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"The Decision to Use the Bomb" (February 1947) By Henry Lewis Stimson ...

The possible atomic weapon was considered to be a new and tremendously powerful explosive, as legitimate as any other of the deadly explosive weapons of modern war. The entire purpose was the production of a military weapon; on no other ground could the wartime expenditure of so much time and money have been justified. ...

[The article continues by quoting a memorandum of July 1945 from Secretary Stimson to President Truman] ...

"b. think she (Japan) has within her enough liberal leaders (although now submerged by the terrorists) to be depended upon for her reconstruction as a responsible member of the family of nations. ... On the other hand, I think that the attempt to exterminate her armies and her population by gunfire or other means will tend to produce a fusion of race solidity and antipathy which has no analogy in the case of Germany. ... It is therefore my conclusion that a carefully timed warning be given to Japan ..."

On July 28 the Premier of Japan, Suzuki, rejected the Potsdam ultimatum by announcing that it was "unworthy of public notice." In the face of this rejection we could only proceed to demonstrate that the ultimatum had meant exactly what it said ... Had the war continued until the projected invasion on November 1, additional fire raids of B-20's would have been more destructive of life and property than the very limited number of atomic raids which we could have executed in the same period. But the atomic bomb was more than a weapon of terrible destruction; it was a psychological weapon. ... The bomb thus served exactly the purpose we intended. The peace party was able to take the path of surrender, and the whole weight of the Emperor's prestige was exerted in favor of peace. When the Emperor ordered surrender, and the small but dangerous group of fanatics who opposed him were brought under control, the Japanese became so subdued that the great undertaking of occupation and disarmament was completed with unprecedented ease. ...

### **Questions:**

- 1. What reason does Stimson use to justify the use of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?**
- 2. If you were a podcaster with the opportunity to interview Stimson and ask him three questions regarding the decision to drop the bombs, what would those questions be?**

3. Stimson refers to Japan's wartime military leaders as "terrorists." What do you think his reasoning was to use this label to describe these men? Do you think this label is appropriate?

4. How does this document present the role of the Japanese Emperor? Why do you think Stimson brought attention to the Emperor's role?