

(Name of Project)

by
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(Based on, If Any)

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in Order of Work Performed)

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ENOLA GAY

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“The point I am trying to make is that even in time of war, you can see current events in their historical perspective, provided that your passion for the truth prevails over your bias in favor of your own nation.”

LEO SZILARD

Author's Note

The events in *Enola Gay* have been authenticated by multiple sources, and in many instances are part of historical record. These sources include published or unpublished letters, diaries and memoirs of the key participants in the story, as well as official transcripts of meetings. Scenes of direct address (following the MAIDEN'S narration) by specific characters are verbatim. These are the characters own words. In the private meetings of the characters when the doors are closed and only brief quotes are available of what was actually said, I have used my imagination. Of course, this does not make it a documentary, but for such a topic, there is no loose playing with the facts.

David Blackman

Cast of characters:

AGENT
ANNOUNCER
BARD
BYRNES
CHURCHILL
COMPTON
CREW MEMBERS
DAVIS
DOOMAN
EISENHOWER
FEREBEE
FERMI
FORRESTAL
GOUDSMIT
GREW
GRONOUSKI
GROVES
HUME
LEAHY
LEWIS
LAURENCE
MAIDEN
COLONEL MARSHALL
GENERAL MARSHALL
MCKLOY
NICHOLS
NEDDERMEYER
OPPENHEIMER
PARSONS
PHOTOGRAPHERS
REPORTERS
SCIENTISTS
SPAATZ
STALIN
STIMSON
SWEENEY
SZILARD
TELLER
TIBBETS
TRUMAN
WIGNER
WILSON
ZHUKOV

Production Notes

The play consists of three acts. If required the play can be produced as a two act with the end of the first coming on page 84 with the completion of the atomic test at Alamagordo New Mexico.

All of the characters in this story were connected to the greatest scientific experiment in the history of mankind. The stakes were incredibly high and remain so. It is ultimately, a play about the first "Weapon of Mass Destruction." In that light, it is a contemporary story and should be treated as such. Despite the large number of characters, the play is intended to be performed by an ensemble of ten to twelve actors.

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

LIGHTS. The CREW of the Enola Gay enter the stage, and adopt positions as they would in their given roles within the aircraft.; co-pilot, navigator, tail gunner, bombardier and so on. The last to arrive is the pilot, COLONEL PAUL TIBBETS. They each cover their faces completely with oxygen masks and welding glasses. Each appears locked in a cramped space, separate from each other and bracing for the unknown. SOUND of a large aircraft. LIGHTS momentarily on the HIROSHIMA MAIDEN walking through their position.

TIBBETS

One minute to target...

The HIROSHIMA MAIDEN looks into the sky. SOUND of an almighty explosion that shakes the heavens. LIGHTS. The stage is empty. LIGHTS on HARRY TRUMAN and JIMMY BYRNES in the Oval Office.

TRUMAN

I really can't believe he's gone...the whole country relied on him.

BYRNES

He was a great leader.

TRUMAN

I never sought this Jimmy...I always thought you would become Vice President. If FDR ever made a slip, it was not supporting your nomination.

BYRNES

You did what was asked of you. I've always known that.

TRUMAN

The President...valued your support, even if it wasn't always returned. He used to say there wasn't a Bill he could get through Congress without Jimmy Byrnes on his side.

BYRNES

I always did what I could Harry.

Pause.

TRUMAN

Which is why I have a proposal to make. I don't have to remind you that there is no longer a Vice President.

BYRNES

It did cross my mind.

TRUMAN

I'm sure it did. And according to our Constitution, if anything happens to me, the Secretary of State would succeed him.

BYRNES

Yes Harry...

TRUMAN

I would like you to be my Secretary-of-State.

BYRNES

It would be an honour and a privilege...

TRUMAN

Of course this won't officially take effect till July. Needless to say in an unofficial capacity...

BYRNES

I understand...

TRUMAN

Good. Now that we've got that settled I'd like you to gather all the notes that were taken at the Yalta conference...

BYRNES

There is something we need to discuss which is most urgent...

TRUMAN

What is that?

BYRNES

We may soon have in our possession a weapon of such tremendous power as to give the United States unparalleled military superiority in the post-war world.

TRUMAN

What kind of weapon?

BYRNES

An atomic bomb. The final tests are being prepared as we speak, the crews have been training for nearly two years for what may prove to be the most decisive mission of the entire war..

TRUMAN

Why wasn't I informed about this earlier...as the Vice President...

BYRNES

There are thousands of workers from Oak Ridge Tennessee to Washington State who have no idea what they've been building for nearly three years...the plane crews still haven't been told.

TRUMAN

I'm not a welder for Boeing. I served as chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program...I knew there was a massive effort to build a new secret weapon but no details were ever given. What was Roosevelt thinking...

Pause.

TRUMAN

Did you have anything to do with me not knowing?

BYRNES

Of course not. In fact I told Franklin that as the Vice President you needed to be involved more in the decision making...

TRUMAN

You did, huh?

BYRNES

Harry...you are now charged with the most powerful role in the entire free world. How this weapon is used will be entirely up to you.

TRUMAN

An atomic bomb..?

BYRNES

With just one of these an entire city is reduced to dust. Japan will have no choice but to surrender completely on our terms.

TRUMAN

That would mean no invasion...why this is the best news I've heard in a long time.

LIGHTS on SZILARD. TRUMAN and BYRNES remain in tableau.

SZILARD

A Petition to the President of the United States...

LIGHTS on TRUMAN.

SZILARD

Discoveries of which the people of the United States are not aware may affect the welfare of this nation in the near future.

The liberation of atomic power which has been achieved places atomic bombs in the hands of the Army. It places in your hands, as Commander in Chief, the fateful decision whether or not to sanction the use of such bombs in the present phase of the war against Japan...

LIGHTS. All the actors are on stage. Tableau of a JAPANESE WOMAN in ceremonial costume surrounded by several Caucasian men in uniform. PHOTOGRAPHERS and REPORTERS are milling about. All are dressed circa 1945. An ANNOUNCER walks up to a microphone and addresses the audience.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen. On this day, the 8th of May 1955, twenty girls from Hiroshima are about to arrive in New York City via US Army Transport. They will be surgically treated at Mt. Sinai Hospital at absolutely no cost. They have all lived through the terror of atomic bombing. They are all disfigured.

Sudden burst of activity. The JAPANESE WOMAN cannot be seen. GROUND CREW drag what looks like an atomic bomb across the stage but this is quickly obscured by the buzz of activity. Everyone on stage prepares for the arrival of the HIROSHIMA MAIDENS. There is movement around a presence, heightened expectation, PHOTOGRAPHERS attempting to get photos above the throng of people. Shouts and questions running over each other with one statement clearly ringing out...

PHOTOGRAPHER

Could you please lift your veil Ma'am...Ma'am just one shot for the camera!

SOUND of air raid sirens. A plane engine drowning out any other noise. A countdown barely audible. The crowd disappears. LIGHTS. The MAIDEN faces the audience. She is not disfigured or wearing a veil. The only discernible item of clothing are opera gloves covering the length of both arms.

MAIDEN

Late September 1933. A Hungarian physicist and refugee from the Nazi takeover of Austria walks down Southampton Row in London. He stops at a streetlight.

LEO SZILARD stands at a streetlight. It suddenly turns to green. He remains frozen in his tracks.

SZILARD

As the light changed to green and I crossed the street, it suddenly occurred to me that if we could find an element which is split by neutrons and which would emit two neutrons when it absorbed one neutron, such an element, if assembled in sufficiently large mass, could sustain a nuclear chain reaction...

MAIDEN

What he saw were two concepts needed to free the energy locked in the atom: the "nuclear chain reaction" and the "critical mass" needed to set off and sustain it.

SZILARD

In certain circumstances it might become possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction, liberate energy on an industrial scale and construct atomic bombs!

LIGHTS. LEO SZILARD and EUGENE WIGNER walk across the stage engrossed in a map that WIGNER is holding. On another part of the stage, GENERAL LESLIE GROVES, US Army, and COLONEL NICHOLS, US Army Intelligence, study a confidential report. GROVES sits behind a desk eating chocolates. He is overweight.

NICHOLS

"It is believed that this man's name is Szilard. He is not on the staff of Columbia nor is he connected with the Department of Physics in any official capacity. He is a Jewish refugee from Hungary..."

GROVES looks up for a second.

NICHOLS

"It is understood that his family were wealthy merchants in Hungary and were able to come to the US with most of their money. He is an inventor, and is stated to be very pro German and to have remarked on many occasions that he thinks the Germans will win the war..."

Pause. GROVES does not respond.

NICHOLS

(Scanning the document)

In 1942 moved to Chicago from Columbia university, becoming the chief physicist of the Manhattan Project's Metallurgical Laboratory at the University of Chicago...

GROVES

At Metlab?

Pause.

GROVES

What about personal relationships?

NICHOLS

Unmarried, but he does write often to a "Trudi Weiss", a German. He talks about everything.

GROVES

Go on.

NICHOLS

It is suggested that before employing him on matters of a secret nature, a much more careful investigation be made. Employment of this person on secret work is not recommended.

MAIDEN

July 12th 1942. Physicist Eugene Wigner drives to the King's Crown Hotel in New York to pick up Leo Szilard. They then drive across the new Triborough Bridge, passing the New York World's Fair whose theme was "Building the World of Tomorrow"...

LIGHTS on SZILARD and WIGNER.

WIGNER

We have already lost two hours Leo. And nobody around here seems to know who he is.

SZILARD

Let's give it up and go home. Perhaps fate intended it. We should probably be making a frightful mistake by enlisting his help in applying to any public authorities in a matter like this. Once a government gets hold of something, it never lets go.

WIGNER

That is assuming he will even write your letter and the government listens to him Leo. After all, he is the father of "Jewish" physics.

SZILARD

My dear Eugene, this father's presence in Long Island has the same weight as would...the transfer of the Vatican from Rome to New Jersey. That's why we need his support. Roosevelt will listen to him.

WIGNER

He may listen, but that doesn't mean he will give you the money. The material alone for a graphite chain reaction-

SZILARD

(Impatient)

I know very well the cost of graphite. It is irrelevant.

WIGNER

Not if you're broke at the end of it.

SZILARD

We must determine the possibility of a chain reaction...even if I have to pay for it myself.

WIGNER

And then what?

SZILARD

We build atomic weapons, or the US government does, at least before the Nazis beat us to it.

WIGNER

Why don't we simply ask where he lives? After all, every child knows him.

LIGHTS on one of the ACTORS.

WIGNER

Excuse me, do you know where Einstein lives?

ACTOR

Of course I do. Right over there.

LIGHTS on EINSTEIN who is finishing a letter. He hands it to SZILARD.

SZILARD

"To F.D Roosevelt, President of the United States White House, Washington D.C. Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future....this new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs...yours very truly, Albert Einstein." Perfect. Now please sign Professor...

LIGHTS on GROVES and BYRNES. They are sitting on a park bench. The Washington monument is in the background.

MAIDEN

August 1942. Senator James F. Byrnes, head of the Appropriations Committee and one of the most influential men in Washington politics arranges a meeting with Colonel Leslie Groves, a brilliant engineering officer whose greatest fear is that the war is passing him by...

GROVES

(To audience)

I often had to carry highly secret papers. Invariably these were carried in a plain brown government envelope with my name and War Department address underneath. I never separated myself from these papers.

If I was in a dining car or a restaurant, I would invariably sit on the envelope. On airplanes I normally clutched it in one hand or held it in my lap.

MAIDEN

There was only one thing that really worried "Greasy" Groves, as he became known at West Point Military Academy: throughout his professional career, he had only commanded a desk...

LIGHTS.

GROVES

I want my transfer to a combat unit Senator. I've been offered an active service command, but so far there's been no word-

BYRNES

This war is a long way from being won.

GROVES

It's what I've trained for most of my adult life. How can an officer who hasn't seen combat be expected to lead-

BYRNES

If there's an invasion of Japan there'll be plenty of opportunity to lead...

GROVES

Yes...but Senator, I didn't want to have to remind you, but I was promised whatever assignment I requested after-

BYRNES

There's a project-

GROVES

Project?

BYRNES

Hold on now Leslie. This project...could very well end the war in one fell swoop.

GROVES

(Pained)

I requested combat duty Senator. This may be my only opportunity...in peacetime I was a Lieutenant for sixteen years...

BYRNES

I know that.

GROVES

You told me I'd have the pick of assignments.. long before the Pentagon was finished.

BYRNES

(Firmly)

Maybe this assignment has picked you. Either way, it's a unanimous verdict by the Joint Chiefs all the way up. You're the best man for the job, possibly the only man to head an operation such as this.

GROVES

Yes sir.

BYRNES

So what do you know about atomic energy?

GROVES

Enough to know that they've been trying to split the atom for decades without much success.

BYRNES

It's about to happen.

GROVES

What?

BYRNES

We were pretty fortunate with this one. A couple of scientists who managed to get out of Europe in the nick of time. Enrico..Fermi and a Hungarian fella...Leo Sziller or some such. Came up with the idea of a chain reaction while crossing the street, or so he says. They've got Roosevelt's ear thanks to Einstein, so here we are. We need to prove it can happen before the Nazis or the Russians do.

GROVES

Jewish?

BYRNES

Most of them are Leslie. At least the good ones.

GROVES

Can he be trusted?

BYRNES

At this point we don't have much choice. Either way, you'll be in charge of him, the entire Project in fact.

GROVES

So what exactly do you want me to do Senator...

BYRNES

Build the first atomic bomb. This will be the largest civilian-military project of the entire war, unless of course the Germans beat us to it first. It's called the Manhattan Project. We can't afford to fail on this one either.

GROVES

You mean "I", don't you Senator?

BYRNES

I've held onto this country's purse strings for as long as I can remember, but if this doesn't succeed, we'll all be answering Senate Inquiries for the next forty years. That includes the President.

GROVES

I won't let that happen.

BYRNES

I never thought you would...General.

BYRNES hands GROVES a folder.

BYRNES

(Indicating the file)

That's now official. Your new orders and promotion are all in this envelope. General Marshall's already signed them and the list of all new promotions will be out in a few days. You'll report to Marshall and Secretary Stimson. I know you've been waiting for this for a long time.

GROVES

What exactly is this bomb supposed to be capable of that we haven't done already?

BYRNES

Wipe out an entire city. Or so they say. Biggest secret of the war. Not even the Vice President knows.

GROVES

Truman? You're kidding...

BYRNES

One of your first tasks will be to pick someone to be the scientific head of the Manhattan Project. The likely candidates are all in that envelope but the choice is ultimately yours...don't worry, he will be completely under your authority. This is a military project all the way.

LIGHTS.

GROVES

I avoided committing anything in writing wherever possible and explicitly directed my liason and junior officers to not keep records. All memoranda for General Marshall were read in his presence then immediately returned for safekeeping. I used officer messengers for highly secret missions, who carried no papers or very limited ones. This was common practice. Every written message increased the chance of disclosing information to outsiders.

NICHOLS

His only admitted weakness was chocolate, consuming enormous quantities around the clock, even keeping a private stash in his office safe...

SOUND of a train carriage steaming through the night.

MAIDEN

Autumn 1942, Robert J. Oppenheimer, brilliant physicist and scholar boards a train heading for Chicago. He is a Professor at the University at Berkeley and the California Institute in Pasadena. Venerated by his students, Oppie, as he was known to his colleagues, was looked upon as the master and model of the rising generation of physicists in America...

LIGHTS. GROVES and NICHOLS, stand up when they see OPPENHEIMER. GROVES is eating chocolate.

GROVES

You've come highly recommended for the job Professor.

OPPENHEIMER

Yes, so I've been told.

GROVES

I can't impress upon you too much how important this project is to the war.

OPPENHEIMER

To say the future of mankind wouldn't overstate the matter General.

GROVES

I'm more concerned with our enemies' future and putting an end to it.

NICHOLS

Do you think the Germans have a chance to get this before we do?

OPPENHEIMER

Hard to say. They have some pretty good physicists too you know. Heisenberg is-

GROVES

We're well acquainted with Heisenberg's file. Do you think he's capable...

OPPENHEIMER

There's a handful of scientists around the world, who with the right amount of time and resources, could develop a new type of weapon like this.

NICHOLS

Could? If it was possible, why wouldn't they? It's never been done before. Isn't that enough reason to do it?

OPPENHEIMER

Would it be possible to open a window in here..

GROVES

Smoke if you want to Professor.

OPPENHEIMER

How did..? Why wouldn't they? Because, they might not want to. Heisenberg may have no desire to put such a weapon in the hands of someone like Hitler. Anyway, to put this type of project together requires the work of a great many minds...physicists, scientists, mathematicians, the best of whom were kicked out or left Germany before the war.

GROVES

Well, that's where you come in Professor. We've got all the best crackpots together to work on this. Now we've been told that under you things get done fast.

OPPENHEIMER

It always helps to have good people around you General.

GROVES

Spare me the modesty. I read about your little feat of learning Dutch in six weeks to give a lecture in Leyden. Whoever I choose will be overseeing the largest project of the entire war. If you're successful, everything you've ever learnt will be put to the test. There will be no room for failure.

NICHOLS

What are you going to need Professor?

OPPENHEIMER

Yes. (Pause.) Well, first of all, the most important thing is that we concentrate all our efforts in one spot otherwise the possibility of duplication of proceedings and confusion will be too great.

GROVES

What do you suggest?

OPPENHEIMER

A group of laboratories established in one place where the collective work will be done under the direction of one man..

GROVES

Like yourself?

OPPENHEIMER

Whoever is most suitable for the job, I suspect. This work would be done by both theoretical and experimental physicists, mathematicians, armament experts, specialists in radium chemistry, and metallurgy, not to mention the technicians we're going to need to deal with explosives and precision measurement...the point being that this one person would need to oversee all these departments necessitating a concentration of human resources.

GROVES writes down a few notes before speaking.

GROVES

We've already established a lab at Oak Ridge to produce explosives. What do you think of establishing a second site there?

OPPENHEIMER

On the Atlantic seaboard? General, we're not dealing with a normal weapon...if there's a premature explosion, dangerous radio-activity would be released, threatening the local population.

GROVES

Tell us where you think the site should be located...

OPPENHEIMER

Wherever it is eventually located, it needs to possess certain features...remoteness being one of them. Somewhere in the desert particularly if there are any accidents. You know gentlemen, we're really dealing with the unknown here. All personnel would be putting themselves at great risk.

Silence. OPPENHEIMER continues.

OPPENHEIMER

There is a site in California that I had mentioned to one-

GROVES

We've already checked it out. It's also too close to an inhabited district.

OPPENHEIMER

How about New Mexico? I was thinking of a place there I was educated at when I was a boy...

GROVES

The Los Alamos Riding School for Boys in Alamogordo, right Professor? It sounds like Alamogordo might be by an ideal spot.

SOUND of the train slowing down. Whistles blowing.
GROVES and the COLONELS slowly get up from their seats.

GROVES (CONT'D)

We'll be in touch Professor. I will remind you that all of this is absolutely top secret...

OPPENHEIMER

Of course...um... when will I know exactly...

GROVES

There's some security matters that need to be dealt with first-

OPPENHEIMER

I've already given those people complete co-operation as to my political affiliations..

GROVES

Well, it seems they're still not quite satisfied. Relax, the final decision is up to me.

OPPENHEIMER prepares to leave.

GROVES

Tell me something Professor, what do you think of Leo Szilard?

OPPENHEIMER

Not to head this project?

GROVES

You wouldn't approve of such a choice?

OPPENHEIMER

General, if it wasn't for Leo Szilard, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

GROVES

So you'd be prepared to vouch for him?

OPPENHEIMER

We've never actually worked together but...he's known for his single-mindedness.

GROVES

Do you think he might pose a security risk?

OPPENHEIMER

I didn't say that. Everyone knows who Szilard is, at least in the scientific community. You are bound to find someone who would be able to speak more confidently, or confidentially on his background.

LIGHTS.

GROVES

In accordance with my verbal instructions of July 15th, it is desired that clearance be issued for the employment of Julius Robert Oppenheimer without delay, irrespective of the information which you have concerning Mr. Oppenheimer. He is absolutely essential to the project.

MAIDEN

(To audience)

October 5th 1942 General Groves is taken on his first inspection of the MetLab at the University of Chicago by its scientific head, Arthur Compton.

COMPTON

The MetLab's mission is to prepare plutonium for A-bombs. But our first task is to prove that the nuclear chain reaction needed to produce that plutonium will actually work.

MAIDEN

Groves meets Szilard and Enrico Fermi for the first time...

LIGHTS on SZILARD, FERMI and SCIENTISTS working intensely on a formula written on a chalk board.

SZILARD

They will be lucky to produce more than a few pounds of uranium until the new reactors are finished. Then, sufficient quantities should be able to be produced...

COMPTON

Gentlemen, I'd like to introduce General Groves.

SZILARD continue working. FERMI turns around.

COMPTON

He is to head the Manhattan Project from this point on.

SZILARD turns around briefly.

SZILARD

A military man cannot run an a project such as this. I am sorry General, but your superiors have given you an impossible task. This is the field of atomic science. Even the best minds in physics, chemistry, are struggling with the possibilities.

GROVES

I do have ten years of formal education after I entered college. That would be the equivalent of about two PhD's, wouldn't it.

SZILARD

We are talking about unexpected and deeply embedded layers of the secrets of nature. Wholly new processes of thought are needed beyond all previous notions of physics...not PhD's.

Pause.

GROVES

What are those formulas gentlemen?

SZILARD

We are trying to calculate the amount of uranium required for this new explosion. At this stage we are looking at a factor of ten.

GROVES

That's unacceptable. The US military can't keep investing money in a project without a clear understanding of how much resources will be required.

SZILARD

Whatever is necessary must be paid.

GROVES

(Visibly angered)

Do you have any idea of the scope of this project, what has already been invested?

SZILARD

General...the idea of a nuclear explosion came to me as I was walking across the street watching the light change to green....It is the imagination, combined with the intellect and scientific fact which will produce an atomic bomb of unprecedented power, not the machinations of a mind-

GROVES

(Trying to control his temper)

We have construction commencing on three sites across the country...billions of dollars have already been allocated, thousands of workers re-located...

SZILARD

But this is not a typical military project is it General? Whatever the amount of fissionable material required, it must be procured for the US to continue so they can help build a weapon that could possibly end the war.

GROVES

Possibly?

SZILARD

More likely change the face of warfare as we know it. Is that a more suitable reason?

Pause.

GROVES

Revise your figures. A factor of 10 is unacceptable. It needs to be narrowed considerably if you expect any foreseeable results.

SZILARD

Nem tudom kikiparni a harsambol.

GROVES spins around.

GROVES

What did you say?

SZILARD

You can't scrape an answer out of my belly. It's an old Hungarian saying.

GROVES

Watch me.

GROVES leaves.

SZILARD

How can you be expected to work with people like that!

MAIDEN

General Groves, or "Gee Gee" as he became known to his highly intellectual recruits, tries to compartmentalise all the scientists and their discoveries. Leo Szilard is one of the first to devise his own way of working...

SZILARD

Hardly a week passed by that somebody did not come to my office in Chicago from somewhere, wanting to convey a piece of information to which I was not entitled. They usually did not ask me to conceal the fact that I came into possession of this information. All they asked was that I conceal from the Army that they were the persons who had given it to me!

COMPTON

Groves considers Szilard the only "villain" in the whole Manhattan Project. Szilard considers Groves his biggest fool.

MAIDEN

October 28th 1942, General Groves drafts a secret letter to be signed by the Secretary of War. He presents it to Arthur Compton for his approval...

LIGHTS.

COMPTON

"It is requested that an order of internment be issued against Mr. Szilard and that he be apprehended and turned over to representatives of this Department for internment. Signed, Secretary of War..." I gather the Secretary hasn't read this yet.

GROVES

I wanted to know your feelings on the matter before it goes any further.

COMPTON

I thought we already had this discussion...

GROVES

He's a security risk.

COMPTON

Maybe by your standards, but, like it or not, he's one of the most valuable members of our organisation.

GROVES

Would you consider him indispensable?

Pause.

COMPTON

The chain reaction is basically his idea.

GROVES

It hasn't been proven yet.

COMPTON

Yes but it has provided the basis for scientists to agree that a nuclear explosion is indeed possible. It will happen.

GROVES

But does that make him indispensable. It's a yes or no answer.

COMPTON

Perhaps not...indispensable...

GROVES

Fine then.

COMPTON

No matter how you look at it General, he is one of the most important members of this project. And I have every reason to believe that he will work with utter devotion to the welfare of the United States.

GROVES

Devotion? He's patented the chain reaction under his own name!

COMPTON

And done more to ensure the security of any new discoveries than any scientist working in this field.

GROVES

So if I do have him interned?

COMPTON

(Dismayed)

To even think of doing something like this to a physicist of Szilard's stature...

GROVES

(Annoyed by this answer)

He's a German citizen for Christ's sake...

COMPTON

Szilard became a German citizen under the Weimar Republic.

GROVES

I know that already.

COMPTON

Well then you know he's not a Nazi...he arrived in the US on an immigrant visa before they took over. And I might say he's shown nothing but absolute commitment since arriving here.

GROVES

Don't they all?

COMPTON

If you go ahead with this, and I assume Secretary Stimson agrees...you're likely to incur the enmity of every scientist already working on this project. No suspicion on your part is worth that risk.

GROVES

Risk? It's Szilard who should be worried about the risks. No matter how intelligent he may be, Szilard is also the one scientist capable of being a spy.

COMPTON

Based on what proof?

GROVES

He's not prepared to follow orders. Nor does he understand how military authority works.

COMPTON

He understands well enough. He just doesn't care for it.

Pause.

GROVES

Is that right?

COMPTON

I didn't mean it like that. It's not that he's incapable of taking orders-

GROVES

The longer he stays, the longer the project will take to complete. This is unacceptable.

MAIDEN

The Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, refuses to sign. Groves is furious and vows to discover new reasons to imprison Szilard. He has FBI agents follow Szilard's every move...

LIGHTS. SZILARD is going about his daily business while eating a cake.

AGENT

(To audience as he addresses his notes)

The surveillance report indicate that the subject is of Jewish extraction and has a fondness for delicacies and frequently makes purchases in delicatessen stores, usually eats his breakfast in drug stores and other meals in restaurants, walks a great deal when he cannot secure a taxi, usually is shaved in a barber shop, speaks occasionally in a foreign tongue, and associates mostly with people of Jewish extraction...

MAIDEN

August 1942 Compton summons Szilard to his office. Szilard considers the meeting to be of no special importance...

LIGHTS on COMPTON at the desk. SZILARD rushes to him and thrusts some papers and drawings onto his desk.

SZILARD

Look at this Arthur...

COMPTON

What are these supposed to be?

SZILARD

It is a draft for a fast neutron reactor. I came up with it last night. You see...look here. Fast neutrons from a radio active core would bombard a surrounding blanket of uranium turning it into plutonium. This plutonium would then be refined as a new fuel for reactors or used as the explosive in A bombs.

COMPTON hands a notification to SZILARD.

SZILARD

What is this?

COMPTON

(Cold)

Sign over your patents Leo. Otherwise I'll be forced to dismiss you from the MetLab.

SZILARD

My dear Compton....is this another attempt by the US government to blackmail me?

Pause.

COMPTON

All the other scientists are no longer authorised to discuss their work with you, or any other secret matters. You are to return all secret reports and notebooks and cannot participate, even as an unpaid consultant, until such time as the patent negotiations between yourself and the US government have been completed.

SZILARD

Does Groves know he is only delaying the completion of the project...

COMPTON

Groves has already transferred Ed Condon from Los Alamos...

SZILARD

That's ridiculous. Condon is one of the few American pioneers in experimental physics..

COMPTON

And guilty of insubordination as far as Groves is concerned. He had him escorted out of Los Alamos by two security agents.

SZILARD

It was Groves who appointed him to be Oppenheimer's deputy!

Pause. SZILARD sits down.

COMPTON

Are you all right Leo?

SZILARD

Groves cannot remove me from the project...there wouldn't be one if it wasn't for me!

COMPTON

He's in charge. He can do what he likes.

SZILARD

Tell him I will try to obey his rules...

COMPTON

It's not just that. The fact that you're not "American." If you know what I mean.

SZILARD

Thank you for your tact Arthur. I have invested my career, my life into this one possibility...

COMPTON

I know Leo.

SZILARD

Condon...the good General should have been happy to keep him.

COMPTON

He tried to draw up his own rules Leo.

SZILARD

And you...what rules do you follow?

COMPTON

Like it or not, Groves is in charge.

SZILARD is silent.

COMPTON

Well, don't you have anything else to say about all this?

SZILARD

Things are now worse than semi miserable.

MAIDEN

A patent attorney, James Hume is cleared to represent Szilard...

HUME

I was shocked when I learned what was going on. At the time we thought all the stiff armed tactics were supposed to be coming from the Nazis, but I soon discovered that Groves's actions fitted right into that pattern. I thought this is what we're supposed to be fighting.

MAIDEN

Arthur Compton cables Groves hours after the meeting...

COMPTON

I have given Szilard till Wednesday to remove base of operations to New York. This action was based on efficient operation of organisation, not on reliability. Anticipate probable resignation. Suggest Army follow his motions but no drastic action now...

GROVES

Szilard does not resign.

MAIDEN

December 2nd 1942, in the basement of Stagg Field at the University of Chicago, a group of scientists led by Szilard and Enrico Fermi, attempt the first chain reaction experiment. Hiroshima is now a split second and less than three years away from annihilation.

A group of SCIENTISTS gather around SZILARD. He directs them to and fro with lightning speed and confidence in what is about to do.

SZILARD

Let me explain to you exactly what we need. For the uranium graphite pile, the uranium should be compacted into lumps. The neutrons released in the fission will be slowed down by the surrounding graphite. As slow neutrons, they should be the most efficient in creating more fission and more neutrons. This is how we shall maintain the chain reaction.

SZILARD, FERMI, SCIENTISTS, prepare for the first chain reaction experiment.

FERMI

(To Szilard)

All is ready.

SZILARD

How much did we end up using?

FERMI

Four hundred tons of graphite, six tons of uranium metal and fifty tons of uranium oxide. Rutherford has sent word that any impurities in the boron might prematurely detonate any uranium chain reaction.

SZILARD

There will be no explosion!

SZILARD and FERMI turn their attention to the task at hand. A SCIENTIST standing on the platform next to the graphite pile slowly pulls out what looks like a rod sticking from the side of it.

SZILARD

Pull the rod to the next position.

SOUND gets louder.

FERMI

Neutron intensity has increased.

The clickety clack SOUND becomes more rapid then merges into a roar.

FERMI

The counter can't follow it any more.

SZILARD

Switch to the chart recorder!

FERMI

We are in high neutron intensity regime. The recorder cannot cope.

SZILARD

Change the scale of the recorder.

FERMI hesitates.

SZILARD

You must do it now!

SOUND becomes even louder.

FERMI

Neutron intensity is increasing more and more Leo..

SZILARD checks the equipment.

SZILARD

The pile has gone critical.

SOUND is almost unbearable. The SCIENTISTS holding the rods turn towards FERMI and SZILARD. Others are holding their ears.

SCIENTIST ONE

You've done it Leo..

SCIENTIST TWO

Should we shut the pile off?

Pause.

SZILARD

(To FERMI)

We have our answer.

FERMI doesn't move.

SZILARD

Do you want the chain reaction to continue and destroy half of Chicago!

The SCIENTISTS on the ladders look to SZILARD and FERMI waiting for directions. SZILARD rushes up to the SCIENTISTS who holding the rods.

SZILARD

Shut the pile off!

The SCIENTIST pushes the rod back into the graphite pile. FERMI and SZILARD are left alone. FERMI pulls out a bottle of Chianti, opens it and pours two glasses. In silence they toast and drink.

FERMI

Congratulations Leo.

SZILARD is silent.

SZILARD

(to audience)

It is a black day for mankind. There is nothing to celebrate. This test proves anything is possible. And our work is virtually done.

FERMI

Whatever weapon they make, it would probably be so big you couldn't get it over the target.

LIGHTS. An atomic bomb sits on the stage with the name "Little Boy" scrawled across it. It looks bizarre, awesome, disconcerting. CAPTAIN PARSONS addresses the audience.

MAIDEN

Captain Parsons, US Navy, is the assigned explosives expert on the Manhattan Project. It will be his job to arm the first nuclear weapon in mid flight...

He is wearing a crisp Navy white uniform. He holds a briefcase.

PARSONS

(to audience)

What I have here are schematic drawings of the uranium bomb. This, of course, is highly top secret and you're not to discuss any of what I am about to tell you with anyone else.

PARSONS places the briefcase on a table and opens it. He takes out some diagrams and unrolls them.

PARSONS

Inside the bomb casing is the uranium core. It weighs about twenty two pounds. It's split into two unequal segments kept six feet apart inside the barrel of a cannon which is inside the bomb's casing. Basically, it looks like a gun. We've created an atomic bullet which is fired down the gun barrel at the target using the proximity fusing system which we developed. The target is another piece of uranium. When the gun is fired, the uranium bullet breaks through the pins holding it in place, then breaks through the tamper shield, rams it into the target and boom, you've got yourself a nuclear explosion.

MAIDEN

March 1943. Thanks to Szilard's chain reaction experiment, atomic bombs can now be designed and built under the direction of J. Robert Oppenheimer. Szilard is left behind as many of his colleagues at Metlab pack up for the train ride to Lamy, New Mexico, the nearest station to the Los Alamos Laboratory...

LIGHTS. SZILARD remains on stage observing the transformation as he is surrounded by SCIENTISTS carrying luggage, arriving at Los Alamos. It is a "Magic Kingdom" of natural wonder. The SCIENTISTS are totally in awe of their new surroundings.

SCIENTIST ONE

This place reminds me of the Magic Mountain...

SCIENTIST TWO

The Magic what...?

SCIENTIST ONE

The Magic Mountain. It's a famous novel by Thomas Mann...

SCIENTIST TWO

Never heard of it. What's it about?

SZILARD

A man remains in a sanatorium for seven years, freeing himself from the constraints and conventions of life, and instead, engages in a prolonged questioning of the universe.

OPPENHEIMER

There was plenty in the life of Los Alamos to cause irritation...but I have never known a group more understanding and more devoted to a common purpose, more willing to lay aside personal convenience and prestige, more understanding in the role they were playing in their country's history.

SZILARD

(to audience)

Nobody could think straight in a place like that. Everybody there will go crazy.

Buildings emerge out of nowhere. Trucks arrive.
SCIENTIFIC and MILITARY PERSONNEL file out.
OPPENHEIMER facing the SCIENTISTS.

OPPENHEIMER

I'd like to welcome you to Los Alamos. I'm going to lay out for you where we stand right now towards building this....gadget. Uranium will be supplied by the manufacturing plant at Oak Ridge and plutonium by another factory going up at Hanford Washington. Going on current estimates it might take as long as two years to produce sufficient raw materials for a critical mass huge enough to yield a nuclear explosion. The uranium we know more about but a lot of work will be with the neutrons and that's still pretty unknown.

SCIENTIST ONE

How big is this explosion supposed to be?

OPPENHEIMER

The radiation alone with this gadget will kill every living thing within a thousand yard radius...

SCIENTIST TWO

I don't understand, are we here to help build a poisonous gas type weapon..?

OPPENHEIMER

No...not at all. Blast...blast effect will kill everything within 2000 yards.

One of the SCIENTISTS raises his hand.

NEDDERMEYER

Excuse me, but can I say something?

OPPENHEIMER

Sure Seth, go right ahead...

NEDDERMEYER

Everyone keeps talking about an explosion pounding apart...

OPPENHEIMER

What are you driving at?

NEDDERMEYER

What we should be all working towards is implosion...driving together.

There is an uncomfortable silence in the room, followed by a few sniggers. There is clearly little support for this idea.

SCIENTIST THREE

That's gotta be one of the silliest ideas I ever heard.

OPPENHEIMER

Seth, you were saying...

NEDDERMEYER

Yes..we're looking at compression in one dimension when fissionable material could be compressed by exploding a layer of TNT wrapped around it.

NEDDERMEYER realizes he now has everyone's attention.

NEDDERMEYER

Two, or three dimensions working instead of one, then the explosive doesn't have to travel as fast and we won't need as much fissionable material.

There is another deadening silence. Heads begin to shake.

PARSONS

You obviously haven't worked with ordnance before. It would be impossible to create such a device.

SCIENTIST ONE

I think you should stick to theoretics Neddermeyer.

Pause. All await OPPENHEIMER'S response.

OPPENHEIMER

This will have to be looked into Seth.

OPPENHEIMER turns his attention to the group.

OPPENHEIMER

We're discovering the special nature of chain reactions here gentlemen, so there is no such thing as a silly idea until it is absolutely proven otherwise. And there is no time to lose. The Germans may be well ahead of us for all we know, so speed is essential.

MAIDEN

Early December 1943, Groves arranges to meet Szilard in Chicago to "discuss" the patents on his discoveries...

LIGHTS. GROVES is seated in his office. SZILARD enters.

GROVES

You're late.

SZILARD

I must tell you General, I only agreed to this meeting under duress.

GROVES

And now that you're here what is your decision?

SZILARD

I do not wish to sign this contract.

GROVES

You are aware of what that means...

SZILARD

General...I am willing to negotiate-

GROVES

You have nothing to negotiate with.

SZILARD

You cannot talk to me this way.

GROVES

Your presence in this country is a privilege extended to you by the US government.

Pause.

SZILARD

I did not mean to imply ungratefulness on my part, but General, I need you to state clearly whether I will still be employed at the Met Lab if I fail to sign this paper.

GROVES is silent.

SZILARD

It is a simple question to which I demand an answer.

GROVES

You make no demands here Mr. Szilard.

SZILARD

(Defensively)

In this room or in this country?

GROVES

I refuse to give you any assurances.

SZILARD

On what grounds!?

GROVES

That such a statement from me would constitute duress and then our agreement would not be legally valid. After all, in any contract or employment negotiation, there is always some duress. Why, if Sears Roebuck and Company offered me a million dollars a year in salary to be its general manager, that would certainly be duress on me.

SZILARD

Not if you were *worth* such a salary.

GROVES

You're lucky I even agreed to meet with you Szilard. I could have you int-

SZILARD

In the absence of any clear statement on your part, I feel like a man who is accosted in the street by somebody who demands money while he keeps his hand in his pocket so that it is not quite clear whether he is holding a gun, or a pipe.

GROVES

I don't smoke, Professor.

SZILARD

Are you threatening me?

GROVES

You're a refugee who once belonged in the Austrian Army. You attended a German university, you profess an admiration of German culture and..

SZILARD

I am a Jew.

Pause.

GROVES

Yes.

SZILARD

And that has no bearing on this matter?

GROVES

I have nothing against Jews in general. Just your type.

SZILARD

What type is that?

GROVES

Pushy...opinionated.

SZILARD

But even you must answer to a higher authority.

GROVES

As far as I'm concerned the US government is being more than generous with you Mr. Szilard.

SZILARD

If I sign it, is because I am convinced, rightly or wrongly, that the Germans have caught up with us and I do not wish to leave the project..

GROVES

And for a man of your talents there is no other game in town is there Szilard..?

SZILARD

Science has taught me one thing...

GROVES

And what's that?

Pause.

SZILARD

(resignation)

You cannot always choose who you make history with.

GROVES

\$25,000 for all your nuclear inventions made before 1940. Not a penny more.

SZILARD

Is this your negotiating strategy?

GROVES

You'll get no further assurances.

GROVES hands SZILARD a pen. SZILARD doesn't move.

GROVES

I have the power to remove you completely from this project, which I won't hesitate to do unless you sign this agreement.

SZILARD pauses for a second, then signs.

GROVES

(TO audience)

Sure, we should never have had an atomic bomb if Szilard had not shown such determination during the first years of the war. But as soon as we got going, so far as I was concerned he might just as well have walked the plank!

MAIDEN

September 1944, at the US Army Second Air Force Headquarters in Colorado Springs, two senior officers go through the list of the most accomplished bomber pilots in the U.S. Army Air Force.

LIGHTS on GROVES and NICHOLS in his office. They are looking at identical documents.

NICHOLS

This one might just be the man General.

GROVES

He better have more combat experience than the last candidate.

NICHOLS

In February '42, he became the Squadron Commander of the 340th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bombardment Group, destined for England. In November of that year he was in Algeria leading the first bombardment missions in support of the North African invasion.

GROVES

How many missions?

NICHOLS

Enough for him to have earned a assignment stateside long time ago General. He flew 25 missions in B-17s, including the first American Flying Fortress raid against occupied Europe. But he keeps volunteering for whatever we throw at him. Listen to this General...specially chosen by Eisenhower to fly him during the North African Theatre of Operations.

GROVES

What about B29s?

NICHOLS

In March 1943, he was returned to the states to test the combat capability of the B-29...it was plagued with problems-

GROVES

Yes, I remember..

NICHOLS

Well...he taught himself to fly the airplane and subsequently flew it about 400 hours in tests. Basically he has more experience with the B-29 than any other pilot.

GROVES

You seem pretty impressed with him.

NICHOLS

He's a regular war hero General. Duty, honour, country. Pretty soon there won't be any of 'em left.

GROVES

(Sardonically)

Are you sure he's still alive?

NICHOLS

He's actually here in Washington.

GROVES

What about security?

NICHOLS

(Checking his notes)

He writes to his mother. Apparently she encouraged him to be a pilot. Never discusses his missions...he's true blue all the way General...talks about nothing, especially with his wife.

GROVES

What's his name?

LIGHTS.

CREW MEMBER

Colonel Tibbets?...all the crew are assembled and ready to go.

MAIDEN

August 6th 1945...

LIGHTS. A swirl of activity on stage. TIBBETS addresses the CREW of the Enola Gay.

TIBBETS

At ease gentlemen. The moment has arrived. The weapon we are about to deliver was successfully tested back in the States. We have received orders to drop it on the enemy. The targets in order of priority are as follows: Hiroshima, Kokura and Nagasaki. The bomb you are going to drop is something new in the history of warfare. It is a weapon...of mass destruction. We think it will wipe out everything within a three mile area.

The CREW look at each other not quite sure what to make of this. TIBBETS gives a signal to someone offstage.

TIBBETS

Projector please.

The projector starts but quickly the film gets caught in the sprockets. There is the sound of the machine ripping up the film. There is a collective moan from all on stage coupled with laughter. One of the CREW attempts to fix it.

CREW MEMBER

Hope the bomb doesn't do that.

More laughter. One of the CREW MEMBERS goes over and starts tinkering with the projector.

PARSONS

(to audience)

Now the film you are not about to see was made of the only test we have performed. This is what happened. At ten miles, the flash of the explosion was seen. At ten thousand feet away, a soldier was knocked onto his back. Fifteen miles away another soldier was temporarily blinded. At twenty miles, a girl in a town who had been blind all her life saw a flash of light. A fifty miles away, the explosion was heard by the local population. At sixty thousand feet, a cloud in this mushroom shape was formed. It was preceded by a flash of light much brighter than the Sun.

The CREW MEMBERS start mumbling amongst themselves. TIBBETS observes their reactions from the side. LEWIS raises his hand.

LEWIS

What exactly is it we're takin' over there Captain?

TIBBETS

Relax Bob...if we come back from this one I'll take you on a guided tour of the drop zone, personally.

PARSONS pulls out a pair of goggles.

PARSONS

These will be worn by every crew member on the plane near the target at the time of the explosion. (PARSONS puts them on and demonstrates). By turning this knob on the nose bridge, it will change the amount of light admitted by the glass. The knob must be turned to its lowest settings. That's all I have to say. Good luck...

The CREW member at the projector turns to TIBBETS.

CREW MEMBER

I got it Colonel...should be ready to roll.

TIBBETS

All right men. What you are about to see is classified top secret. No one's ever seen anything like it. So don't talk about it to anyone. OK...

LIGHTS on the JAPANESE WOMAN. She is slowly undressing. TRUMAN, TIBBETS and SZILARD address the audience.

SZILARD

Seven months after the bomb came, my mother had taken me to a village by the sea, where there were other refugees from Hiroshima.

TIBBETS

We stayed in a reed shack that swimmers would dress in. For the first time, I saw my reflection in the mirror...

TRUMAN

My scalp was visible scar tissue flowed like lava down my cheek, across my jaw...

TIBBETS

I crawled across the sand to drown myself in the sea...

End of Act One

ACT TWO

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

LIGHTS on the MAIDEN.

MAIDEN

June 18th 1945, Truman meets with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss plans for the invasion of the Japanese mainland...

LIGHTS.

GENERAL MARSHALL

Operation Downfall will begin on or about November 1, 1945 Mr. President. 767,000 Marines and Army troops will begin landing on the beaches of the southern island of Kyushu in "Operation Olympic." The objective of this operation will be to occupy the southern half of Kyushu and use it as an air base and staging area for a second invasion. If the Japanese do not then surrender, "Operation Coronet"-the landings on the main island of Honshu will begin. This will be a force of 28 divisions, twice the size of "Olympic," They would eventually come ashore on beaches near Tokyo.

ADMIRAL LEAHY

Even with a force of this size, it could take until the end of 1946 to occupy the capital and enough of Honshu to force Japan to surrender. It will be the largest amphibious invasion force in history.

BYRNES

What is the expected date for the invasion of Honshu?

GENERAL MARSHALL

Approximately sometime in March '46.

TRUMAN

And the expected casualties?

GENERAL MARSHALL

Anywhere from 25,000 to 60,000 in the first few days of fighting.

TRUMAN

My God it will be like Okinawa all over again. Surely there must be some other way to bring an end to this thing...60,000 casualties. I just don't understand how the Japanese can't admit they've lost and its time to throw in the towel...

MCKLOY clears his throat.

TRUMAN

Mckloy, you look like you have something on your mind. C'mon get it out. It's my policy everyone has his say even if they don't agree with me.

MCKLOY

Yes sir...Mr. President, I have to tell you, to go through with this invasion would be just sheer madness if we don't first consider a political solution.

BYRNES

We've been down this road before Mckloy...

TRUMAN

No Jimmy, let's hear him out. A political solution heh? What do you propose?

MCKLOY

I think everyone in this room, with a few possible exceptions, knows that Japan is beaten. They have no navy no air force, their armies are in disarray all over Asia, we're destroying their cities on a daily basis with absolute impunity...both islands Mr. President are totally cut off from supply or re-inforcement. From all reports, the population is starving...

BYRNES

But that doesn't mean they're willing to surrender.

MCKLOY

On certain conditions...yes-

BYRNES

The Japanese are in no position to dictate terms. They started this damn war...

TRUMAN

Be quiet. Go on...

MCKLOY

And now we can choose how to finish it. Let them have their Emperor. We know from recent intercepts they are looking for some sort of peace deal which is not a total stain on their national honour and that means allowing them to keep their Emperor before we consider an invasion or, assuming it works, dropping an atomic bomb on one of their cities.

TRUMAN

I don't know if the American public could abide by that sort of decision, Mckloy. There have been calls for trying Hirohito as a war criminal.

MCKLOY

Newspapers have also called for clarification of our surrender terms. No one wants this struggle to continue any longer than necessary. So I say to you with all respect Mr. President that it would be the most wrongheaded move possible if we wish to occupy Japan after the war under any peaceable conditions. They must retain their Emperor. And the cost of an invasion...

BYRNES

You can't say the same thing about the bomb McKloy. It might prevent an invasion and allow us to maintain our policy of unconditional surrender.

MCKLOY

But for what purpose? If the bomb doesn't induce the Japanese to surrender unconditionally, which is highly likely, then we will have to invade...

BYRNES

Or continue to use such a weapon as part of our planned military objectives...

MCKLOY

Mr. Secretary, I think making a distinction between violent combat and the planned and systematic destruction of large numbers of civilians is critical at this stage of the war.

LEAHY

Here here...

TRUMAN

(To Leahy)

Admiral, you obviously have something to add to that.

LEAHY

I totally concur with McKloy. The Japanese are defeated and are looking for a way out. Operation Starvation has been a dubious but unparalleled success. We are slowly starving the whole country through naval blockade and there's nothing they can do about it. If we continue with this course of action when a political solution is staring at us in the face...

TRUMAN

You've heard Secretary Byrnes say we might not have to invade. If the Manhattan Project is a success...

LEAHY

Frankly Mr. President I don't think it will succeed, and if it does, why would we want to use it on an essentially defeated enemy? It's not how I was taught how to wage war.

TRUMAN

The Japanese have had a lot to say about how this war has been waged Admiral. I'll certainly take all of this into consideration. The last thing I want to do is send American boys to their deaths unnecessarily. Jimmy and I will bring this up at Potsdam when we meet with Stalin and Churchill. In fact McKloy, I'd like you to work on the Declaration of surrender terms that I'll be making.

MCKLOY

Yes Mr. President.

TRUMAN

General, do you have anything to add before we adjourn.

GENERAL MARSHALL

No Mr. President. The Army is working on the assumption that the invasion of Japan will be required to achieve our aims of unconditional surrender. In fact, I will make sure that every individual moving to the Pacific should be indoctrinated with a firm determination to see the invasion through.

TRUMAN

So it is agreed to plan and prepare for the invasion of Japan. I thank you for your time gentlemen.

MAIDEN

Immediately following the June 18th meeting, Byrnes solidifies his position as the pre eminent advisor on American foreign policy in the Truman administration...

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

LIGHTS on BYRNES and TRUMAN in the Oval Office.

BYRNES

If you go along with these recommendations Mr. President, it would mean that we allow Japan to dictate terms of surrender.

TRUMAN

The Joint Chiefs don't consider allowing their Emperor to remain as constituting a dictation of policy. Memorandums from Stimson and Grew have said as much.

BYRNES

Unconditional surrender is the only acceptable policy the US Government can take against an aggressor like Japan.

TRUMAN

Would Roosevelt have demanded unconditional surrender knowing what we know...

BYRNES

Why it was his idea in Casablanca. He had every opportunity to change his position in April of '43 but, there it was again. Unconditional surrender. None of us expected it.

TRUMAN

McKloy, Leahy, Grew, all consider modifying our terms as essential to avoiding an invasion.

BYRNES

There are other considerations, Mr. President, which the Joint Chiefs cannot be privy to. Which is why I strongly advise that we wait before making any formal announcements as far as conditions of surrender.

TRUMAN

Wait till when? Okinawa has fallen. From all reports, Japan is in shock.

BYRNES

We must wait till the first test has been successfully completed before any announcement is made regarding Japan's surrender, particularly in our dealings with the Soviets. There is no point of dealing with Stalin with a good hand when we can have a royal flush.

TRUMAN

I see you've read Stimson's memo.

BYRNES

Why, of course. Henry has a habit of suffering towards his decisions but when you get down to it he's as hard-nosed as they come.

TRUMAN

If we're prepared to get tough with Stalin again, I don't want to back off like we did with Poland. I gave him an ultimatum and he ignored it.

BYRNES

We still may need Russia in the event the test fails. Stalin looks like he'll keep his promise and will be ready to invade Manchuria and force Japan to surrender. But if this proves to be unnecessary....

TRUMAN

And so prolong the war? You read the casualty figures at Okinawa.

BYRNES

As far as an invasion, whatever preparations we start now can be called off at the last minute. But if we change our terms of surrender now, the hardliners in Tokyo will think we have buckled under the weight of our own losses. Unlike our country, the Japanese people have no idea of the full extent of their losses and inevitable defeat. In a nutshell, consideration of the Emperor in our surrender conditions can wait.

TRUMAN

What about a warning? Marshall believes we should initially target a Naval installation before picking out a city. Let them see what it's capable of.

BYRNES

He didn't say anything when he had the chance. Anyhow, it is not the interests of Japan that should concern you at this juncture.

Japan's collapse is inevitable. On that, I am in complete agreement with McKloy and Leahy. But Soviet expansionism in Europe and Asia is another matter entirely.

TRUMAN

You think we should tell Stalin about the atom bomb?

BYRNES

This information Mr. President, if used correctly, could play a decisive part in our future relations.

Pause.

TRUMAN

I'm going to instruct McKloy that any modifications to the surrender policy need to come through you. In fact, I want you to handle all foreign policy matters from here on Jimmy.

LIGHTS.

MAIDEN

McKloy meets with Byrnes on several occasions, but reports that Byrnes is unwilling to even consider changing the conditions of Japanese surrender.

MCKLOY

He told me it might be considered a weakness on our part. Byrnes inferred that he might not insist on treating the Emperor as a war criminal, but he would oppose any deal as a concomitant or demand for surrender..

LIGHTS on TRUMAN.

TRUMAN

Our demand has been, and it remains, unconditional surrender!

TRUMAN hits the podium forcefully.

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

MAIDEN

April 25th 1945, at 12.00 pm, a meeting is arranged between President Truman and General Groves.

GROVES

I'd been to the White House before, but never under these conditions. I had to take a secret road around to avoid all the newspapermen who gathered in great numbers every morning in the President's ante-room. It was Stimson's idea. He knew they'd be able to put two and two together if they saw us both together waiting to see the President.

LIGHTS.

TRUMAN

My Secretary of State tells me you've made this project what it is...

GROVES

I haven't built the bomb if that's what you mean...but I'm very good at getting the right people working at maximum effort.

TRUMAN

So it seems. Take a seat General. Make yourself comfortable.

GROVES

If you don't mind sir, I'd prefer to stand, I have a train to catch back to Chicago at 6.00pm so I really don't have much time.

Pause.

BYRNES

I told you Harry, he's the hardest working general in the Army.

TRUMAN

All right then...we certainly don't want to keep you waiting. I've been told a lot of hocus pocus about these bombs. Why don't you fill me in on exactly what you fellas are doing out there...

GROVES

We're designing the most powerful weapon known to mankind. An atomic bomb...

TRUMAN

How will this differ from our conventional arsenal?

GROVES

With just one of these bombs you can wipe out an entire city. Or so we hope.

TRUMAN

An entire city, huh? Obviously, General, this is no normal weapon we're talking about here.

GROVES

Not in the sense that it's ever been used before, Mr. President.

TRUMAN

Something to do with uranium...?

GROVES

Fission sir. That's correct. We're also working on a plutonium bomb which will work a little differently...

TRUMAN

Differently?

GROVES

Yes sir. The plutonium bomb works on the implosion principle.

GROVES looks for a prop to make his demonstration.
He grabs an orange.

GROVES

If I took this orange and squeezed it with as much force as possible evenly spread across the surface of this sphere, it should cause an implosion that would trigger a nuclear reaction-

TRUMAN

And cause a mighty big bang!

GROVES

Why...yes sir.

TRUMAN

My God this is really something. It's like reading a science fiction novel back in High School.

GROVES

I can assure you its very real sir.

TRUMAN

Do you think they'll actually pull it off?

GROVES

They will.

BYRNES

Or die trying...

GROVES

Yes sir. The tests are scheduled very soon, once a few kinks are worked out and they'll be ready for operation immediately.

TRUMAN

Hold on there. Approval of this weapon for operational use has to come directly from me.

GROVES

Yes Mr. President, I am well aware of that but as far all those working on this project are concerned-

TRUMAN

You're speaking for the scientists as well?

GROVES

They all know what they signed on for. If there was any dissent over this, I'd be the first to know about it.

TRUMAN

This is a foreign policy matter.

GROVES

Yes...but I thought there's never been any doubt that these bombs would be used to defeat Germany and Japan. I mean, that's why we're doing this..?

TRUMAN

The final decision has not been made on how this bomb will be used. Germany is on the brink of collapse and the Japanese may surrender before it's even ready..

GROVES

The Japanese won't surrender until they have been completely wiped out. Okinawa has proven that.

BYRNES

(to Groves)

We're setting up an Interim Committee to examine all our options...

GROVES

Options as to what? Begging your pardon sir, but what other options are there?

TRUMAN

It has been suggested to demonstrate this weapon on a neutral target with Japanese observers, or warn the Japanese so they can evacuate the target city...

GROVES

By whom Mr. President? Not the scientists..?

TRUMAN

I see no reason why these options shouldn't be given due consideration.

BYRNES

Some of the Admirals are convinced the Japs will throw it all in if we negotiate terms of surrender.

TRUMAN

A demonstration on a neutral target may be a more desirable option.

GROVES

And let them shoot our planes down with the bomb in it?

BYRNES

We'll be looking closely at target options Leslie.

GROVES

And if I may ask Mr. Secretary, who will be on this Committee?

BYRNES

A fair representation of all parties involved in the project...Henry Stimson will oversee target choices...there will also be Laurence, Compton, Fermi, Oppenheimer...

GROVES

Don't you think that's about four scientists too many Mr. Secretary...

Laughter.

BYRNES

They will be there more for technical matters.

TRUMAN

Jimmy here will be on hand to oversee all policy decisions. He will be my representative.

GROVES

Very good sir.

BYRNES

And of course, given your position, you will also sit on the Committee, make sure nothing gets out of hand...

TRUMAN

You better get a move on General...Don't want you to keep the war waiting.

GROVES smartly salutes.

GROVES

Thank you for your time Mr. President...Mr. Secretary...

GROVES exits.

TRUMAN

I have a strong feeling he'd prefer there wasn't any President to get in his way...

BYRNES

He's a good man Harry...been pushing for combat duty ever since he finished building the Pentagon. Had to twist his arm to head this project and so far he's surpassed all our expectations. A first-rate soldier.

TRUMAN

From now on Jimmy, when you speak to me directly, in public or in private, I think it would be best if you refer to me by my new title.

Pause.

BYRNES

Why of course...Mr. President.

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

LIGHTS.

MAIDEN

8th of May 1945, the War in Europe is declared over...

TRUMAN stands in front of a microphone.

TRUMAN

This is a solemn but a glorious hour. I only wish that Franklin D. Roosevelt had lived to witness this day. General Eisenhower informs me that the forces of Germany have surrendered to the United Nations. The flags of freedom fly over all Europe. For this victory, we join in offering our thanks to the Providence which has guided and sustained us through the dark days of adversity...

MAIDEN

A mission is sent under Samuel A. Goudsmit, a Dutch experimental physicist, to determine the extent of Germany's nuclear program. He arrives in Strasbourg and pours over the captured papers of renowned physicist Carl Friedrich Weizsacker.

LIGHTS. GOUDSMIT quickly ruffles through some papers. He becomes more and more excited as he goes through them.

GOUDSMIT

This is wonderful...they had nothing. The Germans had nothing...no atomic bomb! Now we won't have to use ours!

LIGHTS on SZILARD listening to this speech on radio while playing chess with WIGNER. COMPTON enters.

SZILARD

Well?

COMPTON

They weren't even close.

SZILARD

But Heisenberg...the others, they must have known, guessed what we did...

COMPTON

British Intelligence has every key scientific figure that worked for the Nazis holed up in some farmhouse awaiting further interrogation. But from all reports, there was no bomb program Leo. Apparently Hitler was only interested in “German” physics.

WIGNER laughs at this comment.

SZILARD

So the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics are now exclusively Jewish.

COMPTON

As far as Nazis were concerned...

SZILARD

Not interested...impossible.

COMPTON

His armaments minister, Albert Speer, is one of our prisoners. He’s confirmed everything the scientists told us.

SZILARD

So...our supposed greatest threat never even got off the ground.

WIGNER

Your move Leo.

SZILARD

Then there is absolutely no need for us to continue with this work.

LIGHTS.

ACT TWO SCENE FIVE

MAIDEN

May 11th 1945. Lend Lease to the Soviet Union is formally cancelled. Ships that had been loaded are unloaded, ships steaming towards Russia are called back. Henry Stimson, the Secretary of War believes a new attitude is vital towards the Russians..

STIMSON

The time now and the method now to deal with Russia is to keep our mouths shut and let our actions speak for words. The Russians will understand them better than anything else. We hold all the cards. It’s a royal flush and we mustn’t waste it!

LIGHTS. SZILARD, “cocooned in absentia”, watches the action about to unfold.

MAIDEN

In the weeks following Germany's collapse, scientists at both Los Alamos and the Metallurgical Lab in Chicago meet to discuss whether they should continue to work on the atomic bomb project. At Los Alamos, Robert Wilson, one of Oppenheimer's brightest students, plans the first meeting. Oppenheimer is the last to arrive...

LIGHTS on WILSON and SCIENTISTS.
OPPENHEIMER enters.

OPPENHEIMER

Sorry I'm late. Have I missed anything?

SCIENTIST ONE

No, we just got started.

WILSON

We weren't sure you were going to show up...

OPPENHEIMER

I wouldn't have missed it for...well, I knew I had to be here.

WILSON

I'm glad you could make it Robert.

OPPENHEIMER

So what have you been discussing?

WILSON

I have been talking with a few of the scientists Robert, and, well, to be frank, we're not sure we should help finish this bomb...

SCIENTIST TWO

Germany's finished. That's why we signed on in the first place. To get the bomb in case Hitler did.

OPPENHEIMER

So what do you propose gentlemen? That we tell Groves... the United States government that we've decided to stop working on the most important project of the war while thousands of Americans are dying every day against an undefeated enemy?

SCIENTIST TWO

We know that Robert but we never thought they'd actually think of using this thing.

OPPENHEIMER

I've been in Washington. I've spoken with those in charge of making the decisions, both civilian and military, General Marshall, Admiral Leahy, all good men.

They're far more equipped to make these decisions on how this weapon should be used than we are.

WILSON

Just make the bomb and forget about the consequences...is this what you taught us at Berkeley...?

OPPENHEIMER

Berkeley is another time. We're in the middle of a world war...

WILSON

All the more reason to consider what we are doing here...would Washington consider a demonstration of the weapon on the Japanese mainland? Invite some representatives from their government....

OPPENHEIMER

What if it doesn't go off?

WILSON

Then kill them so they don't tell anybody! Anything's better than letting this thing be used because no one's paying attention.

OPPENHEIMER

Look..I can assure you that the greatest attention is being given to this matter. I can't tell you how impressed I am by the unqualified professionalism of all those concerned, right up to the President himself, in making decisions that will affect the future of our country.

WILSON

I've heard there's a petition going around MetLab...

OPPENHEIMER

And?

WILSON

Some of us would like to read it...maybe sign it. Let the government know how we feel.

OPPENHEIMER

I brought you all into this, did I not? I guaranteed you would be engaged in the most important work in your careers. I haven't lied to you.

WILSON

No one's saying you have...

OPPENHEIMER

There is but one task you need to be concerned with...that it is your duty to complete as scientists.

WILSON

Regardless of the consequences?

OPPENHEIMER

With full knowledge of the consequences.

Pause.

WILSON

We'll do what you say Robert.

OPPENHEIMER

Rest assured, I will be with all of them when they make the final decision. And I will be sure to let them know exactly how you feel.

LIGHTS. SZILARD grabs his hat and coat and prepares to leave.

MAIDEN

At the Metallurgical Lab in Chicago committee on "Social and Political Implications" of the bomb is formed, headed by Nobel Prize winning physicist James Franck. The central recommendation is against a surprise attack on Japan and for a demonstration in an uninhabited area. The document which became known as the Franck Report is not made available to any of the scientists working at Los Alamos.

LIGHTS.

ACT TWO SCENE SIX

BYRNES home in the "Deep South." LIGHTS on BYRNES, SZILARD and WIGNER

BYRNES

Mr Zeelard, welcome...it's been a long ride I gather...

SZILARD

This is my associate Dr. Eugene Wigner...

BYRNES

Dr. Wigner. Refreshments gentlemen?

SZILARD

No...water perhaps. What we have to discuss is very urgent Mr. Byrnes.

MAIDEN

May 25th 1945. Leo Szilard, accompanied once again by Eugene Wigner, takes a train to Spartanburg Georgia for a pre arranged meeting with Jimmy Byrnes.

Szilard tells Truman's secretary that he is glad to go wherever the President directs him...

BYRNES

Both of you, take a seat. Now what can I help you with?

SZILARD

It's what you can do, Mr. Byrnes. I fear that if this bomb is used against Japan it will begin an arms race the likes of which you could not imagine.

BYRNES

(Offstage)

Martha, get me some more iced tea if you would. That's very interesting. So you think after nearly spending two billion dollars on this project we should not use it, while, I might add, we are in a state of war.

SZILARD

I would go as far as to say keep the atomic bomb a secret. There is no need for the world to know that America possesses this weapon.

BYRNES

I don't think you quite realise how things work over here Mr. Szilard...

SZILARD

I brought the idea of a nuclear bomb to President Roosevelt's attention. Professor Einstein and I wrote the letter urging him to start working immediately on the bomb-

BYRNES

Yes yes, I'm aware of your contributions to the project and believe me they are greatly appreciated by this government and of course the American people.

SZILARD

There is no need to use the bomb against Japan. Hitler didn't have the bomb. It's over. That was why we urged the US government to build it first before the Nazis got a hold of it.

BYRNES

Yes..but we are still at war with Japan.

SZILARD

Japan is a second-rate power, it has no chance of developing nuclear weapons...if you use it against Japan it will only turn the Russians more hostile-

BYRNES

Or make them more manageable.

SZILARD

The Russians will not listen because you threaten them with bombs.

BYRNES

Are you certain of that...

SZILARD

You obviously don't know the Russians Mr. Byrnes.

BYRNES

I've dealt with the Russians as part of the US Delegation in Tehran. I will do so again in Potsdam as the newly sworn in Secretary of State. There is nothing "obvious" about what I know Mr. Szilard, particularly when it comes to the Russians.

SZILARD

I did not mean to imply-

BYRNES

Once Stalin knows what we possess, he'll start to think differently about taking over all of Eastern Europe.

SZILARD

I'm talking about the future of mankind not Eastern Europe. (Checking his outburst). How can you not see this? By threatening the Russians it will only make them more determined to have the bomb themselves...

BYRNES

General Groves tells me they won't have the capability for another twenty years-

SZILARD

General Groves is wrong...another three to four years if we're lucky.

BYRNES

Why they don't possess enough uranium...

SZILARD

Yes but Czechoslovakia does. There is no way you can control this material or the information to make the bomb and once you explode it there is the proof that it can be made and other nations particularly the Russians will be scrambling to make them...

BYRNES

The Russians are in Hungary, your country, aren't they? You wouldn't want them to stay there indefinitely...

SZILARD

I did not come here to talk to you about Hungary. The bombing of Japan could start an arms race that could destroy both Russia and the United States.

BYRNES

Let me make it perfectly clear to you Mr. Zeelard. No matter how responsible you are for this gadget coming into existence, it is now the property of the United States government and we will use it as we see fit.

Pause.

SZILARD

Have you considered a demonstration...advising the Japanese of the nature of this weapon, warning them of its tremendous destructive power.

BYRNES

Why an Interim Committee has been formed to discuss just that. Your colleague Robert Oppenheimer will be on it. What do you think of Oppenheimer?

SZILARD

He is a brilliant physicist...there would be no project without him.

BYRNES

That's settled then. I'm sure Professor Oppenheimer and the rest of the Committee will take a close hard look at all of these questions.

SZILARD

Yes...

BYRNES

I want to thank you for taking the time out to come down here and discuss this with me Mr. Zeelard, Mr...

WIGNER

Wigner. Eugene Wigner.

BYRNES

Yes. Of course. Good afternoon to both of you.

SZILARD and WIGNER are alone on stage.

SZILARD

You didn't say anything...

WIGNER

There is nothing left to say.

MAIDEN

Szilard and Wigner made their way back to the train station...

SZILARD

I was rarely as depressed as when we left Byrnes' house. I thought to myself how much better off the world might be had I been born in America and become influential in American politics, and Byrnes been born in Hungary and studied physics.

BYRNES

Szilard's general demeanour and his desire to participate in policy making made... an unfavorable impression upon me.

ACT TWO SCENE SEVEN

MAIDEN

June 1st 1945. The Franck Report is submitted to Arthur Compton. It is strongly supported by Szilard who urges as many scientists as possible to sign it. Groves now believes it is a matter of national security that Leo Szilard is removed completely from the Manhattan Project...

LIGHTS.

GROVES

I ordered a complete report in all his activities in the last six months, including what positive contributions, if any, he has made since July 1st 1943.

MAIDEN

Following Szilard's meeting with Byrnes, Groves is convinced he cannot allow him to continue working on the project. He arranges a meeting with Secretary Stimson to discuss Szilard's position...

LIGHTS.

STIMSON

I've read your request.

GROVES

I'm convinced he's a spy Mr. Secretary.

STIMSON

Do you have any evidence to support this belief?

GROVES

Just call it intuition...a gut instinct.

STIMSON

You're accusing one of our top scientists of espionage.

GROVES

I'm not saying that sir. It's just that...Szilard is the kind of man who advises a company one way and after they're half-way through then says "Let's try this way." Of course he isn't paying the bills.

STIMSON

This is no reason to accuse him of spying.

GROVES

(Resentful)

Can't you see Mr. Secretary? Szilard is interfering with the Project. Because...for whatever reason he commands so much respect, scientists are divided over their role...

STIMSON

And you think Szilard is actively engaged in slowing progress on the gadget's development.

GROVES

I'm convinced of it sir. I wouldn't say he was committing treason, but his loyalty is to be questioned of that I am certain. He keeps all the younger scientists stirred up. I wouldn't have a bit of trouble with the Chicago or Princeton people if it wasn't for Szilard..

STIMSON

And for this you want me to intern him...

GROVES

He's disruptive force Mr. Secretary. We can't afford to abide by any dissenting opinion on such a matter of extreme importance.

STIMSON is silent.

GROVES

I'm sure I don't have to remind you of the cost of this enterprise...the Senate Investigations-

STIMSON

No you don't. I cannot agree to what you are asking. Take him off the Project if necessary but I will not authorise such a request.

GROVES

Yes sir.

STIMSON

Anything else?

GROVES

Yes sir. I have the list of targets that you asked for.

GROVES hands them to STIMSON.

STIMSON

Kyoto is on this list.

GROVES

Correct.

STIMSON

That will be all.

MAIDEN

So Leo Szilard, the man most responsible for the development of the first nuclear weapons, is removed from the Manhattan Project.

SZILARD

By this time I knew it would not be possible to dissuade the government from using the bomb against the cities of Japan. All that remained was for scientists to go unmistakably on record that they were against such an action.

LIGHTS. For a moment, SZILARD and the MAIDEN are aware of each other's presence on stage.

ACT TWO SCENE EIGHT

MAIDEN

May 30th 1945, Leo Szilard phones General Groves Pentagon office and has his secretary arrange a meeting there with Robert Oppenheimer in Chicago...

SZILARD

Thank you for coming Robert-

OPPENHEIMER

I got a call from General Groves secretary arranging this meeting. When did you and Groves get so friendly-

SZILARD

We haven't, and I suspect never will. Fortunately his secretary was only aware that Groves had forbidden my presence at the Metlab, but not in Chicago itself.

OPPENHEIMER

You no longer have clearance Leo...if Groves finds out we'll both be in breach of security-

SZILARD

I don't give a damn about Groves! Robert, you are on this Interim Committee. You must use your influence to stop them dropping this bomb.

OPPENHEIMER

By them, I gather you mean the United States government...

SZILARD

Robert, I'm sure you would have realised by now that the future of the post-war world will be decided by men like Groves and Secretary Byrnes.

OPPENHEIMER

I don't agree with you; the final say will be that of the President-

SZILARD

Who is completely under the sway of one man! I have just come back from speaking with Byrnes. I urged him to reconsider this matter. He wants to impress the Russians by incinerating Japanese cities...

OPPENHEIMER

That hasn't been decided by anyone as yet.

SZILARD

How can you be so naïve about this!

OPPENHEIMER

This is government policy which I don't think you or I are qualified to influence...

SZILARD

Qualified? We brought this thing into existence. Are we not qualified to have any say how it should be used..?

OPPENHEIMER

You more than anyone is responsible for this Project getting off the ground. How in God's name do you think it can be stopped now?

SZILARD

I did not want the Nazis to possess such a weapon-

OPPENHEIMER

And now thanks to you the United States will.

SZILARD

That doesn't give them the right-

OPPENHEIMER

Of course it does! Who is going to stop them?

SZILARD has no answer. OPPENHEIMER starts lighting his pipe. He takes a few puffs.

OPPENHEIMER

This bomb is shit Leo.

SZILARD

What do you mean by that!?

OPPENHEIMER

This is a weapon which has no military significance. It will make a big bang- a very big bang, but it is not a weapon which is useful in war.

SZILARD

That is philosophy not reality! The US government has no interest in atomic control once the war is finished. I cannot believe you do not know this!

OPPENHEIMER

If by that you mean sharing information with the Russians, I intend to let them know my opinion on the matter, that we should tell the Russians we have an atomic device-

SZILARD

Tell them? And then what? Wait for them to become more manageable..?

OPPENHEIMER

Don't you think that if we tell the Russians what we intend to do, and then use the bomb in Japan, the Russians will understand it?

SZILARD

They'll understand it only too well. You know as well as I do if they drop the bombs on Japan, or anywhere for that matter, a nuclear arms race will have begun.

OPPENHEIMER

It's...there's nothing we can do about it Leo. It's out of our hands.

SZILARD pulls out his petition and hands it to
OPPENHEIMER.

OPPENHEIMER (CONT'D)

What's this?

SZILARD

Take a look...

OPPENHEIMER takes it from SZILARD and carefully
scrutinizes it.

OPPENHEIMER

These names...when did this all happen?

SZILARD

Scientists that have all worked on the Project Robert, like you, who single-mindedly put all their energy and talent to creating this weapon, but now see that it is going to be used not as a defensive-

OPPENHEIMER

I can't sign this-

SZILARD

Why not? You expect me to seriously believe you think this bomb should be used on innocent civilians?

OPPENHEIMER

It's not my position as head of this project to make a political decision-

SZILARD

It's not a political decision but a statement of beliefs!

It was we physicists who gave the military everything they needed to know about atomic bombs, blast effects, densely packed urban areas, we who played down possible side effects from radiation when every scientist knows quite well that thousands of civilians will suffer and die horribly from radiation poisoning...

OPPENHEIMER

(Referring to the petition)

Does Groves know anything about this?

SZILARD

Groves has no interest in the opinion of a scientist, least of all an Hungarian Jew.

SZILARD hands him a pen.

SZILARD (CONT'D)

This is the last chance...

SZILARD goes over to OPPENHEIMER as he reads the petition. OPPENHEIMER hands it back to SZILARD unsigned.

ACT TWO SCENE NINE

LIGHTS.

MAIDEN

May 31st 1945. The Interim Committee meets. James. F Byrnes Robert Oppenheimer and Ralph. A Bard, Undersecretary of the Navy, are in attendance. Oppenheimer begins his attempt to influence government policy...

OPPENHEIMER

Russia has always been friendly to science. We might open up this subject with them in a tentative fashion and...in the most general terms so we don't give them any details of our productive effort.

BYRNES

It's not their scientists that concern me Professor. Anyhow, you think the Russians are not going to want to know exactly how we made this thing if we speak about this project in "general terms"? Assuming it works of course.

OPPENHEIMER

I do not think, Mr. Secretary, that we should pre judge the Russian attitude in this matter. I feel very strongly about this.

BYRNES

And I find it incredulous that you could even make such a suggestion.

MARSHALL

Mr. Secretary, there have been a lot of charges and countercharges in our relations with the Russians. Most of these allegations have been unfounded.

BYRNES

Your point, General...

MARSHALL

We need have no fear that the Russians will disclose any information on this project, least of all to the Japanese, as has been suggested. In fact, I propose we invite two prominent Russian scientists to witness the test.

Pause.

BYRNES

General, nothing should be done which would allow the Russians advance knowledge of this weapon. And there is nothing you can say that will alter my position.

OPPENHEIMER

Mr. Secretary the Russians have brilliant scientists of their own that are not shackled with the restrictions the Nazis placed on theirs.

BYRNES

Then let them figure it out for themselves. If we give this information to the Russians, Stalin will want to be brought into this partnership just like the British.

MARSHALL

But even the British don't have blueprints of our plants.

BYRNES

The British are quite grateful for what we have provided them to date. Now I propose that we push ahead as fast as possible in production and research of atomic weapons to make certain we stay ahead and at the same time make every effort to have better relation with Russia.

ALL

Agreed...

SZILARD

Oppenheimer does not bring up the subject of Russian involvement in any future meetings.

MAIDEN

June 1st 1945, Secretary Byrnes makes the following recommendations...

BYRNES

The Interim Committee agrees that the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible. That it should be used on a war plant surrounded by worker's homes. That it should be used...without warning.

MAIDEN

Ralph A. Bard, representing the Navy, officially withdraws his agreement from the third recommendation. He is the lone voice inside Washington to officially question the soundness of government policy on Japanese surrender.

BARD

A warning to the Japanese government of an event of this magnitude would give them sufficient reason to surrender.

SZILARD

His cause is taken up by no one. No mention is made to the President of Bard's position. Likewise, Bard is told nothing.

ACT TWO SCENE TEN

MAIDEN

June 12th 1945. After some of the bloodiest fighting in the whole Pacific War, Okinawa falls into American hands.

GROVES

US battle casualties exceed 50,000 of which 12, 520 soldiers and Marines were killed...

MAIDEN

Over 110,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians lose their lives...It is the last island to be taken before the Japanese mainland.

SZILARD

Despite the historic occasion that this victory presents, Truman holds off from any statement or proclamation on Japanese surrender...

TRUMAN

It was my decision then that the proclamation to Japan should be issued from the forthcoming conference at Potsdam.

This I believed, would clearly demonstrate to Japan and to the world that the Allies were united in their purpose. By that time, also, we might know more about two matters for our future effort: the participation of the Soviet Union and the atomic bomb.

LIGHTS.

MAIDEN

July 2nd 1945. Stimson meets with Truman and presents a memorandum formally recommending a modification of the surrender formula...

TRUMAN

"We should give the Japanese a carefully timed warning, containing the threat of overwhelming force but disavowing any attempt to exterminate the Japanese as a race or nation..a post war government could include a constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty if it be shown to the complete satisfaction of the world that such a government will never again conspire to aggression."

STIMSON

I've consulted with the Secretary of the Navy and the Acting Secretary of State. They have both approved the tenor of the memorandum and the recommendations contained in it.

TRUMAN

It's quite impressive Henry.

STIMSON

I am inclined to think, Mr. President, that it may well be worthwhile to warn them of what is to come and so give them a definite opportunity to capitulate. But there must be an explicit statement on the future of their constitutional monarchy. As you can see, the memorandum includes text of the proposed draft declaration.

TRUMAN

You've presented these subjects in a satisfactory manner. It's a very powerful paper.

SZILARD

But Truman changes nothing.

MAIDEN

That same day, General Groves calls Robert Oppenheimer at approximately 12.50 pm in Sante Fe New Mexico...

LIGHTS on OPPENHEIMER and GROVES.

OPPENHEIMER

The test is still scheduled for the 17th.

GROVES

Can't you make it any earlier?

OPPENHEIMER

It is possible, but the 17th would be the wisest thing. It would give us more time to get things done within a few days of that date.

GROVES

I don't like the idea of a later date.

OPPENHEIMER

General...we've been working at a furious pace, even more so since Germany's surrender...

GROVES

There are various things involved...look, it's extremely important that it be completed by the earlier date.

OPPENHEIMER

Because of these various things involved..

GROVES

Yes. This test needs to happen before the President meets the Russians in Potsdam. That's as much as I can say.

OPPENHEIMER

We will try to meet the earlier date General, but, I must say, this goes against my own feelings.

GROVES

These are things beyond my control...the upper crust wants the test as soon as possible. And Oppie...

OPPENHEIMER

Yes...

GROVES

One more thing. Tell your people it's not your fault. That it came from a higher authority.

LIGHTS.

GROVES

(to audience)

I was extremely anxious to have the test carried off on schedule. One reason for this was that I knew the effect that a successful test would have on the issuance and wording of the Potsdam ultimatum.

ACT TWO SCENE ELEVEN

MAIDEN

July 13th 1945. A "very urgent" cable from is intercepted by US intelligence, documenting the most important diplomatic development of the summer- the direct intervention of Emperor Hirohito...

MCKLOY

"His Majesty the Emperor, mindful of the fact that the present war daily brings greater evil and sacrifice upon the peoples of all belligerent powers, desires from his heart that it may be quickly terminated."

MAIDEN

Admiral McKloy immediately informs Stimson of the development.

LIGHTS on STIMSON as he is awoken by MCKLOY in the middle of the night. STIMSON is in his dressing gown. STIMSON starts reading the intercept.

MCKLOY

Mr. Secretary, there is no doubt in my mind that a genuine option exists for a negotiated surrender. A pattern is very clear here, initiatives by the Japanese have taken occurred in Moscow, Stockholm, Lisbon, Bern...that with the daily readings of the Magic intercepts indicates Japan's readiness to throw in the towel.

STIMSON

It could be a ruse...trying to buy some time.

MCKLOY

For what? The whole country is on the verge of collapse. Dulles' intercept of Tojo's communique to his envoy makes it all very clear sir.

STIMSON

Read that out for me again Bill.

MCKLOY

Yes sir. "...it was necessary to have them understand that we are trying to end hostilities by asking for very reasonable terms in order to secure and maintain our nation's existence and honour..."

STIMSON

Reasonable terms? That could mean anything...

MCKLOY

Tojo is referring to the preservation of the Emperor's position. To avoid an invasion, we must allow them to keep their Emperor.

STIMSON puts on his reading glasses.

STIMSON

"Should the United States and Great Britain remain insistent on formality, there is no solution to this situation other than for us to hold out until complete collapse because of this point alone." (To MCKLOY) I'll prepare a memorandum on this for the President when we arrive in Potsdam.

MCKLOY

Yes sir. What a long way we've come since that Sunday morning we heard the news of Pearl Harbour!

SZILARD

For the first time, John McKloy believes there is a real chance to avoid the use of an atomic device against an essentially defeated enemy...

MAIDEN

Stimson's memorandum to the President advises that the draft includes explicit assurances for the Emperor...

STIMSON

We are at the psychological moment to commence our warnings to Japan. I would therefore argue that we formulate a warning to Japan to be delivered during the course of this Conference, and rather earlier than later.

MAIDEN

Jimmy Byrnes strikes this item from the State Department recommendations. It is his first official act as the newly installed Secretary of State.

ACT TWO SCENE TWELVE

SZILARD

July 16th 1945. The Presidential Party arrives at Potsdam, an outer suburb of Berlin. Truman and Byrnes are taken on an inspection of the bombed out city...

TRUMAN puts a handkerchief over his face to prevent himself from gagging.

TRUMAN

What's that smell...

BYRNES

There's anywhere from 35,000 people buried underneath all this. At least according to the bombing survey estimates. From reports, some cities are worse...Dresden for example.

TRUMAN

And now all that's left are these old women and children.

BYRNES

(Curiously)

You can tell which of the buildings were destroyed by bombs and those by artillery fire...

TRUMAN cleans himself and neatly folds his handkerchief.

BYRNES

Germany is a country waiting to be rebuilt Mr. President. And it's our job to make sure it's under the most favorable conditions to the US. Stalin would like nothing better than to take over the whole lot if we give him half a chance.

TRUMAN

Morgenthau's suggesting that we should make Germany an agricultural society.

BYRNES

Whatever for?

TRUMAN

(Uncertain)

So she would never pose a threat to her neighbours again.

BYRNES

Clearly it was a good idea not to invite him.

TRUMAN

More than that, I accepted his resignation before we left.

BYRNES

Revenge against Germany is not practical policy. Europe already made that mistake first time round. All we'll be doing is helping to foment another Communist revolution. The stakes are even higher now.

TRUMAN

I agree with you, and so does Churchill, apparently. He happened to mention that he's holding 700,000 Germans troops in military formations, just in case Stalin decides to advance further than what he agreed to.

BYRNES

Churchill knows he can't do anything without our say-so.

TRUMAN

He also wanted to know whether we'd be prepared to launch an air strike against Russia's communication centres...

BYRNES

And?

TRUMAN

I don't want to start World War Three. Not over a bunch of countries your average American couldn't point on a map.

BYRNES

Stalin knows where Iran is Mr. President, and if we allow him to get a hold of those oil fields...

TRUMAN

He wouldn't go that far...

BYRNES

(Re assuring)

We control 57 percent of the world's oil to Russia's 11 percent. And their production has dropped by a third. Meanwhile one third of all resources in the world are in the Middle East. Stalin isn't likely to leave Iran of his own accord. But...he understands the use of force. And as long as he knows we're prepared to go all out in the event of a Soviet attack or incursion into neutral countries, I don't think we'll have too many problems.

TRUMAN

Whatever he understands Jimmy, Stalin made it very clear what he thinks of our cancelling Lend Lease...said it was..

BYRNES

"Unnecessary and brutal..?" That was the general idea.

TRUMAN

Zhukov estimates they've lost twenty million dead. At any one time the Soviets engaged 45 Nazi divisions to our fifteen.

BYRNES

And that's why we have to balance the ledger. In terms of manpower, the Russians will always have superiority. Our technological and industrial advantage must be maintained at all costs.

TRUMAN

What if the test fails?

BYRNES

Then we secure Russian guarantees for an invasion of Japan at the earliest possible date.

TRUMAN looks around surveying the destruction.

TRUMAN

All this, Jimmy, is what happens when a man overreaches himself.

MAIDEN

The day after the Presidential party's arrival at Potsdam, Stimson urges the immediate issuance of a warning. Byrnes, once again, rejects the proposal...

BYRNES

The timetable on the subject of a warning has already been agreed to by the President.

LIGHTS.

MAIDEN

Byrnes controls access to the President, ensuring that other advice was kept at a distance. Stimson sits in the garden, excluded from all interviews.

STIMSON

I regret that I do not have more to do here. I had been the head of three delegations to three international conferences of this kind. I am finding myself crippled by not knowing what happens in the meetings in the late afternoon and evening.

SZILARD

Conflict and disagreement between Russia and the United States begins almost immediately over questions of reparations and the recognition of governments by the Western powers that had recently been overrun by the Soviet Army.

LIGHTS. The encasement of the atomic bomb is brought onto the stage. OPPENHEIMER and the SCIENTISTS surround it. The core of the bomb is then lowered slowly from above into the encasement. There are two ladders on either side of the it with a SCIENTIST on either side assisting the procedure.

WILSON

A little more...a little more.

The core just about hits the encasement and abruptly stops.

WILSON

It's stuck.

OPPENHEIMER

What do you mean it's stuck?!

MAIDEN

July 16th 1945. Alamagordo New Mexico. The final preparations are made for the first atomic test. The site is named Trinity...

SZILARD

Some of the scientists take bets on how large the explosion will be...

GROVES

Edward Teller, bet a blast equal to 4500 tons of TNT. Oppenheimer a low 3000. Isaac Rabe if I remember correctly put his money on 20 kilotons and Enrico Fermi was taking side bets on the possibility of incinerating all of New Mexico!

WILSON

It's OK, it's the plutonium...it's just expanded a little. Once the assembly heats up it will expand and the core will fit...

FERMI

You've got to relax. I'll bet you a month's salary against ten dollars it will work.

OPPENHEIMER

(Nervously)

All right...I'll take that bet.

WILSON continues to manipulate the core which is sitting on top of the encasement. He is watched intently by the others.

WILSON

It's in...

OPPENHEIMER

Good. Everyone in position.

OPPENHEIMER stands on a chair to address the gathering.

OPPENHEIMER

(to audience)

We are about to begin the final countdown. First, everyone must lie down on the ground with your feet towards the blast.

All on stage comply.

OPPENHEIMER

Close you eyes and cover them with your hands as the countdown approaches zero. As soon as you become aware of the flash you may turn over sitting or standing as long as your eyes are covered with the welder's goggles supplied.

Countdown begins. OPPENHEIMER and the SCIENTISTS put on goggles and stare intently at the sky.

An explosive flash.

GROVES

"The whole country was lighted by a searing light with the intensity many times that of the midday sun.

OPPENHEIMER

It was golden, purple, violet gray and blue. It lit every peak, crevasse, and ridge of the nearby mountain range with a clarity and a beauty that cannot be described but must be seen to be imagined.

WILSON

Thirty seconds after the explosion came, first the air blast pressing hard against people and things, to be followed almost immediately...

STIMSON

...by the strong, sustained, awesome roar which warned of doomsday and made us feel that we puny things were blasphemous to dare tamper with the forces heretofore reserved for the Almighty..."

LIGHTS. TRUMAN and BYRNES are seated across from STIMSON.

MAIDEN

July 17th 1945. Henry Stimson informs Truman of the success of first test...

TRUMAN

Jimmy, I'd say we've finally got the upper hand for the first time here at Potsdam. When Stalin here's about this he'll know we mean business.

BYRNES

Once the weapon is used in combat there is no doubt our bargaining position will have increased considerably.

STIMSON

If I could speak to you...confidentially Mr. President.

TRUMAN

There's nothing you can say that Secretary Byrnes shouldn't know about..

STIMSON

Of course.

TRUMAN

Then what is it Colonel?

STIMSON

I think we should inform the Russians of this test as soon as reasonably possible.

BYRNES

Why?

STIMSON

Because if we don't, they will acquire this weapon regardless of our entreaties to do otherwise.

TRUMAN

I'm not about to hand over this weapon to the Soviets...

STIMSON

Mr. President, this bomb will change everything between the United States and the Soviets.

BYRNES

That's where you're wrong. This test is a solution we've spent billions trying to produce.

TRUMAN

What makes you think the Soviets will listen to whatever we have to say to them about this? They're hell-bent on taking over all of Europe as it is.

STIMSON

It is my judgement that the Russians will respond to a direct and forthright approach from the United States. From you Mr. President. This is an historic opportunity. But if we carry this weapon on our hip in negotiations, the more suspicious they will be of our motives.

TRUMAN

Our motives are very clear Henry. We don't want a Communist dominated Europe and neither do our Allies.

STIMSON

The Russians are still on our side. They are also aware of Japanese overtures for surrender through their embassy in Moscow. This is a perfect moment to reassure the Japanese once and for all of the Emperor's position.

TRUMAN

We'll just have to wait and see. I want to thank you Henry, for taking the time to come here to the conference and being present to help me in this way.

STIMSON

Mr. President..?

TRUMAN

You're free to return to Washington at any time.

STIMSON

But Mr. President-

TRUMAN

I know this trip has been a great strain on you Henry. Your work is done here.

STIMSON leaves. TRUMAN turns to BYRNES.

TRUMAN

By God Jimmy, this changes everything...

BYRNES

It certainly does. The question is, will you tell the Russians about the test?

TRUMAN

Why not? Russia is our ally after all. They should know what this gadget is capable of.

BYRNES

They certainly should.

TRUMAN

About time they also realise the United States is not going to negotiate away half of Europe without some say in the matter.

BYRNES

What if they won't leave?

TRUMAN

I don't care how many troops he's got massed on the Elbe. If I have to bring more divisions from-

BYRNES

Yes but what if Stalin refuses to change his negotiating position?

TRUMAN

We must then be prepared to use all necessary forces at our disposal.

BYRNES

Then...we could be talking World War Three.

TRUMAN

The United States is now the strongest military power in history. If England is as broke as Churchill says it is...and Russia with no real economy...well, it's an unprecedented position and I don't intend to waste it.

BYRNES

What about Japan?

TRUMAN

Japan is finished.

BYRNES

Japan is very much involved in this matter.

TRUMAN

You've read the reports, it's a matter of weeks.

BYRNES

If Russia enters the Pacific War...

TRUMAN

Russia will only enter the Pacific Theatre if we press the issue. But we no longer need Soviet help.

BYRNES

The Russians are working on their own timetable regardless of whether we politely ask them to declare war on Japan.

TRUMAN

This bomb makes all the difference.

BYRNES

You can't ignore Japan at this crucial stage.

TRUMAN

They're on the verge of total collapse. The Navy's ready to pack up and go home.

BYRNES

Japan will eventually surrender. But the overriding significance of the atomic bomb will only sink into the remarkably obtuse Soviet consciousness after its power has been demonstrated.

TRUMAN

I think if Stalin knows we possess such a weapon, and that we are prepared to use it to protect American interests, he'll become...less obtuse. Then he will understand our full bargaining position.

BYRNES

I don't know if simply informing the Russians of what we have will convey its true significance Mr. President, but we must do it before the Russians enter the war, with or without our invitation.

TRUMAN

In that case what's preventing Stalin from invading Manchuria at this moment?

BYRNES

They're still negotiating with Chang Ki Shek over conditions of Russian entry into Manchuria. If he was encouraged to seek the most favorable terms possible in the event of allowing a Russian attack on Jap forces...

TRUMAN

But how long might that take..?

BYRNES

I would hope as long as necessary. Our Chinese ally needs to know he has your complete support towards seeking such terms...

Pause.

TRUMAN

I agree. I'll call him immediately. The next time Stalin and I meet, I'm going to tell him in no uncertain terms that he just can't walk all over Eastern Europe.

LIGHTS.

MAIDEN

John McKloy observes that the big bomb is playing its part; stiffening the spines of both the Prime Minister and the President...

MCKLOY

After getting Groves' report they went to the next meeting like little boys with a big red apple secreted on their persons.

MAIDEN

Averill Harriman, Winston Churchill and President Charles De Gaulle of France all noted the cheerfulness that has suddenly emerged in the American camp.

CHURCHILL

What was gunpowder? Trivial. What was electricity? Meaningless. This atomic bomb is the Second Coming in Wrath!

MAIDEN

A few hours after the Trinity explosion, Leo Szilard, unaware of the result, redrafts his petition to the President of the United States...

SCIENTIST ONE

It's all ready Leo.

SZILARD

Make sure the date is correct.

SCIENTIST TWO

There it is. July 17th 1945.

SZILARD

How many signatures do we have?

SCIENTIST TWO

Sixty seven. It's only from two sites, Chicago and Columbia. Oppenheimer has made sure none of the scientists at Los Alamos or Oak Ridge ever see this.

SCIENTIST ONE

Who do we send it to?

SCIENTIST TWO

What about Stimson or Byrnes?

SZILARD

Byrnes...sees the bomb as an opportunity to intimidate the Russians with few consequences for the United States.

SCIENTIST TWO

Who else is there? If Oppenheimer won't sign it...

SZILARD

Truman.

The SCIENTISTS look at each other almost in disbelief.

SZILARD

There is no one else. Only he can stop this...no matter how unlikely the possibility.

LIGHTS.

MAIDEN

August 6th 1945.

LIGHTS on TIBBETS and CREW.

TIBBETS

Bob, have you figured out what we are doing this morning?

LEWIS

Colonel I don't want to get put up against a wall and shot.

TIBBETS

Bob we're about to get on our way. You can talk.

LEWIS

Are we carrying a chemists nightmare?

TIBBETS

No. Not exactly.

LEWIS

How about a physicists nightmare?

TIBBETS

Yes. Is there a problem?

LEWIS

No problem Colonel, just a question. Are we splitting atoms?

TIBBETS doesn't answer. He pulls out a metal container and opens it.

CREW MEMBER

What have you got there Colonel?

TIBBETS

Twelve capsules. Each with a lethal dose of cyanide. If we're shot down and captured I don't think I have to explain to you the measures the Japanese will take to find out what we are doing.

LIGHTS. The JAPANESE WOMAN is being examined by TRUMAN.

TIBBETS

A keloidal adhesion was removed from the back of her neck, allowing her head which was frozen in the bowed position since these injuries were incurred, to move freely. It is expected, of course, to be many months before there is reasonable mobility in this area.

SZILARD

Her ulcerated lower left eyelid was replaced with a graft that we took from the inside of her upper right arm so that she could close her eyes at night. So far this doesn't seem to have taken quite as well as we had expected.

TRUMAN

We then took a graft of full thickness hair bearing skin from behind her right ear and implanted it over her eyes giving her a new set of eyebrows. She took a look at herself in the mirror this morning and was quite pleased.

LIGHTS.

SZILARD

"In view of the foregoing, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition: first, that you exercise your power as Commander in Chief to rule that the United States shall not resort to the use of atomic bombs in this war unless the terms which will be imposed upon Japan have been made public in detail and Japan knowing these terms, has refused to surrender...

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

ACT THREE SCENE ONE

MAIDEN

July 24th 1945. Truman, Byrnes, Churchill and Stalin meet at the Cecilienhof Palace in Potsdam Germany. The twentieth century's nuclear arms race is about to begin at approximately 7.40pm...

LIGHTS.

STALIN

One gets the impression of an artificial division: on the one hand, Italy, whose position has been eased, and on the other, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland, whose position is not to be eased.

TRUMAN

Italy is not in the same position as these other countries.

STALIN

In what way is Italy more deserving than the other countries? Her only merit is that she was the first to surrender. In all other respects Italy behaved worse and inflicted greater harm than any other satellite state.

TRUMAN

Our representatives have had the opportunity to visit the government of Italy. The same could not be said of Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary.

STALIN

What else?

TRUMAN

The nature of the governments in these countries prohibits diplomatic relations.

STALIN

But you have diplomatic relations with Italy and not with the other countries.

TRUMAN

The other satellites can obtain our recognition of their governments if they satisfy our requirements.

STALIN

Which requirements?

TRUMAN

Concerning freedom of movement and freedom of information.

STALIN

None of these governments hinders or can hinder movement and free information for members of the Allied press. There must be some misunderstanding. With the ending of the war in Europe, the situation there has improved.

BYRNES

There is no misunderstanding.

TRUMAN

We want these governments reorganised.

STALIN

I assure you that the government of Bulgaria is more democratic than the government of Italy.

TRUMAN

We proposed the same formulation in respect of Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary as in respect of Italy.

STALIN

But this...does not include...diplomatic relations.

TRUMAN

I have said many times already that we cannot resume diplomatic relations with these governments until they are reorganised as we consider necessary.

STALIN

I suggest that the word "responsible" wherever it is applied to Italy, should be deleted. This word tends to belittle the Italian governments position.

TRUMAN

Nonetheless, the United States could not support any application for UN membership from a government that was not responsible and democratic.

STALIN

But in Argentina the government is less democratic than in Italy, but Argentina is nevertheless a member of the United Nations Organisation. It is a government, it is a democratic government, but if you add "responsible," then it turns out that this is some other kind of government.

Pause.

STALIN

I propose that the Big Three declare themselves ready merely to examine the question of resuming diplomatic relations with the Eastern European countries...sooner or later.

CHURCHILL

We consider that our representative in Italy is fully accredited. The status of that representative cannot be fully equated with that of an ambassador...but we do call him ambassador.

STALIN

But not of the kind as those of the Soviet Union and the United States.

CHURCHILL

Not quite. About ninety percent.

STALIN

That's the kind of ambassador then, that should be sent to Rumania, a "not quite" ambassador.

General laughter.

TRUMAN

I want to do everything I can to get to the point of resuming diplomatic relations with the eastern European countries.

STALIN

Then why don't you recognise these countries?

TRUMAN

I have already explained the difficulties in solving this problem.

STALIN

The difficulties were there before, but they are no longer there. We find it very hard to adhere to this resolution in its present form. We do not want to adhere to it.

CHURCHILL

Italy has a responsible democratic government. But the trouble with Eastern Europe is that it is so tightly closed to Western representatives that Britain could not even find out what sort of governments were there.

STALIN

How can you say such things without verifying them?

CHURCHILL

We know this from our own representative there. I am sure the Generalissimo would be surprised to learn some of the difficulties of our mission in Bucharest.

STALIN

These difficulties do not exist!

CHURCHILL

An iron fence has come down around them!

STALIN

All fairy tales!

TRUMAN

The governments would not be recognised unless they were reorganised.

Pause.

BYRNES

In the hope of reaching an agreement, I propose that the words "responsible government" should be replaced by the words "recognised government."

STALIN

That is more acceptable. But I think we should also adopt a decision that the three governments are willing to examine the question of establishing diplomatic relations with these four countries.

CHURCHILL

To suggest that the Big Three would agree to even examine the question would clash with what we have just said here.

STALIN

No. Each country would simply be saying that it would take up the question of recognition entirely independently.

TRUMAN

I have no objections.

STALIN

In that case, we have none either.

SZILARD

A moment of agreement. Neither Truman nor Stalin wanted to pursue this issue further, realising a point of no return may soon be reached. Churchill on the other hand...

CHURCHILL

Generalissimo Stalin, I think there is a contradiction here.

STALIN

I did not hear any contradiction.

CHURCHILL

I understood the President to say here that he does not now want to recognise the governments of Rumania, Bulgaria and the other satellite countries.

TRUMAN
(to CHURCHILL)

It says here that we undertake only to examine the question.

CHURCHILL

But Mr. President, this tends to mislead public opinion.

STALIN

Why?

TRUMAN

Yes, why?

CHURCHILL

Because it follows from the meaning of the statement that we shall soon recognise these governments; as it is, I am aware that this does not reflect the stand either of the government of the United States or the government of the United Kingdom.

STALIN

The governments might or might not be recognised. No one knows whether they will or will not be recognised.

CHURCHILL

But under the current circumstances they will not be recognised. And unless the circumstances of these governments change-

STALIN

The question will be examined, and then peace treaties could be signed after the governments actually were recognised.

SZILARD

And so the Big Three agreed to write peace treaties they would not sign for countries they would not recognise, because of differences they would not resolve. The Cold War had begun. The choice of weapons was soon to follow...

TRUMAN casually saunters over to STALIN.

MAIDEN

July 24th. 7.40pm.

TRUMAN

We have a new weapon of unusual destructive force.

Pause.

STALIN

I am glad to hear of it and hope you make good use of it against the Japanese.

STALIN smiles broadly. The stage and history are for a moment, frozen in time. TRUMAN, STALIN and CHURCHILL come together for their last photo opportunity. LIGHTS flashing as PHOTOGRAPHERS move around the stage...

SZILARD

Most Western observers record that Stalin did not understand the nature or gravity of what Truman was disclosing to him. Russian observers, such as Field Marshal Zhuzov, the hero of Stalingrad, have a different view of what happened...

ZHUKOV

Stalin understood exactly what the American President was saying. We already had spies working at Los Alamos. Immediately after his meeting with Truman, Stalin ordered us to make sure all was being done for Russia to have its own atomic weapons.

MAIDEN

July 25th 1945, the day before the Potsdam Declaration, President Truman writes...

TRUMAN

We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley era...it seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered.

ACT THREE SCENE TWO

MAIDEN

Late July, 1945. The final meeting of the Target Selection Committee.

GROVES

If you look in front of you there are aerial photos detailing the concentrated areas of those cities earmarked for possible targets. (GROVES goes through the photos as he continues). The primary list consists of Kokura, Hiroshima, Nagata, and Kyoto.

STIMSON

Why Kyoto General?

GROVES

We've taken into account psychological factors.

OPPENHEIMER

It was deemed...desirable...to make the first use of the bomb sufficiently spectacular for the importance of the weapon to be internationally recognized when publicity of it was released...

STIMSON

Desirable by whom?

GROVES

I wouldn't say that was the real reason for it.

STIMSON

Then what is the main reason General?

GROVES

The people there are of higher intelligence. They'll be better able to appreciate the significance of the weapon.

OPPENHEIMER

On the other hand, Hiroshima has the advantage of being such a size and, with possible focussing from nearby mountains, that a large fraction of the city may be destroyed. I'm sure they will appreciate the significance of that.

STIMSON

Which is the first primary target?

GROVES

Since this is a military operational matter I can't show you the primary target without first discussing them with General Marshall.

STIMSON

As the Secretary of War General, my understanding of what constitutes military operations far outweighs your own. Which is the first primary target?

GROVES

Kyoto. The primary is Kyoto.

STIMSON

Take it off the list.

GROVES

Mr. Secretary, I suggest you change your mind after you read the description of Kyoto-

STIMSON

I will not approve that city.

GROVES

...and our reasons for considering it to be a desirable target.

STIMSON

I doubt it. Kyoto is an historical city. One that is of great religious significance to the Japanese. I visited it when I was Governor-General of the Philippines and was very much impressed with its ancient culture.

GROVES

The city is filled with booming war plants. It's an ideal choice.

STIMSON

General, this decision has to be governed not only by considerations of inflicting maximum damage but also the historical position that the United States would occupy after the war. That being said, anything that would damage that position in any way, would be unfortunate.

GROVES

Kyoto is large enough in area for us to gain a complete knowledge of the effects of an atomic bomb.

STIMSON

Remove it from the list.

GROVES takes the photos of Kyoto and puts them aside.

STIMSON (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, I will leave the rest of the meeting in the General's capable hands. I have to call the President in less than an hour with the Interim Committees recommendations...

ACT THREE SCENE THREE

MAIDEN

July 25th 1945. The day before the Potsdam Declaration.

LIGHTS.

TRUMAN

I swear to God, he didn't even blink.

BYRNES

Show him...don't tell him. They've occupied Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, installed governments he calls "democratic", but we can't even get in to verify one way or the other. And rest assured they will be nothing but puppet governments controlled from Moscow.

TRUMAN

I don't want to give up half of Europe without a fight.

BYRNES

Leahy's talking about an "iron ring" going down on all the Eastern countries...

TRUMAN

Yes, Churchill was obviously quite taken by that comment.

BYRNES

And Churchill's right. It's already happened. That's why we should use the bomb while we still have the chance. Don't give Stalin the opportunity to extend his influence any further, and, at the same time, knock the Jap right out of the war. Groves has already drafted his orders to General Spaatz.

TRUMAN

What about MacArthur..?

BYRNES

(dryly)

He hasn't been consulted.

TRUMAN

Why not?

BYRNES

Spaatz has already made it clear he won't execute the mission on verbal orders only.

TRUMAN

Even from the President?

BYRNES

That's right. And if MacArthur knows, it could only complicate matters.

TRUMAN

We've firebombed sixty of their cities, completely destroyed their capacity to wage war...

BYRNES

And there is still no guarantee that this will force the Japs to surrender without an invasion.

TRUMAN

What are you saying Jimmy?

BYRNES

LeMay's tactics have been incredibly effective. This gadget would be no worse than what has already been achieved through conventional bombing.

Pause.

TRUMAN

And as a wartime President, I have every right to use it.

BYRNES

That's right Harry. And it might speed up the inevitable...save thousands, possibly millions of lives.

MAIDEN

Truman looks at his copy of the Potsdam Declaration, scheduled to be broadcast the following day. In each paragraph, the Allied and US position on the future of the post-war world is laid out. On paragraph 27, the terms of Japanese surrender are answered once and for all...

TRUMAN

"What does unconditional surrender mean to the Japanese people? It means...the end of the war and not prolonging the present agony and suffering of the Japanese people."

BYRNES

As long as we capitulate to any of the Japanese demands on the point of the Emperor they can say they negotiated a deal with the US government. The public believes...has entrusted us to accept nothing less than unconditional surrender. Anything else would be totally unacceptable and I might say politically dangerous.

TRUMAN

I want to leave Potsdam right away. There's nothing left to negotiate. When it happens, I don't want to be here. There's been enough horse-trading with the Russians. Nothing more will come of it.

MAIDEN

Truman hastens to meet the Augusta so that he will not have to explain to Stalin why he was not kept fully informed of the success of the bomb.

TRUMAN

Who is the pilot...?

BYRNES

A Colonel Paul Tibbets...he was in charge of the 504th Bombing Group assigned since the beginning. (BYRNES refers to a cable from GROVES). The plane is the "Enola Gay."

TRUMAN

"Enola Gay" huh? His wife or girlfriend no doubt...

BYRNES

For this occasion, he's named it after his mother.

LIGHTS.

ACT THREE SCENE FOUR

MAIDEN

4.00 am, August 6th 1945 on the island of Tinian...

People are milling about in busy anticipation, PHOTOGRAPHERS, FILM CREW, AIRCRAFT CREW, MP'S. The crew of the ENOLA GAY enter. Everyone on stage comes alive as if they are welcoming a group of celebrities. As the CREW prepare to leave on their fateful mission, the stage, the reality that the play has inhabited until this point disintegrates. With every description of the explosion, the set changes, the pace becomes more frenetic, the world as it was previously understood, is destroyed. SZILARD, TRUMAN and BYRNES watch the proceedings.

PARSONS

Remove and secure catwalk and tool...

SOUND of airplane in mid flight. VOICEOVER of the final countdown. All the photographers gather around TIBBETS.

PHOTOGRAPHER ONE

Look this way Colonel...

PHOTOGRAPHER TWO

Colonel over here!

PHOTOGRAPHER THREE

Smile for the folks back home...

TIBBETS complies. He notices PARSONS head out of the waist tunnel.

MAIDEN

Two minutes from target.

TIBBETS

Parsons get down here!

PARSONS

What's going on Colonel...

PHOTOGRAPHER ONE

You're gonna be famous so smile..!

PHOTOGRAPHER ONE takes a picture of PARSONS who smiles awkwardly. He climbs down.

MAIDEN

One minute from target.

PHOTOGRAPHER TWO

Look serious Colonel...now busy...

TIBBETS complies with the request. LIGHTS.
TRUMAN is alone, sitting at a bar. He is approached by JOHN GRONOUSKI.

GRONOUSKI

It's a pleasure to meet you Mr. President. John Gronouski. Can I buy you a drink..?

One of the SCIENTISTS enters carrying a portable recording machine.

REPORTER ONE

What you got there Captain...

SCIENTIST

Oh, this is a portable recording machine on which I plan to capture the crew's reaction to the atomic explosion. In fact gentlemen, (he grabs the PHOTOGRAPHERS and signals to the other crew members not surrounded by press) these guys are every bit as important as the rest of us!

MAIDEN

8.15 am...

TIBBETS

Bombs away...

LIGHTS. The stage is bathed in the colours of an atomic explosion. Everyone on stage notices it. TIBBETS points to the sky...

TIBBETS

A column of smoke rising fast. It has a fiery red core. A bubbling mass, purple-gray in colour, with that red core. It's all turbulent. Fires are springing up everywhere, like flames shooting out of a huge bed of coals..!

SZILARD

For three days she lay in the hospital. Listening to people die slowly and agonisingly around her. She could hear the thud of bodies hitting the ground outside...

LIGHTS. LAURENCE walks up to LEWIS.

LAURENCE

Hey Lewis, how about keeping a log of the flight?

LEWIS

I don't know...I've got a lot to do up there...

LAURENCE

The New York Times will publish it once the war's over and hey...you never know...

TRUMAN and GRONOUSKI sip their drinks.

TRUMAN

John, I want to tell you why I decided to use the atomic bomb.

LEWIS

(to the rest of the crew)

You guys...We've got it made and we're gonna win this war. Just don't screw it up!
Let's do this really great!

MAIDEN

August 8th 1945, Russia declares war on Japan...

LEWIS

I am starting to count the fires. One, two, three, four, five six...fourteen,fifteen...it's impossible. There are too many to count..!

A PHOTOGRAPHER shoves a camera into a CREW MEMBER'S hand.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Shoot whatever you can over the target!

TIBBETS

Let's wind this up fellas...

PHOTOGRAPHER THREE

Ok, let's get a group shot, all the crew gather round..!

MAIDEN

August 9th 1945, Nagasaki is destroyed...

FEREBEE

Here it comes, the mushroom shape that Captain Parsons spoke about...It's like a bubbling molasses. The mushroom is spreading out...

TIBBETS, PARSONS and the CREW gather round.

PHOTOGRAPHER THREE (CONT'D)

Some of you up front on your knee...not you Colonel!

All the PHOTOGRAPHERS line up in front of the CREW.

PHOTOGRAPHER THREE (CONT'D)

Ok...on three...one...two...THREE!

PARSONS

It's maybe a mile or two wide and half a mile high. It's nearly level with us and climbing. It's very black, but there is a purplish tint to the cloud.

SZILARD

At night she found the heat of the crematoriums comforting against the chilly night air...

PARSONS

The base of the mushroom looks like a heavy undercast that is shot through with flames. Hiroshima must be below that..!

SZILARD

Truman is aboard the USS. Augusta having lunch when he is brought the coded message signalling the mission's success...

TRUMAN

"It's a boy..." This is the greatest thing in the history of the world!

MAIDEN

August 10th, Truman orders all bombing to stop. The Japanese Foreign Ministry accepts the Postdam Declaration with one sole condition...

LEAHY

(reading it out aloud)

"The Japanese government are ready to accept the terms enumerated in the Joint Declaration which was issued at Potsdam on July 26...with the understanding that the said Declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of his Majesty as a sovereign ruler..."

TRUMAN

We had no choice. The Japanese refused to surrender.

PARSONS

The flames and smoke are billowing out, whirling out into the foothills...All I can see now of the city is the main dock and what looks like an airfield. There are planes down there...

LEAHY and STIMSON approach TRUMAN.

LEAHY

I advise we accept this offer Mr. President.

STIMSON

So do I. Their position is crystal clear. Leave their Emperor alone and they will comply to whatever we demand.

TRUMAN

I agree. Let the Japanese government know immediately our acceptance of this condition.

GRONOUSKI

History will show you did the right thing, Mr. President.

LIGHTS on BYRNES.

BYRNES

The Big Three said unconditional surrender. As Secretary of State I must advise you not to agree to this wording. It could lead to your crucifixion.

LIGHTS on the MAIDEN in ceremonial dress. She holds a large book in her hands.

MAIDEN

I saw a single plane, the magnificent B 29, fly across the sky. It was alone. Some children waved. Suddenly there was a blinding flash of light that we all turned to see...

LEWIS

All I could think was, "My God, what have we done."

LIGHTS. The MAIDEN places a mask over her face. The stage is the blackened landscape of Hiroshima or Nagasaki. The pre-atomic world has been dismantled literally and figuratively. TIBBETS and CREW walk around like a bunch of tourists. Some of them are holding cameras around their necks.

LEWIS

So this is it, huh?

FEREBEE

I can't believe we actually got here.

LEWIS

What are ya talkin' about?

FEREBEE

You see those looks some of those Japs back there gave us? Somebody ought to tell'em the war's over.

TIBBETS

They know. Otherwise we'd be dead already.

FEREBEE

Hey Colonel, it doesn't look like the bomb has done that much damage.

TIBBETS

Nagasaki's over those hills, so the effects of the blast was more contained than at Hiroshima...

SZILARD

As the dead and dying are stacked upon each other in funeral pyres to prevent the spread of disease, Truman and Byrnes have lunch. The next day, Secretary Byrnes accepts Japanese surrender...

BYRNES

(to audience)

"From the moment of surrender, the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese government to rule the state shall be subjected to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate the surrender terms."

SZILARD

August 14th 1945. 1.49 am Washington time. Radio Tokyo announces that Japan's surrender would shortly be forthcoming in accord with the new US terms implicitly assuring the position of the Emperor. At 3.30pm the Japanese War Minister tells a standing audience...

MAIDEN

"The Emperor has decided to end the war. It is therefore proper that we abide by the Imperial wish..."

SZILARD

A week later, Colonel Tibbets and his crew make a trip to Nagasaki, staying at a mountain Inn that was, like magic, shielded from the bomb...

LEWIS

Maybe you missed the target Ferebee.

FEREBEE

Pardon me. Next time I'll level a city from the exact centre. Just to make sure.

SWEENEY

I don't want there to be a next time.

TIBBETS

Don't worry Bob. With this weapon, there's not going to be too many wars we can't finish one way or the other.

FEREBEE notices the MAIDEN.

FEREBEE

So I guess this is where we sign in.

LEWIS

You're not going to get me to sign my name here. You never know who might read it...

The MAIDEN speaks a few words in Japanese and gestures with the book in her arms to TIBBETS.

LEWIS

I wouldn't do it Paul. Feelings must be pretty wound up around here about what we did.

FEREBEE

I'm not game myself...

TIBBETS

Why not? We ended the war didn't we?

TIBBETS takes the book from her and signs it.

FEREBEE

While you're at it Colonel, why don't you ask her how we get to Nagasaki?

SWEENEY

What the hell do you think we're going to see there anyway Paul?

TIBBETS

Exactly what we accomplished.

LEWIS

Hey why is she wearin' a mask?

SZILARD

June 1st, 1955, the first of twenty five Hiroshima Maidens are operated on at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York...

FEREBEE

Take a look at her hands they're like claws for Christ's sake.

TIBBETS

Miss, could you tell us how we get to Nagasaki from here?

The MAIDEN stands and prepares to take off her mask.

LEWIS
What the hell's she doin'?

SWEENEY
Jesus...

LIGHTS. REPORTERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS surround
the MAIDEN.

REPORTER ONE
Could you please lift your veil for one shot...

She stands motionless. Her face remains in
darkness. Some of the JOURNALISTS turn away. After
a brief moment, the PHOTOGRAPHERS start
snapping away.

SZILARD
The second operation on Tomoko Nakabayashi takes place on May 24th 1956.
She had pleaded with the doctor to fix her badly burned arms so she would no
longer have to wear opera gloves in public...

TIBBETS and the CREW gather round the MAIDEN.
She is placed on a table. They methodically remove
her mask and gloves.

SZILARD
The lower half of her face has been wholly reshaped.

TIBBETS
...as if melted from the blast...

TRUMAN
Her nose is smudged as if by a heavy thumb...

SZILARD
...like mashed cartilage with two tiny holes peeking out of it.

TIBBETS
Her mouth is a thin tear of scar tissue over her chin...

TRUMAN
...clutching her throat, making ordinary functions like eating, sipping, kissing or
smiling...all but impossible...

SZILARD
Her chin has all but melted into her neck...

TIBBETS

The skin on her bare arms split open exposing the pink tissue underneath. As the sun came out the burns were heated even more...

TRUMAN

Her charred clothing and scorched skin made it difficult to distinguish the front of her head from the back...

SZILARD

So ruthlessly and efficiently, her father pruned all the loose clothing away...

TRUMAN

Slowly she was blinded by the swelling and could not see...

TIBBETS

The first operations in Japan were done without anaesthesia...

TRUMAN

After the war, she convinced herself that the condition was temporary...

SZILARD

So she stayed indoors while waiting for the wounds to heal.

TIBBETS

A week before the bombing a fortune-teller told her, "you will be a girl whom people will turn and look at."

SZILARD

Midway through the surgery, she stops breathing.

TIBBETS

Within thirty seconds her chest cavity is open and the surgeon massages her heart with his hands.

TRUMAN

At 7.30 pm, a priest arrives to administer the last rites.

SZILARD

At 9.31 pm, the respirator stops. Tomoko is pronounced dead.

PHOTOGRAPHER

You can lower your veil now...

TRUMAN

Casualties at Hiroshima and Nagasaki exceed 250,000.

A moment of silence. PHOTOGRAPHERS snap away at her prostrate figure on the table. SOUND of an aircraft.

The CREW prepare for explosion as they would in their given roles within the aircraft. The rest on stage look for the SOUND. An almighty explosion. The MAIDEN is no longer on stage.

SZILARD

1964. The U.S Ambassador to Poland, John. A. Gronouski arrives in Independence Missouri, the home of retired President Truman, to speak at a fundraiser.

GRONOUSKI

After the tour of the library I dropped him off at his home and agreed to pick him up in time to have a couple of drinks at the Country Club bar. We stood at the bar and Mr. Truman ordered us each a double shot of Southern Comfort neat. Not my favorite drink, but when drinking with ex-Presidents. After ordering each of us another of the same, he began about a ten minute monologue on his decision to drop the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. He did not ask me whether he did the right thing. He simply was explaining to me and me alone his rationale for deciding to drop the bomb...almost twenty years after the event, to a virtual stranger.

TRUMAN

When they think this is just another bomb, they are making a very serious mistake...But this isn't just another weapon...not just another bomb. People make a mistake when they talk that way...

TIBBETS

People ask me if I regret being the man responsible for the first atomic attack on a civilian population. And I can honestly say I've never lost a nights sleep thinking about it. We were at war. Just like now. So whatever has to be done...it's all right by me.

SZILARD

I knew that the bomb would be dropped, that we had lost the fight. An when it actually happened, my overall feeling was one of relief. Suddenly the secrecy was dropped and it was possible to tell people what this was about and what we were facing in this century. Hiroshima showed up that moral inhibitions can no longer be counted on.

ACTOR

April 1946. Leo Szilard writes to the Metlab expressing his desire to continue working in the field of atomic energy. General Groves blocks his re-hiring, effectively ending Szilard's career in nuclear physics. He also ensures that Truman never sees Szilard's petition.

LIGHTS fade to blackout.

The End

