



自動禁止

Editorial

From Hiroshima to Fukushima

Hiroshima means ‘wide island’. The tidal rivers of the delta dissect the modern city, which has grown beyond its initial island location. It is a rather beautiful situation, surrounded by green, wooded hills. In August, the sun beats down on covered heads of those many thousands of people hurrying to gather at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial to remember the 275,000 victims of ‘Little Boy’, the uranium bomb dropped by Enola Gay, as the US Air Force had dubbed, respectively, their weapon of mass destruction and the plane that delivered it.

The nuclear explosion was detonated some 600 metres above Hiroshima at 8.15 on 6 August 1945, a virtually cloud-free Monday morning. Apparently, the city was chosen from three possible targets, not least because weather conditions were ‘ideal’ for the assault. A clear sky also assisted shooting the photographic record of this, the first of two experimental detonations. The second, over Nagasaki three days later, was a plutonium bomb, dubbed ‘Fat Man’, enabling comparisons to be drawn with the efficacy of the earlier uranium bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The city of Kokura was, in fact, the primary target on that Thursday morning, but it was obscured by smoke; so it was that Nagasaki, the secondary target, was bombed at 11.02 on 9 August.

It is 66 years since those terrible experiments, which instantly killed hundreds of thousands of people, many of them civilians. Tens of thousands more suffered lingering deaths due to their injuries, caused by intense heat, blast, and radiation sickness. Since that summer, no military or political leader has dared sanction the actual use of such a weapon of mass destruction, quite literally, although some have threatened their use at times of acute tension. Perhaps it was such uselessness that Earl Mountbatten had in mind when he remarked, in 1979, that

‘As a military man who has given half a century of active Service I say in all sincerity that the nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence only adds to our perils because of the illusions which they have generated.’

Such illusions are rather clearly perceived in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and elsewhere in Japan. Indeed, as the nuclear disaster at Fukushima continues to unfold, Japanese perceptions have probed more deeply. Sumiteru Taniguchi survived extensive injuries suffered during the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and, at 82 years of age, maintains a lively presence on behalf

of the Nagasaki Council of A-Bomb Sufferers (or *Hibakusha*, in Japanese). He recently observed that

‘Nuclear power and mankind cannot co-exist. We survivors of the atomic bomb have said this all along. And yet, the use of nuclear power was camouflaged as “peaceful” and continued to progress. You never know when there’s going to be a natural disaster. You can never say that there will never be a nuclear accident.’

There is a rising tide of opposition to nuclear power in Japan. Some mothers with young children are literally upping sticks and moving away from the region around Fukushima in an attempt to protect their children from the radioactive contamination which issues from the stricken plant.

The then Prime Minister, Naoto Kan, (he has since resigned), told this year’s Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony that Japan was ‘starting from scratch’ on energy policy, and that he regretted believing the ‘safety myth’ about nuclear power. Two-thirds of the country’s nuclear power stations are switched off. Nuclear energy usually accounts for 30 per cent of energy needs, and this was projected to rise to 50 per cent by 2030. That would require 14 new reactors, in addition to the 54 already there. Of course, six of these at Fukushima are already failing, four of them in the most extreme fashion.

In response to all this, something is moving in Japan. It was reflected in this year’s World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, which we report in this issue of *The Spokesman*. The organisers remarked on the large numbers of new participants, many of them young people. Many such activists are also to be found supporting the encampments springing up in cities large and small around the world, in the wake of Occupy Wall Street. Something moves in our world.

Tony Simpson

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All 544 first and second year students and eight teachers of the Hiroshima Municipal Girl’s High School perished on the fine clear morning of 6 August 1945. They were engaged in demolition work close to the school, which was 500 metres from the hypocentre of the nuclear explosion. When students mobilized at other places in the city are included, the school lost 679 people, the most of any school in Hiroshima. The figure of the girl engraved in the centre of the monument carries a box carved with Einstein’s formula $E=MC^2$. This indirect expression was a way around the occupying US army’s prohibition on direct references to the ‘atomic bombing’. Here, the site is carefully prepared for the 2011 commemoration ceremony. (Photo: Dave Webb, CND). ➤



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