

Nagasaki reminds us

Tomihisa Taue

*The Mayor of Nagasaki
captured the mood of
nuclear threat in time of
virus, and proposed
solutions in 2020.*

Exactly 75 years have passed since the day our city was assaulted by a nuclear bomb. Despite the passing of three quarters of a century, we are still living in a world where nuclear weapons exist.

Just why is it that we humans are still unable to rid ourselves of nuclear weapons? Are we truly unable to abandon these dreadful weapons that so cruelly take lives without even allowing for dignified deaths and force people to suffer for entire lifetimes as the result of radiation?

Songwriter Fumio Kino lost his wife and children to the atomic bomb on that August 9th 75 years ago and went on to express his sadness and feelings about peace through music. In his memoirs he wrote the following:

‘The tragedy that unfolded beneath the reddish-black mushroom cloud that spread out on that day is deeply embedded in my heart. The awful sight of hideously burned people covered in flames; innumerable corpses scorched until they were almost carbonized and spread around the debris like logs; women wandering about with leaden eyes; phantasmagoric visions such as this vividly revisit my mind as the day of August 9th comes around each year.’

In order to see that no one else ever goes through such a hellish experience, the *hibakusha*, or atomic bombing survivors, have fervently striven to inform us about what went on underneath that mushroom cloud. However, the true horror of nuclear weapons has not yet been adequately conveyed to the world at large. If, as with the novel coronavirus which we did not fear

until it began spreading among our immediate surroundings, humanity does not become aware of the threat of nuclear weapons until they are used again, we will find ourselves in an irrevocable predicament.

This year marks the 50th year since the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, or NPT, entered into force. This treaty, which promised that there would be no increase in nuclear-weapon states and that nuclear disarmament negotiations would be pursued in good faith, is an extremely important agreement for humankind. However, in the past few years motions by the nuclear-weapon states to go back on the promise of nuclear disarmament have been increasing, as evidenced by initiatives such as the scrapping of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, or INF Treaty. In addition to that, the development and deployment of newer, more sophisticated nuclear weapons and smaller, easier-to-use nuclear weapons, is proceeding. As a result, the threat of nuclear weapons being used is increasingly becoming real.

‘Only 100 seconds remain.’ In order to symbolize this state of crisis, the ‘Doomsday Clock’, an indicator of the time left until the earth’s extinction, was set at its shortest time ever this year.

Three years ago, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by the United Nations. This Treaty clearly states that nuclear weapons should be eliminated in accordance with the wishes of humanity. Among the nuclear-weapon states and countries under the nuclear umbrella there have been voices stating that it is too early for such a treaty. That is not so. Rather, nuclear arms reductions are far too late in coming.

It is now 75 years since the atomic bombings and the founding of the United Nations. Having reached this milestone, we should now remember that humanity itself promised to eliminate nuclear weapons in Resolution 1 of the UN General Assembly.

When the Pope visited Nagasaki last year, he said two things that may be keys (see *Spokesman 144*). The first was that ‘to make this ideal (of a world of peace, free from nuclear weapons) a reality calls for involvement on the part of all’. The second was that ‘there is a need to break down the (growing) climate of distrust’.

I hereby appeal to everyone around the world.

There are innumerable ways that we can become involved in working for peace.

This year, many people have been applauding the continued efforts by those in the medical profession to battle the novel coronavirus. In the same way, let us now applaud with heartfelt respect and gratitude the *hibakusha* who, while enduring physical and mental pain, have spoken out about their

painful experiences for the 75 years since the time of atomic bombing until today in order to provide a warning to people around the world.

With this applause, an act of only 10 seconds or so, we are able to spread the circle of peace. The message of high school students which hangs in this tent today is also an expression of the desire for peace. Small acts such as the folding of paper cranes can convey feelings about peace as well. Let us proceed unceasingly and with conviction to lay down the roots for a culture of peace in civil society.

Young people of the world; the novel coronavirus disease, global warming and the problem of nuclear weapons share one thing in common, and that is that they affect all of us who live on this earth. Are nuclear weapons necessary for the world of the future that you will live in? Let us clear a path to a world free of nuclear weapons and walk down it together.

I appeal to the leaders of countries around the world.

Please aim to break down the growing climate of distrust and instead build trust through dialogue. At this very time, please choose solidarity over division. At the NPT Review Conference which is scheduled for next year, I ask that you show a workable way towards nuclear disarmament which includes reductions in such weapons by the nuclear superpowers of Russia and the United States.

I now appeal to the government of Japan and members of the Diet.

As a country that has experienced the horrors of nuclear weapons, please sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and see to its ratification at the earliest possible date. In addition, please examine the plan to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Northeast Asia. And please adhere for eternity to the peaceful principles of the Japanese Constitution, which includes the determination not to wage war.

Furthermore, in addition to providing increased support for *hibakusha* who are suffering from atomic bombing after-effects, I ask that relief measures be extended to those who experienced the atomic bombings but have yet to be officially recognized as bombing survivors.

Nine years have now passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. As a city that has experienced the threat of radiation, Nagasaki stands in support of the people of Fukushima as they strive towards recovery.

Along with everyone who reluctantly could not attend today's ceremony because of the novel coronavirus, we offer our heartfelt prayers for those who lost their lives to the atomic bomb and hereby declare that Nagasaki will continue to work tirelessly with Hiroshima, Okinawa, and all the people in places where great losses of life were experienced due to war and

where peace is longed for, in order to bring about eternal peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

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UN Resolution 1

*Establishment of a Commission to deal with the problems raised
by the discovery of atomic energy*

... the Commission shall make specific proposals:

- (a) for extending between all nations the exchange of basic scientific information for peaceful ends;
- (b) for control of atomic energy to the extent necessary to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes;
- (c) for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction;
- (d) for effective safeguards by way of inspection and other means to protect complying States against the hazards of violations and evasions.

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*The author **Kazuo Ishiguro** was born in Nagasaki in 1954. He sent this encouraging message on the 75th anniversary of its atomic bombing.*

‘This is the anniversary of a terrible event. But this milestone also marks seventy-five years during which time there has been no repeat of what was inflicted on the people of Nagasaki that day. My mother, then a teenager in the city, was able to go on to enjoy a long peaceful life.

So this is an anniversary that brings triumph and hope, as well as horror and sadness. Let us not forget how fragile our civilization remains. And in our current, troubled times, let us not forget the importance of the international cooperation and understanding that has brought us safely through these years. Let us remember the huge dangers that continue to threaten us, and the supreme value of human life.’