



BOOK REVIEW: Consequential Damages of Nuclear War; The Rongelap Report

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BOOK REVIEW: Consequential Damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report, by Barbara Rose Johnston and Holly M. Barker. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 2008. 296 pages, \$29.95.

Review by Arjun Makhijani © 2010

Operation Crossroads took place in July 1946 and consisted of two nuclear bomb tests conducted by the United States. The first, Able, was detonated in the atmosphere above the Bikini lagoon in the western Pacific; the second, Baker, in the lagoon itself, with the device 90 feet underwater, dangling from a barge. The Baker test shot 2 million tons of radioactive water skyward in a column that made the target warships look like tiny playthings. Both Able and Baker used 23-kiloton [plutonium](#) devices—about the same size as the bomb dropped over Nagasaki on August 9, 1945.

Witnessed by a host of dignitaries, the explosions signified the bomb's post-World War II coming out party. The tests were the first in a series of sixty-six U.S. nuclear explosions conducted until 1962 in the Marshall Islands, an isolated array of tiny atolls and islands east of Micronesia that came under U.S. administration after the war. Twenty-three of the tests were conducted at Bikini Atoll. Decades later, the terrible health, environmental, economic, and cultural consequences of the tests continue to unfold.

Among the most affected were the people of Rongelap Atoll, about 100 miles east of Bikini. Barbara Rose Johnston and Holly M. Barker chronicle their tragedy in *Consequential Damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report*, based on a 2001 publication prepared for the Nuclear Claims Tribunal of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (*The Rongelap Report: Hardships and Consequential Damages from Radioactive Contamination, Denied Use, Exile, and Human Subject Experimentation Experienced by the People of Rongelap, Rongerik, and Ailinginae Atolls*).

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