

from The Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki



ABOUT THE READING This report was written by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey to determine the effectiveness of the use of nuclear weapons against Japan.



As you read note the reactions of the survivors in their own words and how these reactions are described by the writer.

Morale.—As might be expected, the **primary** reaction to the bomb was fear—uncontrolled terror, strengthened by the sheer horror of the destruction and suffering witnessed and experienced by the survivors. Between one-half and two-thirds of those interviewed in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki areas confessed having such reactions, not just for the moment but for some time. As two survivors put it:

Whenever a plane was seen after that, people would rush into their shelters: They went in and out so much that they did not have time to eat. They were so nervous that they could not work.

After the atomic bomb fell, I just couldn't stay home. I would cook, but while cooking I would always be watching out and worrying whether an atomic bomb would fall near me.

Source: *The Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey. William Gannon, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1973

VOCABULARY

morale confidence and cheerfulness

primary main

succinctly using few words

accentuated strengthened

This section of the report tells about the bombs' effect on morale.

The Effects of the Atomic Bombs, *continued*

Primary Source

The behavior of the living immediately after the bombings, as described earlier [in the report], clearly shows the state of shock that hindered rescue efforts. A Nagasaki survivor illustrates **succinctly** the mood of survivors:

All I saw was a flash and I felt my body get warm and then I saw everything flying around. My grandmother was hit on the head by a flying piece of roof and she was bleeding. . . I became hysterical seeing my grandmother bleeding and we just ran around without knowing what to do.

I was working at the office. I was talking to a friend at the window. I saw the whole city in a red flame, then I ducked. The pieces of the glass hit my back and face. My dress was torn off by the glass. Then I got up and ran to the mountain where the good shelter was.

The two typical impulses were those: Aimless, even hysterical activity or flight from the city to shelter and food.

The **accentuated** effect of these bombs came not only from the surprise and their crushing power, but also from the feeling of security among the inhabitants of the two cities before the attacks. Though Nagasaki had undergone five raids in the previous year, they had not been heavy, and Hiroshima had gone almost untouched until the morning of 6 August 1945. In both cities many people felt that they would be spared, and the various rumors in circulation supporting such feeling covered a wide range of wishful thoughts. There were so many Christians there, many Japanese-Americans came from Hiroshima, the city was a famous beauty spot—these and other even more fantastic reasons encouraged hopes. Other people felt vaguely that their city was being saved for “something big,” however.

After surviving such a tragic event, people must have felt dazed with disbelief and horror and shocked by the enormous loss and devastation it caused.

Many people in the two cities felt safe because their cities had not been hard hit by bombing raids so far. People in Hiroshima thought the Americans might not bomb their city because many of its people were Christian or related to Japanese Americans or because the Americans wouldn't want to destroy a city known for its beauty.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. The excerpted section of the report tells about the effect of the bombs on the morale of the inhabitants. Do you think this effect was intended by President Truman when he chose to drop the bombs? Explain your answer.

2. Why might one nation seek to harm the morale of an enemy nation? What benefit could the drop in morale provide?
