

(no subject)

The Urth list — 5 messages, 4 voices, 19 Jan 2011

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Lee Berman — 19 Jan 2011, 19:55

James Wynn: Allow me to take the Devil's side for a bit. The Imperial Japanese culture in the early 1940s glorified nihilistic fanaticism. Long after it was clear that they would not win the war, the Emperor and the J government had decided that if they were beaten there should be a genocide of the Japanese people.

I certainly allow it, if I am permitted to take Angel's advocate role for a minute. It is a simplistic, cruel view of life to say that if an enemy Emperor orders the genocide of his people that we ought to be the perpetrators of it. Somehow that is the right thing to do?

If I were transported back in time and installed as US president I would order something along the lines of a N. Korea strategy. Containment. One cannot in good conscience commit a crime against humanity, kill hundreds of thousands of innocent people (including American POWs) in the "hopes" (and it was simply hope at the time) that it might avert a worse killing.

However, if I were actually from that primitive time period when declarations of victory and national pride were so much more important than human life than they are now I would probably think differently. If I thought as I do now I almost assuredly would never be elected president then.

But, if you weigh the horrors of ALL the uses of atomic weapons over the last 65 years AGAINST the almost certain toll without them, Pres Harry Truman's decision to use the bomb looks quite humane. So God bless the Bomb.

I agree with this. But it is hindsight. A global blessing that couldn't have been foreseen (after WWII many were already looking to WWII). If I had been preident in 1945 and enforced a containment strategy on Japan (and avoided assassination) I don't know if we would have had Pax Americana for the next 65 years. We'll never know. But as a 21st century resident I know could never nuke any nation. (meaning I couldn't be elected president now either, esp. if I spoke that publicly ;-)).

James Wynn — 19 Jan 2011, 20:43 · in reply to Lee Berman

Thomas Bitterman-

It is entirely possible that the atomic bombs were not the cause of Japanese surrender. Some Japanese principals have denied that the bombs were a major factor, citing instead the Russian invasion. In any case, invasion wasn't the only other option - a blockade along with continued bombing was also an option, and would have almost certainly succeeded (albeit more slowly).

As in North Korea? Do you really think we could have pulled off such a blockade during the Cold War with China and the Soviet Union right off of Japan's coast? I think the idea that the bombing wasn't THE factor in the surrender is extremely wishful thinking. There was likely a Japanese ministers or two who thought privately that surrender would be a good idea. But the military and emperor called the shots. If the Japanese didn't surrender after the loss of Okinawa, it is improbable that they would have capitulated to the loss of some small islands (which the Soviets didn't take until after Hiroshima). And anyway, they didn't surrender after the loss of those islands. They surrendered after Nagasaki.

James Wynn: Allow me to take the Devil's side for a bit. The Imperial Japanese culture in the early 1940s glorified nihilistic fanaticism. Long after it was clear that they would not win the war, the Emperor and the J government had decided that if they were beaten there should be a genocide of the Japanese people.

Lee-

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"War //is the remedy that our enemies have chosen, and I say let us give them all they want." ~ William T. Sherman

Lee-

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I appreciate that sentiment. However, knowing how containment has worked for North Koreans and Iraqis, I am unconvinced that would have been the humane choice. Compare Japan to North Korea. Compare SOUTH Korea to North Korea.

Lee-

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Actually, if you had been President in 1945 and sent 10s of 1000s of young men to die to liberate remote Pacific Islands and then said "We'll just spend the next 40 years watching Japan's borders." You probably would have been impeached. If you had chosen to invade Japan rather than end the war quickly with a couple bombs, you certainly would have been impeached. We elect presidents to make unpleasant choices: Take it in the face or fight back. If Americans had wanted half-measures, they'd have run the country from Congress.

Thomas Bitterman — 19 Jan 2011, 21:44 · in reply to James Wynn

On Wed, Jan 19, 2011 at 3:43 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

Thomas Bitterman-

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As in North Korea?

Japan was not connected to a much larger country that was actively supporting it. Also, we have not continued bombing North Korea in the manner we would have continued bombing Japan in the scenario I actually presented. Japan had no oil and was busy starving.

Do you really think we could have pulled off such a blockade during the Cold War with China and the Soviet Union right off of Japan's coast?

Why not? What were China and the Soviet Union going to do? Run the blockade because they liked Japan so much?

I think the idea that the bombing wasn't THE factor in the surrender is extremely wishful thinking.

Yet that is what is maintained by several people who should know - people who were directly involved in the decision. Perhaps they are unreliable, but that could be true of anybody.

There was likely a Japanese ministers or two who thought privately that surrender would be a good idea. But the military and emperor called the shots. If the Japanese didn't surrender after the loss of Okinawa, it is improbable that they would have capitulated to the loss of some small islands (which the Soviets didn't take until after Hiroshima). And anyway, they didn't surrender after the loss of those islands. They surrendered after Nagasaki.

The Soviets invaded Manchuria (a sizeable land area, not some small islands) right about the same time as Nagasaki. Again, Wikipedia with the info.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 19 Jan 2011, 22:19 · in reply to Thomas Bitterman

Thomas Bitterman wrote:

The Soviets invaded Manchuria (a sizeable land area, not some small islands) right about the same time as Nagasaki. Again, Wikipedia with the info.

The Soviet invasion of Manchuria was a bad joke - AFTER we had dropped the Hiroshima bomb, and Japanese capitulation was certain, they marched into a conquered area where the Japanese were grossly overstretched and the native population were going to hail them as liberators. A total "us-too" invasion.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Thomas Bitterman — 20 Jan 2011, 15:26 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Wed, Jan 19, 2011 at 5:19 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danl do at gmail.com> wrote:
Thomas Bitterman wrote:

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The Soviet invasion of Manchuria was a bad joke - AFTER we had dropped the Hiroshima bomb, and Japanese capitulation was certain,

If capitulation was certain after the first bomb, the second bomb becomes morally problematic. In any case, given the continued reluctance to surrender even after the second bomb it seems unlikely the issue was settled after the first.

they marched into a conquered area where the Japanese were grossly overstretched and the native population were going to hail them as liberators. A total "us-too" invasion.

The Japanese were scared. They had reason to be after what the Russians had just gotten done doing to the Germans. There was little reason to believe the Russians would or could be

stopped.

But we are way off topic.