neither of them think anything of their pledged word.

Source: *New York Times*, June 24, 1941, p. 8.

**Truman's Potsdam Diary**

(Primary Source)

Truman kept a diary during in which he recorded notes on his meetings with Churchill and Stalin at the Potsdam conference. The following are notes he wrote in his diary for July 17, 18, and 25.

*Potsdam**July 17, 1945*

Just spent a couple of hours with Stalin. Joe Davies [former U. S. ambassador to Moscow] called on [Ivan] Maisky [Former Soviet ambassador to London] and made the date last night for noon today. Promptly a few minutes before twelve I looked up from the desk and there stood Stalin in the doorway. I got to my feet and advanced to meet him. He put out his hand and smiled. I did the same, we shook, I greeted Molotov and the interpreter, and we sat down. After the usual polite remarks we got down to business. I told Stalin that I am no diplomat but usually said yes & no to questions after hearing all the argument. It pleased him. I asked him if he had the agenda for the meeting. He said he had and that he had some more questions to present. I told him to fire away. He did and it is dynamite—but I have some dynamite too which I'm not exploding now. He wants to fire Franco, to which I wouldn't object, and divide up the Italian colonies and other mandates, some no doubt that the British have. Then he got on the Chinese situation, told us what agreements had been reached and what was in abeyance. Most of the big points are settled. He'll be in the Jap War on August 15th. Fini Japs when that comes about. We had lunch, talked socially, put on a real show drinking toasts to everyone, then had pictures made in the back yard. I can deal with Stalin. He is honest—but smart as hell.

Source: Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 53.

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*Potsdam**July 18, 1945*

... Went to lunch with P.M. [Churchill] at 1:30. Walked around to British Hqtrs. Met at the gate by Mr. Churchill. Guard of honor drawn up. Fine body of men, Scottish Guards. Band played Star Spangled Banner. Inspected Guard and went in for lunch. P.M. & I ate alone. Discussed Manhattan (it is a success). Decided to tell Stalin about it. Stalin had told P.M. of telegram from Jap Emperor asking for peace. Stalin also read his answer to me. It was satisfactory. Believe Japs will fold up before Russia comes in. I am sure they will when Manhattan appears over their homeland. I shall inform Stalin about it at an opportune time.

Stalin's luncheon was a most satisfactory meeting. I invited him to come to the U.S. Told him I'd send the Battleship *Missouri* for him if he'd come. He said he wanted to cooperate with U.S. in peace as we had cooperated in War but it would be harder. Said he was grossly misunderstood in U.S. and I was misunderstood in Russia. I told him that we each could help to remedy that situation in our home countries and that I intended to try with all I had to do my part at home. He gave me a most cordial smile and said he would do as much in Russia. . . .

Source: Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 53-54.

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*Potsdam*  
*July 25, 1945*

We met at 11 A.M. today. That is Stalin, Churchill and the U.S. President. But I had a most important session with Lord Mountbatten & General Marshall before that. We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark.

Anyway we "think" we have found the way to cause a disintegration of the atom. An experiment in the New Mexican desert was startling—to put it mildly. Thirteen pounds of the explosive caused the complete disintegration of a steel tower 60 feet high, created a crater 6 feet deep and 1,200 feet in diameter, knocked over a steel tower 1/2 mile away and knocked men down 10,000 yards away. The explosion was visible for more than 200 miles and audible for 40 miles and more.

This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th. I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital [Kyoto] or the new [Tokyo].

He & I are in accord. The target will be a purely military one and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I'm sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance. It is certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler's crowd or Stalin's did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful.

At 10:15 I had Gen. Marshall come in and discuss with me the tactical and political situation. He is a levelheaded man—so is Mountbatten.

At the Conference Poland and the Bolsheviki land grab came up. Russia helped herself to a slice of Poland and gave Poland a nice slice of Germany, taking also a good slice of East Prussia for herself. Poland has moved in up to the Oder and the west

Neisse, taking Stettin and Silesia as a fact accomplished. My position is that, according to commitments made at Yalta by my predecessor, Germany was to be divided into four occupation zones, one each for Britain, Russia and France and the U.S. If Russia chooses to allow Poland to occupy a part of her zone I am agreeable but title to territory cannot and will not be settled here. For the fourth time I restated my position and explained that territorial cessions had to be made by treaty and ratified by the Senate.

We discussed reparations and movement of populations from East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy and elsewhere. Churchill said Maisky had so defined war booty as to include the German fleet and Merchant Marine. It was a bombshell and sort of paralyzed the Russkies, but it has a lot of merit. [Most of the German fleet and merchant marine had fallen to the Western powers and thus was, under the Russian definition, was war booty and not considered as part of any reparations agreement.]

Source: Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 55-56.



From left to right, seated: British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, U. S. President Harry S. Truman, and Soviet Union Prime Minister Josef Stalin in garden of the Cecilienhof Palace during the Potsdam Conference, Potsdam, Germany.

National Archives, NLT-AVC-PHT-63(1453)6

**Report of the Interim Committee on Military Use of the Atomic Bomb**  
**May 31, 1945**  
(Primary Source)

Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson chaired a committee formed to advise the President on atomic energy. On May 31, The Interim Committee on Military Use of the Atomic Bomb issued its report.

Secretary Stimson explained that the Interim Committee had been appointed by him, with the approval of the President, to make recommendations on temporary war-time controls, public announcement, legislation and post-war organization. . . . He expressed the hope that the [four] scientists would feel completely free to express their views on any phase of the subject. . . .

The Secretary expressed the view, a view shared by General Marshall, that this project not be considered simply in terms of military weapons, but as a new relationship of man to the universe. . . . While the advances in the field to date had been fostered by the needs of war, it was important to realize that the implications of the project went far beyond the needs of the present war. It must be controlled if possible to make it an assurance of future peace rather than a menace to civilization. . . .

At this point General Marshall discussed at some length the story of charges and counter charges that have been typical of our relations with the Russians, pointing out that most of these allegations have proven unfounded. The seemingly uncooperative attitude of Russia in military matters stemmed from the necessity of maintaining security. He said that he had accepted this reason for their attitude in his dealings with the Russians and had acted accordingly. As to the post-war situation and in matters other than purely military, he felt that he was in no position to express a view. With regard to this field he was inclined to favor the building up of a combination among like-minded powers, there by forcing Russia to fall in line by the very force of this coalition. General Marshall was certain that we need have no fear that the Russians, if they had knowledge of our project, would disclose this information to the Japanese. He raised the question whether it might be desirable to invite two prominent Russian scientists to witness the test.

Mr. Byrnes expressed a fear that if information were given to the Russians, even in general terms, Stalin would ask to be brought into the partnership. He felt this to be particularly likely in view of our commitments and pledges of cooperation with the British. In this connection Dr. Bush pointed out that even the British do not have any of our blue prints on plants. Mr. Byrnes expressed the view, which was generally agreed to by all present, that the most desirable program would be to push ahead as fast as possible in production and research to make certain that we stay ahead and at the same time make every effort to better our political relations with Russia.

It was pointed out that one atomic bomb on an arsenal would not be much different from the effect caused by an Air Corps strike of present dimension. However, Dr. Oppenheimer stated that the visual effect of an atomic bombing would be tremendous. It would be accompanied by a brilliant luminescence which would rise to a height of 10,000 to 20,000 feet. The neutron effect of the explosion would be dangerous to life for a radius of at least two-thirds of a mile.

After much discussion concerning various types of targets and the effects to be produced, the Secretary expressed the conclusion, on which there was general agreement, that we could not give the Japanese any warning; that we could not concentrate on a civilian area; but that we should seek to make a profound psychological impression on as many of the inhabitants as possible. At the suggestion of Dr. Conant the Secretary agreed that the most desirable target would be a vital war plant employing a large number of workers and closely surrounded by workers houses.

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**NOTES OF THE INTERIM COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, 31 MAY 1945**  
**10:00 A.M. to 11:15 P.M.-- 11:15 P.M. to 1:15 P.M.**

**PRESIDE:**

**Members of the Committee**

Secretary Henry L. Stimson, Chairman  
 Hon. Ralph A. Bard ✓  
 Dr. Vannevar Bush ✓  
 Hon. James F. Byrnes ✓  
 Hon. William E. Clayton ✓  
 Dr. Earl T. Compton ✓  
 Dr. James B. Conant ✓  
 Mr. George L. Harrison

**Invited Scientists**

Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer  
 Dr. Enrico Fermi  
 Dr. Arthur H. Compton  
 Dr. E. O. Lawrence

**By Invitation**

General George C. Marshall  
 Major Gen. Leslie E. Groves  
 Mr. Harvey E. Bundy  
 Mr. Arthur Page

CLASSIFICATION CONTROL  
 UNCLASSIFIED  
 To: \_\_\_\_\_  
 By authority of: *NSC 60202*  
 By: *TRG* per *71050*  
 Date: *9/29/71* *WHL-MSB*

**I. OPENING STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN:**

Secretary Stimson explained that the Interim Committee had been appointed by him, with the approval of the President, to make recommendations on temporary war-time controls, public announcement, legislation and post-war organization. The Secretary gave high praise to the brilliant and effective assistance rendered to the project by the scientists of the country and expressed great

\*SECRET\*  
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Notes of the Interim Committee Meeting, Thursday, 31 May 1945

Whistle Stop Project, U. S. Department of Education.

[http://www.whistlestop.org/study\\_collections/bomb/large/interim\\_committee/bmi4-1.htm](http://www.whistlestop.org/study_collections/bomb/large/interim_committee/bmi4-1.htm) [August 15, 2000]

## **Report of the Franck Committee on a Noncombat Atomic Demonstration**

**June 11, 1945**

(Primary Source)

Atomic scientist Jerome Franck chaired a committee of Chicago scientists working on the Manhattan project. On June 11, Franck, on behalf of the committee of scientists, petitioned Secretary of War Stimson urging a noncombative demonstration of the power of the atomic bomb in order to improve chances for a postwar agreement on international control of nuclear weapons.



Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer  
Atomic physicist and head of the Manhattan Project  
National Archives, NWDNS-434-OR-7(44)

The way in which the nuclear weapons, now secretly developed in this country, will first be revealed to the world appears of great, perhaps fateful importance.

One possible way—which may particularly appeal to those who consider the nuclear bombs primarily as a secret weapon developed to help win the present war—is to use it without warning on an appropriately selected object in Japan. It is doubtful whether the first available bombs, of comparatively low efficiency and small size, will be sufficient to break the will or ability of Japan to resist, especially given the fact that the major cities like Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe already will largely be reduced to ashes by the slower process of ordinary aerial bombing. Certain and perhaps important tactical results undoubtedly can be achieved, but we nevertheless think that the question of the use of the very first available atomic bombs in the Japanese war should be

weighed very carefully, not only by military authority, but by the highest political leadership of this country. If we consider international agreement on total prevention of nuclear warfare as the paramount objective, and believe that it can be achieved, this kind of introduction of atomic weapons to the world may easily destroy all our chances of success. Russia, and even allied countries which bear less mistrust of our ways and intentions, as well as neutral countries, will be deeply shocked. It will be very difficult to persuade the world that a nation which was capable of secretly preparing and suddenly releasing a weapon, as indiscriminate as the rocket bomb and a thousand times more destructive, is to be trusted in its proclaimed desire of having such weapons

abolished by international agreement. We have large accumulations of poison gas, but do not use them, and recent polls have shown that public opinion in this country would disapprove of such a use even if it would accelerate the winning of the Far Eastern war. It is true, that some irrational element in mass psychology makes gas poisoning more revolting than blasting by explosives, even though gas warfare is in no way more “inhuman” than the war of bombs and bullets. Nevertheless, it is not at all certain that the American public opinion, if it could be enlightened as to the effect of atomic explosives, would support the first introduction by our own country of such an indiscriminate method of wholesale destruction of civilian life.

Thus, from the “optimistic” point of view—looking forward to an international agreement on prevention of nuclear warfare—the military advantages and the saving of American lives, achieved by the sudden use of atomic bombs against Japan, may be outweighed by the ensuing loss of confidence and wave of horror and repulsion, sweeping over the rest of the world, and perhaps dividing even the public opinion at home.

From this point of view a demonstration of the new weapon may best be made before the eyes of representatives of all United Nations, on the desert or a barren island? The best possible atmosphere for the achievement of an international agreement could be achieved if America would be able to say to the world, “You see what weapon we had but did not use. We are ready to renounce its use in the future and to join other nations in working out adequate supervision of the use of this nuclear weapon.”

This may sound fantastic, but then in nuclear weapons we have something entirely new in the order of magnitude of destructive power, and if we want to capitalize fully on the advantage which its possession gives us, we must use new and imaginative methods. After such a demonstration the weapon could be used against Japan if a sanction of the United Nations (and of the public opinion at home) could be obtained, perhaps after a preliminary ultimatum to Japan to surrender or at least to evacuate a certain region as an alternative to the total destruction of this target.

It must be stressed that if one takes a pessimistic point of view and discounts the possibilities of an effective international control of nuclear weapons, then the advisability of an early use of nuclear bombs against Japan becomes even more doubtful—quite independently of any humanitarian considerations. If no international agreement is concluded immediately after the first demonstration, this will mean a flying start of an unlimited armaments race. If this race is inevitable, we have all reason to delay its beginning as long as possible in order to increase our headstart still further . . . . The benefit to the nation, and saving of American lives in the future, achieved by renouncing an early demonstration of nuclear bombs and letting the other nations come into the race only reluctantly, on the basis of guesswork and without definite knowledge that the “thing does work,” may far outweigh the advantages to be gained by the immediate use of the first and comparatively inefficient bombs in the war against Japan. At the least, pros and cons of this use must be carefully weighed by the supreme

political and military leadership of the country, and the decision should not be left to considerations, merely, of military tactics.

One may point out that scientists themselves have initiated the development of this “secret weapon” and it is therefore strange that they should be reluctant to try it out on the enemy as soon as it is available. The answer to this question was given above—the compelling reason for creating this weapon with such speed was our fear that Germany had the technical skill necessary to develop such a weapon without any moral restraints regarding its use.

Another argument which could be quoted in favor of using atomic bombs as soon as they are available is that so much taxpayers’ money has been invested in those projects that the Congress and the American public will require a return for their money. The above-mentioned attitude of the American public opinion in the question of the use of poison gas against Japan shows that one can expect it to understand that a weapon can sometimes be made ready only for use in extreme emergency; and as soon as the potentialities of nuclear weapons will be revealed to the American people, one can be certain that it will support all attempts to make the use of such weapons impossible.

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**Henry L. Stimson's Appeal for Atomic Talks with Russia**  
**September 11, 1945**  
(Primary Source)

Secretary of War Henry Stimson sent the following memorandum to the President approximately six weeks after Truman had told Stalin at Potsdam about a secret weapon the United States had developed. Stimson, who had been one of the persons who had originally cautioned against advising the Russians of U.S. nuclear research, now urged Truman approach the Soviets to discuss controls on nuclear weapons.

The advent of the atomic bomb has stimulated great military and probably even greater political interest throughout the civilized world. In a world atmosphere already extremely sensitive to power, the introduction of this weapon has profoundly affected political considerations in all sections of the globe.

In many quarters it has been interpreted as a substantial offset of the growth of Russian influence on the continent. We can be certain that the Soviet Government has sensed this tendency and the temptation will be strong for the Soviet political and military leaders to acquire this weapon in the shortest possible time. Britain in effect already has the status of a partner with us in the development of this weapon. Accordingly, unless the Soviets are voluntarily invited into the partnership upon a basis of cooperation and trust, we are going to maintain the Anglo-Saxon bloc over against the Soviet in the possession of this weapon. Such a condition will almost certainly stimulate feverish activity on the part of the Soviet toward the development of this bomb in what will in effect be a secret armament race of a rather desperate character. There is evidence to indicate that such activity may have already commenced.

If we feel, as I assume we must, that civilization demands that some day we shall arrive at a satisfactory international arrangement respecting the control of this new force, the question then is how long we can afford to enjoy our momentary superiority in the hope of achieving our immediate peace council objectives.

Whether Russia get control of the necessary secrets of production in a minimum of say four years or a maximum of twenty years is not nearly as important to the world and civilization as to make sure that when they do get it they are willing and co-operative partners among the peace-loving nations of the world. It is true if we approach them now, as I would propose, we may be gambling on their good faith and risk their getting into production of bombs a little sooner than they would otherwise.

To put the matter concisely, I consider the problem of our satisfactory relations with Russia as not merely connected with but as virtually dominated by the problem of the atomic bomb. Except for the problem of the control of that bomb, those relations, while

vitaly important, might not be immediately pressing. The establishment of relations of mutual confidence between her and us could afford to await the slow progress of time. But with the discovery of the bomb, they became immediately emergent. Those relations may be perhaps irretrievably embittered by the way in which we approach the solution of the bomb with Russia. 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. It will inspire them to greater efforts in an all-out effort to solve the problem. If the solution is achieved in that spirit, it is much less likely that we will ever get the kind of covenant we may desperately need in the future. This risk is, I believe, greater than the other, inasmuch as our objective must be to get the best kind of international bargain we can—one that has some chance of being kept and saving civilization not for five or for twenty years, but forever.

The chief lesson I have learned in a long life is that the only way you can make a man trustworthy is to trust him; and the surest way to make him untrustworthy is to distrust him and show your distrust.

If the atomic bomb were merely another though more devastating military weapon to be assimilated into our pattern of international relations, I would be one thing. We could then follow the old custom of secrecy and nationalistic military superiority relying on international caution to prescribe the future use of the weapon as we did with gas. But I think the bomb instead constitutes merely a first step in a new control by man over the forces of nature too revolutionary and dangerous to fit into the old concepts. I think it really caps the climax of the race between man's growing technical power for destructiveness and his psychological power of self-control and group control—his moral power. If so, our method of approach to the Russians is a question of the most vital importance in the evolution of human progress.

Since the crux of the problem is Russia, any contemplated action leading to the control of this weapon should be more apt to respond sincerely to a direct and forthright approach made by the United States on this subject than would be the case if the approach were made as a part of a general international scheme, or if the approach were made after a succession of express or implied threats or near threats in our peace negotiations.

My idea of an approach to the Soviets would be a direct proposal after discussion with the British that we would be prepared in effect to enter an arrangement with the Russians, the general purpose of which would be to control and limit the use of the atomic bomb as an instrument of war and so far as possible to direct and encourage the development of atomic power for peaceful and humanitarian purposes. Such an approach might more specifically lead to the proposal that we would stop work on the further improvement in, or manufacture of, the bomb as a military weapon, provided the Russians and the British would agree to do likewise. It might also provide that we would be willing to impound what bombs we now have in the

United States provided the Russians and the British would agree with us that in no event will they or we use a bomb as an instrument of war unless all three Governments agree to that use. We might also consider including in the arrangement a covenant with the U.K. and the Soviets providing for the exchange of benefits of future developments whereby atomic energy may be applied on a mutually satisfactory basis for commercial or humanitarian purposes.

I would make such an approach just as soon as our immediate political considerations make it appropriate.

I emphasize perhaps beyond all other considerations the importance of taking this action with Russia as a proposal of the United States—backed by Great Britain but peculiarly the proposal of the United States. Action of any international group of nations, including many small nations who have not demonstrated their potential power or responsibility in this war would not, in my opinion, be taken seriously by the Soviets. The loose debates which would surround such proposal, if put before a conference of nations, would provoke but scant favor from the Soviets. As I say, I think this is the most important point in the program.

After the nations which have won this war have agreed to it, there will be ample time to introduce France and China into the covenants and finally to incorporate the agreement into the scheme of the United Nations. The use of this bomb has been accepted by the world as the result of the initiative and productive capacity of the United States, and I think this factor is a most potent lever toward having our proposals accepted by the Soviets, whereas I am most skeptical of obtaining any tangible results

by way of any international debate. I urge this method as the most realistic means of accomplishing this vitally important step in the history of the world.



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Secretary of War Henry Stimson with Col. W. H. Kyle  
National Archives, NLT-AVC-PHT-63(1455)22, 1945

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Questions?

National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

Marian McKenna Olivas, Coordinator

Gary B. Nash, Director

6265 Bunche Hall

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1473

(310) 825-4702

FAX: (310) 267-2103

<http://nchs.ucla.edu>

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