

## Week 2 - Building the Bomb - Video

- Atomic Energy for Military Purposes Book
  - Released 3 days after the bombing of Nagasaki
    - NOTE*: War was not yet over
  - Written during the Manhattan project
  - Translated to Russian and people were able to know about atomic bombs outside of their govt.
  - Groves (Major General, USA) in foreword:
    - This book contains everything we can say about the bomb
    - If you say anything else not in this book, then you will be punished by Espionage Act
    - Reason for releasing: If you give them something, then they won't go looking on their own accord
  - Mainly about theoretical physics since Smyth was a theoretical physicist
    - Missing chemistry, engineering, and other types of work
    - It's the least sensitive stuff about the bomb, and everyone mainly understood the ideas prior to the war

## 2. Timeline

phase	goal	methods	primary output
exploratory	to see if a nuclear weapon program is feasible	small-scale experiments and theoretical studies	reports
pilot	to evaluate the feasibility of manufacturing methods	building medium-scale facilities	reports, plans, tacit knowledge, test samples
production	making actual nuclear weapons	building large-scale facilities, designing bombs, preparing for use	fissile material, atomic bomb

  

country	exploratory	pilot	production
United States	1939	1941	1942
Germany	1939	1942 (reactor only)	x
UK	1940	x	x
USSR	1940	x	x
Japan	1941	x	x

- You need a production program to get an atomic bomb
  - "Why did the United States make an atomic bomb?"
    - No one else made one
- State of knowledge in 1939
    - U-238 (99%) and U-235 (<1%)
    - Only U-235 fissions from fast and slow neutron energies
      - U-235 is thus fissile (can sustain fission chain reactions in sufficient quantities)
    - U-238 will absorb slow neutrons without fissioning
      - Kills chain reaction
    - Both isotopes are chemically identical - can only be separated physically, but differ by only 3 neutrons
    - If you could separate U-235, you can make a bomb. But can you? If you can't, what are the options?
    - But nuclear reactors are very possible
      - Some confusion between a reactor and a bomb (out of control reactor)
  - Einstein-Szilard Letter, 1939
    - Written by Szilard but signed by Einstein for importance

- Unsure about many characteristics of the bomb (ie. power, size, weight)
    - Undersold
    - Better to undersell than to oversell
  - This is a policy letter
    - Appoint a guy to keep an eye on the situation
  - FDR did not read this, he got a summary
    - Said: “make sure the Germans can’t blow us up”
  - Asks to make a committee
5. Uranium Committee
- Roosevelt created it in 1939
  - Used to coordinate the fission research with universities
  - Figure out if a bomb is worth worrying about
  - Gets absorbed in to the National Defense Research Committee
  - Office of science and research and development was eventually made as well
    - Was used to develop physical things (ie. camo stuff being put on planes from MIT)
6. James Conant, President of Harvard
- Thought the innovation would take a long time
  - With other things to do (ie. camo), he doesn’t want the scientists to waste their time on the bomb
    - Doesn’t think it’ll work
7. Atomic Piles
- Bomb
    - Produces **exponential** chain reaction
    - Uses **fast** neutron reactions
    - Require **enriched** fuel (80-90% fissile material)
  - Reactor
    - Produces **stable** chain reaction
    - Uses **slow** neutron reactions
    - Uses **unenriched** or **lightly-enriched** fuel and a **moderator** to slow neutrons
  - When U-238 absorbs a neutron, it will (in several days) turn into plutonium-239 (relatively stable) which is **fissile**
    - Could use it as bomb fuel
    - Figured it out at 1941 and paved new path for the bomb
8. Other Programs
- Germans thought the bomb wasn’t necessary for this war, for the next war
    - **Why did the United States decide to make the bomb?**
  - Japan kept program small and thought the US couldn’t make an atomic bomb in time for the war
  - France was invaded by Germany by 1940 :(
  - USSR didn’t have too many sources, so they just accumulated info for post war
9. United Kingdom
- Physicist were figuring out how much material would be needed for the atomic bomb
    - only 5 kg of U-235 was necessary
10. United Kingdom/USA
- UK committee (MAUD) goes to USA and says the bombs feasible but you need to do it because of resources
  - US cleans house on the Uranium Committee and changes name to S-1 Committee
  - It is then estimated at \$400 million cost (5x under)
  - It’s actually much harder than expected, Germany, Japan, and USA were on the right path of saying it’s too hard but the UK are dead-afraid and push the USA to think it’s doable
    - The US has too much money already spent that they keep going
  - FDR approves ARMY taking control over construction job with goal of **making an atomic bomb = Manhattan Project**
11. The Manhattan Project
- Manhattan Engineer District, 1945
    - Spans the entire country

- Name: the OG headquarters was in Manhattan
    - Location: because all the manufacturing places and some education institutions were along this Northeast Corridor
  - “I told you it couldn’t be done without turning the whole country into a factory. You have done just that.” -Niels Bohr, 1944
  - Work conditions were poor so turnover rate was often 60%+
  - Had nearly 125,000 workers in June 1944 with gradual decrease with total workers begin 600,000+
    - Most workers were laborers for making factories
  - More women working on this than the Apollo project
    - Couldn’t afford to count people out on the project because of prejudice
  - Idea was to work now and worry about environmental/safety aspects later
  - Had sites all across the globe
12. Manhattan Project Heads
- General Leslie R. Groves - Military Head of the Manhattan Project
    - Vital to the success of the Manhattan Project
  - J. Robert Oppenheimer - Scientific director of project
    - Theoretical physicist from Berkeley
    - Unlikely choice: hasn’t really led a big project
    - Chosen by Groves because he felt Oppenheimer had something to prove and that he was well liked in the science community to get people behind Groves’ choices
13. Metallurgical Laboratory
- University of Chicago
    - First reactor (CP-1) goes critical in December 1942
14. Radiation Laboratory, Berkeley
- UC Berkeley: Develops particle accelerators, basic theory, isotope separation methods (uranium enrichment)
15. Site Y: Los Alamos
- Meant for research and bomb design
  - Other sites had security issues because of the open access at universities and the attention they drew
  - All work that definitely had to do with the bomb was kept here for security reasons
  - Most reliable scientists were kept here
16. Site X: Oak Ridge
- Meant for uranium enrichment
  - 3 major plants
17. Site W: Hanford
- Built industrial-sized plutonium reactors to make neutrons to make plutonium (though not a lot of it)
    - Total of 3
  - Scaled up version of the Chicago reactor
18. Ways to Separate U-238 from U-235
- None of these were really the best, instead they were chained together so one method would feed into another
  - a) Thermal Diffusion Method (S-50)
    - Fluid uranium circulates, U-235 tends to concentrate toward top since lighter
    - **EX: given natural uranium, enriched it to 0.86% U-235 and pass into K-25**
  - b) Gaseous Diffusion Through Barriers (K-25)
    - Passing gaseous uranium through a mesh barrier
    - The lighter U-235 tended to pass through
    - **EX: given uranium from S-50, you get 23% U-235**
  - c) Centrifugal (*ABANDONED IN WW2*)
    - Spin gasified uranium rapidly and U-235 tend toward the center
  - d) Electro-Magnetic (Y-12)
    - Get uranium ions and shoot them through magnet as a stream, then the stream gets split

with the U-235 being more deflected than U-238

- **EX: given uranium from K-25, you get 84% U-235**

19. Uranium Ore

- Uranium ore was a major supply issue for project
- 73% of ore came from Belgian Congo (75% U/g)
- 9% from Canada (30% U/g)
- 14% from Colorado Plateau (0.25% U/g)
- Groves works to secure all known world uranium and thorium supplies by contracts

20. Cost of the Bomb

- \$2 billion (1945) = \$50-180 billion (2019)
- 63% of the cost was for Oak Ridge (uranium enrichment)
  - 27% K-25
  - 35% Y-12
- 21% on Hanford
- 4% on Los Alamos
- Fissile material production costs greatly exceed research costs
  - Making the fuel is the hardest cost