

Destroyer of worlds

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Destroyer of Worlds On August 6, 1945, the day the first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, the world was forever changed. Thousands had perished due to the highly destructive bomb and the Japanese city was completely demolished. The project that had created the weapon of such devastation had been known as the Manhattan Project, of which J.

Robert Oppenheimer was the scientific director. His work created a weapon that has changed and destroyed the lives of many. Though Oppenheimer is also known for protesting against the devastating hydrogen bomb and for many scientific breakthroughs, he is mostly known for being a “destroyer of worlds.” He had largely contributed to something that left a permanent stain on human history and took thousands of lives. When the atomic bomb was first tested on July 16, 1945, Oppenheimer became aware of its incredible power. He had been the one of the two major directors of the project to invent the bomb.

He was deemed to be a “brilliant researcher,” and his guidance was said to be “irreplaceable”. (“Oppenheimer – A Life”) At that time, the purpose of the bomb’s invention was to stop Japan’s effort to stay in the war.

Oppenheimer hoped that the consequences of the bomb’s explosion would be horrible enough to finish the war. He was well aware of the fact that many innocent lives would be lost because of the two bombs that he had helped create: “Little Boy” and “Fat Man.” A short while before the bomb was dropped, Oppenheimer’s colleague, Leo Szilard, sent a petition, that opposed the dropping of the atomic bomb with 155 scientists’ signatures, to Oppenheimer, hoping that he would be able to send it to President Truman quickly.

However, Oppenheimer refused to send it, believing that it would be too late to matter. He was correct. The moment that the reports of the bomb inundated the radio, he was jubilant – his invention had worked. Though he was initially overjoyed at the success of his atomic bomb, he was later horrified. When, in subsequent years, the hydrogen bomb came into existence, Oppenheimer protested against it. However, after a feasible plan was suggested, Oppenheimer did not argue.

One can observe that “ many scientists pondered the ethical implications of what they were doing [when dropping the atomic bomb] far more deeply than Oppenheimer” (“ A Tragic Life”). In many ways, Oppenheimer himself may have been responsible for the invention of the hydrogen bomb, a weapon of mass destruction that was thousands of times more powerful than the atomic bomb, though Teller had been the one to truly invent it. When Oppenheimer chose Hans Bethe for a job that Edward Teller had desired, Teller was furious. However, to “ soften the blow,” Oppenheimer encouraged Teller to work on the hydrogen bomb. Since Oppenheimer had largely contributed to the atomic bomb, he was accepted into the innermost circle of the government and given many secrets. During those times, he was tried and cleared for communism twice.

However, Oppenheimer admitted that he had been “ a member of just about every Communist Front organization on the West Coast” (PBS- “ Science Odyssey”). He also donated about one thousand dollars each year to communist organizations. This cast suspicion and was later held against him in trial. Another episode, that was said to be “ never fully explained,” was also held against him in trial. At one point in his career, he had talked to <https://assignbuster.com/destroyer-of-worlds/>

government officials, saying that he knew a friend, or friends, giving secrets to the Soviets. Though it was he who had reported the incident, Oppenheimer refused to give the names until he was forced to by his colleague, Leslie Groves, the military director of the project.

His friend, Haakon Chevalier, was reported to be one of them, and was dismissed from his job. One of Oppenheimer's associates, Tatlock, was said to commit suicide one month after the incident. On Oppenheimer's trial, which was held because the government was suspicious of the loyalty of Oppenheimer and afraid of the fact that he may have associated with Communist Party, Oppenheimer's security clearance was revoked. He was no longer allowed to have knowledge of government secrets, and he withdrew from public. He had silenced what had been the few gifts that he had bestowed on his generation: his scientific critique and his gift of teaching. Perhaps the reason why Oppenheimer had made such terrible decisions was because of the fact that he was known to be emotionally unstable.

He had suffered depression in his youth, and had been even said to be schizophrenic at one point in his life. Also, as a child, he was sheltered by overprotective parents and had not been acquainted with anyone save his brother, Frank. Oppenheimer's personality was also not known to be desirable: he was known to be "insufferably arrogant" and "acerbic and cutting" to those whom he had considered to not be "his equals intellectually" ("Key Issues"). One of Oppenheimer's most famous quotes is "I have blood on my hands" ("A Tragic Life"), which he had said to President Truman shortly after Little Boy was dropped. He had never been

more correct. The damage that had been set on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was astounding.

Little Boy, dropped on Hiroshima, caused the deaths of 78, 000 to 80, 000 people. Twenty-five to forty thousand citizens of Japan perished in Nagasaki when Fat Man was dropped. In total, sixty thousand buildings were demolished. The victims suffered, some perishing immediately, others dying painfully months later, from radiation sickness. The survivors – in Japanese, hibakusha – had physical and mental scars and disabilities and were affected by the radiation for the rest of their lives.

The hibakusha were forced to rebuild their lives after total loss, with minimal support from the government. Though Oppenheimer could not have predicted the all-consuming fire of the bomb, he knew that it would cause death, pain, and wreckage. By not listening to his conscience, he made the destruction that much worse. The dropping of the bomb on Japan was considered quite unnecessary: it was clear to many historians that Japan was visibly weak and already on the edge of surrender. There was no point in the killing of many citizens.

Though the bomb had sped up the end of the war, it was not needed to determine the outcome. Oppenheimer, having the name of “ Father of the Atomic Bomb,” has been true to his epithet and has used a powerful weapon that has changed the world, even today. He bestowed upon humanity a weapon that could destroy all of civilization in a short amount of time, a power that humans are not and may never be ready to wield. Works Cited
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