

Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemorations

Confronting 60 Years of Nuclear Myth-Making

Editorial

Many U.S. citizens rely on debunked propaganda, repeated endlessly, that U.S. atomic mass destruction at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was committed to force the Japanese to surrender and to "save lives." The historical record contradicts this hoax.

In 1945, Brig. Gen. Bonnie Feller wrote, "Neither the atomic bombing nor the entry of the Soviet Union into the war forced Japan's unconditional surrender." Even President Dwight Eisenhower, who at the time was the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, said the Bomb didn't end the war. Ike said, "First, the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing. Second, I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon." Historian Gar Alperovitz (*Atomic Diplomacy*, Penguin Books, 1985 and *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, Random House, 1996) has said, "I think it can be proven that the bomb was not only unnecessary but known in advance not to be necessary."

These authoritative challenges refute official government history. Still, all three statements share a thoughtless implication: namely, that a nuclear attack could conceivably be "necessary" or "excusable" under some circumstances. That most people in the United States believe this to be true is the result of decades of myth-making started by President Harry Truman. Truman said in August 1945, "The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians."

Taking Truman at his word, the 140,000 civilians killed at Hiroshima are the minimum to be expected when exploding a "small" nuclear weapon on a "military base." At this rate, today's weakest warheads—which are 12 times the power of Truman's bomb—would each kill a minimum of 1.68 million civilians.

The ability to think of such acts as "necessary"—and to prepare and threaten them—requires the adoption of a learned indifference that insulates the conscience from the consequences of one's actions. Deep-seated denial is needed

Navy Veteran Who Saw Nagasaki Calls A-Bombing 'Crime'

Edward L. Stayton, 80, of Cromwell, Minnesota was a fireman 1st class aboard a navy destroyer in the Pacific during World War II. On September 1, 1945, he went ashore with fellow crew members at Nagasaki, Japan, on a mission to liberate prisoners of war held outside of the city. He arrived at Nagasaki three weeks after it was hit by the atomic bomb. Stayton says what he saw changed his life forever. In response to news that Paul Tibbets, the pilot who flew the Enola Gay on its bombing mission against Hiroshima, was the featured speaker at a Commemorative Air Force fundraiser, Mr. Stayton wrote to our friend Joel Kilgour at the Loaves & Fishes Community in Duluth:

"They say that the bombs helped end the war, but at what cost? Mr. Tibbets has his view on the importance of the Bomb, but I was there. The day we dropped anchor at Nagasaki was a watershed moment in my life. I remember clearly the corpse of a child—probably three years old—floating upside-down, bloated and barbecued, in the harbor. I remember the streets piled high with charred bones and heaps of human remains. I will never forget that for all of eternity. From that point on I was no longer a bright-eyed patriot, willing to turn my conscience over to the government. Wars are unconscionable. They are hell on earth. And it is a crime to use the lives of children to win them."

to excuse any mass destruction because, generally, the injustice of indiscriminate attacks is not debatable—whether at Wounded Knee, Oklahoma City, Sarajevo, Rwanda, New York City, Fallujah or Hiroshima. Furthermore, since H-bomb explosions produce uncontrollable, long-term results, it follows that the rationalization of U.S. nuclear war planning

has hardly changed since 1945. Consider how similar to Truman's words are those of the U.S. State Department's written declaration to the International Court of Justice (the World Court) on the question of the legality of using nuclear weapons: "Nuclear weapons can be directed at a military target and can be used in a discriminate manner."

This artful lie, the engine of the nuclear weapons establishment, amounts to the cynical, outlawed, fascist notion that positive good can come from the commission of massacres. The State Department's claim cannot, no matter how often or skillfully repeated, make the effects of even one nuclear warhead limited, controllable, militarily practical or ethically justifiable. A rebuttal is provided by no less an authority than a former top commander of the U.S. Strategic Air Command (SAC, now Strategic Command).

Gen. George Lee Butler (USAF Ret.), in 1996, became the first SAC commander in history to condemn U.S. nuclear weapons and the nuclear war policy that he himself had implemented. Gen. Butler now speaks and writes against the Bomb with the clout of his unassailable credentials. He has said current nuclear war policy is based on "the mistaken belief that nuclear weapons retain an aura of utility." On the contrary, "The likely consequences of nuclear war have no politically, militarily or morally acceptable justification, and therefore the threat to use nuclear weapons is indefensible," Butler says, concluding that nuclear weapons' "effects transcend time and place, poisoning the earth and deforming its inhabitants for generation[s]."

Admiral William Leahy put Butler's point well in 1950. As the WWII Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Leahy's denunciation of the Bomb bears repeating as an epitaph for the nuclear age: "I was not taught to make war in that fashion," he said about Hiroshima, "and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children."

— John LaForge

2005 August 6 – 9

Days of Remembrance and Action

1945 - 2005 August 6 and 9, 2005 mark the 60th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. Join the global majority to say NO! to militarism, war and oppression, and YES! to nonviolence, justice and a more secure world.

Los Alamos Nuclear Weapons Lab, New Mexico

Hiroshima, 60 Years: It Started Here Let's Stop it Here! Teach-in, sunflower pageant, workshops, music, candlelight meditation and more. Ashley Pond Park in Los Alamos, Saturday, August 6, 8:30 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. **Contact:** Los Alamos Study Group, (505) 265-1200, lasg.org; Pax Christi New Mexico, (505) 870-2275, <http://paxchristi.org>; and Upaya Zen Center, Joan Halifax, (505) 986-8182, upaya.org

Nukewatch is organizing a bus/van to Los Alamos from the upper mid-west. Call (715) 472-4185 for information and a reservation.

International Peace Walk

Organized by For Mother Earth, the walk is approximately 250 km, will start in Ypres, Belgium and end at the NATO/ U.S. nuclear weapons base in Kleine Brogel where there will be a peace camp from August 6 - 9. **Contact:** For Mother Earth: motherearth.org; E-mail: International@motherearth.org

Y-12 Nuclear Facility, Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Stop the Bombs! Remembrance/names ceremony, peace march, rally and direct action, and peace lantern ceremony. Saturday, August 6, all day at the main gate of the Y-12 National Security Complex, Oak Ridge. **Contact:** Ralph Hutchison, Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, orepa@earthlink.net, (865) 483-8202, www.stopthebombs.org

Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab, California

Seeds of Change. Celebrate the vision of a nuclear-free world with music, dinner, rally and candlelight march. William Payne Park, 5800 Patterson Pass Road, Livermore. Saturday, August 6, 5 p.m. **Contact:** Tara Dorabji, Tri-Valley CAREs, tara@trivalleycares.org, (925) 443-7148, www.trivalleycares.org

Nevada Test Site, Nevada

Many Stories, One Vision for a Nuclear Free World Conference, speakers and public witness including storytelling, nonviolence trainings, liturgy, music, performance, workshops and nonviolent direct action. University of Nevada, Las Vegas and at the Nevada (Nuclear) Test Site, August 4 - 7. **Contact:** Nevada Desert Experience, (702) 646-4814, nde_youth@peacenet.org, www.nevadadesertexperience.org

Candlelight Vigils

We are calling for candlelight vigils to be held at City Halls in communities across the country. In addition, we encourage people to organize readings, lantern lighting ceremonies, shadow projects and more. In support of Mayors for Peace, we are calling on local groups to invite their mayors to participate in the vigils. **Contact:** Jackie Cabasso, Western States Legal Foundation, wslf@earthlink.net, (510) 839-5877