Preparations for the test explosion at Alamogordo in New Mexico

had been almost completed by the time I left for Potsdam, and on the
voyage over I had been anxiously awaiting word of the results. I had
heard the scientific predictions, but there was no real assurance
what would happen at this full-scale atomic explosion. On the day
after I arrived at Potsdam, July 16, a top priority message from
Secretary Stimson informed me that at dawn that day the bomb had been
successfully exploded. The test had met the expectations of the
scientists as to explosive force. We have now harnessed the basic
power of the universe. The atom bomb had become a reality.

With this we were in possession of a new revolutionary weapon of
catastrophic destructive force, and we were in a position to deliver it
against the enemy, if I would have to make the decision, and in a matter
of days I would have to issue the order for its use.

The idea of developing an atomic bomb was first suggested to Dr. Oppenheimer
by Dr. Albert Einstein. The development of the atomic bomb was a vast undertaking.

It was an achievement of the combined efforts of science, industry, labor
and the military. It has no parallel in history. A vast number of extremely high pressure, of
materials, over 2½ years and more than two billion dollars, in money.

Only a very small portion of the thousands of men working in these

plants knew what they were producing. This strict was the secrecy imposed that not even the scientific community, even those at Los Alamos, had the slightest idea of what was going on. Before 1939 it was generally agreed among scientists that it was theoretically possible to release atomic energy. But there was no known practical way of doing it.

Sometime in 1942 we learned that the Germans were at work on a method to harness atomic energy into a weapon of war. This was to be added to the V-I and V-II rockets with which they hoped to conquer the world. We can thank Providence that they failed. This was properly described as the battle of the laboratories. In 1940, before the war, we began to pool with Great Britain all scientific knowledge useful to war. From the pooling of science came many priceless helps to our victories.

It was under this general policy between our two nations that research on the atomic bomb began. American and British scientists joined the discovery race against the Germans, and the United States could provide the tremendous industrial and economic resources required for the project—without injury to our war production program.
Our plants were far removed from the reach of enemy bombing. Britain, on the other hand, was constantly exposed to enemy bombing - a constant threat of possible invasion. This is why Roosevelt and Churchill decided that it was best to concentrate all work on the development of the project in the United States.

Late in April Stimson had reported to me that the project had progressed to a point where the completion of the bomb could be expected within four months. He proposed and I approved the setting up of a committee of top men for the purpose of giving special considerations to the questions raised by the imminent atomic weapon. This Interim Committee was made up of the following members:

Secretary Stimson, Chairman;

George L. Harrison, president of the New York Life Insurance Company, and special assistant to Stimson;

James F. Byrnes, as personal representative of the President;

Ralph A. Bard, Undersecretary of the Navy;
William L. Clayton, Assistant Secretary of State;
Dr. Vannevar Bush, president of the Carnegie Institution in Washington
and Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development;
Dr. Karl T. Compton, president of the Massachusetts Institute of
Technology and Chief of the Office of Field Service in the Office of
Scientific Research and Development;
and Dr. James B. Conant, president of Harvard University and
Chairman of the National Defense Research Committee.

The committee was assisted in this work by a group of
scientists which included Dr. Arthur H. Compton, Dr. Enrico Fermi,
Dr. E. O. Lawrence and Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer.

On June 1 the Interim Committee made its report on whether
the bomb should be used against Japan. The report recommended that not
only should the bomb be used but that it be used without specific warning,
as soon as possible, and against a target that would clearly show its
devastating strength.

I also received this report from the panel of scientists, as
advisers and the Interim Committee;

"We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring
an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use."
In bringing these recommendations to me, Stimson said he was in agreement with them. His opinion was that there would be no surrender from the Japanese Emperor and his military advisers unless we could deliver a tremendous shock. He said that an atom bomb attack would do this, and save many more times the lives it would cost, for the Japanese as well as for our forces.

My military advisers were all agreed on using the bomb. At Potsdam I went over the matter again with Stimson, Byrnes, Forrestal and with Marshall and the Chiefs of Staff. I also talked with Churchill, who unhesitatingly favored the use of the bomb as the means of bringing a swift end to Japanese resistance.

My final decision to use the bomb as commander in chief of the American armed forces. It was a military decision, and I regarded the bomb as a military weapon. Stimson and others saw the bomb as a psychological weapon. Its use would doubtless have a psychological impact on the Japanese, but whatever effect it might have on the Japanese high command the bomb, to me, was still a military weapon, to be used in a military manner for the purpose of getting a military surrender.

I was not convinced that saturation bombing of cities during the war,
At Potsdam the atom bomb was kept a close secret. Churchill, of course, knew about it. At the July 24 session I mentioned to Stalin that we now had a new powerful weapon, of unusual destructive force. Stalin evinced no unusual interest, and seemed quite unaware of the significance of the news. All he said was that he was glad to hear we had a new