

THE BOMBING OF HIROSHIMA

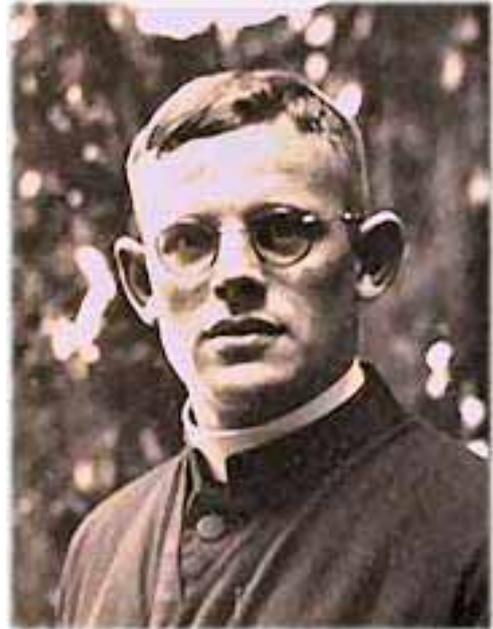
Report from an eye-witness

John Siemes, S.J.

Translated from the Japanese by Francis Mathy, S. J., 1997

(An article from Francis Britto's *All about Francis Xavier*)

[Fr. Siemes was at Nagatsuka at the time of the bombing. He returned to Tokyo at the beginning of September and began immediately to write this report. He finished it on September 20. It was written for the information of his fellow Jesuits.]



John Siemes, S.J.

THAT MORNING

Until August 6 Hiroshima had not been bombed, except for an occasional bomb dropped by a bomber that had strayed from its path. And the damage from these had been slight. As the surrounding cities, one after another, were devastated by the enemy bombers, Hiroshima alone remained unscathed. Enemy observation planes flew daily over the skies of the city, but no bombs were dropped. The citizens of Hiroshima thought it strange

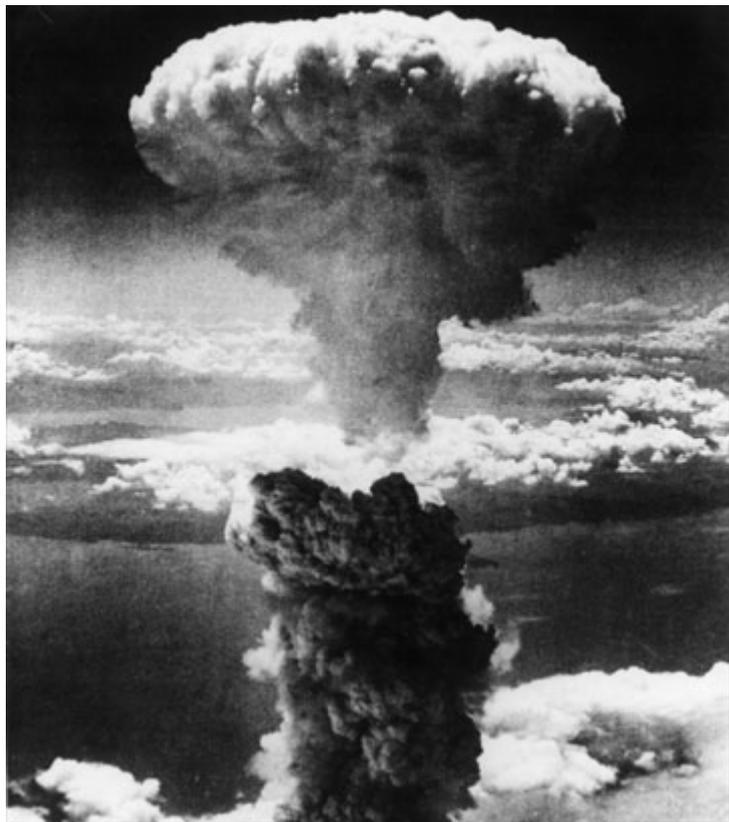
that only their city had been passed over like this for so long a time, and the rumor began to circulate that the enemy had some sinister design in not bombing their city. But no one, I am sure, even in his or her wildest imaginings, foresaw the cruel fate that would befall the city.

August 6 was a clear, bright day. From early morning a hot sun beat down upon the city. At 7 AM, as it did every morning at this time, the air-raid warning siren sounded. Eventually two or three planes appeared over the city. But no one on the ground paid any attention to them. And at 8 AM the all-clear signal sounded.

I was sitting in my room in the Jesuit novitiate at Nagatsuka. Six months earlier, all the Jesuit priests and scholastics studying either philosophy or theology had been evacuated to Nagatsuka, about three kilometers from the city limits of Hiroshima. The novitiate stood in the middle of a high hill overlooking a wide valley extending all the way from the city of Hiroshima, which was built along the sea, and winding its way into the mountains. At the bottom of the valley flowed a river stream. From my window I had a magnificent view of the valley, as it stretched out before me in a southwesterly direction. In the far distance I could see a corner of the city.

Suddenly—at exactly 8:15 AM—I saw the entire valley burst into brightness. It was like the momentary flash of magnesium when a picture is taken. At the same time I felt a wave of heat pass by me. I rushed to my window to discover the cause of this strange phenomenon, but all I could see was a bright yellow light. I went to the door, intending to go outside and investigate further. I had then not the slightest suspicion that the strange light had any connection with the enemy planes. As I was walking from the window to the door, I heard an explosion of medium strength. It seemed to be quite distant. At that moment—about 10 seconds after I had first seen the light—I heard a tremendous sound, a sound strong enough to break the windows and bend the beams of our house, and I was attacked by glass fragments that came flying through the air like hail. I saw that all the window frames had been blown inside the room. Then for the first time I realized that this was the work of a bomb.

I was certain that the bomb had made a direct hit on one of our buildings or some place very close by. I noticed that I had cuts on both hands and on my head and that they were bleeding. I tried to open the door to leave the room, but it wouldn't open: Some force had warped both the door and its frame. I kicked it and pushed it and finally I was able to get out to the wide corridor that ran down the middle of the building. But the corridor was also badly battered. Part of the ceiling had caved in; the doors of the rooms on both sides of the corridor were warped and would not open easily; the bookshelves had all toppled to the floor. There had been only one explosion. There were no enemy



The Atomic Mushroom

planes in the sky. Most of the people in the house had received some injury: some had been hit by splinters of wood, others by splinters of glass. And some were bleeding. No one had been gravely injured. But when I saw the huge splinters of glass embedded in the wall opposite to my window, I realized that it was a miracle that we had not received greater injury.

We went outside to try to locate the place where the bomb had fallen. But search as we might, we could not find the bomb crater. We noticed that the southeastern side of the building had suffered the greatest damage and that all of the doors and windows had been blown out. The wind after the explosion seemed to have come from a southeasterly direction,

since the building was now leaning toward the opposite direction. It was a Japanese-style wooden building, but the man who had built it, Brother Groper, had made the structural framework much stronger than that of the usual Japanese building. The chapel, built later in the style of a Japanese Shinto shrine, suffered greater damage: three of its beams were split.

Several houses about one kilometer down the valley in the direction of Hiroshima were on fire and mountain fires were burning in the woods on the other side of the valley. Several of us went to help the farmers put out the fires in the valley, and the rest began to tidy things up at the novitiate. While we were doing this, it began to thunder and rain.

Looking down at the city, we saw black smoke rising high into the sky and we heard the sound of an occasional explosion. In the light of all that I had seen and heard, I concluded that a fire bomb of tremendous explosive and expansive power had been dropped at the mouth of the valley. At the moment of the explosion, several had seen three planes flying high above the city.

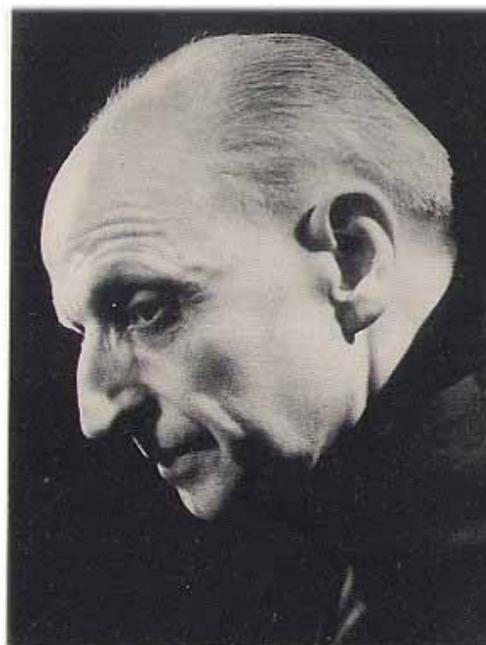
THE GRIM PROCESSION

About half an hour after the explosion, there began to appear a procession of refugees climbing up the valley from the city. Only a thin line at first, gradually this stream began to broaden. Some of the refugees stopped by at our novitiate. They seemed to be dragging their bodies along with great effort. Their faces were black and they had burns and bleeding cuts here and there on their bodies. We gave them first-aid and had them lie down on the mats of the chapel, which we had already cleaned and put to order. Among the injured were some whose arms or legs or back had been severely burned.

We applied what little fat we had at hand—because of the war, this wasn't much—to the burns. Fr. Arrupe, who had studied medicine before entering the Society of Jesus, went about treating the injured. But we soon ran out of bandages and medicine, and all we could do was keep the wounds clean.

More and more refugees came to us for help. Those only slightly injured crawled up the hill with the gravely injured on their backs. Among the refugees were also injured soldiers and mothers carrying their burned children. From a farmhouse at the bottom of the valley came a messenger saying that the house there was filled with the wounded and the dead. Would the novitiate accept at least the more severely injured?

The injured at that house were all from the suburbs of Hiroshima. Their houses had collapsed at the moment of the flash and many had been buried under the debris. Those who



Pedro Arrupe S.J.

were out of the house at the time escaped being pinned under the wreckage, but , instead, burns suddenly appeared here and there on their bodies, especially where their skin was not covered or only lightly covered. From a number of places in the area, fire had suddenly broken out and had quickly spread in all directions. Hearing this, we judged that the bomb had fallen on this suburb of Hiroshima, perhaps somewhere around Yokokawa Station, three kilometers from the novitiate. That made us worry about Fr. Kopp, who had gone that morning to say Mass at the convent of the Helpers of the Holy Souls in Yokokawa, where the Sisters had a kindergarten, and had not yet returned.

By noon both the chapel and the library were overflowing with the seriously injured, but there was a decrease in the flow of refugees from the city. At 1 PM Fr. Kopp finally appeared, and he had six Sisters with him. He reported that the convent and everything around it had burnt down, and that the entire area had become a burnt-out wasteland. Father had bleeding cuts on his head and neck, and the back of his right hand was badly burned. Finishing Mass, he had just stepped out of the convent to return home when he encountered the light, felt the waves of heat pass by him, and saw a huge blister suddenly appear on the back of his hand. The wind that accompanied the explosion made a horrendous noise as it blew in the windows and doors of the houses it passed. The noise was so loud that Fr. Kopp was convinced that the bomb had fallen in his immediate neighborhood.



Br. Groper, S.J.

The Sisters' convent was a wooden building, but it, too, had been built according to the specifications of Brother Groper, and so it was also able to withstand the wind and did not collapse. But tongues of flame soon appeared here and there and very quickly spread to the convent. They had no water to fight the flames and save the building. Fr. Kopp and the Sisters had time to carry the more valuable possessions outside and bury them in the open field in front of the convent. Finally the convent burnt to the ground, and Father and the Sisters threaded their way through the burning streets to the river, which they followed upstream until they were close to Nagatsuka.

It was shortly after Fr. Kopp's return that we got the report that the entire city of Hiroshima had received damage from the bomb; that everywhere roofs had collapsed and houses had been set on fire. Only then did we become concerned about our fellow Jesuits in the center of the city—the superior of the mission and the three priests living with him—and worry about their safety. Until that time we had not known how extensive the destruction caused by the bombing had been, and so we had not even thought about them. Moreover, we non-Japanese Jesuits living in Nagatsuka went into the city only when it was absolutely necessary to do so. The citizens of Hiroshima were in a state of great excitement. When they saw foreigners in the city, they judged them to be either idle spectators come to observe their desperate situation or else spies for the enemy. In either case, there was good reason to fear that they might attack us.

Frs. Stolte and Erlinghagen went down the novitiate hill to the road below, where refugees were now passing by in great numbers. They transported the severely injured who had fallen along the way to the emergency relief center that had been quickly set up at the elementary school in the village. But all the people at the emergency center could do was to apply iodine. They did not even clean the wounds. Bandages and other necessary supplies were lacking. The injured that were brought in were simply laid down on the school ground, and nothing further was done for them. But without medicine or bandages what else could have been done? Thus, carrying the injured to the relief center really served no good purpose.

In the endless procession of refugees that passed by there were many who were unhurt. But whether because they were in a state of shock as a result of the catastrophe that had befallen them or because they were too deeply worried about the wellbeing of their loved ones to be concerned about anyone else, they ignored completely the seriously injured people they met along the way. They seemed completely befuddled and abstracted; they were like walking zombies. These were not the ones to set up a volunteer relief system.

THE FATHERS IN THE CITY

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon a seminarian and two kindergarten teachers from our church in the heart of the city reached the novitiate. They informed us that the church, the priests' residence, and all the other buildings had burned to the ground and that Frs. La Salle and Schiffer were gravely injured. They told us that they had taken refuge at Asano Park on the riverside. The priests were fatigued and would not be able to walk all the way to Nagatsuka. We would have to go into the city and fetch the injured.

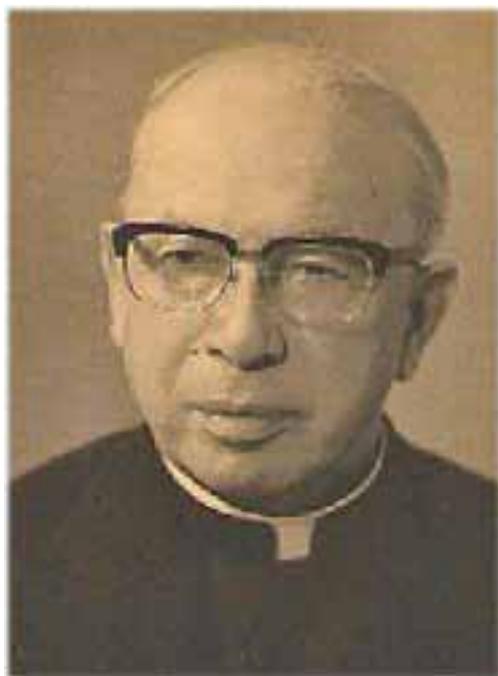
We hurriedly put together several litters, and seven of us set off immediately for the city. The rector and novice master, Fr. Arrupe, also joined us, carrying with him medicine and food. The closer we got to the city, the greater the devastation we saw. It became more and more difficult for us to proceed. Now there were no houses that had not been greatly damaged and many had either collapsed or burned down. And when we passed the city limits and entered the city, all the houses had been reduced to ashes. What until yesterday had been a well laid-out network of city streets was now a burnt-out wasteland as far as the eye could see.

We passed through this smoldering desert and turned onto the street that followed along the river. Twice we were nearly overcome by the heat and smoke arising from the burnt-out mass and had to walk down the embankment to the river. We passed a great number of people who had been badly burned and could just barely walk. Many dead bodies lay at the sides of the street and also living corpses that had reached the end of their endurance and could go not further.

At the foot of Sanjo Bridge, which marks the entrance into the centermost part of the city, we came upon a long procession of soldiers who had sustained severe burns. Some walked with the help of improvised canes; some rode on the backs of their less injured comrades, some just crawled along. It was a long, long, grim procession.

On the bridge stood several abandoned military horses with their heads hanging down. On their bellies, too, were severe burns. On the other side of the bridge all was burnt out ruins, except for the concrete structure of Teishin Hospital. But here too, the innards had been consumed by fire. Using this building to chart our course, we finally came to the park.

A great number of people had found refuge here. Some of the trees in the park were on fire. Huge trees had fallen over the street and bridge that led into the park, making them almost impassable. According to some people we met there, the tremendous wind brewed by the great heat generated by the bomb uprooted huge trees and strewed them over the landscape. It was already quite dark. But as we walked on, our path was lit by flames of the fires that had not as yet burned themselves out.



Hubert Cieslik, S.J.

We found our fellow Jesuits in a far corner of Asano Park, near the river. Fr. Schiffer was lying on the ground, his face ashen as if in death. Blood was still flowing from a very deep cut behind his ear; he was in danger of dying. Our Mission Superior, Fr. La Salle, had a very deep cut in his leg. Neither Fr. Cieslik nor Fr. Kleinsorge was badly injured, but both were completely fatigued.

As we laid out the provisions we had brought for them to eat, they gave us an account of what they had experienced in the course of this long day. At the time of the bombing, each was in his own room in the priest's residence. Then precisely at 8:15 they had the same experience as we had had in Nagatsuka: an extremely bright light followed by a sound strong enough to break windows, walls, and furniture. Splinters of wood and glass fell upon them like hail. A wall fell down over Fr. Schiffer and he

hit his head badly. Fr. La Salle received numerous splinters of glass in his back, and one leg was badly cut and was still bleeding. The rooms were in shambles but the frame of the wooden building had held up well. This, too, was owing to the the building skills of Brother Groper.

Their first assumption had been the same as ours in Nagatsuka: the bomb had dropped nearby. We discovered later that the epicenter was one kilometer from the church. The chapel, the house of the catechist, and all the other buildings except for the priests' residence had collapsed in one instant. From underneath the ruins of the catechist's house they had heard the cries for help of the kindergarten teachers, and with great effort they had managed to rescue them, as well as several others of the neighborhood who had been buried under debris and cried out for help. Even Fr. La Salle and Fr. Schiffer forgot their own injuries and went to assist the people crying out for help. This caused their wounds to bleed more profusely.

Fire broke out. At first the fire was at some distance from them, but it spread rapidly and before long it was all around them. Unless they went to a safer place, they would soon be swallowed by a sea of fire. Even so, they stayed on until the last minute. They took time to bury their more prized possessions and other objects that they thought would be of use to them later. But in the confusion following the bombing, they were unable to find the very objects and documents that they had supposedly gathered together in one place for this very purpose. In the case of some of these objects, they knew where they were but were unable to get them out of the house.

Soon the fire was so close that if they waited longer, they would be cutoff from all avenues of escape. There was no time to be wasted. The Mission Superior's secretary, Mr. Fukai, had not been injured, but he had lost the will to live. He did not want to leave the priests' residence; he did not want to live on to see his country defeated and destroyed. And so he refused to leave the house. Fr. Kleinsorge managed to hoist him on his back and carry him out of the house. Then, with Mr. Fukai still on his back, he joined the others in hurrying toward a place of refuge. As they made their way along the devastated streets, they could hear the cries for help of many people who had been trapped under fallen houses. Even though they knew that unless they were helped, these people would very likely burn to death, there was no longer time for such rescue attempts.

They had hoped to escape to the outskirts of the city, but they knew that they no longer had the strength to go so far, and so they headed for Asano Park, which had been designated as a place of refuge in the time of a bombing. Somewhere along the way to the park Mr. Fukai had forced Fr. Kleinsorge to put him down and had stubbornly refused to go any further. They had no choice but to leave him there. We never learned what happened to him after that.

Everyone who reached the park instinctively made for the river that was at one end of it. As the area consumed by the fire spread, a strong wind began to blow. About 2 o'clock it transformed itself into a tornado and the skies became dark. The tornado came out of the sea and moved with tremendous power up the river bed. When he saw it approaching, Fr. Kleinsorge threw himself over Fr. Schiffer to protect him from its fury. The others also fell quickly to the ground and pressed themselves as closely to it as possible. The lady who cooked for the church did not get down fast enough. She was blown into the river and huge trees that had been pulled up by their roots fell over her. (It was a near miracle that she lived through it and was able to rejoin the small group from Noboricho.) The water of the river was blown high into the sky. The mad passage of the tornado took only five minutes. Except for the cook, none of the Fathers nor any one connected with the church was injured. But a great number of people who had sought refuge on the bridge somewhat downstream from the park were blown into the river and lost their lives.

The park was overflowing with refugees. All were grieving. Some had been injured. Others had had to leave behind a dear one caught under a collapsed house. Still others had become separated from a loved one in the course of their flight. The injured had no one to treat them and many died. People were no longer squeamish about lying next to a dead body.

RESCUE BY NIGHT

It was no easy task to remove the injured priests from the park. In the first place, it was difficult to bandage them in the dark. If they were moved even a little, blood would start flowing again from their wounds. We placed them on our improvised litters and began our trek back to Nagatsuka in the dark, picking our way carefully over the fallen trees. Each movement of the litter caused its occupant almost unbearable pain. Not only that. The movement caused the wounds to open and blood to flow in such quantity as to invite death before we reached our destination.

A Japanese Protestant pastor of our acquaintance that we encountered at this time was for us in our trouble like an angel sent from God. Somewhere or other he had found a small boat and he offered to transport our wounded across the river to a place from which we would be able to walk more easily. First, Fr. Schiffer and his two litter-bearers were taken across the river. The boat was to return and pick up Fr. La Salle. When it did return half an hour later, the pastor in the boat called for several people to help him. On his way up the river he had rescued two children who had been badly burned. We received them from his hands into the park, but soon after this, they began to shiver with fever and they died almost immediately.

Now it was Fr. La Salle's turn to get into the boat. One scholastic and I got on with him. By this time Fr. Cieslik had recovered his strength and he decided to accompany the rest of the rescue mission on their return to Nagatsuka afoot. Fr. Kleinsorge was too tired to walk any further, so it was decided that he and the cook would spend the night in the park and someone would come for them the next day.

From the night darkness across the river could be heard the neighing of horses frightened by the fire. In the shallows of the place where we disembarked on the other side of the river we found a great number of injured who had jumped into the river to escape the fire. They were too weak to pull themselves up to shore and they cried out for help, knowing that when the tide came in they would drown. But there was nothing we could do for them.

Finally we reached the spot where Fr. Schiffer's group was waiting for us. Someone had left there a large box filled with rice balls. But until our arrival there had been no one to distribute them to the injured. We did so at once, and then ate some ourselves. A number of the injured were crying out for water, so we carried water to them. From here and there in the dark we heard still other cries for help, but we could not get to them because of the debris of collapsed buildings that obstructed our path.

A squad of soldiers approached us. Their officer, who had heard us speaking in a foreign language, pulled out his saber and was about to cut us down when Fr. Lares took firm hold of his arm and, explaining that we were all Germans, quieted him down. The officer had thought that we were Americans who had parachuted down into the city. There was, in fact, a rumor running through the city to the effect that Americans really had parachuted down into Hiroshima.

Fr. La Salle was dressed in shirt and trousers and had nothing else covering him. It was a hot summer night, made all the hotter by the fire that had swept through the city. But he

began to feel cold. There was only one of us that was wearing a jacket and he gave it to him. Since the latter still felt cold, I gave him my shirt. On that hot night I found it refreshing to walk along wearing nothing above the waist.

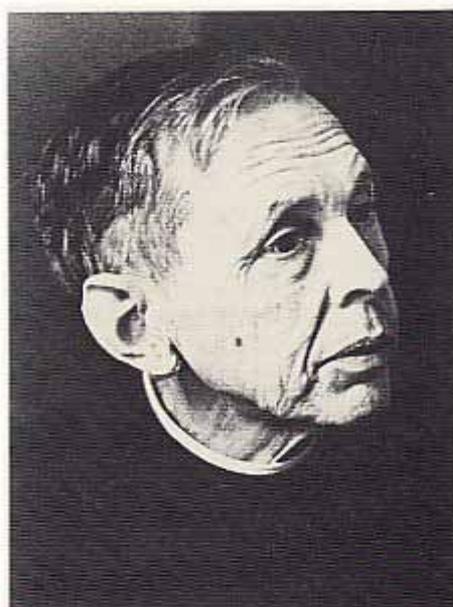
By now it was the middle of the night. It seemed best to have four men carry each litter. But we didn't have enough men for this. So we decided that first the four of us would carry Fr. Schiffer's litter beyond the burned out portions of the city to the city limits. From there, one man would rush to the novitiate to get more help, while the others returned to this spot to get Fr. La Salle. I was one of those elected to carry Fr. Schiffer's litter.

The scholastic's job was to walk ahead of us and scout the way. He was to warn us of fallen telephone poles, trees, and rocks blocking our path. But no matter how carefully we threaded our way through all these obstacles, we would occasionally stumble or get our feet entangled in electric wire, etc. Once Fr. Kruer fell in a pile of debris and dropped the litter. Fr. Schiffer screamed out in pain and almost lost consciousness. Along the way we saw sitting on the side of the road an injured man who had been sitting in the very same place—in front of a burnt house from which the heat was still rising—when we passed there earlier on the way to the park. A very strange fellow, we thought.

When we reached Sanjo Bridge we met Frs. Tappe and Luhmer, who were coming from Nagatsuka to help us. They were in the process of rescuing a family buried under their collapsed house some fifty meters from the road. The father was dead, but they had succeeded in digging out the two daughters, who were now sound asleep at the side of the road. The mother was still under the house, they explained. They told us to go on ahead and that they would catch up with us after they had dug out the mother.

When we reached the city limits, we put down Fr. Schiffer's litter and left two of our number to wait with him there until help came from Nagatsuka. The rest of us returned to the former spot to get Fr. La Salle. The destroyed city was almost entirely a burnt out ruin. It was a dark night, so we did not see the many corpses lying along the way. But all the time we walked we heard people crying out for help and our nostrils were assailed by a foul stench as of something burnt. "The stench of dead bodies being cremated," someone explained. The man we had already seen twice was still at his post when we passed there a third time.

Our litter, as I have said, was an improvised one made of sticks we had found around the novitiate. It must have been a most uncomfortable litter for our superior, Fr. La Salle. He had many splinters of glass embedded in his back. As we were walking along a very narrow street in the suburbs of Hiroshima, a bicycle approached us from the opposite direction and we had to veer suddenly to the left side of the street. It was too dark to see the two-meter



P. Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle SJ
* 11. 11. 1898
† 7. 7. 1990

deep ditch on that side and the two litter-bearers on the left side fell into it. Despite the great pain this caused him, Fr. La Salle was able to joke about the matter. But the litter was broken and we were unable to go on. So we decided to send Brother Kinjo ahead to the novitiate to get our cart and wait for his return.

Brother Kinjo returned very shortly with a hand-drawn cart, but it was not ours. He had found it in front of a house that had fallen down and he had commandeered it. We put Fr. La Salle on the cart and pulled the cart to the novitiate, taking great care that the wheels would not fall into any of the great potholes in the road. It was already 4:30 in the morning when we reached the novitiate. Usually we were able to make the round trip in two hours. Our rescue mission had taken us twelve.

The two injured men finally received treatment. I slept for two hours on the floor. (My bed had been given to someone else.) Soon after I woke up, I offered a Mass of thanksgiving: it was August 7, the anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus. After Mass we set out to fetch Fr. Kleinsorge and the others who had remained in the city.

BACK TO THE DEVASTATED CITY

We left for the city, pushing our cart before us. In the dark of the previous night we had been spared a most frightening sight, but now in the light of the new day it pressed down upon us without mercy. The streets of the city, as far as the eye could see, had become a desolate wasteland of ashes and debris. The shells of a number of concrete buildings remained standing, but their innards had been completely burned out.

The banks of the river were crowded with the injured and the dead. The tide coming in from the sea gradually covered over the corpses at river's edge. Unclothed corpses were particularly numerous on the wide streets of the Shirajima area and the injured often lay next to them. The hot rays of the midsummer sun beat down mercilessly upon both the dead and the injured. There were several of the latter lying in the shade of a burnt bicycle and the burnt-out shell of a streetcar. People looking like zombies walked stumblingly toward us, but before they reached us, their strength gave out and they fell to the ground.

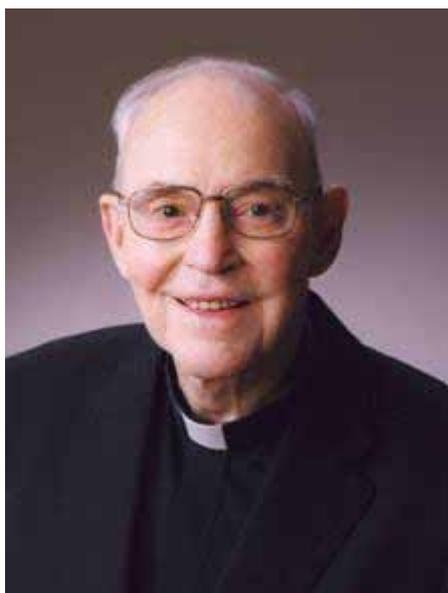
An old lady with a little girl in tow collapsed at our very feet. We loaded the two on our cart and brought them to the emergency tent which had been set up at the entrance to Teishin Hospital. There a great number of injured were lying on the hard ground. Here too bandages were so few that the only ones to receive them were those who had very severe cuts and burns.

Later we took a soldier and an old lady to the emergency tent in our cart, but we soon realized how impossible it would be to carry all the injured lying there under the hot sun to the hospital. Moreover, we saw that the injured had no greater chance of survival there than they had lying in the street. The emergency tent could not provide effective treatment of any kind. We learned much later that all of the injured brought there had been laid out in corridors of the burnt-out hospital where they remained untreated for many days and finally died.

Now we hurried toward the park. We recommended the injured lying under the merciless heat of the sun to the loving Providence of God and moved on. On our way to the park we took a short detour to have a look at the burnt-out church compound in Noboricho, and we dug up what had been buried there the previous day. All the objects that had been buried were found to be in good condition, while everything else, without exception, had been badly burned. From the ashes we pulled out the remains of sacred vessels that had been twisted out of shape by the heat of the fire.

We reached the park and loaded the cook and a mother and her two children in the cart. Fr. Kleinsorge had regained his strength and went on foot to Nagatsuka, accompanied by Br. Nobuhara.

On the way home we had to pass once again through Shirajima and see the many injured and dead lying in the streets. There was not yet any sign of rescue activity. At the foot of Sanjo Bridge we came upon the family that Frs. Tappe and Luhmer had rescued the night before. Someone had put a sheet of tin over their heads to protect them from the sun. Our cart was now full, so we could not find place for them on it. We gave some water to them and to others near them and resolved to come for them later. It was about 3PM when we returned to Nagatsuka.



Karl Luhmer, S.J.

After grabbing a quick meal, Frs. Stolte, Luhmer, Erlinghagen, and I did go to fetch the family mentioned above. Fr. Kleinsorge asked us to fetch also the two little girls who had lain close to him in the park, since they had lost their mother. Many people spoke to us along the way. When they saw that we were engaged in helping the injured, they displayed respect for us.

It was only now that we encountered for the first time rescue teams carrying litters to transport the injured. We went to Sanjo Bridge, but we could not find the family we had seen there earlier. They must have been helped by some other rescue group. At the bridge we came upon a group of soldiers who were engaged in rescue work. It had taken more than thirty hours for a public rescue effort to get started.

We found the two children Fr. Kleinsorge was concerned about and lifted them into our cart. The six-year-old boy had not been injured, but his 12-year-old sister had burns on her head, hands, and feet. She had lain in the park for 30 hours without receiving any kind of treatment. The left side of her head and the skin around her eyes were so covered with blood and pus that we thought she had lost the use of her left eye. But later when we washed off the dirt and dried blood, we discovered that there was nothing wrong with her eye.

On our way back to Nagatsuka we picked up another family of three persons. But before getting on the cart, they wanted to know what country we were from. They too had

heard the rumors about Americans parachuting down into the city. It was dark when we finally returned to Nagatsuka.

The novitiate offered shelter to some fifty people who had lost all they possessed in the fire. Most of these had received some kind of injury and not a few had been seriously burned. All of us at the novitiate did our best to nurse our guests and provide them with adequate food,

Our rector, Fr. Arrupe, worked hard in treating the injured, using the medical supplies that he had had so much difficulty obtaining. But in the end all he could do for them was to keep the wounds clean and free of pus. Even those who had received only minor burns were extremely weak and suffered from diarrhea.

There were many injured who had found refuge at the farmhouse just below the novitiate, and every day Fr. Arrupe made his rounds there too. He soon had the reputation among his patients of being an expert physician with a very compassionate heart. Moreover, the energetic relief activities of the Jesuits at Nagatsuka quickly won for us the good will of the people and induced them to take a more favorable view of Christianity, something which our years of apostolic work had failed to achieve.

Of all the injured who were treated at our novitiate, only three died. All three had very serious injuries and all three suffered a sudden heart failure. That only three died can be thought to be due to the good treatment they received. Of the injured treated in the public emergency centers and hospitals, one-third to one-half died. This high death rate is not surprising, since they received no treatment and lay there unattended. Doctors, nurses, bandages, medicine, all were in short supply. It took a company of soldiers three full days to cremate all the corpses removed from the emergency center set up at an elementary school near Nagatsuka.

For many days from morning to night we saw on the road that passed by our novitiate a constant procession of people carrying corpses to be cremated at the emergency crematory set up at six places in a valley near our house. Each party carried its own wood and burned its own corpses. Frs. Luhmer and Laures did the same for the dead of neighboring houses. The corpses were, of course, putrescent and swollen and emitted a most foul smell. The fires of these improvised crematories burned on deep into the night, lighting up the valley with their flames.

We did all we could to get news of what had become of the people we knew in Hiroshima and the relatives and friends of those who had found refuge with us. Often it was only after many weeks that word reached us that a friend was living in a distant village or was being treated in a certain hospital, etc. But there were many people concerning whom we never did receive news. They must have perished in the holocaust.



Laures, S.J.

We had thought that the mother of the two children we rescued from the park was dead, but later we found that she was alive. You can imagine the great joy of the mother when she was reunited to her children three weeks later! But more often we experienced sorrow at recalling the faces of those whom we would never see again.

SAD STATISTICS

I did not understand at first the scale of the sad fate that had overtaken Hiroshima, but gradually it began to reveal itself to me. I had experienced the destruction of Hiroshima only in fragments, but gradually these fragments began to come together within me and form a whole.



Jesuit Church after the Bomb

What happened to Hiroshima can be outlined as follows. With the blast accompanying the detonation of the bomb at 8:15, the entire city was destroyed. Only two sections of the city escaped total destruction: parts of the eastern and of the southern fringes. The bomb had detonated just above the most central part of the city. All the Japanese houses made of wood within five kilometers of the epicenter were either blown away or crushed by the wind that followed the explosion. (99% of the buildings were wooden.) People who were outside at the time of the blast received burns, resulting from some kind of emanation from the bomb, either a special element or a radiation. The parts of the body that received much of this emanation became gangrenous.

The fire spread very fast. The heat generated by the flames created a tornado, and this tornado in turn spread the fire throughout the entire city. People who were trapped under their fallen houses and people who, because of the rapid movement of the fire, did not get away in time were burned to death. Even houses six kilometers distant from the epicenter, without exception, suffered some damage. Most of them collapsed and caught fire. Houses fifteen kilometers from the epicenter had all their windows broken. Judging from the vast scope of the destruction, people thought at first that enemy planes had first spread an inflammable substance over the city and then had dropped a bomb to ignite it. Some people said that they had seen the enemy planes drop something that was on a parachute over the city and that this object had exploded about 1000 meters in the sky. Soon the newspapers announced that the bomb had been an atomic bomb: the horrendous wind had been caused by the explosion of uranium atoms; and with the explosion gamma rays had been emitted. But no one yet understood the exact nature of this bomb.

How many men, women, and children fell victim to this one bomb? The people who experienced the bombing estimate the number of the dead to be at least 100,000.

The population of Hiroshima was 400,000. The official government report states that as of September 1 (1945) an estimated 70,000 have died as a direct result of the bombing (this statistic does not include the missing), while another 130,000 were injured (43,500 of them seriously). But in conversations with various and differing groups of people we know in the city we conclude that 100,000 is not too high a figure.

Very near our novitiate are two barracks occupied by about 80 Korean laborers. The day of the bomb they were working in the streets of the city. Only four out of one barrack and sixteen out of the other survived. 70% of the people who lived on the same street as the Noboricho Catholic church died. Of the people on the street parallel to ours, but closer to the epicenter, 90% died. Of 600 Protestant mission-school girls working in a factory, only 30-40% survived. All 300 hundred students of a prefectural middle school for girls had just assembled on the school grounds when the bomb exploded: Almost all of them were killed. Many people living in the farmhouses near the novitiate go to work each day at a factory in the city, but almost all of these were killed or received serious injuries. Next door to the novitiate lives a family by the name of Tamura. Two of the children died and Mr. Tamura, who happened to have gone into the city on business that day, returned home badly burned.

When we take everything we have heard into consideration, it would seem that of each five-member family an average of two were killed or severely injured. The mayor of the city, the officer in charge of the Japanese garrison, and a number of high ranking dignitaries were killed. 33 university professors either died or were severely injured. The casualty rate was very high among the soldiers stationed in the city, especially those of the engineering unit, whose barracks were very close to the epicenter, They were almost all killed.

Of the injured who died, a large number would undoubtedly have been saved had they received proper medical care. But no one was expecting a catastrophe of this scale. Moreover, since the entire city collapsed under the one blow, it is natural that all the equipment and materials on hand to deal with such an emergency also perished, while the relief potential in the outlying areas of the city that had escaped destruction had never been formally organized..

Many of the injured were already very weak from malnutrition, so that their powers of recovery were minimal and they died. On the other hand, those who possessed physical stamina and were able to receive adequate care recovered from the burns caused by the emanations from the bomb. But there were puzzling exceptions. Some who seemed most likely to recover in short time suddenly died. (There were several cases like this among the injured taken care of by us at Nagatsuka.) Others who did not seem to have suffered burns suddenly developed inflammations and were dead in a week. At first we thought that the cause of these deaths was some unknown element that had been emitted by the bomb and which when swallowed, caused havoc with the inner organs. Later we learned that the gamma rays emitted by the bomb had the same effect as an overdose of X-ray: they destroyed the organization of the body and reduced the number of white blood corpuscles. Thus, those who

had been exposed to a greater dose of radioactivity displayed the symptoms we were observing. I myself have experienced only two or three cases of people without any visible injury suddenly dying. Two weeks or so after the bombing, Frs. Kleinsorge and Cieslik grew extremely weak. By that time the light injuries they had received were well on their way to recovery, but then the process seemed to reverse itself: the mouths of the wounds reopened and to this day (September 24) have refused to heal. The doctor reports that both men are suffering from a decrease in white corpuscles. There seems to be truth in the theory that radioactivity from the bomb attacks the blood. But with regard to the present condition of the two fathers, I wonder if malnutrition and the weakness stemming from it do not have much to do with the symptoms they are experiencing.

There are rumors floating about that a potentially fatal amount of radioactivity still envelops the ruins of Hiroshima, that people coming from outside to clean up the city are dying one after another, and that the areas affected by the bomb will not be fit for human inhabitation for a long time to come. But I don't think these rumors are true. I myself and many others I know returned to the burnt-out ruins of the city soon after the bombing and none of us have displayed the symptoms described above.

WHAT ARE WE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED

Neither on the day of the bombing nor since then have I heard anyone from Hiroshima raise a voice in criticism of the Americans, nor have I met anyone who expressed a desire for vengeance. The people accepted the terrible blow that fell upon them as simply one of the inevitable calamities accompanying war and thus futile to criticize. All through the war years I found among the ordinary people very little hatred toward the enemy countries. Sometimes the newspapers would try to fan up such a spirit of hatred in their readers, but they were generally unsuccessful. In the period after the initial victories in the early months of the war, the people looked down upon the enemy and esteemed him little. But when the tide turned and the allied forces began to advance steadily, island by island, and B29s began to appear high in the Japanese skies, the people were astounded at America's technological power.

The psychological attitude of the ordinary Japanese citizen is well illustrated, I think, by the following incident. Two or three days after the atomic bomb had been dropped, a teacher of Hiroshima University visited us and informed us that Japan would destroy San Francisco with a bomb no less powerful than the one that had fallen on Hiroshima. Did he really believe that? He was probably trying to convince us foreigners that Japan was on the same scientific plane as the United States. Out of patriotism he had even tried to convince himself of this and had succeeded. He considered this to be a matter of fact.

A rumor circulated that Japan had also discovered the principles underlying the new bomb but that for lack of adequate natural resources they had been unable to actually build a bomb. The story continued that the principles discovered by Japanese scientists were further developed by German scientists, who advanced to the point where they could actually make an atomic bomb. Then the Americans had gotten hold of the German scientific data and

used it to make the bomb which they had dropped on Hiroshima. Such rumors quickly made the rounds of the city.

Again and again we discussed the morality of dropping an atomic bomb on a civilian population. Some said that the atomic bomb was no different from poison gas and that there was no justification for dropping it on a civilian population. Others insisted that in a total war such as Japan was engaged in there was no essential difference between soldier and civilian. Moreover, the atomic bomb had induced the Japanese to surrender and had put an end to the bloodshed of war, averting the inch by inch struggle to repulse the enemy that had been anticipated. My own opinion is that if we concede man's right to wage total war as that term is interpreted today, then we have no justification for objecting to the killing and maiming of civilians.



B-29 Showering Bombs

And so the basic question is: can total war such as we know it today ever be morally justified, even in the case that we are certain that the war is a just one. Do we not have to say that total war is a greater physical and moral evil than any good we might expect to gain from it. I hope the moral theologians will quickly give a clear answer to this question.



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