



The Actual Reason Why America Dropped 2 Atomic Bombs on Japan - Part 1 with Prof. Kuznick

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acTVism Munch (acTV): Thank you for your time today. Without getting into details or context at first, can you describe the events that unfolded in Japan in August of 1945 when the United States became the first nation to use atomic bombs?

PK: August 6, 1945: U.S. B-29s took off from the island of Tinian in the Pacific, heading for Japan. The primary target was the city of Hiroshima. Hiroshima had about a 300,000 civilian population, 43,000 Japanese soldiers and 45,000 Korean slave laborers. The B-29 named Enola Gay by the pilot, Paul Tibbets; he named it after his mother, Enola Gay Haggard of Clinton, Iowa dropped the first atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima at 8:15 a.m.. It exploded above the city, at 860 meters above the city and wiped out basically an area of almost 2 miles in each direction.

The immediate impact? Well, we know that the death toll by December of that year, December 1945, was up to about 140,000 to 150,000. After five years, the death toll was 200,000, so it had a devastating impact. It exploded with the equivalent of 16 megatons explosive force or 16 million tons of TNT – excuse me 16 kilotons, not 16 megatons, in terms of destructive capabilities, and just devastated the entire city, leveled most of the city. The idea was to target a military target surrounded by workers' homes. And that's what Hiroshima was. It was a city that had military significance. It was a city with the Western Defense Command. It was a city from which, at the port, Japanese troops spread out throughout the empire, so there were some soldiers there. The original U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey official report said that 3243 soldiers died in the bombing, but that number is probably low. There were more soldiers than that killed, and overwhelmingly the victims were women and children – Japanese civilians.

So that was the first atomic bomb. On August 9th, the United States dropped the second atomic bomb over the city of Nagasaki. The bomb that exploded over Hiroshima was a uranium bomb. The bomb that exploded over Nagasaki was a plutonium bomb. This was actually a more powerful bomb over Nagasaki. It exploded with the force of 21 kilotons, but it was contained in the Urakami valley, whereas the Hiroshima bomb was targeted at the Aioi bridge, the T-shaped bridge in the middle of downtown Hiroshima. The Nagasaki bomb was targeted supposedly on the Mitsubishi shipbuilding area, but it missed the target by almost two miles and instead landed in the Urakami district. The Urakami district was significant because that's where the Catholic population of Nagasaki was located. Nagasaki had the biggest Christian population in all of Asia, and so the bomb detonated above the Urakami cathedral, which was the biggest cathedral in East Asia. That's got a lot of significance that

we can get into later, in terms of the different response of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the bombings.

So in Nagasaki, there were approximately 70,000 to 74,000 dead by the end of 1945 and 140,000 to 150,000 dead by 1950. But the detonation, the bomb, was more powerful because it landed in the Urakami valley, it was somewhat constrained, the shockwaves were held in by the mountain range on both sides. So the damage was actually a little bit less than it was in Hiroshima. But again, the targets were women and children, civilians, overwhelmingly. And the bombs started the Nuclear Age. We can get into the historical context around that and what that meant and why they were so unnecessary, why the slaughter was totally gratuitous, but it had a very specific geopolitical purpose.

actV: Let's now get into some details. Before we discuss why the U.S. dropped atomic bombs in Japan, could you address the biggest myth that has been disseminated in the mainstream media surrounding this historical event?

PK: Let me give you some examples about the bullshit that the mainstream media publishes about the dropping of the atomic bombs – by learned people, these are not idiots, these are intelligent people. Susan Rice, former national security adviser, U.N. representative, wrote an op-ed in The New York Times in late 2019. She might be our next vice-president – I hope not – but it's possible. And she wrote, "Following D-Day, my father was sent to the West Coast to prepare for deployment to the Pacific theater. He was spared combat by President Harry Truman's decision to drop atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, provoking the Japanese surrender." Supposedly, that's what saved him from going into combat.

Chris Wallace, the most progressive of the Fox News commentators, has a new book out called "Countdown 1945", which has been on top of the New York bestseller list for weeks. And Chris Wallace writes, "Despite all his misgivings, Truman knew he had to drop the atomic bomb. The Manhattan Project had given him a weapon to potentially end the war, and no matter how devastating their losses, the Japanese refused to surrender. They left him no choice."

The New York Times recently had an article about the Trinity test on July 16th in Alamogordo, New Mexico. The Times reporter Maria Cramer accepts the idea that the bombs were necessary to force Japan's surrender in the Second World War. She mentions, the scientists had misgivings, but she gives the final word to Stephen Olson, author of a book about Hanford Nuclear Reservation, who says, "it's very hard to conceive a set of developments in 1945 that would've avoided dropping those bombs." Well, it's not so hard for me, I'll tell you in a minute.

Barack Obama, when he went to Hiroshima in May 2016, you know, I urged him to go. I applauded him for going – the first sitting American president to visit Hiroshima. And what he did there was a disgrace. And what he said there was a disgrace. And he first starts his speech at the Cenotaph, and he says, death fell from the skies in Hiroshima. Death didn't fall from the sky, the United States dropped two atomic bombs. But then he goes on to reiterate the main lie of the war. He says World War 2 reached its brutal end in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. World War 2 did not reach this end in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The atomic bombs did not end the war. There is no justification.

The American myth is the idea that the only way to avoid an invasion, in which Truman says

in his memoir, a half million American boys would have been killed. The myth is that the only way to avoid that, because the Japanese were fanatics and fiercely resisting, was to drop atomic bombs. And over the years, not only is it a half million American boys, but millions of Japanese lives were saved also. So not only is the bomb necessary, but it's humane, it's benevolent, it's something that is a tragic reality, but it was actually the right thing to do, even for the Japanese. So America preserves the idea of American exceptionalism, American goodness, decency, benevolence, kindness, generosity. You know, we sometimes do bad things, but in a noble cause, and they actually are in the interests of humanity. There could be nothing further from the truth. Nothing further from the truth.

acTV: Why did the U.S. drop atomic bombs if it wasn't absolutely necessary? And were there any alternative options on the table that could have ended the war without the use of atomic bombs?

PK: Well, there's a lot in that sentence – that could take me a few hours to unpack.

Let me start with the myth. The myth begins shortly after the atomic bombings. Truman's initial statement does not talk about saving lives and avoiding an invasion. His initial statement talks about revenge for Pearl Harbor. He initially said thousands of American lives were saved. He then ups it in the early drafts of his memoir to a quarter of a million, then to a half billion, later in life, he says a million. George H.W. Bush, former president, said that Truman's tough, calculating decisions saved millions of American lives. So the number keeps going up as the evidence piles up that they were unnecessary: Number 1.

So initially, 85% of Americans told pollsters that they supported the dropping of the atomic bombs – that was the Gallup poll. Roper released a poll later in 1945 that showed that 23 % of Americans said they wished the Japanese had not surrendered so quickly so we could have dropped more atomic bombs on them. In the southwest, 30% felt that way. This was the initial attitude. But then in the summer of 1946, John Hersey published his famous articles and book called Hiroshima, in which he traces six survivors of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima, two doctors, two clergymen, two others, and so humanizes the victims for the first time. That was electric. It caught on everywhere. People were reading it, repeating it, buying hundreds and thousands of copies and distributing them. And so then the American leaders realized that the myth that they had started to construct, that defending the bombing was unraveling. So Secretary of War Stimson, former Secretary of War at this point, Stimson writes an article in Harper's magazine defending the bombing and laying out what later became the heroic narrative of the triumphal narrative. The myth that we're talking about. So that was Stimson's doing. Stimson had grave misgivings, but George Bundy helped him write that. George Bundy talked about Stimson's misgivings. Stimson knew that the atomic bombs were necessary. Stimson, in fact, the Secretary of War, tried to convince Truman over and over again to change the surrender terms, to tell the Japanese that they could keep the Emperor.

Stimson and everybody else around him knew that the main stumbling block was the demand for unconditional surrender, which Roosevelt had articulated at the meeting at Casablanca. But to the Japanese unconditional surrender meant that the Emperor would be tried as a war criminal and executed. The emperor to them was a deity tracing back to 660 B.C.. General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Command issued a background briefing the summer of 1945, that said execution of the Emperor to them would be comparable to the crucifixion of Christ

to us – all would fight to die like ants. They knew that all the advisers around Truman, with one major exception, urged him to change his surrender terms. They plead with him, they intervened with him repeatedly, Forrestall, Leahy, Stimson, the military leaders. They all knew that there was the possibility that the Japanese would never surrender unconditionally the way the U.S. was demanding. Joseph Grew, the Undersecretary of State who was the acting Secretary of State at times in 1945, was the only one who really had experience in Japan. He was a former U.S. ambassador to Japan. He kept on telling Truman and the others, change the surrender terms if we want to end the war.

How do we know that that was the main stumbling block? We'd broken the Japanese codes in the beginning of the war and we were intercepting their telegrams. And the main telegram flow, diplomatic telegrams, was from Foreign Minister Togo in Tokyo to Ambassador Sato in Moscow. And the reason why they were corresponding so much was because in May, the Japanese Supreme War Council had decided that the way to get better surrender terms was to try to get the Soviet Union to intercede on their behalf and get them better surrender terms. And what they wanted was two-fold: to keep the Soviets out of the war, because the Soviets had been neutral up till early April, and to get the Soviets to get them better surrender terms. In early May and early June, former Prime Minister Hirota met several times in Tokyo with the Soviet ambassador Malik. Malik wrote back to the Kremlin, the Japanese are desperate to surrender. This was early June.

We knew this from so many sources. In fact, Allen Dulles wrote a book, *The Secret Surrender*, I think it was in 1966. Allen Dulles was active in the OAS, then becomes a CIA director, and wrote a book about the Japanese surrender. He said, our embassies all over the world were reporting that the Japanese wanted to surrender, if they could keep the Emperor. We knew this. Everybody knew this, it wasn't a secret. The telegrams going back and forth between Togo and Sato said the only obstacle to ending the war is the demand for unconditional surrender. If they will guarantee the emperor and the continuation of the dynasty then the war is over. We knew this. In fact, Truman himself refers on July 18th to the intercepted July 12th telegram, as the telegram from the Jap emperor asking for peace. Those are Truman's words, we don't make this stuff up. So that was one thing that they all knew.

One person who Truman listened to was James Byrnes, and from the first day in office, Byrnes was the adviser who Truman leaned on the most. Secretary of the Navy, Forrestall flew Byrnes up from Spartanburg, South Carolina, in Forrestall's private plane, so that he could brief Truman. And he lays out the story about the atomic bomb to Truman, who knew nothing about it as vice president. Truman had been vice president for 82 days, nobody had even enough respect for him to tell him we were building an atomic bomb. He doesn't find out about this until he's sworn in on the night of April 12th after Roosevelt died. So Truman is going to make these decisions. Who does he lean on? This idiot, James Byrnes, who wanted to be Vice President and President, but he was such a segregationist that the Democratic Party bosses knew they would lose all black votes. And there was too much of a risk. But he gets Truman's ear. And from the beginning, he's Truman's made adviser and he tells Truman is politically crucified and destroyed. If he lets the Japanese keep the emperor and that's who Truman listened to. During the Potsdam meeting in mid-July, Stimson went to Truman and Byrnes again and begged them to change the surrender terms of the Potsdam Declaration. And Truman says to his 78-year-old frail Secretary of War said, "If you don't like it, why don't you pack your bags and go back to Washington?" So that was the attitude. And even though they had a draft of the Potsdam Declaration that had these assurances to the Japanese about the Emperor, they took it out.

And so that was the first way to get to end the war without the use of atomic bombs. The second way, which we knew and the Soviets knew, but the Japanese didn't know, was that the United States had been begging the Soviet Union to come into the war, imploring them to do so since the day after Pearl Harbor. But the Soviets had to defeat the Nazis almost single handedly. So they were not in a position to enter the Pacific War and help the U.S. out there. But the US kept pushing them. And at the meeting at Yalta between Roosevelt and Stalin and Churchill, Stalin gives his agreement that the Soviets will enter the Pacific War three months after the end of the war in Europe, which means August 8th or August 9th, the Soviets will be in the Pacific War.

Everybody knew what that meant. The Joint Intelligence Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a report on April 11th, 1945, in which they said, if at any time the USSR should enter the war, all Japanese will realize that absolute defeat is inevitable. They've repeated that on other occasions. The Japanese Supreme War Council issued a statement on May 16th. They said, at the present moment, when Japan is waging a life or death struggle against the US and Britain, Soviet entry to the war will deal a death blow to the Japanese empire.

We knew that from the Japanese. We knew that from the Soviets, we knew that from our intelligence. The Pacific Strategic Intelligence Summary for the week of the Potsdam meeting says, it may be said that Japan now officially, if not publicly, recognizes her defeat. And goes, all they're trying to is reconcile public opinion. They knew that the Japanese were defeated after the battle of Saipan in July 1944, the Japanese had lost hope for a military victory. They began holding secret meetings about how they could end the war.

In February of 1945, Prince Konoe, the three-time former Prime Minister, wrote a secret memo to Emperor Hirohito. And he says, I regret to inform you, but defeat is inevitable. That's from the former Prime Minister to the Emperor, he says, what we have to do is try to avoid a communist revolution. We acknowledge our defeat. They all do that. The military leaders, they all knew that.

There were some fanatics, it's important to note that there were some fanatics who said if a hundred million Japanese are willing to die together, we can't be defeated. So there were some who called for national suicide, basically hara kiri rather than surrender. But that was a small minority of mostly junior officers, not the important leaders. In fact, Stimson and Marshall, General Marshall, both commissioned intelligence reports that said that the Japanese are not fanatics. They're not even as fanatical as the Nazis, when they know they're defeated they're going to surrender. So we knew that, despite our claims to the contrary. So, we can get into some more detail about who is the real target, what Truman knew and what alternatives there were.

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