

Norm Dixon

# Hiroshima and Nagasaki

*Worst terror attacks in history*

Norm Dixon, Green Left Weekly, Australia, 3 August 2005.



Hiroshima, August 1945

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**August 6 and August 9 will mark the 60th anniversaries of the US atomic-bomb attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Hiroshima, an estimated 80,000 people were killed in a split second. Some 13 square kilometres of the city was obliterated. By December, at least another 70,000 people had died from radiation and injuries.**

Three days after Hiroshima's destruction, the US dropped an A-bomb on Nagasaki, resulting in the deaths of at least 70,000 people before the year was out.

Since 1945, tens of thousands more residents of the two cities have continued to suffer and die from radiation-induced cancers, birth defects and still births.

A tiny group of US rulers met secretly in Washington and callously ordered this indiscriminate annihilation of civilian populations. They gave no explicit warnings. They rejected all alternatives, preferring to inflict the most extreme human carnage possible. They ordered and had carried out the two worst terror acts in human history.

The 60th anniversaries will inevitably be marked by countless mass media commentaries and speeches repeating the 60-year-old mantra that there was no other choice but to use A-bombs in order to avoid a bitter, prolonged invasion of Japan.

On July 21, the British *New Scientist* magazine undermined this chorus when it reported that two historians had uncovered evidence revealing that “the US decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ... was meant to kick-start the Cold War [against the Soviet Union, Washington's war-time ally] rather than end the Second World War”. Peter Kuznick, director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at the American University in Washington stated that US President Harry Truman's decision to blast the cities “was not just a war crime, it was a crime against humanity”.

With Mark Selden, a historian from Cornell University in New York, Kuznick studied the diplomatic archives of the US, Japan and the USSR. They found that three days before Hiroshima, Truman agreed at a meeting that Japan was “looking for peace”. His senior generals and political advisers told him there was no need to use the A-bomb. But the bombs were dropped anyway. “Impressing Russia was more important than ending the war”, Selden told the *New Scientist*.

While the capitalist media immediately dubbed the historians' “theory” “controversial”, it accords with the testimony of many central US political and military players at the time, including General Dwight Eisenhower, who stated bluntly in a 1963 *Newsweek* interview that “the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing”.

Truman's chief of staff, Admiral William Leahy, stated in his memoirs that “the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender.”

At the time though, Washington cold-bloodedly decided to obliterate the lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children to show off the terrible power of its new super weapon and underline the US rulers' ruthless preparedness to use it.

These terrible acts were intended to warn the leaders of the Soviet Union that their cities would suffer the same fate if the USSR attempted to stand in the way of Washington's plans to create an “American Century” of US global domination. Nuclear scientist Leo Szilard recounted to his biographers how Truman's secretary of state, James Byrnes, told him before the Hiroshima attack that “Russia might be more manageable if impressed by American military might and that a demonstration of the bomb may impress Russia”.

Drunk from the success of its nuclear bloodletting in Japan, Washington planned and threatened the use of nuclear weapons on at least 20 occasions in the 1950s and 1960s, only being restrained when the USSR developed enough nuclear-armed rockets to usher in the era of “mutually assured destruction”, and the US rulers' fear that their use again of nuclear weapons would led to a massive anti-US political revolt by ordinary people around the world.

Washington's policy of nuclear terror remains intact. The US refuses to rule out the first use of nuclear weapons in a conflict. Its latest Nuclear Posture Review envisages the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear “rogue states” and it is developing a new generation of ‘battlefield’ nuclear weapons.

Fear of the political backlash that would be caused in the US and around the globe by the use of nuclear weapons remains the main restraint upon the atomaniacs in Washington. On this 60th anniversary year of history's worst acts of terror, the most effective thing that peace-loving people around the world can do to keep that fear alive in the minds of the US rulers is to recommit ourselves to defeating Washington's current "local" wars of terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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