

"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.

"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. Ike 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."

THINKING CRITICALLY


- 1. CONNECT TO HISTORY Summarizing** What were the main arguments for and against dropping the atomic bomb on Japan?
 **SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R4.**
- 2. CONNECT TO TODAY Evaluating Decisions** Do you think the United States was justified in using the bomb against the Japanese? In a paragraph, explain why or why not.

Rebuilding Begins

With Japan's surrender, the Allies turned to the challenge of rebuilding war-torn nations. Even before the last guns fell silent, they began thinking about principles that would govern the postwar world.


THE YALTA CONFERENCE In February 1945, as the Allies pushed toward victory in Europe, an ailing Roosevelt had met with Churchill and Stalin at the Black Sea resort city of Yalta in the Soviet Union. Stalin graciously welcomed the president and the prime minister, and the Big Three, as they were called, toasted the defeat of Germany that now seemed certain.

For eight grueling days, the three leaders discussed the fate of Germany and the postwar world. Stalin, his country devastated by German forces, favored a harsh approach. He wanted to keep Germany divided into occupation zones—areas controlled by Allied military forces—so that Germany would never again threaten the Soviet Union.

When Churchill strongly disagreed, Roosevelt acted as a mediator. He was prepared to make concessions to Stalin for two reasons. First, he hoped that the Soviet Union would stand by its commitments to join the war against Japan that was still waging in the Pacific. (The first test of the atom bomb was still five months away.) Second, Roosevelt wanted Stalin's support for a new world peace-keeping organization, to be named the United Nations. 

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Motives

 Why was Roosevelt anxious to make concessions to Stalin concerning the fate of postwar Germany?

The historic meeting at Yalta produced a series of compromises. To pacify Stalin, Roosevelt convinced Churchill to agree to a temporary division of Germany into four zones, one each for the Americans, the British, the Soviets, and the French. Churchill and Roosevelt assumed that, in time, all the zones would be brought together in a reunited Germany. For his part, Stalin promised "free and unfettered elections" in Poland and other Soviet-occupied Eastern European countries.

Stalin also agreed to join in the war against Japan. That struggle was expected to continue for another year or more. In addition, he agreed to participate in an international conference to take place in April in San Francisco. There, Roosevelt's dream of a United Nations (UN) would become a reality. **E**

THE NUREMBERG WAR TRIALS Besides geographic division, Germany had another price to pay for its part in the war. The discovery of Hitler's death camps led the Allies to put 24 surviving Nazi leaders on trial for crimes against humanity, crimes against the peace, and war crimes. The trials were held in the southern German town of Nuremberg.

At the **Nuremberg trials**, the defendants included Hitler's most trusted party officials, government ministers, military leaders, and powerful industrialists. As the trial began, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson explained the significance of the event.

A PERSONAL VOICE ROBERT JACKSON

"The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored because it cannot survive their being repeated. . . . It is hard now to perceive in these miserable men . . . the power by which as Nazi leaders they once dominated much of the world and terrified most of it. Merely as individuals, their fate is of little consequence to the world. What makes this inquest significant is that these prisoners represent sinister influences that will lurk in the world long after their bodies have returned to dust. They are living symbols of racial hatreds, of terrorism and violence, and of the arrogance and cruelty of power. . . . Civilization can afford no compromise with the social forces which would gain renewed strength if we deal ambiguously or indecisively with the men in whom those forces now precariously survive."

—quoted in opening address to the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

E What decisions did Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin make at the Yalta Conference?

War Criminals on Trial, 1945–1949



Each defendant at the Nuremberg trials was accused of one or more of the following crimes:

- **Crimes Against the Peace**—planning and waging an aggressive war
- **War Crimes**—acts against the customs of warfare, such as the killing of hostages and prisoners, the plundering of private property, and the destruction of towns and cities
- **Crimes Against Humanity**—the murder, extermination, deportation, or enslavement of civilians

In the end, 12 of the 24 defendants were sentenced to death, and most of the remaining were sent to prison. In later trials of lesser leaders, nearly 200 more Nazis were found guilty of war crimes. Still, many people have argued that the trials did not go far enough in seeking out and punishing war criminals. Many Nazis who took part in the Holocaust did indeed go free.

Yet no matter how imperfect the trials might have been, they did establish an important principle—the idea that individuals are responsible for their own actions, even in times of war. Nazi executioners could not escape punishment by claiming that they were merely “following orders.” The principle of individual responsibility was now firmly entrenched in international law.

THE OCCUPATION OF JAPAN Japan was occupied by U.S. forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. In the early years of the occupation, more than 1,100 Japanese, from former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo to lowly prison guards, were arrested and put on trial. Seven, including Tojo, were sentenced to death. In the Philippines, in China, and in other Asian battlegrounds, additional Japanese officials were tried for atrocities against civilians or prisoners of war.

During the seven-year American occupation, MacArthur reshaped Japan's economy by introducing free-market practices that led to a remarkable economic recovery. MacArthur also worked to transform Japan's government. He called for a new constitution that would provide for woman suffrage and guarantee basic freedoms. In the United States, Americans followed these changes with interest. The *New York Times* reported that “General MacArthur . . . has swept away an autocratic regime by a warrior god and installed in its place a democratic government presided over by a very human emperor and based on the will of the people as expressed in free elections.” The Japanese apparently agreed. To this day, their constitution is known as the MacArthur Constitution.

“I was only following orders.”

DEFENDANTS AT THE NUREMBERG TRIALS

SECTION 3

ASSESSMENT

1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

•Douglas MacArthur
•Chester Nimitz

•Battle of Midway
•kamikaze

•J. Robert Oppenheimer
•Hiroshima

•Nagasaki
•Nuremberg trials

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

Using a chart such as the one below, describe the significance of key military actions in the Pacific during World War II.

Military Action	Significance
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Which military action was a turning point for the Allies?

CRITICAL THINKING

3. DEVELOPING HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

At the trials, many Nazis defended themselves by saying they were only following orders. What does this rationale tell you about the German military? Why was it important to negate this justification?

4. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Explain how the United States was able to defeat the Japanese in the Pacific.

5. EVALUATING DECISIONS

Is it legitimate to hold people accountable for crimes committed during wartime? Why or why not?

Think About:

- the laws that govern society
- the likelihood of conducting a fair trial
- the behavior of soldiers, politicians, and civilians during war