

## II. The Beast-Men and The Bomb

MOVIE REVIEW: *Oppenheimer*

# Putting the Issue of Nuclear War Back on the Table

by Stewart Battle

Aug. 29—For the first time in nearly four decades, the subject of nuclear war has finally re-entered the public stage. Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* depicts the intense moral and emotional tension involved with the creation of the first atomic bomb, including the inhuman behavior by those who made the decision to unnecessarily murder over 200,000 Japanese civilians. Even more stark was the callousness of the American people of 1945, who cheered as the bombs melted the faces off those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

As is made clear in the chilling final scene, this is not simply some story from the past, but one that still stalks the world today. And if anyone is being honest, it is far worse than even that. Today, NATO is pushing Russia into an existential crisis, and is showing no rational understanding that their continuing escalation will inevitably lead to global war. Russia has responded by threatening to change their nuclear doctrine to one of potential first-strike—mirroring that policy employed by the United States. A nuclear power can never be defeated militarily, and Russia has made it clear repeatedly that they will never accept a defeat in the current conflict in Ukraine.

When you see *Oppenheimer*, see the reality that nuclear weapons are just as real today as ever, and nothing has been done over the past 78 years to make the world



safer. Will today's Americans act any different from those citizens in 1945, or will we cheer as the first round of nuclear missiles are launched against Russia?

Over the recent several decades, this danger has receded from the minds of younger generations. As Nolan has reported in interviews, even his own daughter questioned him as to why make a movie about nuclear weapons, because “no one is interested in that anymore.” As part of his attempt to make the reality of nuclear war more real to his audiences, Nolan delivered a powerful and personal message by using his own daughter for the character whose face was melted off by the blinding flash of a nuclear bomb! Nolan said in an interview: “The point is that if

you create the ultimate destructive power, it will also destroy those who are near and dear to you. So I suppose this was my way of expressing that in what, to me, were the strongest possible terms.”

The dropping of the atomic bomb and the world's entry into the Atomic Age meant one large step for mankind into the future. As the vast majority of the scientists in the Manhattan Project will tell you, there was tremendous excitement among them in this period, not because we developed a bomb that could kill millions, but because the splitting of the atom meant an entirely new power for mankind to harness for the good! This meant a nearly limitless source of energy, an

end to scarcity, and hopefully an end to future wars, if treated properly. However, it also meant the unresolved problems of the world—of empires, of geopolitics, of an immature mankind—if left unresolved, could lead to the annihilation of humanity. While Nolan doesn't capture the very real spirit of optimism around this period, he does illustrate the moral reservations those such as Oppenheimer himself had regarding these questions, as well as the beastly response from others, such as the snarling duo of President Harry Truman and his Secretary of State, James "Jimmy" Byrnes.

Loosely implied in *Oppenheimer*, though also not explicitly portrayed, is the fact that although the Japanese had already all but surrendered long before the bombs were dropped, the decision had been made to proceed nonetheless. The lie that the bombing of Japan was ultimately what ended the war still persists today. In actuality, President Roosevelt was conducting negotiations with Emperor Hirohito which, if he had lived, would have guaranteed an agreement to end the war. Following the President's untimely death, the Japanese continued trying to reach agreeable terms of surrender, and were in negotiations with the Soviets<sup>1</sup> as well as with the Vatican,<sup>2</sup> though these efforts were sabotaged.

It was clear that the Americans—at the behest of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill—were resisting peace in favor of continuing the war, in order to demonstrate the destructive power of the bomb to the Soviet Union. The bomb was really not about Japan or even World War II at all, but was aimed at establishing a global reign of



Universal Pictures

*J. Robert Oppenheimer, as portrayed by Cillian Murphy in Christopher Nolan's film.*

terror to extend Anglo-American rule far into the future.

With that said, there are some important topics not discussed in *Oppenheimer* which are important to clarify.

### The Alternative

It is crucial to understand the vastly different approach represented by Franklin Roosevelt and those around him. Roosevelt never would have used the bomb, as he made clear in discussions with his Vice President and later Commerce Secretary Henry Wallace and others. Additionally, in 1945, six out of seven five-star generals, including Douglas MacArthur and Dwight D. Eisenhower, opposed the use of the bomb. Roosevelt's view of America's role in the world was not one of strong-arming one's adversaries into submission, but rather that relations based on trust and cooperation were needed if the world were to continue to exist.

On April 11, 1945, the night before he died suddenly, Roosevelt wrote a speech which he planned to deliver three

days later on a national radio broadcast. In it, he wrote:

We seek peace—enduring peace. More than an end to war, we want an end to the beginnings of all wars—yes, an end to this brutal, inhuman,



U.S. Army

*J. Robert Oppenheimer (left) with Army Maj. Gen. Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, at the site of the Trinity atomic bomb test in New Mexico, 1945.*

1 L. Wolfe. "The Beast-Men Who Made and Dropped the Bomb," *EIR*, Aug. 4, 2023.

2 Gerald H. Belsky. "The Role of Popes and the Vatican in Negotiations for Peace," *EIR*, Feb. 23, 2023.



U.S. Signal Corps

*President Franklin Roosevelt did not see in the Soviets an eternal adversary, and he worked hard to gain Stalin's trust for his anti-imperial vision for the post-war world. Shown: FDR and Marshal Joseph Stalin in Tehran, Dec. 1, 1943.*

and thoroughly impractical method of settling the differences between governments....

Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships—the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace.

Roosevelt was no imperialist, and as such he terrified Churchill and the British endlessly. He saw the war as largely a result of British and European colonial policies, which had created poverty and strife in their wake around the world (not to mention the direct British role in starting World Wars I and II). Roosevelt was determined that, following the close of the current war, the former colonies were not to be returned to Britain, France, Belgium, or anyone else, but would instead be offered American methods of modern industrial development and manufacturing so they could finally become truly free.

FDR's son Elliott relayed a discussion he had with his father in 1944 at the White House, where the

President said:

The point is that we are going to be able to bring pressure on the British to fall in line with our thinking, in relation to the whole colonial question.<sup>3</sup>

Had Roosevelt lived, there is no question he would have brought this change about. An American policy based on technological and industrial progress for the benefit of all peoples was vastly different than the zero-sum game of British imperialism and would have been the bedrock for a new policy of trust and cooperation between sovereign nation-states—big and small.

Certainly, Roosevelt did not see in the Soviets an eternal adversary, and he worked hard to gain Stalin's trust for his anti-imperial vision for the world. Stalin even told Averell Harriman after Roosevelt's death: "President Roosevelt has died, but his cause must live on."<sup>4</sup> It was this orientation that the British Empire was determined to kill, which is why Churchill pushed the knuckle-dragging Truman to make the final decision to drop the bomb. This of course created the intended effect: A new terror around the world that, far from creating peace, would set new future conflicts into motion.

Reflecting on this changed dynamic during a visit to Moscow in 1945, Gen. Eisenhower said:

Before the atom bomb was used, I would have said yes, I was sure we could keep the peace with Russia. Now I don't know. I had hoped the bomb wouldn't figure in this war. Until now I would have said that we three [Britain, U.S., USSR] ... could have guaranteed the peace of the world for a long, long time to come. But now, I don't know. People are frightened all over.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Reign of Terror Begins**

With these actions in play, the British had the kind of foundation they were looking for to set a very different policy into motion. Again, the core question was: Could mankind survive with these new weapons powerful enough to blow up the whole world, or were

<sup>3</sup> Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It*, p 224.

<sup>4</sup> William Jones. "Roosevelt-Stalin Correspondence Sheds Light on FDR Post-War Vision," *EIR*, July 6, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> William Jones, *Ibid*.



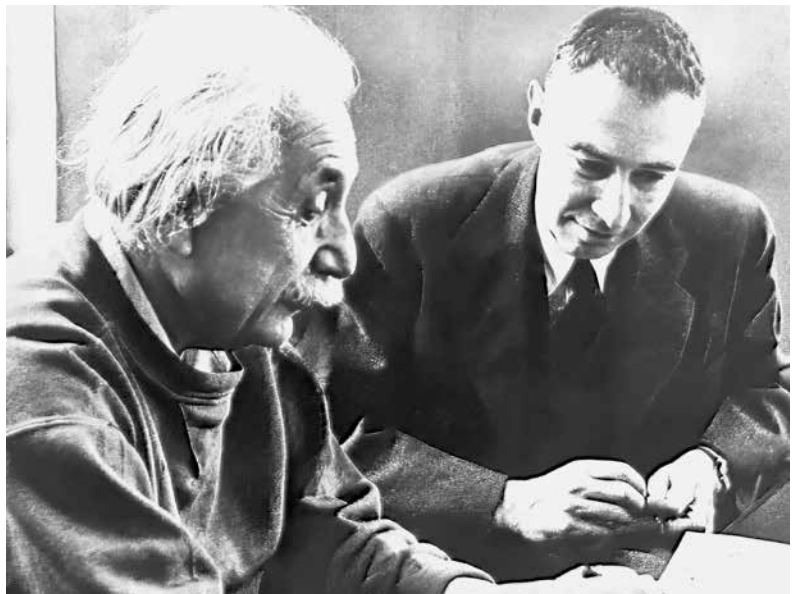
we doomed to self-destruction? These questions and concerns were clearly portrayed in the movie, in particular in the final scene with Albert Einstein and J. Robert Oppenheimer.

Naturally, many proposals and discussions ensued as to how to deal with this situation—how much should be controlled by governments, how to ensure international cooperation, peace treaties, etc. These developments are touched upon only briefly in the movie, in reference to the large number of scientists pushing to ban the use of the bomb and other preventive measures to stop a further arms race. What *Oppenheimer* goes nowhere near, however, and what continues to be a sticky issue up to this day, are those axioms and assumptions which underlie this subject, which some in the British imperial camp would rather you conveniently overlook, amidst an impending nuclear Armageddon.

Enter Bertrand Russell, the British lord, mathematician, philosopher, and pseudo-scientist who first became an outspoken voice for peace—the peace of the graveyard—during these years of the Atomic Age (as well as an outspoken proponent of mass population reduction, particularly among the “dark-skinned races”). In 1946, Russell wrote an [article](#) published in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* titled, “The Atomic Bomb and the Prevention of War.” In it, Russell argues that the only way to save the human race from certain nuclear apocalypse is to establish world government, or more properly, world empire, as Russell compares it to the way that “Rome secured the peace of the Mediterranean area for several centuries.” Every nation must be forced to join it, Russell says, and even insists that if the Soviets don’t accept, it would be better to wage preemptive nuclear war against them rather than wait for them to build their own arsenal of atomic bombs later.<sup>6</sup>

With this view of “peace,” the question to be asked is: Is peace so sacred that it negates the need

<sup>6</sup> Some argue this is an exaggeration and that Russell never actually meant it like this. Unfortunately for them, Russell himself clarified this in an interview with BBC in 1959, where he was asked if he had in fact called for preventative war against the Soviets. Russell replied: “It’s entirely true and I don’t repent of it. It was not inconsistent with what I think now.”



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*Profound theoretical and philosophical questions concerning atomic energy and man’s survival of its destructive power occupied discussions of J. Robert Oppenheimer with fellow physicist Albert Einstein, shown together at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, c. 1950.*

for freedom? The oligarch Russell’s insanely murderous plan becomes, with such logic, a “necessary evil.”

By the mid-1950s, the pre-emptive nuclear warrior Russell had morphed into the leader of the anti-nuclear weapons peace movement, under the banner of SANE (the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy), informed by a 1955 letter drafted by Russell and signed by many scientists, where they conclude: “The abolition of war will demand distasteful limitations of national sovereignty.” Many scientists and others fell for this. Some, including Leo Szilard—portrayed in *Oppenheimer* as the main representative of those scientists who opposed the building of the atomic bomb—even agreed with Russell’s proposal of a preemptive nuclear war on the Soviets.

### **The Missing Element**

In exchange for “peace,” Americans were being pressured to concede that most precious thing—the kernel which separates a human being from a beast of the field. German poet and playwright Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) explored this question in his essay “The Legislation of Lycurgus and Solon.” As Schiller describes, Lycurgus’s Sparta was a utilitarian paradise, with all forms of society legislated to perfection. Equality was mandated, all wealth distributed, and all

citizens were provided for with the utmost of care. The state behaved like a finely-tuned watch and generated immense pride and patriotism from its citizens—not to mention its famous military prowess born of its soldiers’ almost unnatural strength in war.

But these strengths were gained at the expense of the human spirit of the Spartans themselves, sacrificing the free play of thought and human emotion for an indestructible security for the state. Those artifacts of human creativity—the arts and sciences—were banished in fear that they would distract citizens from a more simple-minded loyalty to the fatherland or engender dangerous rebelliousness. As Schiller points out, the Spartans saw their citizens as a means, not as ends, thereby destroying the foundation of natural law and morality through their own legislation.

Properly understood, governments are instituted to protect and foster those inherent creative potentialities within their citizens, as it is only through the improvement of those faculties that the future of the state can be secured. Isn’t this true morality, to bring the ordering of oneself and one’s government into accord with the natural laws of the universe and the beautiful potentials of the human species? Instead, Russell and others of his British ilk seek to force humanity into submission to their depraved and arbitrary view of a necessary-if-slightly-evil world empire—as is now ongoing with today’s “rules-based order.”

Rather, peace should be seen as President Kennedy described it in his famous speech at American University in 1963:

What kind of peace do we seek? Not a *Pax Americana* enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on Earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children—not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women—not merely peace in our time but peace for all time.

Had FDR lived, he would have seen the situation in the same way.

*Oppenheimer*’s release has helped raise the public consciousness of the nuclear bomb, and as such might just play a vital role in preventing nuclear war today. However, the movie fails to elaborate upon the deeper

and even more important issues underlying the danger and the solution—up to and emphatically including today. The dawn of the Atomic Age fundamentally altered the world by the fact that it necessitated a new paradigm if mankind were to survive an otherwise assured self-destruction.

While arms control treaties and other laws restricting nuclear weapons are undoubtedly critical, this change could never be brought about by forcing an iron fist upon humanity in order to secure “peace”—only the morally stunted or willfully evil would agree to such a horror. Rather, only through the recognition of the principle of the “One Humanity” and the inherent good in every human life—no matter how great our differences—can a true and durable peace be secured. Schiller Institute chairwoman Helga Zepp-LaRouche’s call for a new security and development architecture, which takes into account the interests of all nations, is *the* main organizing concept currently on the table for the continued survival of the human race.

More about the decision to drop the atomic bomb is available in *EIR* [here](#).



The advertisement features a blue magazine cover for *EIR* (Executive Intelligence Review) with the headline "There Are No Limits to Growth" and a picture of Earth. Behind it is a white document titled "EIR Daily Alert Service" listing various news items such as "Schiller-LaRouche Principle of Stewardship To Drive Agenda for 2021 World Economic Daily Agenda Meeting for January", "Energy Mined: Preparing for Next Round of Talks on Promoting Farmers", "Solving the Earth's Strategic Crisis: Water to Citizens, Not to Fire Pumps, Not Fire Missiles at Iran", "Parliament Votes Up Resolution To Join NATO", "Add Hypersonic Weapons Capability To Its Arsenal", "Space Pull Production of Additive Manufacturing", "WHO Global Health Issues to Tack in 2021", "China Annual CPC 'Democratic Life Meeting' Concludes, and Iran Agree To Start Regular Rail Service in 2021".

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