AP U.S. History
HW - read for next class

An editorial from the Nippon Times, a Tokyo newspaper (August 10, 1945)

How can a human being with any claim to a sense of moral responsibility deliberately let loose an instrument of destruction which can at one stroke annihilate an appalling segment of mankind? This is not war; this is not even murder; this is pure nihilism. This is a crime against God and humanity which strikes at the very basis of moral existence. What meaning is there in any international law, in any rule of human conduct, if any concept of right and wrong, if the very foundations of morality are to be overthrown as the use of this instrument of total destruction threatens to do?...

The U.S. may claim, in a lame attempt to raise a pretext in justification of its latest action, that a policy of utter annihilation is necessitated by Japan's failure to heed the recent demand for unconditional surrender. But the question of surrendering or not surrendering certainly can have not the slightest relevance to the question of whether it is justifiable to use a method which under any circumstance is strictly condemned alike by the principles of international law and of morality. For this American outrage against the fundamental moral sense of mankind, Japan must proclaim to the world its protest against the U.S., which has made itself the archenemy of humanity.

Letter from President Truman (January 12, 1953)

My Dear Professor Cate:

Your letter of December 6, 1952 has just been delivered to me. When the message came to Potsdam that a successful atomic explosion had taken place in New Mexico, there was much excitement and conversation about the effect on the war then in progress with Japan. The next day I told the Prime Minister of Great Britain and Generalissimo Stalin that the explosion had been a success... I called a meeting... to discuss what should be done with this awful weapon.

I asked General Marshall what it would cost in lives to land on the Tokyo plain and other places in Japan. It was his opinion that such an invasion would cost a minimum one quarter of a million casualties, and might cost as much as a million, on the American side alone, with an equal number of the enemy. The other military and naval men present agreed. I asked Secretary Stimson which sites in Japan were devoted to war production. He promptly named Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among others. We sent an ultimatum to Japan. It was rejected.

I ordered atomic bombs dropped on the two cities named on the way back from Potsdam, when we were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean... the bombs ended the war, saved lives, and gave the free nations a chance to face the facts.

Sincerely,
Harry Truman

Thinking Questions:
- How do the accounts differ in their explanations of why the atomic bombs were used?
- Do you think Truman provides sufficient justification for their use? Does the editorial provide sufficient justification for their condemnation?