Response Week 3

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HST 415 / Alex Wellerstein

Something that popped into my mind during the lecture was the extent that Truman was involved in the dropping in the Bomb and why so many people attribute it to him instead of L. Groves. It seems that Truman was all for dropping the bomb but did not order the dropping itself. What are nucleonics?

The meeting minutes for the dropping the bombs was very detailed. The scientists put a lot of thought into what the weather would be like to each of the targets and the back up targets as well. They even included a section on the psychological impact of the bomb and how bombing those targets would affect the Japanese government. The goal clearly was here to use the bombs as an end all to the war. The scientists were used to maximize the damage of these bombs to houses and industry targets. After listening to the lectures, it was clear that the Japanese did not take the Atomic bombs into consideration in their surrender. The biggest problem for them was the Soviet forces invading from the other side.

The Szilard petition and the Franck report bring into question the use of the bomb and if it should be used at all. I find it strange that such a petition even existed. Even then this had no effect on the outcome of Japan being bombed. All the scientists are concerned to some degree about the bomb. This is reflected in the Franck report and Szilard especially, but in previous readings such as the meeting minutes for the targets. There is a lot of care and precision for where these bombs are placed.

As a scientist in 1945 I feel like my sentiment would be to prevent my own country to be bombed and would work very hard to create the atomic bomb to counterattack. But as soon as we realized that Germany would not bomb us, I would try to stop the use of the bomb. The points the scientists raise during this time are very accurate. The technology for the bomb is already well known across the world for other nations to catch up would be a matter of years. So the only other option would be good diplomacy and reinforcement of peaceful treaties. If everyone has this technology the only way, we could stop mutual destruction is the promise that we will never use it. Which is a terrible argument.

Lastly, the article by Professor Wellerstein is very intriguing. I like the way it is written a lot. My only issue is that it uses many big words which scare me. First, he starts by giving the opinion of others and what historians themselves have thought about and dissected Truman’s response to dropping the bomb. He does not discredit them, but simply brings those arguments to the table. Then he introduces new facts and points about how Truman behaved in his diary entries versus Stimson’s diary entries. One can see that Truman had a strong misconception about Hiroshima. Wellerstein never actually says that Truman had a misconception about himself when introducing these facts, letting the reader draw the conclusions. Then he goes on to bring the reader into other aspects of the political situation in 1945. Allowing the readers to see that Truman wasn’t really in control of the situation since he did not see the full extent of the atomic bomb until it was dropped. This was a fun read with a good flow.