In The Wake of Hiroshima & Nagasaki

"Atomic Bombing" Interviews with Crews of "Enola Gay" and "The Great Artiste"


Standing before the Enola Gay, the crews that dropped the atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima talk about their experiences on what one calls a "great, fantastic fairy-land project." The interviews are unedited, each beginning with a clap board and ending with a "cut." The tone of their descriptions is unexceptional;

Fig. 29. Paul Tibbetts and his machine.  
(Credit: National Archives)

most of them express a shared relief at the explosion's flash of light — it worked. Paul Tibbetts' (the pilot of the Enola Gay) matter-of-fact comments exemplify the lofty point of view of the crews: "The sight that greeted our eyes was quite beyond what we had expected because we saw the cloud of boiling dust and debris below
Fig. 30 The man-made cloud from America's "fairyland project" — Nagasaki.
(Credit: National Archives)
us with this tremendous mushroom on top. Beneath that was hidden the ruins of the city of Hiroshima." In this tone, these raw interviews sweep us from atomic fairy-land to the deadly banality of war.

― Abé Mark Nornes

The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki


A Japanese Tragedy
(Nihon no higeki, also The Tragedy of Japan)


Japanese Tragedy is a compilation film drawing on wartime footage from Nichiei. It was completed in May 1946, and received permission for public showing after initially being censored. There was no company to handle it's release, although it was shown in several local theaters. After this, it was screened independently in one location within Tokyo. The following August, the Occupation censored the film a second time, and both the positive and negative were confiscated.

Producer of the film (and then head of production at Nichiei) Iwasaki Akira wrote in Eiga-shi (Film History, Tōyō Keizai Shinpō, 1961) that, "A Japanese Tragedy is a four reel documentary film that should be considered a history of the 20 stormy years of the Shōwa Era. Primarily through a montage of the period's newsreels, it

Fig. 31 & 32. Images of the end from both sides of the line: the flag raising on Iwo Jima and Japanese POWs listening to the Emperor surrender on radio.