

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF the Atomic Bombing of HIROSHIMA POL CHIKOFF

INTERROGATION

Will you please introduce Miss Pelchikoff first.

Miss Pelchikoff was a friend of my children down in Kobe when they were in school together in the Canadian Academy. She was born in Vladivostok of a Russian Lieutenant Colonel in the First World War on the Austrian Front. Coming to Japan, they went immediately to Hiroshima and lived there from about 1922 till they had to leave Hiroshima at the time of the atomic bomb. Miss Pelchikoff was in Hiroshima and will tell her own story.

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Q. Tell us just what happened that day, the things that followed after the bomb hit.

A. Well, the bomb was dropped at about a quarter to eight. It was just a flash, I believe, and I didn't notice or have time to notice what it was all about so when the flash came, the house tumbled down on us. Well, you can just imagine how it all happened because we had no time even to flee to the air shelters, air raid shelters, or even to dug-outs. Well, my mother called to me, wondered where I was and I answered back. So she asked my dad where he was, and he was under a wall which fell on him. And then my little brother was outside and I was in the room. I don't remember what I was doing exactly, but anyway when she found that everybody was safe, we rushed outside to see what it was all about. When we went outside we didn't have to look towards the town, but if we only looked around our house, there were people starting to come out, some bruised, some wounded, some burned. Then we looked down towards the town and we saw it flaming, and the thing that caught my eye was the castle burning, flames coming out the windows. The reason I saw that was because it is higher than any other building in the town. Then my father asked us what we would like to do, as he didn't know what the bomb was like and he thought it was just an ordinary bomb. Then mother said, well, we'll leave it to fate and just follow the road and so we took a little bag where we had our bandages and medicine and a bit of rice. That was all we

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had with us. We started up the road towards the mountains but to our astonishment hundreds of people came after us and we looked at them and we saw negroes, just negroes--they weren't Japanese--they were negroes, and I asked them: "What happened to you? What's the matter with you?" and they said: "We saw the flash and this is the color we turned." Well, I didn't take time to ask how it all happened, but anyway we went further and there were people wounded, very badly wounded with, I don't know, maybe beams falling on them. And I heard someone screaming from under a house. I tried to pull her out, but I couldn't. It was impossible. I just saw a hand and I know it was a woman's hand. I couldn't pick her out. It was just too hard with so much on top of her. It was impossible. Then when we started up the mountain, we didn't follow the road because the road was crowded with people, couldn't pass it. The mountains were starting to burn all around, the city was ablaze. Well, anyway we went further and further for about two hours. On the way we met many people suffering, dying off, but anyway, finally we reached the hospital, a military hospital. It was supposed to be just a school, but it was used as a military hospital in case of heavy air raids. Well, we didn't know that. We arrived there, but we saw by the mark that it was a hospital, so we went in. My head was aching like anything because a beam had fallen on me and there was a big scar and blood falling over my face. Mother's shoulder was wounded too. My father and little brother weren't wounded at all. But we were terribly tired, just all out, fatigued so we decided to take a rest, but I couldn't rest. There were these people whining away, groaning and asking for help. I thought it was my duty to help them. Well, I didn't exactly have anything against them or for them, so I thought I might just as well help them, because they were just people. So I went over to the doctors and nurses who were very few, of course. And they said: "What kind of medicine do you think we should put on? We don't know

what it's all about," and I said, "Well, I don't know either."
And then they said, "Well, this is all we've got, cans of castor oil and mercuric iodine. So they smeared mercuric iodine over these burns and then later they smeared castor oil. The reason they smeared castor oil was because they thought they were just ordinary burns, and they didn't give anybody any water, even though they asked for water very badly. Well, some people gave some water and as soon as they gave water to them, they vomited it all out and they'd keep on vomiting until they died. Blood would rush out and that was the end of them. So the Doctor said: "Don't give water under any circumstances." I stayed there for two days.

On the 5th

- Q. Could you describe the nature of these burns? I think the doctor would be very much interested.
- A. The burns were of the color--as I said, people just turned the color of negroes. That's the nearest I can get to it, and the skin would just peel off--some would peel off very thickly and some very thinly--and the thicker the peeling, the worse the wound, of course. Some of them you could see the burns. The eyes closed, and the nose bled, the lips swelled and the ears swelled, and the whole head started swelling. By about two or three hours, the whole head swelled--not in a nice shape, but bulgy. Then there were other kinds of patients. The wounded with fractured arms and legs. And the blisters, huge water blisters which had to be punctured. Then there were split stomachs, the intestines out--would come out, and the fractured skulls and so forth. After we dressed the wounds, then on the second day the wound would become very dirty and they smelt very bad. The whole air, even the air around the hospital smelt very bad. The wound would become yellow in color and they'd go deeper and deeper. No matter how much you tried to take off the yellow rotten flesh, it would just go

deeper and deeper. And I don't think it pained them very much. I don't think the burns gave them pain because when you touched them with pincers or anything, they were immediately unconscious for all I know. We spent two days and then we proceeded to a little cottage where we stayed for two or three days, maybe more, I guess more, until the 15th when the Emperor gave his decision about surrendering. And then we were taken to a little countryside up in the mountains from where I come now.

Q. Will you tell us about those people whose bodies turned green?

A. There were about four different kinds of patients. The ones that die off within two or three days. They died because of heavy burns. If people were burned more than one-third of the body, most of them died. Then there were kinds of patients that lived for maybe a week. They died from inhaling the gas, I think, and their heart weakened, and they died of exhaustion, I should say. Then there was a kind of patient that lived through the burn. Their burns got well, but in a month's time they'd find their hair falling out and a very high temperature, and their throats would become very sore and they'd turn very pale green and then they'd die off. And then there's a fifth category where they say that people that have been in the area of this bomb, two kilometers in circumference cannot live more than three years. I don't know whether it's just a rumour or fact, but that's what the Japanese police have said to people and people that had burns on their faces or hands or anywhere would not live more than three years even though they got better.

Q. I think you said yesterday that a great many of them who died from the bombing would turn into ^a greenish yellow color, and that happened immediately after or the next day?

A. The people that were very badly burned, they vomited all the time-- absolutely no intermission, but vomited and vomited so they couldn't take in any water, or even ice.

Q. Does anybody have any explanation of the effects of the bomb?

A. They presumed that it was gas. That is how they explained it.

But some doctors said that it was the uranium effect with the sun's rays which passed through the body, and that would poison all the bones and everything inside the bones. That's how they explained it.

Q. What explanation would the people have?

A. They didn't know anything about it. People in Japan, they're not inquisitive at all. What the Parliament said, what the Government said, they'd obey whatever they say. Even I didn't know though that America was winning --certainly didn't--everything was hidden away from the people. That is why, well, my brother told me about how the Americans threw notes down from the airplanes saying that we are going to bomb this place and take the children and women out. Why, I've never seen anything like that.

Q. You talked about the attitude of the people as they were going down the road. Could you describe that again?

A. They were just terribly panic-stricken. Not in the way we are, you know. They keep everything in their hearts so they had their heads down and just walking away, and they didn't know where they were going or how they were going to do it--they didn't care about anything any more. They just said: "Everything gone." and about losing their children, they'd say: "We couldn't get the child out, it was squashed under our house." And they'd grin away and laugh. The Japanese when in sorrow they show it with a smile and when supposing the girl is a bride; she has her head down, she doesn't smile at all, she keeps a straight face--just the opposite from us. And the thing they thought queer, why wasn't there one foreigner killed in that. Everybody was safe. There were two German missionaries who were badly injured: one had an artery cut here and he bled for eight hours, and then there was another man who had his hand or foot fractured and I think he was not coming along very well.

And then there was another. Father Aruppe, he's Spanish, I believe. He went right in. He was a surgeon, this young man and he went right in and helped very very many Japanese. He believed in cutting off the arm, supposing the arm was burned. The Japanese, they tried to scrape off the rotten flesh and everything, but he believed in cutting the arm off, so he went and cut it off, and he saved very many Japanese like that, doing that. I think he should get a reward for it. Wonderful man!

Q. What was the attitude of the people as you went along, did they resent your being there? Did they regard you as foreigners?

A. Oh, yes. They knew that we were foreigners and they thought that you people dropped it so not one foreigner would be killed. They said: "Why on earth are you safe? Why weren't you burned?" They looked at us with jealousy, and I didn't go down-town--I was afraid that they may kill you. And even among the Japanese there was some antagonism among the people that were burned and among the people that weren't burned. Even now the last time I went to Hiroshima in September--from the 11th to the 19th I was there--and there were very many people who were burned, and they'd look at me with very bad eyes.

Q. Will you tell us what happened to the "shoji" which were exposed to the light?

A. Oh, yes. Our house was a Japanese house and the sunshine would always fill the room and it would go right across and touch the doors. The Japanese sliding doors are made of a thin frame of wood and paper on both sides. And when we got back to see the house, whether it was burned or not after, because we left right after the bomb--we didn't care what was to happen to our clothing or our house, but when we got back on the next day we saw this door, just the outlines of the burn, the whole just a scorched outline, and I'd explain it just as the sun's rays had gotten in, the uranium rays got in and burned it, I think. But the house didn't catch on fire at all.

- Q. How far was your home from the center of the bomb?
- A. It was approximately three kilometers.
- Q. How did your father know that this was not an ordinary bomb. What did he notice?
- A. He was in the war before and the bomb, the heavy bomb didn't sound-- we didn't hear any sound. We just saw a flash and we didn't see any, well, it wasn't one of those fire bombs that spread fire. We'd read so much about it, that is why I thought there was something queer about it.
- Q. Did the people in Hiroshima ever think that they would be bombed?
- A. No, they didn't. We heard that there were rumors that Kyoto and Hiroshima would be left alone because Hiroshima was such a beautiful place. And they'd say if the Americans ever came here, they'd have Miyajima right next to Hiroshima, and Kyoto, so they thought, never mind, one or two B-29s wouldn't do any harm to it. That was the propaganda in our city anyway, but people from Tokyo, the burned out people would come and they'd say: "You better not play with fire," they'd say. My dad was always very cautious about it.
- Q. That was the first bomb?
- A. No.
- Q. The city had been bombed before, I think?
- A. Just once, one incendiary bomb was dropped.
- Q. Did you say that you were within the When the door was opened, you were within the direct rays of the light that came through this door that was slid open?
- A. Yes, I was looking towards the city.
- Q. And your brother was outside you said?
- A. Yes, right out in the sun's rays. He just lay flat on the ground and that was his
- Q. Completely in the open with nothing to protect him whatsoever?
- A. Nothing at all. No, nothing at all.
- Q. And he was not burned?
- A. No, nothing.

- Q. Did you notice anything in particular about the fingernails on these people who were burned? You mentioned that the other day.
- A. The fingernails just I think that if you pulled them they'd come off. I didn't have the chance of ever trying to do anything like that. They bent outward. The skin was all off and the nails bent outward, and I think that if I tried to take them off, they'd just come off. And their fingers weren't straightened out. It was as though they were holding something very hard--all the people. You tried to straighten up the fingers--that's what hurt them very much, and the fingers would click, so I think the inner bones were kind of burned too.
- Q. About people that were burned, were many of the people burned through their clothing? Without their clothing themselves having been burned off?
- A. Yes, there were cases like that. I knew of a doctor surgeon, who I heard about later. He was doing an operation, urgent operation, and he had his back towards the center of the place where the bomb dropped, and he had that big officer's uniform, that thick uniform, and the whole of his back from the head down was burned and he died in three days.
- Q. That was right through the uniform?
- A. Yes, the whole of the uniform, but nothing burned.
- Q. And were there cases in which clothing actually was burned off the people that were not within buildings that caught on fire and things like that--people who were out in the open? Did their clothing burn off from them?
- A. Yes, there were cases like that and I think wool burned--I happened to think it over last night--and I think woolly and heavy things burnt faster than just cotton. You see, I didn't notice about clothing then. It was just

Q. When things burned, were there flames? Were there flames in connection with the burning, or did they just disintegrate and were without flames, when you speak of the clothes being burned?

A. I never saw a person whose clothes were being burned. We went right out of the city so we didn't see at all, and I suppose it was so fast nobody noticed it. So, I don't think it burned with flames at all. I think, it just Well, the body didn't burn, I think, but the buildings, the whole city was

Q. Was there any place you know of where things burned where there was no fire at the time the bomb hit? In other words, the fire was created by the bomb itself and not by getting into contact with fire?

A. I think the whole of Hiroshima The bomb fell and in some cases it started from--maybe the house wasn't very cautious about putting out the light, putting out the fire.

Q. Isolated haystacks where there was no fire present at the time the bomb hit, did things like that burst into flames?

A. Well, I should think so--maybe so because I never noticed any of that, but I think so because I would be walking up in the mountains, through mountains and all of a sudden when I arrived, on our left the bushes started to burn right out so we had to dodge those fires. And the fire lasted in Hiroshima from half past eight to I think the next morning. Early in the morning about 6 o'clock it ended and people, they tried to save themselves who were already encircled by the fire. They jumped into the rivers. There were seven rivers in Hiroshima and they were just full of them, and I knew of a Russian lady and a Russian gentleman. He stayed in the water for seven hours. He'd come out of the water for a little while to get a breath, and then he would go in again. He was in the water nearly all the time--7 hours, and it was so hot that he said he was afraid the water was going to boil. On both sides the fire would just get fiercer and fiercer. Doctors were so panicky they forgot the patients that were lying around.

- Q. You said your parents were having breakfast by a window ...
- A. Yes, Sir.
- Q. Was this window on the side towards the bomb?
- A. No, Sir.
- Q. It was on the back side?
- A. Yes, but the sun's rays were coming out ... coming into the room.
- Q. But the direct rays from the bomb blast did not come through the window?
- A. Yes, because the window was on the other side.
- Q. Did you say you were looking directly towards the city when it happened?
- A. Yes, Sir.
- Q. Did the light bother your eyes?
- A. I saw the light very close to me. I thought it was on me, and I felt the hot waves too. I thought it was very hot.
- Q. Was there any chance that your brother who you said was outside, could have been protected by a building or something from the rays coming down that would account for his not being burned?
- A. Well, he was in the sunshine, in absolute sunshine.
- Q. If the sunshine was coming from the east, I gather that the bomb was in the west. What you said about the window--was there a possibility of protecting the building--was there something that kept the rays of the bomb from hitting direct?
- A. The children that were playing with my brother were burned. They didn't lie down on the ground. They were little little children. They got burned and they died soon after, and my brother didn't get burned.
- Q. So far as you know, was there anyone who was in a wooden house--by a wooden wall--burned by the fire of the building?

- A. I didn't see myself, but I heard from people that the wooden buildings just as soon as we--which were on the side of the bomb, and they were on the sunny side just burned immediately with the flash.
- Q. What about some of the brick buildings? Were they burned?
- A. The brick buildings were all destroyed, and they fell on top of the people and injured them. Many many people were killed by big buildings like this--from 7 to 8 storeys high falling down and becoming one storey high. And then they'd never come out, but aside from the people even still not dug out, I don't know a thing about them.
- Q. You mention being in the direct rays of the light. Did you feel anything at all when the light struck you?
- A. Yes, I thought it was very hot. Yes, I felt very uncomfortable.
- Q. Very shortly after you felt the flash, did you feel any wind blowing or any pressure or anything of that type?
- A. Well, it was all in one bang. I never heard the explosion. I suppose there was an explosion, a big sound but I never heard it. I just saw the house tumbling down, and I believe that it was all dark. That is all I remember. Everything in darkness for about 2 or 3 minutes.
- Q. Do you think the darkness might have been a result of the flash having affected your eyes?
- A. No.
- Q. Or do you think it was due to something else?
- A. I think it was just dust, because my eyes--I couldn't clear out my eyes for about two or three days. It was just full of little bits of sand and glass, I suppose. Everything. Very painful.
- Q. You mentioned about the door having been scorched. Was any of your clothing or anything scorched at all?
- A. No, nothing, nothing.

- Q. Were you wearing light colored or dark colored clothing?
- A. I was wearing a blue dress. It was a very light blue dress--light color--hot dress.
- Q. When you went back afterwards, from the standpoint of services there, was the water supply working?
- A. No, all services were out. Absolutely. For a police station--it was kind of in the suburbs, only about two policemen were left in the whole staff. You see, so nothing--absolutely. Everything went back to ruin, absolute ruin.
- Q. It was dark for two or three minutes. Did the dust rise so as to cover the sunlight and make it appear as if it was
- A. I don't know what it was. It was just absolute darkness for two or three minutes, and then later it started to clear up better and better. Well, I don't know, it would just sort of rise and then it would clear up a bit. The aeroplanes flying up above, you know ...
- Q. What did it do? Did it reduce the visibility so you couldn't see for two or three miles? Could you see a long distance a short time after the bomb hit?
- A. Maybe in half an hour, I could see down town. In other words, then you saw very clearly, as clear as I could see.
- Q. When you saw the castle burning far out, was it many minutes after the bomb hit?
- A. Maybe it was five--well--you could see the flames.
- Q. Did you see any other white people after the bombing? Were there any others around you or were they not burned?
- A. Not one white person was burned. They were injured but not burned.
- Q. Then you saw quite a few of them. How many?
- A. Three days after we saw everybody.
- Q. And were any of these white people near the center of the town than yourself at the time of the bomb?
- A. Oh, yes. We were the only ones out of town. Everybody else was in town. We advised them--we told them we'd take them with us and everything, but they said: "No, we don't need to." Well, the

- missionaries, they thought it was their duty to die with the Japanese, Germans and Catholics. But then, the other people, we told them to, but all their garments and everything burned. See, they ...
- Q. Did any of these white people lose their hair at a later date?
- A. Nobody was injured in any way. That is why the Japanese, they just say: "It was a miracle--there must be some kind of trick to it." You know, they just won't believe it.
- Q. How many white people?
- A. There were nine Russians, one American woman--well, she was an American, maybe she was French or something--she says she's an American married to a Japanese and I believe twelve Germans--German missionaries.
- Q. They were located in various parts of the town, some here, some approximately the same distance as you people at the time of the explosion?
- A. Yes, about half half.
- Q. Was there any visible change in the attitude of the people toward the war after the bomb fell?
- A. Oh, they said that it was very inhuman and that "I suppose that we'd lose the war," and they said: "I suppose all the Japanese are going to be killed, but we're going to live in the dug-outs and, oh, not going to give up by this." They were all of various opinions. There were people who right from the beginning said, "We shouldn't have fought with the Americans. We shouldn't have fought with foreign people anyway." If they consider anybody white, they're god. They think a white person is very highly educated and something very much much higher than themselves, but some people, you see, they try to live up to us and they can't.
- Q. On whom do they place the responsibility for the effect of this bomb?
- A. I heard a rumor that said that America defeated Germany and that they took the bomb away from the Germans. You see, the Germans

had it ready to bomb New York. As soon as they took it away from the Germans, they used it on us. And they said the pilot was a German forced by Americans, and see, they saw him tied up in Hiroshima to a telephone pole and the Japanese beat him to death, they said. I never saw the German. That was the rumor that I heard.

Q. Did you hear any criticisms of the Government leaders, air raid officials regarding the bombing?

A. You mean criticisms of the Japanese?

Q. Yes.

A. Oh, very many criticisms--the radio locators--they said that they didn't work very well, because the airplane would fly over and then the sirens would go. On that day the bomb was dropped, and there were no sirens whatsoever. There was always a B-29 or two flying about and no sirens. They blamed the people that took care of telling us when the enemy plane would be over, and they blamed the Government for not paying much attention to that. There were a lot of criticisms. The whole of Japan--I mean, all during the war there were criticisms--especially the military folks.

Q. Did the Government take any steps immediately following the catastrophe for rehabilitation? Did they send anyone in there or were there any outside agencies that came in there immediately?

A. Oh, yes. From other towns there were policemen, nurses, doctors and engineers. Everybody said that was but the only thing they took care of was the food, nothing else, no bandages, no clothing, absolutely nothing. If we hadn't stopped and this Japanese little household wouldn't let us in the cottage, we would have to sleep on the floor just like this wooden floor, not even a mat

Q. Wasn't the Red Cross able to come down there?

A. No. No Red Cross. Everything was smashed.

Q. How did they bury the people?

A. They didn't even burn them. There were just thousands and thousands of soldiers and people that they just dug up a big big hole in front of the regiment Headquarters. There was a big field where the soldiers march and have parades, you know. They'd dig a big hole there and they threw the bodies in there and they covered them. And they did it about five times.

Q. How did the people in the surrounding areas to which these people were evacuated behave toward them?

A. Oh, the countryside didn't want Well, we were supposed to evacuate. We had a command from the Government saying that we had to evacuate by the 25th of February and people started to evacuate. But the country people, they started saying: "You didn't pay much attention to us during ... when it was good times. Now that you are asking for help, well, we won't let you in," and you see, they made all sorts of excuses, saying that there was a sick person, or the house is too small. "We won't send you the vegetables because it was so scarce." Well, they tried to move the people out. So, even if they went to the relative's to live, they'd come back with nervous breakdowns, saying: "I'd rather be killed by bombs than live in a house where they don't want you." So then many people came back.

Q. How about the evacuation after the atomic bomb fell?

A. Oh, then. Let's see. Oh, then, they sympathized, at least they sympathized with us, even though we were foreigners. They acted very nice to us.

Q. How did they behave towards each other? How did they behave towards other Japanese who evacuated?

A. Well, there was I don't think they I mean they were so astonished I mean they didn't have time to think about how to act of anything. Everybody was out of their wits. Everybody had a