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PATRICK J BUCHANAN



WORLDNETDAILY COMMENTARY

Hiroshima, Nagasaki & Christian morality

Posted: August 10, 2005
 1:00 am Eastern

By Patrick J. Buchanan
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On the 40th, 50th and 60th anniversaries of D-Day, Presidents Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush traveled to Normandy to lead us in tribute to the bravery of the Greatest Generation of Americans, who had liberated Europe. Always a deeply moving occasion.

The 40th, 50th and 60th anniversaries of the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, were not times of celebration or warm remembrance. Angry arguments for and against the dropping of the bombs roil the airwaves and fill the press.

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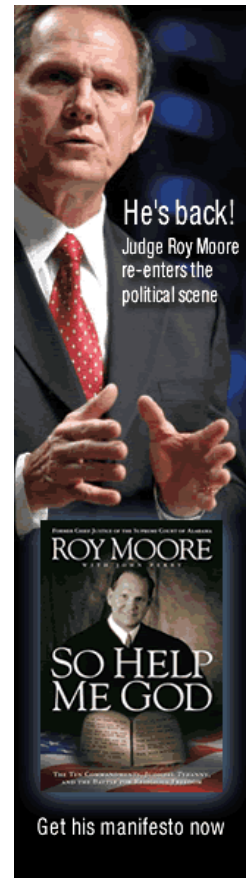
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And the reason is obvious. While World War II was a just war against enemies whose crimes, from Nanking to Auschwitz, will live in infamy, the means we used must trouble any Christian conscience.

That good came out of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is undeniable. In a week, Japan surrendered, World War II ended and, across the Japanese empire, soldiers laid down their arms. Thousands of U.S. soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Japanese who would have perished in an invasion of Japan survived, as did Allied POWs who might have been executed on the orders of Japanese commanders when we landed.

But were the means used – the destruction in seconds of two cities, inflicting instant death on 120,000 men, women and children, and an agonizing death from burns and radiation on scores of thousands more – moral?



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Truman's defenders argue that by using the bomb, he saved more lives than were lost in those cities. Only the atom bombs, they contend, could have shocked Japan's warlords into surrender.

But if terrorism is the massacre of innocents to break the will of rulers, were not Hiroshima and Nagasaki terrorism on a colossal scale?

Churchill did not deny what the Allied air war was about. Before departing for Yalta, he ordered Operation Thunderclap, a campaign to "de-house" civilians to clog roads so German soldiers could not move to stop the offensive of the Red Army. British Air Marshal "Bomber" Harris put Dresden, a jewel of a city and haven for hundreds of thousands of terrified refugees, on the target list.

On the first night, 770 Lancasters arrived around 10:00. In two waves, 650,000 incendiary bombs rained down, along with 1,474 tons of high explosives. The next morning, 500 B-17s arrived in two waves, with 300 fighter escorts to strafe fleeing survivors.

Estimates of the dead in the Dresden firestorm range from 35,000 to 250,000. Wrote the Associated Press, "Allied war chiefs have made the long-awaited decision to adopt deliberate terror bombing of German populated centers as a ruthless expedient to hasten Hitler's doom."

In a memo to his air chiefs, Churchill revealed what Dresden had been about, "It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing of German cities simply for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed."

Gens. MacArthur, Eisenhower, "Hap" Arnold and Curtis LeMay reportedly felt the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was unnecessary. But recent documents have surfaced to show the Japanese warlords were far more determined to fight on to a bloody finish in the home islands than previously known.

Yet, whatever the mindset of Japan's warlords in August 1945, the moral question remains. In a just war against an evil enemy, is the deliberate slaughter of his women and children in the thousands justified to break his will to fight? Traditionally, the Christian's answer has been no.

Truman's defenders argue that the number of U.S. dead in any invasion would have been not 46,000, as one military estimate predicted, but 500,000. Others contend the cities were military targets.

But with Japan naked to our B-29s, her surface navy at the bottom of the Pacific, the home islands blockaded, what was the need to invade at all? On his island-hopping campaign back to the Philippines, MacArthur routinely bypassed Japanese strongholds like Rabaul, cut them off and left them to "rot on the vine."

And if Truman considered Hiroshima and Nagasaki military targets, why, in the Cabinet meeting of Aug. 10, as historian Ralph Raico relates, did he explain his reluctance to drop a third bomb thus: "The thought of wiping out another 100,000 people was too horrible," he said. He didn't like the idea of killing "all those kids."

Of Truman's decision, his own chief of staff, Adm. William Leahy, wrote: "This use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make wars in that fashion ..."

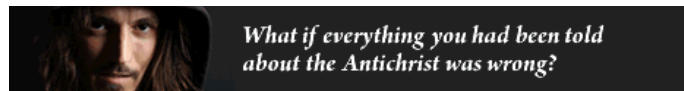
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Pat Buchanan was twice a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination and the Reform Party's candidate in 2000. He is also a founder and editor of [The American Conservative](#). Now a political analyst for MSNBC and a syndicated columnist, he served three presidents in the White House, was a founding panelist of three national TV shows, and is the author of seven books.





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