Several Quotations Concerning The Use Of The Atomic Bomb

The most carefully guarded secret of World War II was unknown to Harry S Truman when he became President. Roosevelt had never told Truman that a team of British and

American scientists were developing a device of tremendous destructive potential- the atomic bomb. Within a matter of weeks, Truman would be faced with the lonely- responsibility of deciding if, when, and where the atomic bomb would be dropped.

History books tell us the Harry Truman made the decision to drop the atomic bomb, but they do not tell us whether his decision was right or wrong. Was the dropping of an atomic bomb upon the city of Hiroshima justified? Did President Truman make the right decision? As you read the arguments for and against the dropping of the bomb, try to decide what *you* would have done.

**HARRY S TRUMAN, President of the United States:**

The final decision of where and when to use to atomic bomb was up to me. Let there be no mistakes about it. I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used. The top military advisors to the President recommended its use, and when I talked to Churchill he unhesitatingly told me that he favored the use of the atomic bomb if it might aid to the end of the war….

**FLETCHER KNEBEL and CHARLES W. BAILEY, Journalists:**

Nowhere in the Manhattan paper is there any indication that President Truman ever made an affirmative decision to drop the bomb. Rather, he seems to have proceeded on the assumption that the bomb would be dropped when ready. The papers tend to confirm a recent statement by Groves that Truman “was like a little boy on a toboggan” who never had an opportunity to say yes. All he could have said, Grover argued, was no. The word the President never uttered….

**HENRY L. STIMSON, Secretary of War:**

My chief purpose was to end the war in victory with the least possible cost in the lives of the men in the armies which I had helped raise. In the light of the alternatives which, on a fair estimate, were open to us I believe that no man, in our position and subject to our responsibilities, holding in his hands a weapon of such possibilities for accomplishing this purpose and saving those lives, could have failed to use it and afterwards looked his countrymen in the face…

**ADMIRAL WILLIAM D. LEAHY, Advisor to President Truman:**

It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was no material assistance in out war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons…“Bomb” is the wrong word to use for his new weapon. It is not a bomb. It is not an explosive. It is a poisonous thing that kills people by its deadly radioactive reaction, more than by the explosive force it develops. My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Age…

**DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe:**

General Eisenhower expressed the hope that we would never have to use such a weapon against a enemy because he disliked seeing the United States “initiate the use” of anything so horrible and destructive…

**WINSTON CHURCHILL, Prime Minister of Great Britain:**

There never was a moment’s discussion (at Potsdam) as to whether the atomic bomb should be used or not. The historic fact remains, and must be judged in the after time, that the decision to use the atomic bomb to compel the surrender of Japan was never an issue…There was the unanimous, automatic, unquestioned agreement around our table; nor did I ever hear the slightest suggestion that we should do otherwise…

**LESLIE R. GROVES, General in charge of the Manhattan Project:**

…In my opinion, his (Truman’s) resolve to continue with the original plan will always stand as an act of unsurpassed courage and wisdom – courage because, for the first time in the history of the United States, the President personally determined the course of a major military strategical and tactical operation for which he could be considered directly responsible; and wisdom because history, if any thought is given to the value of American lives, has conclusively proven that his decision was correct….

**GENERAL CARL SPAATZ, Commander of the Strategic Air Forces:**

The dropping of the bomb was done by military men under military orders. We’re supposed to carry out orders and not question them…

**GENERAL CURTIS LeMAY, Commander of the 20th Air Force:**

I think President Truman made the proper decision because I firmly believe that is saved lives in the long run by doing it and shortened the war and that was what we were after at the time…