

The Mistake of Dropping the Atomic Bomb

By Laine Lund

The tragedy of war is that it uses man's best to do man's worst.

-Henry Fossdick

World War II began Sept. 1, 1939. Germany, Japan, and Italy were allied fighting against Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, (U.S.S.R.). America joined the war Dec. 7, 1941 after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (World War II: Timeline). Meanwhile, German scientists were doing atomic research. Dr. Otto Hahn and Dr. Fritz Strassmann were German scientists who discovered the fission of uranium using neutrons (Atom Central, History leading to the creation of the atomic bomb). Albert Einstein warned President Roosevelt that Germany was doing atomic research and that this might lead to a powerful weapon (Sheinkin, 18-21). The Americans immediately got to work developing their own atomic bomb. Italy ousted their leader named Benito Mussolini and surrendered to the Allies on Sept. 8, 1943 (BBC, On This Day, 8 September). In time Germany finally began losing the war and on April 30, 1945 Hitler committed suicide (World War II: Timeline). The next month, in May, Germany surrendered but Japan kept fighting. Soon after that, July 16, 1945, America tested their atomic bomb at the Trinity site which was near Alamogordo, New Mexico (51f. The Manhattan Project). It worked! The U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb on a Japanese city called Hiroshima. Then three days later, when Japan still hadn't surrendered, the Americans dropped another atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki. Finally the Japanese surrendered on Sept. 2, 1945 (Wikipedia, Surrender of Japan).

Should the U.S. have dropped those bombs? No, the U.S. should not have dropped the atomic bombs for the following three reasons: 1) The bombs killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people. 2) The war was almost over and if the U.S. had waited Japan would have surrendered eventually. 3) The Allies. could have used traditional ways to defeat Japan.

The first reason that the U.S. shouldn't have dropped the two atomic bombs onto Japan is because they killed hundreds of thousands of citizens and this is simply not humane. It is usually understood in warfare that you try not to kill innocent people. On August 6, 1945 Little Boy, the smaller atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. 70,000 buildings were completely destroyed and 70,000 people died. Burns, wounds, and radiation poisoning would kill another 100,000 people (Sheinkin, 204). On August 9, 1945 the U.S. dropped a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki killing about 75,000 people (Hiroshima and Nagasaki Death Toll). The U.S. shouldn't have intentionally killed so many innocent citizens.

The second reason that the U.S. shouldn't have dropped the two atomic bombs is because the war was almost over. Italy had surrendered in July, 1943 and Germany had surrendered in May, 1945. Japan was the only axis power left against basically the whole world. The U.S.A., Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and China were the biggest four countries fighting Japan. There were many smaller allied countries (Wikipedia, Allies of World War II). It was just a matter of time before they had to surrender.

The third reason that the U.S. shouldn't have dropped the two atomic bombs is that the allies could've used traditional ways to defeat Japan. They had a plan called Operation Downfall in case the atomic bombs didn't get finished in time. The plan was to use nearby airbases in China and Korea from which they would bombard Japan until they surrendered. There were two other parts to Operation Downfall: Operation Olympic and Operation Coronet. Beginning in November 1945, Operation Olympic would've begun with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. invading one of the Japanese islands called Kyushu. Then in the spring of 1946 Operation Coronet was supposed to invade the Kantō Plain, which is near Tokyo on the island of Honshu. (Wikipedia, Operation Downfall). This was a solid military plan that should've been given a chance

Many people believe the U.S. was right in dropping the atomic bombs because Japan was not planning to surrender. A reason why they wouldn't surrender was because of the strict terms of the Postdam Declaration. President Harry S. Truman wrote a letter to Japan saying

“We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the **unconditional surrender** of all Japanese armed forces. . . The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.” (Wikipedia, Potsdam Declaration). The Declaration also says that Japan could be occupied by the Allies and that “stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals,” (Wikipedia, Potsdam Declaration). The Japanese responded to it by ignoring the declaration. The terms were too strict. The Japanese wanted to keep their emperor and did not want to have to let the Allies occupy their land. Even though they ignored the Potsdam Declaration, the U.S. still didn’t have to drop the atomic bombs. The U.S. had already taken over Okinawa and according to Steve Sheinkin, “Japan’s military had taken such a beating by this point, the country was nearly defenseless.” (Sheinkin, 188). The U.S. could have taken the advice of the Secretary of War, Stimson, who suggested that the Potsdam Declaration be reworded to keep their emperor as long as they surrendered (Sheinkin, 204). Japan’s military was very beaten up and it’s very possible they would have surrendered if the Potsdam Declaration’s terms weren’t so strict.

Another reason that people believe the U.S. should have dropped the atomic bombs is that it would bring a quick end to the war and save American lives. Yes, it did bring a quick end to the war. However, it killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese people instead. 170,000 people were killed in Hiroshima, and 75,000 were killed in Nagasaki. The U.S. exchanged American lives for thousands more Japanese lives.

In conclusion dropping the bombs on Japan was a mistake. The U.S. shouldn’t have done it because the bombs killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people, the war was almost over and if the U.S. had waited Japan would have surrendered eventually, and the Allies could’ve used traditional ways to defeat the Japanese. The Potsdam declaration could’ve been modified making it easier for Japan to surrender. Even though the atomic bombs ended the war quickly, it wasn’t worth all the those lost lives. War really does use man’s best to do man’s worst. The scientists did their best by working hard on the atomic bomb, and then it was used to kill innocent people.

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