

August 9, 1945

TO: All Division Leaders

FROM: J. R. Oppenheimer

We received the following telegram:

"IF YOU CAN SEE YOUR WAY TO MAKING STATEMENT ON TREMENDOUSLY SOBERING RESPONSIBILITIES OF KNOWLEDGE ATOMIC BOMB AND ON POSSIBLE BENEFICIAL RATHER THAN DESTRUCTIVE USES FOR FUTURE PLEASE TELEGRAPH COLLECT. WE WOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL AND GUARANTEE SOBER PRESENTATION THESE STATEMENTS LEADING NEWSPAPERS UNITED STATES.

(Signed) NORTH AMERICAN NEWS ALLIANCE"

It seemed to me that this might be an opportunity to present our general points of view somewhat more widely than has been possible in the past. After consultation with a few members of the project I sent the following answer. I hope you will think that this statement does not misrepresent us:

"In answer to your telegraphic request should be glad to furnish the following statement. Please do not paraphrase or distort this statement, since this could profoundly embarrass others: 'The many scientists who have been engaged in this development of the atomic bomb have been sustained by hopes for the future which it is appropriate that I should express on their behalf. These are not different from those which have inspired the leaders of our Government in encouraging and supporting this work. It is our conviction that these hopes will be shared by the American people as they come to know the facts. For this reason we appreciate and welcome the efforts of the press and the radio to bring the truth, openly and clearly, before the American public.

'We have believed that the use of this weapon in the war against Japan might help to shorten that war and be a benefit to the world for that alone; but above all we have thought that this rather spectacular technical development, and the assured prospect of far more terrifying future developments, would force upon the people of this country, and all the war-weary peoples of the world, a recognition of how imperative it has become to avert wars in the future; how the cooperation and understanding between nations which has seemed desirable for so long has become a desperate necessity. We have hoped further that in the hands of statesmen atomic power itself could help to provide a mechanism for bringing peoples together and for establishing confidence between nations. We have been supported in this hope by the fact that science itself, out of which this development has been born, is one of the most universal of human efforts, and that its tendency has been to bridge the gap between cultures rather than to deepen it.

'As has been so clearly stated by the President and by the Secretary of War, the atomic bomb is only one product of our recent technological advance. As scientists we share their confidence that constructive developments of great and lasting benefit to mankind will eventuate from this work. The general outlines of many of these are even now clear to us, and we hope that there will come a time when it is by them rather than by weapons of war that this development will be remembered. We believe that it is in the first instance in the hands of the American people to make these hopes a reality.'

J. R. Oppenheimer"

You may make what disposition of this you wish.