

In July, British, American and Soviet leaders gathered in Potsdam (a suburb of Berlin). There they announced the **Potsdam Declaration**, which stated the terms for ending the war with Japan, on behalf of the U.S., Great Britain and China.

The Atomic Bombing of Japan and the Soviet Invasion

Beginning in June, following the occupation of Okinawa, the top-ranking officials of the Japanese government met several times to discuss ending the war. The government (not realizing that the U.S.S.R. had secretly agreed to participate in the war against Japan) asked the Soviet Union to serve as intermediary between Japan and the U.S. in negotiating an end to the war.

When the Potsdam Declaration was issued, Prime Minister Suzuki Kantaro and his chief cabinet ministers noticed that it was a request for conditional surrender, and were inclined to accept it. But Army officials insisted on fighting a decisive battle in Japan proper. The government decided to wait until a response from the Soviet Union was forthcoming. On August 6, the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb in history on Hiroshima, convincing the Japanese government that it had no choice but to bring the war to an end as quickly as possible. On August 8, the U.S.S.R. violated the Japan-Soviet neutrality pact by declaring war on Japan. The following day, August 9, marked the Soviet invasion of Manchuria and the dropping of a second U.S. atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

Emperor Showa's Decision

Late at night on August 9, government officials held a meeting in the presence of Emperor Showa to discuss whether to accept the Potsdam Declaration. The opinions of those assembled were evenly divided on this question. At 2:00 a.m. on August 10, Prime Minister Suzuki approached the Emperor and requested an imperial decision. Emperor Showa told them to tell the Allies, immediately, that Japan would surrender in accordance with the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. At noon on August 15, the people of Japan heard the Emperor's voice on a radio broadcast informing them that the long war was over and Japan had been defeated. It was Japan's first defeat since the Meiji era.

Japan's surrender marked the conclusion of World War II. Casualties from the conflict have been estimated at 22 million killed and 34 million wounded.

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American Diplomats Who Saved Japan from Annihilation

Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew

U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt wanted the Japanese to submit to an unconditional surrender. No responsible government could agree to a demand for unconditional surrender. Hostilities would have continued until all of Japan had been destroyed.