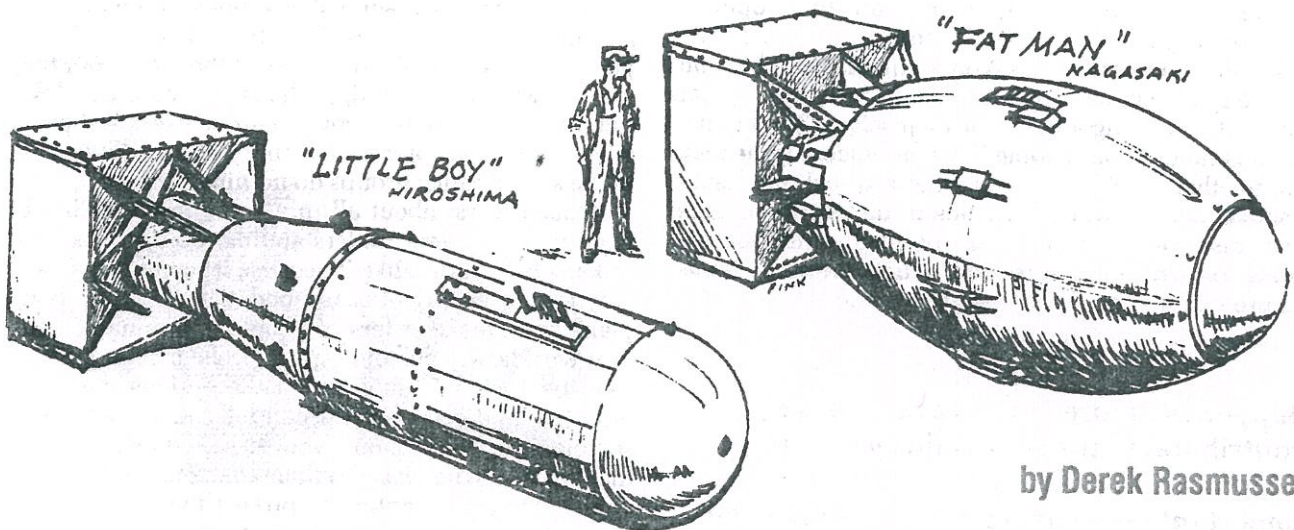


3 myths about the arms race



by Derek Rasmussen

If you're like me you were probably taught a few basic "facts" about nuclear weapons while you were growing up. Somebody probably taught you that the atom bombs the United States dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki shortened World War II. In history class somebody probably said that nuclear weapons have only been used twice. Later somebody probably said that the main reason for the United States having nuclear weapons is to deter the Soviet Union.

Everything they told you was a lie.

Myth #1

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The American atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not shorten WWII, it lengthened it; it didn't save Allied lives, it cost Japanese and Allied lives.

Dr. Martin J. Sherwin is the only American historian to have read through all the top-secret documents relating to the Manhattan Project and the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His research took eight years and from it he published a book, *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*.

In a telephone interview with Dr. Sherwin last year, he gave me the following chronology of the last few months of WWII.

May 1945:

The U.S. demands the unconditional surrender of Japan. The former ambassador to Japan ("A man who knew more about Japan than any other American in government," says Sherwin) and now acting Secretary of State, Joseph Grew, urges President Truman to modify the unconditional surrender demand.

The U.S. had cracked Japanese codes years before, and from the intercepted messages Grew and Truman knew the Japanese would never surrender without assurances that the institution of their Emperor would survive.

Truman refuses.

June 21:

U.S. wins battle for Okinawa, begins daily aerial bombing of Japan.

In his memoirs, Joseph Grew predicts that Japan may have surrendered on this day if the U.S. had modified their demands for an "unconditional surrender."

July 13:

In the clearest sign of the war, Japanese Foreign Minister Togo (in a cable intercepted by American Intelligence and delivered to President Truman) says, "Unconditional surrender is the only obstacle to peace..."

Truman ignores it.

August 6:

Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima. 80,000 die.

August 7:

The second bomb is supposed to be dropped August 11, giving the Japanese time to consider surrendering (note below: Japan's offer to surrender came August 10).

The timing decision, however, is left in the hands of Colonel Paul Tibbets at bomber command.

Tibbets says it is "too bad" that the date isn't two days earlier, because the weather will be nicer.

The date is moved up.

August 9:

Atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki. 74,000 die.

August 10:

Japanese government offers to surrender on the condition that the U.S. guarantees the continuation of the Emperor and his dynasty.

August 14:

The U.S. agrees to this conditional Japanese surrender — a surrender it could have accepted months before (Emperor Hirohito is still alive and ruling today).

Given that the Americans could have ended the Pacific War in July, if not May, of 1945, every Australian, New Zealander, British, Canadian and American soldier who died during that period (not to mention the Japanese) is the

responsibility of Truman's government and its blind determination not to end the war until it had tested atom bombs (one uranium and one plutonium) on civilian populations.

The atom bombs "also held out the possibility of a dividend," says Sherwin, "and that was the chance to give Moscow a little shock and shake them up a bit."

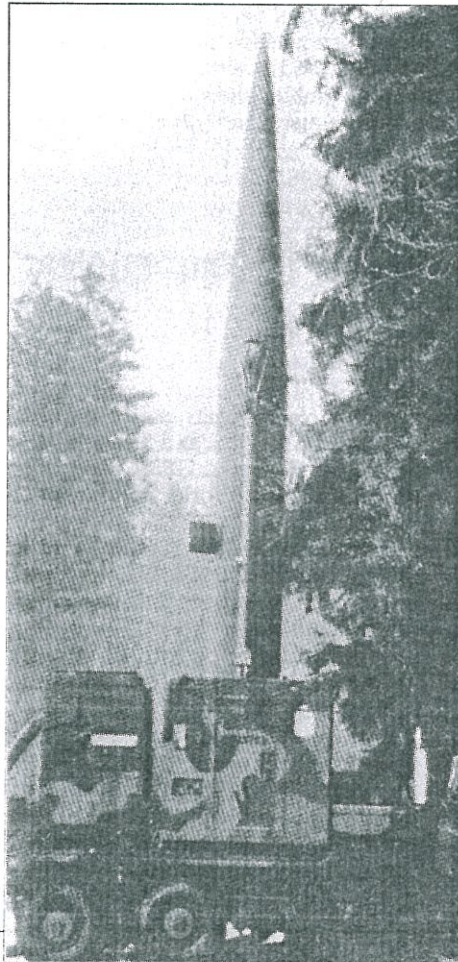
But WWII wasn't over yet. In what American scholar Noam Chomsky has described as a "final gratuitous act of barbarism," the United States launched a thousand plane raid against Japan August 14, four days after Japan had offered to give up, but technically, before the U.S. had accepted.

Seven cities were bombed.

One victim, Makoto Oda, described what happened in Osaka:

"In the afternoon of August 14, 1945, thousands of people died during a protracted and intensive aerial bombardment of an arsenal in Osaka. I was a witness to the tragedy...After what seemed an eternity of terror and anguish, we who were fortunate enough to survive emerged from our shelters. We found the corpses — and the leaflets which American bombers had dropped over the destruction. The leaflets proclaimed in Japanese, "Your Government has surrendered. The war is over!" (from: *Journal of Social and Political Ideas in Japan*, August 1966).

Even American Secretary of War Stimson was "appalled that there had been no protest over the air strikes we were conducting against Japan which led to such extraordinarily heavy losses in life." He felt that "there was something wrong with a country where no one questioned that."



Pershing 1