History - message board post

History

Why factors led President Truman to make the audacious decision to drop the atomic bombs on Japan? The war in Europe had ended after Hitler's suicideand the Allied occupation of Berlin. However, the war in the Pacific was dragging on and it was expected that the invasion of mainland Japan would cost between half a million and a million lives. The Japanese leadership paid little heed to the Potsdam Declaration in late July 1945. President Truman declared that if the Japanese did not surrender, they would face total destruction. In order to minimize the losses faced by Allied troops and to minimize the costs of the war in Pacific, President Truman decided to go ahead with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Giangreco).

If you could go back in time to August of 1945 would you advise Truman differently? Why or why not?

If I could go back in time, I would advise President Truman to use the atomic bombs in order to end the war as soon as possible. Truman's decision to drop the atomic bombs was politically popular as the American public was partially in favor of annihilating the Japanese at any costs (Dower). Certain quarters have argued that the Japanese surrender came due to the Soviet change of neutrality and declaration of war on Japan. While this may be considered as a supporting factor for the end of the war in the Pacific, but this cannot be taken as the only reason that the war ended. The Japanese high command including Emperor Hirohito ended the war by declaring that the enemy had acquired a weapon that was powerful enough to annihilate the entire Japanese nation.

References

Dower, John W. Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor / Hiroshima / 9-11 / Iraq. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010.

Giangreco, D. M. Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan 1945–1947. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2009.