

A UNIT I:
A FIGHT TO
THE FINISH
BBS 3-22

The Crossroads: The End of World War II, The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War

This exhibit contains graphic photographs of the horrors of war.
Parental discretion is advised.

[*Editor's Note:* The following is the verbatim text of the original Smithsonian script including a few parenthetical indications of material that was to come. This reproduction omits all photographs and their captions, but retains an illustration, a chart and a few facsimiles of documents from the planned exhibition.]

"TODAY IS V-E DAY"

May 8, 1945, was "Victory in Europe Day." Allied soldiers, sailors and airmen had brought the European War to a close by forcing complete and unconditional surrender on the Nazi Reich. They had won total victory in a just cause.

For one moment the Allies could celebrate—the war was not over. In the Pacific, the battle with Japan was becoming increasingly bitter. Allied losses continued to mount. It seemed quite possible that the fighting could go on into 1946. Unbeknownst to all but a small number of decision-makers and scientists, however, the Western Allies were preparing a revolutionary new weapon: the atomic bomb. To this day, controversy has raged about whether dropping this weapon on Japan was necessary to end the war quickly. But one thing is clear. The Pacific War would end in a way that few could anticipate on V-E Day.

UNIT 1: A FIGHT TO THE FINISH

In 1931 the Japanese Army occupied Manchuria; six years later it invaded the rest of China. From 1937 to 1945, the Japanese Empire would be constantly at war.

Japanese expansionism was marked by naked aggression and extreme brutality. The slaughter of tens of thousands of Chinese in Nanking in 1937 shocked the world. Atrocities by Japanese troops included brutal mistreatment of civilians, forced laborers and prisoners of war, and biological experiments on human victims.

In December 1941, Japan attacked U.S. bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and launched other surprise assaults against Allied territories in the Pacific. Thus began a wider conflict marked by extreme bitterness. For most Americans, this war was fundamentally different than the one waged against Germany and Italy—it was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism. As the war approached its end in 1945, it appeared to both sides that it was a fight to the finish.

Combat in the Pacific—1945

As the Pacific War entered its final climactic stage during the first half of 1945, the fighting reached unprecedented levels of ferocity and destructiveness. Fearing that unconditional surrender would mean the annihilation of their culture, Japanese forces fought on tenaciously.

To many on the Allied side, the suicidal resistance of the Japanese military justified the harshest possible measures. The appalling casualties suffered by both sides seemed to foreshadow what could be expected during an invasion of Japan. Allied victory was assured, but its final cost in lives remained disturbingly uncertain.

THE STRATEGIC SITUATION, SPRING 1945

By the time of the German surrender, the Allies had reversed Japan's dramatic 1941-42 sweep into the Pacific and southeast Asia. U.S. forces advancing through the southwest Pacific had reconquered most of the Philippine Islands. The U.S. Pacific Fleet had destroyed the bulk of Japan's navy, had blockaded the Japanese home islands with submarines and had either cut off or captured most of Japan's southern and central Pacific island outposts. British forces had advanced into Burma.

Although disorganized resistance continued in the Philippines and Japanese armies remained intact in Southeast Asia, China, and Manchuria, the Allies began to execute their strategy for the final destruction of the Japanese Empire. The cost proved shockingly high, however, as Japanese forces used suicidal tactics in the air and on the ground to defend islands close to their homeland.

NO HOLDS BARRED—IWO JIMA AND OKINAWA

American war plans for the first half of 1945 centered on landings on the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, combined with an aerial bombing campaign against Japanese cities. Planners selected Iwo Jima to provide an emergency airfield for B-29s

returning from raids on Japan. They expected massive U.S. firepower to annihilate the enemy garrison there in a matter of days. Okinawa, only 640 kilometers (400 miles) from the southern tip of Japan, was expected to provide a base for assaults on the Japanese home islands.

Instead of proving easy operations against an enemy on the verge of collapse, Iwo Jima and Okinawa became costly battles of attrition taking weeks longer than hoped. By the end of the fighting on the two islands, total U.S. casualties for the first half of 1945 had exceeded those suffered during the previous three years of the Pacific war. To those in combat, Iwo Jima and Okinawa were a terrible warning of what could be expected in the future.

"...a passionate hatred for the Japanese burned through all Marines...My experiences...made me believe that the Japanese had mutual feeling for us...This collective attitude, Marine and Japanese, resulted in savage, ferocious fighting with no holds barred...This was a brutish, primitive hatred, as characteristic of the horror of war in the Pacific as the palm trees and the islands."

Private First Class Eugene B. Sledge, 1st Marine Division, in "With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa"

IWO JIMA: A SLICE OF HELL

On Iwo Jima, the Japanese garrison controlled the island's high ground. They had constructed an interlaced network of underground fortifications in the side of Mt. Suribachi, a dormant volcano dominating the 29 square kilometer (11 square mile) island. Instead of leaving cover to attack the landing force on the beaches, the Japanese defenders remained in their dugouts and poured a deadly rain of fire on the U.S. Marines.

Rather than a few days, wresting control of the island from the dug-in defenders took nearly five weeks of bitter fighting that cost the Marine Corps over 6,800 dead and almost 20,000 wounded. Japanese losses were also horrendous. When fighting on Iwo Jima ended on March 26, only 200 of the Japanese garrison of 20,700 remained alive as prisoners.

OKINAWA: A BATTLE OF UNPRECEDENTED FEROCITY

As the first waves of the American assault force landed on April 1, 1945, Okinawa's Japanese defenders put up little resistance. Instead of engaging in a hopeless attempt to repel U.S. forces on the beaches, the Japanese 32nd Army largely abandoned the northern portion of the island. It withdrew to fortifications and caves in the hilly terrain near the ancient strongpoint of Shuri Castle to the south. Such positions offered excellent fields of fire, allowing the Japanese defenders to exact a heavy toll for every piece of territory surrendered.

As the soldiers and Marines of the U.S. Tenth Army struggled to root out the island's 83,150 defenders from their underground shelters, American artillery and bombs transformed the island into a devastated wasteland of craters and corpses. In spite of vast American material superiority, Japanese resistance was not finally crushed until the end of June, at a cost of over 12,500 U.S. dead and 35,500 wounded.

WAR WITHOUT MERCY

"The Japs had to be killed anyway because of how they fought; there was no other way. But what made you want to do it was your friends. When you saw their corpses day after day, your hatred—oh God, hatred—built day after day. By June, I had no mercy for a single Jap who was trying to surrender."

Evan Regal, a U.S. Marine Corps flamethrower operator on Okinawa, 1945

By the third week of June, Okinawa's remaining defenders had withdrawn to the island's southernmost tip with no hope of evacuation. Surrender, even for those inclined to do so, proved extremely difficult. Americans were reluctant to take prisoners and Japanese officers and NCOs often shot those attempting to give up. Over 10,000 surrendered nonetheless, the largest number to do so during the war. But most chose suicide or battle to the death. In the end, the Japanese Army lost over 70,000 men.

Thousands of Okinawan refugees, their homes and villages

destroyed, also found themselves trapped by the fighting. Caught in crossfire, at least 80,000 civilians perished.

COMBAT FATIGUE

The protracted fighting on Iwo Jima and Okinawa and high U.S. casualties caused severe combat fatigue for many U.S. soldiers and marines. As the fighting on the islands dragged on far longer than initially expected, lack of opportunity for rotation out of the combat zone began to undercut the morale of some troops. Many believed that after eighteen months in the war zone they deserved to be shipped home. Instead, planners selected their units for the invasion of Japan, offering only the prospect of more bitter fighting to the survivors of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

"Okinawa was a killing field. In the 82 days of battle for that island, an average of 2,500 people died every day. Under those conditions, with death everywhere, I seemed to have gone into a sort of trance. It was as if I had left my body and was looking at myself in a movie. I just did not feel anything."

Peter Milo, American soldier on Okinawa, 1945

PREPARATIONS FOR THE INVASION OF JAPAN

As the Okinawa battle reached its bloody climax during June, the United States began to gather the forces required to execute the largest amphibious operation in history. U.S. Planners believed that the assault would be met with formidable opposition, including suicide attacks by aircraft, midget submarines, piloted torpedoes, motor boats, and even explosives-laden swimmers. To those responsible for planning and executing the invasion of Japan, the potential for appalling casualties was clear.

THE KAMIKAZE

"Even if we are defeated, the noble spirit of this *kamikaze* attack corps will keep our homeland from ruin. Without this spirit, ruin would certainly follow defeat."

Vice-Admiral Tokujiro Ohnishi, sponsor of the kamikaze corps, 1945

During October 1944 Japanese Navy and Army pilots began a desperate campaign of suicide crash dives against Allied ships. Called *kamikaze* or "divine wind," the attacks took their name from a typhoon that destroyed a 13th century Mongol invasion fleet before it could reach Japan.

Vice Admiral Takijiro Ohnishi, who orchestrated the formation of the *kamikaze* corps, hoped that the suicide attacks would enable Japan to overcome the material superiority of the Allies or at least salvage a spiritual victory for Japan. The *kamikaze* campaign proved enormously costly to the Allies, particularly in the invasion fleet off Okinawa, but failed to reverse Japan's decline toward defeat.

THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI

"Without regard for life or name, a samurai will defend his homeland."

From a letter by kamikaze pilot Teruo Yamaguchi, 1945

Proponents of suicide attacks appealed to pilots' patriotism and to their belief that death in battle would insure their after-life as spirit-guardians of Japan. *Kamikaze* pilots who endorsed such sentiments often considered themselves the embodiment of the samurai values of self-sacrifice and devotion to the Emperor. To demonstrate their commitment, many wore samurai-style *hachimaki* (headbands) and swords during their final flights.

THE RITUAL OF DEATH

"Please do not grieve for me, Mother. It will be glorious to die in action. I am grateful to be able to die in a battle to determine the destiny of our country."

From the last letter of kamikaze pilot Ichizo Hayashi, April 1945.

Ritual and mysticism accompanied *kamikaze* pilots' preparations for suicide attacks. Before climbing into their aircraft on the day of a mission, the flyers received a ceremonial toast of sake or water, which signified spiritual purification. As another symbol of purity, pilots often flew their final missions in clean uniforms or even burial robes.

For good luck, many wore *senninbari* (thousand stitch wrappers), a cloth belt for which a pilot's mother had solicited contributions of a single stitch each from women in her community. Others carried small dolls belonging to daughters or family photographs as charms to insure the success of their crash dives.

FLOATING CHRYSANTHEMUMS

The invasion of Okinawa for the first time placed a large part of the U.S. Pacific Fleet within range of aircraft attacking from bases in Japan. From April to June 1945 Imperial Navy and Army pilots flew over 1,800 individual suicide sorties as part of ten mass assaults of up to 400 aircraft against U.S. ships. Called Kikusui or "floating chrysanthemum" operations after the emblem of 14th-century samurai hero Masashige Kusunoki, these *kamikaze* attacks sank 28 ships and damaged 176.

The scale of the *kamikaze* operations off Okinawa expended pilots at an alarming rate. To make up these losses, replacement pilot training became severely abbreviated, causing the already poor quality of Japanese flyers to deteriorate further. Some reached their units barely able to take off and land. In spite of these problems, advocates of suicide operations hoped to meet Allied landings in Japan with over 5,000 *kamikaze* aircraft.

FIGHTING THE KAMIKAZE

While supporting the invasion of Okinawa, the U.S. Navy suffered its heaviest losses of the entire war, primarily from *kamikaze* attacks. Although the *kamikaze* campaign failed to drive the U.S. fleet away from the island, the mass suicide attacks proved a severe shock to the Allies. U.S. military and naval commanders, fearing the psychological effect of the *kamikaze*, ordered a news blackout on reports of the suicide attacks that lasted until the end of the Okinawa fighting. To the ships' crews, the experience seemed to confirm Japanese fanaticism and offer a grim foreboding of what they would endure in future operations.

"Jap planes and bombs were hitting all around us. Some of our

ships were being hit by suicide planes, bombs, and machine gun fire. It was a fight to the finish...How long will our luck hold out?"

Seaman First Class James J. Fahey, aboard the light cruiser Montpelier, 1945 (from "Pacific War Diary")

A PILOTED BOMB: THE YOKOSUKA MXY7 OHKA

Proponents of the *kamikaze* corps expected the *Ohka* (Cherry Blossom) piloted suicide bomb to prove even more destructive than conventional *kamikaze* airplanes. Conceived by Navy Lieutenant Ota during 1944, the *Ohka* was carried aloft by a mother plane and released up to 96 km (60 mi) away from its target. Solid-propellant rockets in the rear boosted the bomb's speed to over 800 kph (500 mph) during the final dive to the target, making it nearly impossible to shoot down with anti-aircraft fire. Its 1,200 kg (2,600 lb) warhead was sufficient to sink or severely damage any ship unlucky enough to be hit.

In practice, the *Ohka* proved far less formidable than hoped, leading U.S. sailors to nickname it the *Baka* (foolish) bomb. The lumbering mother planes, usually Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" bombers, were often shot down before flying close enough to the U.S. fleet to release their payloads. Over 750 *Ohka* Model 11s were produced, of which several hundred were used against the U.S. fleet off Okinawa. Only a handful of *Ohka* pilots succeeded in hitting ships and they sank only one.

THE NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM'S OHKA

The National Air and Space Museum's *Ohka* is a Model 22, the successor to the Model 11 used at Okinawa. Unlike the rocket-powered *Ohka* Model 11, the Model 22 was powered by an early type of jet engine, which was expected to double the bomb's range. Although it had only begun flight testing during early 1945, proponents of the *Ohka* Model 22 hoped to meet the expected Allied invasion fleet with hundreds of the new type. Nearly sixty had been produced before the end of the war terminated further development.

The wartime history of the National Air and Space Museum's *Ohka* remains obscure. The museum's *Ohka* was brought from Japan to the U.S. after its capture by the Navy, spending a short time at Alameda, California, during 1946. The Navy then transferred the suicide bomb to the Smithsonian in 1948. After years in display storage at the museum's Paul E. Garber Facility in Suitland, Maryland, the *Ohka* Model 22 was restored for this exhibit during 1993 and 1994.

A Torch to the Enemy: The Strategic Bombing of Japan

While the Allies struggled to destroy the remaining Japanese forces in the Pacific during the first half of 1945, the U.S. strategic bombing campaign against Japan, begun the previous year, escalated dramatically. The raids flown after late February razed every major Japanese city and killed several hundred thousand civilians.

This campaign against Japanese urban centers represented not only the culmination of U.S. plans for the bombing of Japan, but also the ultimate demonstration of the destructiveness of strategic bombing as predicted by air power theorists before and during World War II. Although Germany, Italy and Japan had been widely condemned in the 1930s for attacks on civilian populations, during World War II civilians themselves had become the target.

"The American government and the American people have for some time pursued a policy of whole-heartedly condemning the unprovoked bombing and machine gunning of civilian populations from the air."

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, December 2, 1939

"I want no war against women and children, and I have given the Luftwaffe instructions to attack only military objectives."

Adolf Hitler, September 1939

"We can all strongly condemn any deliberate policy to try to win a war by the demoralization of the civilian population

through the process of bombing from the air. This is absolutely contrary to international law..."

Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain, September 14, 1939

FROM THE BLITZ TO THE FIRESTORM

In spite of early war statements condemning strategic air campaigns against civilians, all of the belligerent powers quickly succumbed to the temptation to strike at the enemy's heartland from the air. By the fall of 1940, catastrophic losses suffered in daylight attacks led the German Luftwaffe to undertake the first night area raids against British urban centers. Although extraordinarily destructive, this campaign failed to undermine British civilian morale. Instead, the attacks provoked a desire for massive retaliation against Germany.

Between 1940 and 1943, initial small-scale attacks by the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command escalated into massive "thousand bomber" raids aimed at the destruction of entire German cities. By 1945 incendiary (fire) bombs and high explosives had reduced great cities such as Berlin, Hamburg and Dresden to smoking ruins.

THE AMERICAN BOMBING CAMPAIGN IN EUROPE

The leaders of the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) entered World War II determined to prove the value of daylight precision bombing against carefully selected targets. Their aim was to destroy Germany's ability to make war by attacking key factories, oil production facilities, transportation networks, and other strategic objectives.

American planners persisted in the face of British skepticism, heavy losses and difficulties in achieving accuracy. By mid-1944 the gradual erosion of German air defenses combined with a massive buildup of U.S. bomber forces enabled USAAF commanders to continue their policy of daylight attacks on industrial targets. But true precision bombing was difficult to achieve. Cloudy weather often resulted in less accurate drops by radar.

The desire to undermine civilian morale also caused USAAF leaders to expand the campaign to large-scale daylight attacks against German cities.

THE LONG ROAD TO TOKYO

"...we'll fight mercilessly. Flying Fortresses will be dispatched immediately to set the paper cities of Japan on fire. There won't be any hesitation about bombing civilians—it will be all-out."

U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, November 15, 1941

During 1941, U.S. air planners began to formulate plans for bombing Japan as relations between the two countries deteriorated. Except for the daring April 1942 raid by aircraft-carrier-launched bombers led by Col. James H. Doolittle, the skies over the Japanese home islands would remain free of American aircraft until 1944.

Protected from air attack by the enormous distances separating it from Allied bases, Japan was not struck again until June 15, 1944, when small numbers of the new B-29 Superfortress began attacks from China. The stage for the final bombing campaign of World War II was not set, however, until the capture of the Marianas Islands, situated 1,300 miles from Tokyo.

TOKYO IN FLAMES

Dismayed with the results of early raids, General Curtis E. LeMay proposed a radical change in tactics after taking command of the Marianas-based bombers in January 1945. Instead of striking individual factories in daylight precision raids with high-explosive bombs, his B-29s would attack urban areas at night with incendiary (fire) bombs.

LeMay ordered a major test of his new tactics on the night of March 9–10, 1945. Flying in three 600-km (400 mi)-long streams, 334 B-29s struck Tokyo for nearly three hours. Within thirty minutes of the first bomb, fires were burning out of control. At the center of the ensuing firestorm, temperatures reached 1000 C (1,800 F). Water boiled in canals and cisterns.

Approximately 100,000 people perished and a million were made homeless. Fifty years later, the March 9–10 Tokyo raid remains the single most destructive nonnuclear attack in human history.

“This blaze will haunt me forever. It’s the most terrifying sight in the world, and, God forgive me, the best.”

A B-29 pilot following the raid of March 9–10, 1945

“I couldn’t tell if they were men or women. They weren’t even full skeletons. Piled on top of each other. The bottom of the pile all stuck together...”

Kobayashi Hiroyasu, a survivor of the Tokyo firestorm, March 9–10, 1945

“Although Mother never expressed it in words, I think she had the most difficult time. She had let the child on her back die. We don’t know if she left him somewhere, or if he just burned up and fell...She’s now eighty-eight years old. When she could still get around, I used to take her to pray at the graves. She’d pour water on them and say: ‘Hiroko-chan, you must have been hot. Teruko-chan, you must have been hot.’”

Funato Kazuyo, a survivor of the March 9–10, 1945, raid

UNPRECEDENTED DEVASTATION

The great Tokyo raid marked the beginning of a five-month period during which Japan would suffer incredible devastation. Moving from one city to another, B-29s destroyed one half the total area of 66 urban centers—burning 460 square kilometers (180 square miles) to the ground. Some cities, like the chemical and textile manufacturing center of Toyama, were completely destroyed. The five-month-long USAAF incendiary campaign against Japan probably took more civilian lives than the half million killed during the five years of Allied bombing of Germany.

“No matter how you slice it, you’re going to kill an awful lot of civilians. Thousands and thousands... We’re at war with Japan. Would you rather have Americans killed?” *Major General Curtis E. LeMay, 1945*

OPERATION STARVATION

In addition to the all-out air attacks on Japanese cities, the

USAAF and U.S. Navy took additional steps to bring Japan to its knees. By spring 1945, U.S. Submarines had succeeded in destroying the Japanese merchant marine. A B-29 campaign aptly code-named “Operation Starvation” completed the process of isolating the home islands by mining Japanese harbors and coastal waters. Carrier-based aircraft contributed to the operation by bombing and strafing a wide variety of targets. By early summer, shipping, manufacturing, transportation, and food distribution had largely ground to a halt.

Two Nations at War

The United States and Japan remained insulated from the harsh reality of total war longer than any other major belligerents of World War II. As the Pacific War entered its fourth year in 1945, both had nonetheless undergone profound change. For Japanese civilians, the horror of war had finally come home in the form of daily air raids, severe privation, and the threat of invasion. For many Americans, combat in the Pacific remained a distant series of events reported through a veil of censorship in newsreels, newspapers, magazines and radio. The cost of victory in American lives, however, represented a very real concern for all with loved ones in the Pacific.

The distance separating Japan and the United States underscored the cultural gulf separating the two societies. Ignorance about the other’s culture, combined with racism, desire for revenge, and the strain of total war produced virulent hatred on both sides.

HOME FRONT, U.S.A.

World War II energized the United States as had few events in our national history. By the spring of 1945, government spending for weapons, munitions, vehicles, clothing, and thousands of other items had brought the Great Depression to an end. Wages soared and unemployment plummeted. Women and members of minority communities entered the work force in unprecedented numbers.

With consumer goods in short supply, and rationing in force, Americans saved as never before. They invested in war bond drives, lending the government the funds needed to finance the war effort. But after over three years of war, Americans were tired. They longed for peace, the return of their sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers, and the realization of their deferred dreams of material prosperity.

THE ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY

By the spring of 1945, the United States had become, as President Franklin Roosevelt predicted, "the arsenal of democracy." The miracles achieved by wartime industry demonstrated the enormous untapped power of the American economy. During the course of World War II, U.S. industry produced 296,429 airplanes; 87,620 ships; 102,357 tanks and self-propelled guns; 372,431 artillery pieces; and 44 billion rounds of small-arms ammunition. At the 1943 Teheran Conference, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, no admirer of capitalism, toasted: "American production, without which this war would have been lost."

THE ROOTS OF A NEW AMERICA

American society underwent fundamental change during the war years. "Rosie the Riveter" became a cultural heroine as women entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, often employed in jobs previously held only by men. American youngsters, with time on their hands and money in their pockets, transformed a New Jersey band singer named Frank Sinatra into the first teen entertainment idol. Newspaper and magazine writers worried about the rise of juvenile delinquency, and wondered how many "quickie" wartime marriages would last. While Americans longed for a return to "normal," they sensed that things would never be the same.

THE LIMITS OF DEMOCRACY

"A viper is a viper, wherever the egg is hatched—so a Japanese-American, born of Japanese parents, grows up

Japanese, not an American."

Los Angeles Times, 1942

A sense of dedication and national purpose marked the American home front during World War II. But the pressures of wartime life and the desire to present a united front to the enemy had underscored the extent to which some Americans were not yet full citizens.

In the spring of 1945, tens of thousands of Americans of Japanese ancestry remained in the ten camps in which they had been summarily incarcerated since 1942. Black migrants moving from rural areas to higher paying jobs in American cities quickly discovered that they too had not left racism behind. Hispanics faced similar problems in Los Angeles and much of the Southwest.

The contrast between the actual treatment of minorities and the public expressions of an international fight for freedom and democracy would provide an important foundation for post-war movements for social equality.

"Probably in all our history, no foe has been so detested as were the Japanese. The infamy of Pearl Harbor was enough; but to it were soon added circumstantial accounts of Japanese atrocities at Hong Kong, Singapore, and finally and most appallingly, upon American prisoners in the Philippines...Emotions forgotten since our most savage Indian wars were reawakened..."

Allan Nevins, "While You Were Gone," 1946

THE YELLOW PERIL

With deep family roots in nations such as Germany and Italy, most Americans had little difficulty understanding their European enemies as good people misled by evil leaders. Anti-Asian racism, long a factor in American life, made it impossible to view the Japanese enemy in that fashion.

Plunged into war by the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and horrified by accounts of Japanese mistreatment of prisoners of war in the Philippines and elsewhere, Americans regarded their Pacific enemy as a

nation of treacherous and inhuman fanatics. Wartime advertising and propaganda portrayed the Japanese as sub-human "monkey-men," vicious rodents, or venomous insects.

Louseous Japanicas

The first serious outbreak of this lice epidemic was officially noted on December 7, 1941, at Honolulu, T. H. To the Marine Corps, especially trained in combating this type of pestilence, was assigned the gigantic task of extermination. Extensive experiments on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan have shown that this louse inhabits coral atolls in the South Pacific, particularly pill boxes, palm trees, caves, swamps and jungles.



1. Flame throwers, mortars, grenades and bayonets have proven to be an effective remedy.
2. But before a complete cure may be effected the origin of the plague, the breeding grounds around the Tokyo area, must be completely annihilated.

Cartoon from the U.S. Marine Corps monthly *Leatherneck*, March 1945.

FINISHING THE JOB

Americans celebrated the victory in Europe in May 1945, then went back to work, determined to achieve total victory over Japan. The job was far from over, and looming on the horizon was the prospect of the losses that might be suffered in an invasion.

THE JAPANESE HOME FRONT AT WAR

By the summer of 1945, Japan was a nation on the brink of collapse. American land, air, and naval forces had finally arrived on the doorstep of the home islands. B-29s of the 20th Air Force were systematically burning Japanese cities to the ground. The submarine campaign and aerial mine laying operations had cut

lines of supply and communication. After the fall of Okinawa, the Japanese people waited in their island fortress, prepared to repulse the enemy on the beaches. But their conditions would increasingly undermine their power to resist.

HARDSHIP ON THE HOMEFRONT

"Everything goes to the military, the black marketeers, and the big shots. Only fools queue up."

Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, diary entry, April 30, 1943

By fall, 1944, the Japanese people could no longer adequately feed or clothe themselves. The shortage of farm workers and lack of chemical fertilizers drastically cut domestic agricultural production. The Allied blockade had cut the supply of vital rice and soy products once imported from Korea and China.

Although silk remained available, cotton and other imported fibers had vanished. Clothes were now manufactured of *sufu*, a cloth in which small amounts of cotton were woven with wood pulp, goat hair, and tree bark.

Dwindling supplies of food and clothing led to rationing, price controls, and long lines outside those stores where goods were available. In spite of stiff penalties, prices soared and the black market became a fact of life. As early as the spring of 1944, rice was 14 times the official price.

LABOR

"On the night shift, after standing up for hours, we were marched into a dining hall where we had our supper. Supper was a bowl of weak, hot broth, usually with one string of a noodle in it and a few soybeans on the bottom. We would gulp it down, then go back to work in the factory."

Hirako Nakamono, a school girl employed in a Hiroshima aircraft factory, 1945

Japanese industry suffered from a severe labor shortage throughout the war years. By 1944 the situation had become critical. Farm workers judged unsuitable for military service were conscripted for factory labor. Women went out to work in

unprecedented numbers. Junior and senior high schools closed as students were assigned to industry, public transport and the construction of roads and fire-breaks.

SLAVE LABOR

The Japanese government turned to slave labor to ease the severe manpower shortages. Some 667,000 Koreans and 38,000 Chinese who had labor contracts to work in Japan ultimately became slave laborers. Forced to work under armed guard at difficult and dangerous tasks during the day, they were housed behind electrified fences at night. Protests were punished by beatings, floggings and execution. During the course of the war, an estimated 67,000 Korean and Chinese slave laborers would die in Japanese custody.

By 1945, most Allied prisoners of war being held in Japan were also treated in a manner indistinguishable from slave laborers. Like their compatriots in Japanese camps overseas, they were often starved, beaten and tortured.

THE COMING OF THE "B-SAN"

The first B-29 raids were directed against industrial targets and took few lives. "We went through those early bombings in a spirit of excitement and suspense," one journalist recalled. "There was even a spirit of adventure, a sense of exultation in sharing the dangers of war even though bound to a civilian existence." People joked about the "regularly scheduled service" of the "honorable visitors." The B-29s, lovely silver specks glittering in the sun as they flew at altitudes of over 30,000 feet, became popularly known as the "B-San," or "Mr. B."

Long insulated from the personal experience of war, Japanese civilians were ill-prepared for the incendiary raids of 1945. With most men absent in military service, the burden of civil defense fell on women and the elderly, who were organized into neighborhood associations. The only equipment they had were primitive, hand-operated pumps supplemented by bucket brigades and wet mops.

"Air raid. Air raid. Here comes an air raid!
Red! Red! Incendiary bomb!
Run! Run! Get mattress and sand!
Air raid! Air raid! Here comes an air raid!
Black! Black! Here come the bombs!
Cover your ears! Cover your eyes!"

Song designed to teach the basics of civil defense to Japanese children, 1944

"Proper air raid clothing as recommended by the government to the civilian population consisted of a heavily padded hood over the head and shoulders...to protect...from explosives...The hoods flamed under the rain of sparks; people who did not burn from the feet up burned from the head down. Mothers who carried their babies strapped to their backs, Japanese-style, would discover too late that the padding that enveloped the infant had caught fire."

Robert Guillian, "I saw Tokyo Burning" (1981)

THE DEMONIC OTHER

"It has gradually become clear that the American enemy, driven by its ambition to conquer the world, is coming to attack us...the barbaric tribe of Americans are devils in human skin...Western Barbarian Demons."

From an article published in "Manga Nippon," a popular magazine, October 1944

Like Americans, the Japanese people viewed their enemies in racist terms. Allied people and leaders were pictured as inhuman demons, lice, insects, and vermin. Wartime propaganda made frequent reference to the "Jewish" nature of the Allied cause. Japanese soldiers and civilians alike were convinced that American troops were waging a "war of extermination" against Japan. The mass suicides on Saipan and Okinawa demonstrated that Japanese mothers would kill themselves and their children rather than allow themselves to fall into the hands of the "devilish" U.S. Marines.

"100 MILLION HEARTS BEATING AS ONE"

By the summer of 1945, every man and woman in Japan over the age of 13 was a member of the People's Volunteer Army, and subject to military discipline. All across Japan, the subject-soldiers of the Emperor drilled with spears and other makeshift weapons in preparation for the final battles on the beaches. If the invasion came, the Japanese people were prepared, as one of them later recalled, to "match our training against their numbers, our flesh against their steel." But the ability of the Japanese people to fight was increasingly undermined by blockade, starvation, overwhelming Allied air power and the collapse of industrial production.

UNIT 2: THE DECISION TO DROP THE BOMB

"That was not any decision you had to worry about."

President Harry S. Truman

While Americans and Japanese alike expected the war to end after a bloody invasion of Japan, the U.S. government was readying a secret weapon that would dramatically affect the war's outcome: the atomic bomb. In the spring and summer of 1945, American leaders would have to decide whether to use this new weapon without warning against Japanese cities.

According to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, however, "the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb... was never even an issue." Upon becoming President in April 1945, Harry Truman inherited a very expensive bomb project that had always aimed at producing a military weapon. Furthermore, he was faced with the prospect of an invasion and he was told that the bomb would be useful for impressing the Soviet Union. He therefore saw no reason to avoid using the bomb. Alternatives for ending the Pacific war other than an invasion of atomic-bombing were available, but are more obvious in hindsight than they were at the time.

DECIDING TO BUILD THE BOMB

The atomic bomb was ultimately used against Japan, but it was built as a weapon against Germany. In late 1938, German scientists accidentally discovered how to split ("fission") the uranium atom, releasing nuclear energy. When physicists in the United States learned of this discovery, many immediately realized that Hitler might acquire a fearsome new weapon: an atomic bomb. Refugees from the Nazis, most notably the Hungarian physicists Leo Szilard and Eugene Wigner, feared this possibility so much that they began to search for a way to warn Western governments.