

The Bombing of Nagasaki August 9, 1945: The Un-Censored Version

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Today, August 9, 2020, we commemorate the 7th anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki.

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73 years ago, at 11:02 am on August 9th, 1945, an all-Christian bomber crew dropped a plutonium bomb, on Nagasaki, Japan. That bomb was the second and last atomic weapon that had as its target a civilian city. Somewhat ironically, as will be elaborated upon later in this essay, Nagasaki was the most Christian city in Japan and ground zero was the largest cathedral in the Orient.

These baptized and confirmed airmen did their job efficiently, and they accomplished the mission with military pride. There was no way that the crew could not have known that what they were participating in met the definition of an international war crime (according to the Nuremberg Principles that were very soon to be used to justify the execution of many German Nazis).

It had been only 3 days since the August 6th bomb, a uranium bomb, had decimated Hiroshima. The Nagasaki bomb was dropped amidst considerable chaos and confusion in Tokyo, where the fascist military government had been searching for months for a way to honorably end the war. The only obstacle to surrender had been the Roosevelt/Truman administration's insistence on unconditional surrender, which meant that the Emperor Hirohito, whom the Japanese regarded as a deity, would be removed from his figurehead position in Japan – an intolerable demand for the Japanese that prolonged the war and kept Japan from surrendering months earlier.

The Russian army had declared war against Japan on August 8, hoping to regain territories lost to Japan in the disastrous Russo-Japanese war 40 years earlier, and Stalin's army was advancing across Manchuria. Russia's entry into the war represented a powerful incentive for Japan to end the war quickly and they much preferred surrendering to the US rather than to Russia. A quick end to the war was important to the US as well. It did not want to divide any of the spoils of war with Russia.

The Target Committee in Washington, D.C. had made a list of relatively un-damaged Japanese cities that were to be excluded from the conventional fire-bombing (using napalm) campaigns that had burned to the ground 60+ major Japanese cities during the first half of 1945. That list of protected cities included, at one time or another Hiroshima, Niigata,

Kokura, Kyoto and Nagasaki. These relatively undamaged cities were off-limits from incendiary terror bombings but were to be preserved as possible targets for the new “gimmick” weapons of mass destruction.

Scientific curiosity was a motivation in choosing the targeted cities. The military and the scientists needed to know what would happen to intact buildings – and their living inhabitants – when atomic weapons were exploded overhead. Ironically, prior to August 6 and 9, the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki considered themselves lucky for not having been bombed as much as other cities. Little did they know.

Early in the morning of August 9, 1945, a B-29 Superfortress that had been christened Bock’s Car, took off from Tinian Island in the South Pacific, with the prayers and blessings of its Lutheran and Catholic chaplains, and headed for Kokura, the primary target. Bock’s Car’s plutonium bomb was in the bomb bay, code-named “Fat Man,” after Winston Churchill.

The only field test (blasphemously code-named “Trinity”) of a nuclear weapon had occurred just three weeks earlier (July 16, 1945) at Alamogordo, New Mexico. The molten lava rock that resulted from the heat of that blast (twice the temperature of the sun) can still be found at the site today. It is called trinitite.

The reality of what had happened at Hiroshima was only slowly becoming apparent to the fascist military leaders in Tokyo. It took 2 – 3 days after Hiroshima was incinerated before Japan’s Supreme War Council was able to even partially comprehend what had happened there, to make rational decisions and to discuss again the possibility of surrender.

But it was already too late, because by the time the War Council was meeting that morning in Tokyo, Bock’s Car and the rest of the armada of B-29s was already approaching Japan – under radio silence. The dropping of the second bomb had initially been planned for August 11, but bad weather had been forecast, and the mission was moved up to August 9.

With instructions to drop the bomb only on visual sighting, Bock’s Car arrived at the primary target, but Kokura was clouded over. So after futilely circling over the city three times, there was no break in the clouds, and, running seriously low on fuel in the process, the plane headed for its secondary target, Nagasaki.

The history of Nagasaki Christianity

Nagasaki is famous in the history of Japanese Christianity. Not only was it the site of the largest catholic church in the Orient, St. Mary’s Cathedral (completed in 1917), but it also had the largest concentration of baptized Christians in all of Japan. It was the megachurch of its time, with 12,000 baptized members.

Nagasaki was the location where the legendary Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, established a mission church in 1549. The Christian community survived and prospered for several generations. However, soon after Xavier’s planting of the church in Japan, it became obvious to the Japanese rulers that Portuguese and Spanish commercial interests were exploiting Japan, and it didn’t take too long for all Europeans to be expelled from the country – as well as their foreign religion. All aspects of Christianity, including the new Japanese converts, became the target of brutal persecutions.

By 1600, being a Christian was a capital crime in Japan. The Japanese Christians who refused to recant of their new religion suffered torture and even crucifixions similar to the

Roman persecutions in the first three centuries of Christianity. After the reign of terror was over, it appeared to all observers that Japanese Christianity was extinct.

However, 250 years later, in the 1850s, after the coercive gunboat diplomacy of Commodore Perry forced open an offshore island for American trade purposes, it was discovered that there were thousands of baptized Christians in Nagasaki, living their faith in a catacomb existence, completely unknown to the government – which immediately started another purge. But because of international pressure, the persecutions were soon stopped, and Nagasaki Christianity came up from the underground. And by 1917, with no help from the government, the growing Japanese Christian community had built the massive Urakami Cathedral, in the Urakami River district of Nagasaki.

Now it turned out, in the mystery of good and evil, that the massive Cathedral was one of two Nagasaki landmarks that the Bock's Car bombardier had been briefed on, and looking through his bomb site 31,000 feet overhead, he identified the cathedral through a break in the clouds and ordered the drop.

At 11:02 am, during morning mass, Nagasaki Christianity was boiled, evaporated and carbonized in a scorching radioactive fireball that exploded 500 meters above the cathedral. Ground Zero was the persecuted, vibrant, surviving center of Japanese Christianity.

The Nagasaki Christian death count

Since the Cathedral was the epicenter of the blast, most Nagasaki Christians did not survive. 6000 of them died instantly, including all who were at confession that morning. Of the 12,000 church members, 8,500 died as a direct result of the bomb. Three orders of nuns and a Christian girl's school disappeared into black smoke or chunks of charred remains. Tens of thousands of innocent Shinto and Buddhist Japanese also died instantly and hundreds of thousands were mortally wounded, some of whose progeny are still in the process of slowly dying from the trans-generational malignancies and immune deficiencies caused by the deadly plutonium.

What the Japanese Imperial government could not do in over 200 years of persecution, destroy Japanese Christianity, American Christians did in 9 seconds. Even today those who are members of Christian churches in Japan represent a fraction of 1% of the population, and the average attendance at Christian worship services is 30. Surely the decimation of Nagasaki at the end of the war crippled what at one time was a thriving church.

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