

HIROSHIMA:

HENRY STIMSON'S DIARY AND PAPERS:

Part 10

Aug. 10 thru Sept. 21, 1945

The following are excerpts from Sec. of War Henry Stimson's diary and papers that have relevance to the atomic bombing of Japan. This is by no means a complete collection of such references from Stimson's diary and papers. These excerpts are published here with the authorization of the Yale University Library. The diary and papers can be found in the Henry Lewis Stimson Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn. The diary and papers can also be found in the Library of Congress, Washington, DC and in the Center For Research Libraries, Chicago, IL.

For information about the prior Henry Stimson diary and papers, click [Stimson Diary and Papers, Part 1.](#)

[I have included some explanatory and contextual comments for the excerpts. My writing is in brackets and italics, as I have done with this paragraph.]

[Japan Surrenders; the Atomic Bomb and the Soviet Union]

Aug. 10, 1945 Diary Entry *[Japan's first surrender offer and the issue of the emperor]:*

"Today was momentous. We had all packed up and the car was waiting to take us to the airport where we were headed for our vacation when word came from Colonel *[Frank] McCarthy [one of Gen. George Marshall's aides]* at the *[War]* Department that the Japanese had made an offer to surrender. Furthermore they had announced it in the clear. That busted our holiday for the present and I raced down to the office, getting there before half past eight. There I read the messages. Japan accepted the Potsdam list of terms put out by the President 'with the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of his majesty as a sovereign ruler'. It is curious that this was the very single point that I feared would make trouble. When the Potsdam conditions were drawn and left my office where they originated, they contained a provision which permitted the continuance of the dynasty with certain conditions. The President and *[Sec. of State]* Byrnes struck that out. They were not obdurate on it but thought they could arrange it in the necessary secret negotiations which would take place after any armistice. There has been a good deal of uninformed agitation against the Emperor in this country mostly by people who know no more about Japan than has been given them by Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Mikado', and I found today that curiously enough it had gotten deeply embedded in the minds of influential people in the State Department. Harry Hopkins *[special advisor to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman]* is a strong anti-Emperor man in spite of his usual good sense and so are Archibald MacLeish *[Assistant Sec. of State for Public and Cultural Relations]* and Dean Acheson *[Assistant Sec. of State for Congressional Relations]* - three very extraordinary men to take such a position."

"As soon as I got to the *[War]* Department I called up *[White House appointments secretary Matthew] Connolly [sic - Connelly]* at the White House and notified him that I was not going away and would be standing by if he wanted me. Not more than ten minutes afterwards they called back to say that the President would like me to come right over, so I hurried around there and joined in the conference consisting of the President, Byrnes, *[Sec. of the Navy James] Forrestal*, *[White House Chief of Staff]* Admiral *[William] Leahy*, and the President's aides *[according to Forrestal's diary, the Presidential aides present were Director of the Office of War Mobilization John Snyder, Naval Aide to the President Captain James Vardaman, and Military Aide to the President Gen. Harry Vaughan; Walter Millis, ed., "The Forrestal Diaries", pg. 83].*

Byrnes was troubled and anxious to find out whether we could accept this in the light of some of the public statements [*demanding "unconditional" surrender from Japan*] by Roosevelt and Truman. Of course during three years of a bitter war there have been bitter statements made about the Emperor. Now they come to plague us. Admiral Leahy took a good plain horse-sense position that the question of the Emperor was a minor matter compared with delaying a victory in the war which was now in our hands."

"The President then asked me what my opinion was and I told him that I thought that even if the question hadn't been raised by the Japanese we would have to continue the Emperor ourselves under our command and supervision in order to get into surrender the many scattered armies of the Japanese who would own no other authority and that something like this use of the Emperor must be made in order to save us from a score of bloody Iwo Jimas and Okinawas all over China and New Netherlands. He was the only source of authority in Japan under the Japanese theory of the State. I also suggested that something like an armistice over the settlement of the question was inevitable and that it would be a humane thing and the thing that might effect the settlement if we stopped the bombing during that time - stopped it immediately. My last suggestion was rejected on the ground that it couldn't be done at once because we had not yet received in official form the Japanese surrender, having nothing but the interception to give it to us, and that so far as we were concerned the war was still going on. This of course was a correct but narrow reason, for the Japanese had broadcast their offer of surrender through every country in the world. After considerable discussion we adjourned to await the arrival of the final notice."

When we adjourned Byrnes and I went into another room to discuss the form of the paper and I told him the desire of Marshall to have one of the conditions of our negotiations with Japan the surrender of the American prisoners in their hands to some accessible place where we could send planes to get them. By this time the news was out and the howling mob was in front of the White House, access to which by the public was blockaded on Pennsylvania Avenue."

I drove back to the [*War*] Department and entered into conference with Marshall and [*Assistant Sec. of War John*] McCloy who had just returned from his overseas trip [*McCloy had been inspecting the condition of Western Europe*] while I was at the White House. [*Special Assistant to Stimson Harvey*] Bundy, [*Assistant Sec. of War for Air Robert*] Lovett, and [*Special Consultant to Stimson George*] Harrison and I were together and I later called in [*Air Force*] Colonel [*de Forest*] Van Slyck who had written the intelligent article I had shown the President the other day on the form of a surrender; and also General [*John*] Weckerling [*Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff*] of G-2 [*Army Intelligence*] who has not been quite so intelligent on this matter as he might be, together with Mr. Robert A. Kinney and Mr. William R. Braisted who are acting as Japanese experts for the G-2 people. We started in accordance with a request that Byrnes had made of me at our talk on the drafting of the whole terms of surrender including the answer to the present Japanese offer. On the latter I found for once that McCloy was rather divergent from me. He was intrigued with the idea that this was the opportunity to force upon Japan through the Emperor a program of free speech, etc. and all the elements of American free government. I regarded this as unreal and said that the thing to do was to get this surrender through as quickly as we can before Russia, who has begun invading Manchuria, should get down in reach of the Japanese homeland. I felt it was of great importance to get the homeland into our hands before the Russians could put in any substantial claim to occupy and help rule it. After all this discussion I called Byrnes on the telephone and discussed the matter with him. He told me he had drafted the answer to the Japanese notice and that he would like me to see it. So I sent over [*Stimson's aide Colonel William*] Kyle to the Department and got it. While a compromise, it was much nearer my position than McCloy's and after a while McCloy agreed that it was good enough from his standpoint. I thought it was a pretty wise and careful statement and stood a better chance of being accepted than a more outspoken one. It asserted that the action of the Emperor must be dominated by the Allied Commander, using the singular in order to exclude any condominium such as we have in Poland [*i.e., there would be only one country in charge of Japan, and that would be the U.S.*]. He had asked me in the morning who was the commander that had been agreed upon among our forces and I told him I thought it was [*Commanding General of the U.S. Army in the Pacific Douglas*] MacArthur although there had been quite an issue between the Army and the Navy to have a dual command, MacArthur and [*U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander in Chief Admiral Chester*] Nimitz."

"During the morning Forrestal had called me up for the purpose of telling me he was heart and soul with me in regard to the proposition of shutting off attack and saving life during the time we discussed this. He told

me that they were planning another big attack by [*Pacific Third Fleet Admiral William "Bull"*] Halsey and he was afraid this would go on."

After a fifteen or twenty minutes delay, which is unusual in this Administration, the President and Byrnes came in from a conference which had been going on in the other room and the President announced to the Cabinet that we had received official notice from Japan through the intermediary, Sweden, and that Byrnes had drawn a reply to it of which they thought they could get an acceptance from Great Britain, China, and perhaps Russia, with all of whom they were communicating. The paper was in the exact form that Byrnes had read me over the telephone and which I told him I approved."

"This has been a pretty heavy day."

Aug. 11, 1945 Diary Entry:

"My rather strenuous efforts yesterday had their consequences in a sleepless night but I am otherwise feeling fairly well. I want to get away. I have been over the terms of surrender papers which were outlined yesterday and drafted last night and they are on their way to Byrnes. The four other powers seem to have approved the Byrnes form of reply to the Japanese offer. The British rather question the compulsion to sign [*the surrender papers*] put on the Emperor [*the British believed Japan was more likely to surrender quickly if Japanese government leaders, rather than the emperor, were required to sign the surrender document. The U.S. agreed to the British request; (U.S. Dept. of State, "Foreign Relations of the U.S.", vol. 6, pg. 628-629, 631-632)*]. The Chinese were very jubilant and the Russians accepted, but stated that they would like to discuss the Supreme Commander [*of Japan; the fact that the U.S. would control post-war Japan soon became a sore spot with the Soviets*]. So thus far it looks as if things were going pretty well. I do not see how the Japanese can hold out against this united front. I am planning to go away now as soon as I can."

Aug. 12 to Sept. 3, 1945 Diary Entry [*Stimson combined these dates - during his vacation for his health - into one diary entry*]:

"We took off at about half past twelve [*on Aug. 12*], got to Highhold [*his estate on Long Island*] safely, spent Sunday [*Aug. 12*] there, and on Monday flew up to Saranac Lake where we were met by cars from the Club and drove over to the Club [*St. Hubert's was "the Club"; it was in the Adirondack Mountains of New York state*]. We had a very warm welcome at the Club and I spent three weeks there until Monday, September 3rd when we flew down to Highhold and spent the night there, and on Tuesday morning returned to Washington by air."

"My stay at St. Hubert's was very quiet owing to my condition. I put myself under the care of Dr. Goff to whom I had brought a letter from the Walter Reed [*Hospital*] doctors, and he attended to me very carefully and intelligently."

"The different points that I remember which took place up there were as follows:"

"I landed [*at St. Hubert's Club*] in the middle of the negotiations with Japan and they were consummated on Tuesday the 14th. This of course made great interest and excitement at the Club. Mabel [*Stimson's wife*] and I were cheered when we first made our appearance in the dining room and when the news came in that the Japanese had accepted Byrnes' reply and the Emperor placed himself under the orders of the Allied Commander. We felt of course very happy over this for it showed the complete success of the program which I had urged" [*i.e., let Japan keep their emperor to get them to surrender*].

"McCloy came up twice I think by plane and he and I worked out a paper after considerable mutual discussion for the treatment of Russia in respect to the atomic bomb. [*A copy of this paper can be found at the excellent Nuclear Files web site at [Stimson's Sept. 11 Paper](#)*]. I telephoned this paper to Bundy in the [*War*] Department so that they could have their views ready when I got back. This was done and the paper was prepared embodying our concurrent views for submission to the President. Before I returned [*to Washington, DC on Sept. 4*], McCloy talked the subject over with Byrnes and found that he was quite radically opposed to any approach to [*Soviet Union Premier*] Stalin whatever [*on international control of the*

atomic bomb]. He was on the point of departing for the foreign ministers' meeting [*Byrnes left Washington on Sept. 4 to meet in London with foreign ministers from Great Britain and the Soviet Union*] and wished to have the implied threat of the bomb in his pocket during the conference. As I will show later [*in the Sept. 4 diary entry*], he did not get away as I expected before I returned on Tuesday, September 4th, and I myself had a short talk with him on the subject that day. Neither McCloy nor I made much impression on him..."

"On Tuesday, August 14th, when the news arrived of the final surrender of the Japanese we had a little thanksgiving meeting in the Casino after dinner.

Sept. 4, 1945 Diary Entry [*Stimson returns to Washington and says he'll resign*]:

"At the Pentagon I tried to arrange my duties so far as possible so as to confine them to getting off [*resigning from his Sec. of War position, now that the war was over*]. ...But it is dreadfully hard to pull free from the entanglements of such a position as I am in."

"Then I found there was an invitation to go to the White House for their first luncheon Cabinet meeting."

"At the talk afterwards [*after the Cabinet meeting*] with Byrnes I took up the question which I had been working at with McCloy up in St. Hubert's, namely how to handle Russia with the big bomb. I found that Byrnes was very much against any attempt to cooperate with Russia. His mind is full of his problems with the coming meeting of the foreign ministers and he looks to having the presence of the bomb in his pocket, so to speak, as a great weapon to get through the thing he has. He also told me of a number of acts of perfidy, so to speak, of Stalin which they had encountered at Potsdam and felt in the light of those that we could not rely upon anything in the way of promises from them. I told him our views as contained in the memorandum [*see the Sept. 11 Paper link above*], the latest copy of which I had taken over there but which I did not take into the meeting. Then we parted and he started off for his mission abroad."

"On the way down in the plane this morning I drafted a letter of resignation to the President and at the Department I wrote it out in longhand. After the luncheon today I handed it to the President as we separated and he then arranged that he would see me tomorrow at twelve o'clock."

Sept. 5, 1945 Diary Entry [*Russia and the atomic bomb*]:

"The President said he was very sorry to have me go. He would have been glad to have me stay through his term but he recognized that I had necessary [*health*] reasons for going. He told me that I should make up my mind when it would be most convenient to me and let him know and that it would take effect then. ...We also arranged that he is to let me know when I could have a longer interview with him than was possible this morning in order to cover a number of things on which I am preparing to leave with him my final views. The chief of these I said was the subject of our relations with Russia in regard to the atomic bomb, and I described the talk that I had had with Byrnes and told him what our differences were. I told him that both my plan and Byrnes' plan contained chances which I outlined, and I said that I thought that in my method there was less danger than in his and also we would be on the right path towards world establishment of an international world, while on his plan we would be on the wrong path in that respect and would be tending to revert to power politics."

Sept. 10, 1945 Diary Entry [*Stimson works on his a-bomb and Russia paper*]:

"Before the ceremonies [*for Gen. Jonathan Wainwright*] began I got in about an hour of work, first giving General Stephen Henry my proposed decorations and awards to my civilian staff and asking him to draw the citations for them, and then quite a while with Jack McCloy working over the memorandum on the atomic bomb [*the Sept. 11 paper*] which I had drawn in Highhold yesterday to complete the work that he and I did up at Ausable [*at St. Hubert's Club*] and which has since been tinkered over by our friends in the War Department here. The original plan, while good, had been somewhat denaturalized by the composite work of the people who handled it down here, so I tried to draw yesterday something snappy for an ending and it was pretty good."

Sept. 11, 1945 Diary Entry:

"I conferred with...McCloy, Harrison, and Bundy, particularly about the final steps in my record for the President on the atomic bomb."

Sept. 12, 1945 Diary Entry:

"...at three o'clock [I] was at the White House with the President for my windup conference. I took three classes of matters up in order. First... the method of the treatment of the bomb with Russia..."

"Our talk about the bomb was the most important. He read over our [Sept. 11] memorandum on that subject and my letter explaining that my present views were not at variance with the warning I gave him last summer at the [July 1945 conference at] Potsdam about freedom of speech in Russia [Stimson had feared then that the repressiveness of the Soviet government would prevent cooperation between the Soviet Union and the U.S.]. He read the original memorandum while I followed the carbon in each case and I left with him the original. He said step by step as we went through it that he was in full accord with each statement that I made and that his view on the whole thing was in accord with me. He thought that we must take Russia into our confidence."

Sept. 17, 1945 Diary Entry:

"...this morning I called in [Under Sec. of War] Bob Patterson [who replaced Stimson as Sec. of War when Stimson retired on Sept. 21] who has recently been reported to me as being rather against the position that I have taken in regard to the solving of the problem with Russia over the atomic bomb and which I had been talking with the President about, and I had a long talk with him. I told him how my view had been gradually formed; how in the beginning I was inclined to think that we ought to hang onto the bomb as long as possible and its secrets; but that gradually I had found that I was wrong and that that would be by far the more dangerous course than to make an effort with Russia particularly to get on terms with us of confidence in which we would eliminate the manufacture of such bombs for war purposes - eliminate the development of the atomic energy of the explosive kind, and confine ourselves to its use and the development of its more controllable smaller powers for commerce. He listened to me and thanked me and asked a few questions and then in his simple, straightforward way he said 'Well, you have convinced me. I find I was wrong and I think you are right. The safest way is not to try to keep the secret. It evidently cannot be kept. I did not realize that beforehand and that being so it is better to recognize it promptly and try to get on terms of confidence with the Russians'."

Sept. 18, 1945 Diary Entry:

"...I received an invitation to the luncheon Cabinet meeting at the White House at one o'clock. There was quite a full meeting. ...The President...announced that he was going to bring up at the regular Cabinet meeting on Friday the question of the control of the big bomb and he asked me if I would be willing to attend that last Cabinet meeting and help out [in regard to Stimson's Sept. 12th discussion with Truman about the atomic bomb and the Soviet Union]. This of course was a sore blow at my plan to get away early Friday or even Thursday, but I told him that of course I would be there if I could walk on my two legs."

Sept. 21, 1945 Diary Entry (Dictated December 11, 1945) [Sept. 21st was Stimson's last day as Sec. of War and also his 78th birthday]:

"This was my last day in office as Secretary of War. My resignation to the President had been accepted as of the close of business today. It was full of tension and emotion and, though I did not feel it, I was on the eve of an emotional and coronary breakdown [in the third week of October Stimson suffered a heart attack]. The day had been particularly congested by the fact that the President had asked me to come to the final Cabinet meeting and to lead in the discussion of the use of the atomic bomb. This was a big chore in itself."

[To Stimson's surprise he was presented with "a huge birthday cake" at lunch in the Pentagon. Then he received what he called "a mystery call from President Truman" to meet the President at the White House before the Cabinet meeting. Upon his arrival, President Truman presented Stimson with the Distinguished Service Metal.]

"From the presentation which was held in the White House grounds immediately behind the President's office, the Cabinet went in to its meeting. ...I had previously given to the President on September 12th my views on this subject *[the Sept. 11 paper]*... I had made the original drafts myself and they had been worked over a little to make them smoother by Jack McCloy and I think Bundy. But the ideas were essentially my own and embodied two rather important things: (1) that we should approach Russia at once with an opportunity to share on a proper quid pro quo the bomb; and (2) that this approach to Russia should be to her directly and not through the UNO *[United Nations Organization]* or any similar conference of a number of lesser states" *[Stimson felt the Soviets would only take talks on controlling the atomic bomb seriously if the approach came from the only nation who had the atomic bomb]*.

"At the Cabinet meeting I spoke entirely extemporaneously without reading these memoranda and there was a general discussion around the table at which the two or three who had started off with an emphatic secrecy proposal ultimately rather yielded to my views *[perhaps members of the Cabinet were being respectful to Stimson on his last day in office, but Cabinet members Sec. of the Navy James Forrestal, Sec. of the Treasury Fred Vinson, and Sec. of Agriculture Clinton Anderson were strongly opposed to Stimson's stated views, and there were probably others who also disagreed with Stimson]*. I felt particularly strongly on this matter because I was much worried over what Secretary Byrnes had said to me about his coming conference with the Foreign Ministers *[in London that month]* at which he proposed to keep the bomb, so to speak, in his hip pocket without any suggestion of sharing it with Russia."

[This Cabinet meeting was Stimson's last act as a government official. Upon leaving the Cabinet meeting he picked up his wife and left for their Highhold estate. Henry L. Stimson passed away on Oct. 20, 1950].

[This concludes my chapters on the Stimson diary. Thank you for visiting.]

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