

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

By Derek Rasmussen
Canadian University Press

If you're like me you were probably taught a few basic "facts" about nuclear weapons while you were growing up. Somebody probably taught you that the atom bombs the United States dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki shortened World War II. In history class somebody probably said that nuclear weapons have only been used twice. Later somebody probably said that the main reason for the United States to have nuclear weapons is to deter the Soviet Union.

Everything they told you was a lie.

Myth #1 — Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The American atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not shorten WWII, it lengthened it; it didn't save Allied lives, it cost Japanese and Allied lives.

Dr. Martin J. Sherwin is the only American historian to have read through all of the top-secret documents relating to the Manhattan Project and the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His research took eight years and from it he published a book, *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*.

Dr. Sherwin presented in a recent phone interview with the Canadian University Press, the following chronology of the last few months of WWII:

May 1945: The US demands the unconditional surrender of Japan. The former ambassador to Japan ("A man who knew more about Japan than any other American in government", says Sherwin) and acting Secretary of State, Joseph Grew, urges President Truman to modify the unconditional surrender demand.

The US had cracked Japanese codes years before, and from the intercepted messages Grew and Truman knew that the Japanese would never surrender without assurances that the institution of their Emperor would survive.

Truman refuses.

June 21: US wins battle for Okinawa, begins daily aerial bombing of Japan.

In his memoirs, Joseph Grew predicts that Japan may have surrendered on this day if the US had modified their demands for an "unconditional surrender".

July 13: In the clearest sign on the way, Japanese foreign Minister Togo (in an intercepted by American intelligence and delivered to President Truman) says, "Unconditional surrender is the only obstacle to peace..."

Truman ignores it.

August 6: Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima. 80,000 die.

August 7: The second bomb is supposed to be dropped on Aug. 11, giving the Japanese time to consider surrendering (note below: Japan's offer to surrender came on Aug. 10).

The timing decision, however, is left in the hands of Colonel Paul Tibbets at bomber command.

Tibbets says it is "too bad" that the date isn't two days earlier, because the weather will be nicer.

The date is moved up.

August 9: Atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki. 74,000 die.

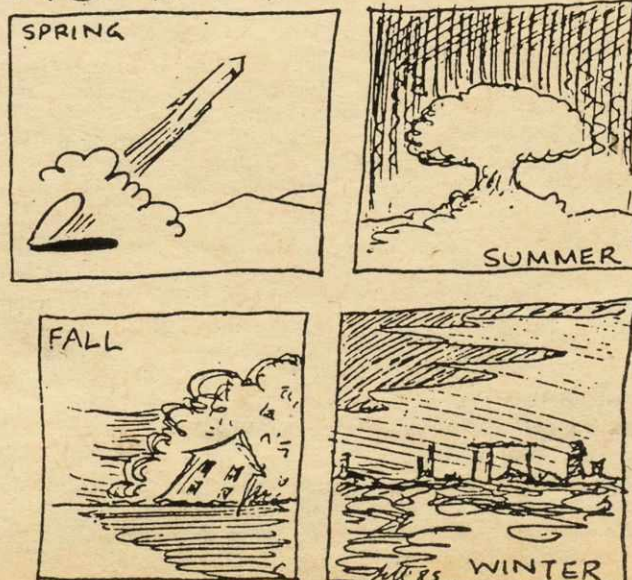
August 10: Japanese government offers to surrender on the condition that the US guarantees the continuation of the Emperor and his dynasty.

August 14: The US agrees to this conditional Japanese surrender — a surrender it could have accepted months before. (And Emperor Hirohito is still alive and ruling today).

The US launched a 1000-plane raid against Japan four days after Japan offered to give up.

Given that the Americans could have ended the Pacific War in July, if not May, of 1945, every Australian, New Zealander, British, Canadian and American soldier who died during that period (not to mention the Japanese) is the responsibility of Truman's government and its blind determination not to end the war until it had tested atom bombs (one uranium and one plutonium) on civilian populations.

NUCLEAR SEASONS



The atom bombs "also held out the possibility of a dividend," says Sherwin, "and that was the chance to give Moscow a little shock and shake them up a bit."

But WWII wasn't over yet. In what American scholar Noam Chomsky has described as a "final gratuitous act of barbarism", the United States launched a thousand-plane raid against Japan on Aug. 14, four days after Japan had offered to give up, but, technically, before the US had accepted.

Seven cities were bombed.

One victim, Mokato Oda, described what happened in Osaka:

"In the afternoon of Aug. 14, 1945, thousands of people died during a protracted and intensive aerial bombardment of an arsenal in Osaka. I was a witness to the tragedy... After what seemed an eternity of terror and anguish, we who were fortunate enough to survive emerged from our shelters. We found the corpses — and the leaflets which American bombers had dropped over the destruction. The leaflets proclaimed in Japanese, "Your Government has surrendered. The war is over!"

(from: Journal of Social and Political Ideas in Japan, Aug. 1966)

Even the American Secretary of War Stimson said he was "appalled that there had been no protest over the air strikes we were conducting against Japan which led to such extraordinarily heavy losses of life." He felt that "there was something wrong with a country where no one questioned that."

Myth #2 — Nuclear weapons have only been used twice

The United States has used nuclear weapons 22 times since Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Most of us have never heard of this, but the facts are in the accompanying chart, drawing primarily from a US Defense Department study.

If a killer puts a gun to your head and asks for your wallet, has he used the gun? Yes. Even if he doesn't pull the trigger, he has still used the gun.

In this way the US has used nuclear weapons over and over again since 1945. And, as the chart shows, usually this loaded gun has been pointed at Third World, non-nuclear, not even conventionally strong nations.

Daniel Ellsberg is a former Marine captain and military consultant to the Rand Corporation. In the early 1960's he was the highest ranking civilian in the US Pentagon to read and revise America's overall nuclear war plan. Ellsberg was interviewed about this secret history of nuclear threats by *Current Magazine* in June, 1981.

Current: Would a president seriously consider using the nuclear weapons against a country that didn't

Ellsberg: First, that's how Harry Truman used them, in August 1945. Second, it's safer then using them against the Soviets. Third every President from Truman on (with the exception of Ford) has had an occasion in an ongoing, urgent crisis to direct serious preparations for imminent US initiation of tactical nuclear warfare, preparations in every case "leaked" to the enemy, and in several cases accompanied by secret, explicit, official threats..."

Presidents buy these weapons because they expect to use them, based on their knowledge of a largely secret history — which both they and their adversaries know better than the American public does — of how past presidents threatened their use, and often with some significant success.