

JAPAN SUBDUED : THE ATOMIC BOMB AND THE END OF THE PACIFIC WAR. By Herbert Feis. [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1961. vii + 199 pp. U.S. \$4.]

Mr. Feis has served as Special Consultant to three United States Secretaries of War and in that capacity witnessed the diplomatic progress of the road to and from Pearl Harbour from the inside. Before the publication of the present volume — which he originally intended entitling *Japan Subdued: Eternity Imperiled* — he had already written four books covering the period from before Pearl Harbour to the Potsdam Conference. The present work is concerned with the period between that Conference at which it was agreed that the Soviet Union would enter the Far Eastern War, and the use of the atomic bomb and the consequential surrender of Japan.

From the point of view of the post-War reader perhaps the most interesting sections of *Japan Subdued* are those in which Mr. Feis considers whether the use of

1. (1866) L.R. 1 Ex. 265.
2. (1875) L.R. 10 Ex. 261.
3. [1891] 1 Q.B. 86.
4. *Fowler v. Lanning* [1959] 1 Q.B. 426.

the bomb was in fact essential and whether its use outweighed other methods of terminating hostilities, for example by combined assault or by inducement. Mr. Feis is not completely convinced, but it would appear that the senior military commanders were certain that surrender would come only after an overwhelming military victory, although they were not averse to promises of leniency being used as an inducement. Mr. Feis remarks that the State Department favoured 'an appeal to the preservative sense of the Japanese people before the struggle reached its portended climax', and although Secretary of War Stimson joined this school of thought, 'he conceived the exposition of our intentions as accompaniment to an ultimate warning of destruction, fused by the atomic bomb'.

One of the justifications that has been put forward for using the bomb is that it saved a large number of Allied lives that would have been lost had Japan been invaded. Thus President Truman, Marshall and Stimson talked of half a million to one million. Others, including MacArthur, however, regarded a figure of 50,000 during the first thirty days as probably exaggerated. The latter considered no invasion possible without Soviet support and regarded a price of Korea, Manchuria and North China as cheap in the circumstances, particularly as there was no desire to devastate Japan.

It would appear from Mr. Feis's statements that the desire to avert casualties was not, at least in so far as the War Department was concerned, as important as has sometimes been made out. Stimson apparently opposed any offer of terms associated with a demand for surrender until 'the United States had the atomic bomb', for he did not believe that anything short of an 'impressive warning of utter destruction' would be heeded by the Japanese. His attitude was such that by the end of May, 1945, he was no longer talking of 'whether' the weapon should be used against Japan, but 'how'. He was convinced that the bomb would mean an end to hostilities 'before the locking of arms came and much bloodshed'. By then its use seemed a foregone conclusion, and 'no one challenged the use of the bomb against an unwarned and vulnerable target in Japan if that was the only way to achieve this commanding purpose'. No one apparently thought it necessary for a belligerent that maintained that it was fighting to uphold the rule of law and had consistently condemned breaches of the law by the enemy, to consult its legal advisers to ascertain whether the atomic bomb and its use against cities was legal, or whether, if it were not, any grounds, such as a legitimate recourse to reprisals, existed whereby its use might be justified.

It is clear from the record provided by Mr. Feis that the decision to use the atomic bomb was that of the United States alone, although it was later acquiesced in by the United Kingdom, with the Soviet Union only told in the most casual way of its existence. The latter, while engaged in negotiating with China the terms for Soviet entry into the war against Japan, was pretending to discuss with the Japanese Soviet mediation between Japan and her enemies. It also appears that both Churchill and Stalin were hesitant in passing on to Truman Japanese requests for mediation, lest the United States think they were dragging their feet.

The final decision as to the use of the bomb was undoubtedly that of Truman, with Churchill actively supporting him, particularly as he believed that what he described as 'the Second Coming in wrath' rendered Soviet assistance unnecessary, a view that was concurred in by Stimson who, in July, wanted to keep the Russians out anyway.

Mr. Feis is of opinion that nothing was gained in keeping the atomic bomb a secret from the Russians, who came into the war immediately after Hiroshima to proclaim that it was the victories of the Red Army which caused the Japanese to surrender in two days. In the light of subsequent events, he believes that had they

been informed much of the present tension between the West and the Soviet Union might have been averted; that the idea that secrecy was preserved by the West in order to preserve the bomb for use against the Soviet Union 'might not have nourished in that country as it did'; and that the Russians might have been persuaded to show co-operation in working a system of control and inspection. It is because of the current significance of this latter problem, which is inherently one of the enforcement of treaties and of international law, that so much space has been given to reviewing a work which, though its subject is inherently of legal significance, ignores all legal implications.

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