

View of Peace and Citizens' Movements in Hiroshima

As a victim of atomic bombing, Hiroshima has continued to send a message renouncing nuclear weapons throughout Japan and the world. This message is based on the citizens' view of peace, but needless to say this view has been affected by changes in the international situation and by domestic policies. I would like to discuss the changes in the citizens' view of peace and talk about Hiroshima's efforts to build peace, focusing on citizens' movements.

The damage caused to Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, resulted from a combination of heat rays, shock waves, blasts and radiation. Approximately 70 percent of the city's buildings were burned to the ground, and it is estimated that out of a population of 350,000, approximately 140,000 people had died by the end of December 1945. But we still do not know the exact number of deaths because the atomic bomb destroyed the community and because many records were lost in the fire. Furthermore surveys conducted after the bombing were inadequate.

On August 10, the day after the dropping of the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, the Japanese government formally protested to the government of the United States, saying that the new bombs violated international law. Japan demanded that the use of atomic bombs be abandoned, saying, "The use of bombs that are incomparably more indiscriminate and atrocious than any conventional weapons and projectiles is a crime against human culture." However, after the war ended in Japan's defeat, the intent of this protest was not passed on to the new Japanese government.

Because of the "Press Code" (a kind of censorship) issued by the Allied Forces during the Occupation, survivors did not fully recognize the terrible effects of radiation. The annihilation of a major city by a single bomb and the collapse of the nation they had trusted intensified citizens' belief that there must be no more war. This humanitarian view of peace, transcending nationality, is clearly reflected in the inscription on the Memorial Cenotaph in the Peace Memorial Park unveiled on August 6, 1952, which says: "Let all the souls here rest in peace for we shall not repeat the evil."

There have been disputes about who is the subject of this statement, but while responsibility for the atomic bombing was not made clear, it has become accepted that it was a crime of humanity.

People believed that describing the damage caused by the atomic bomb would contribute to peace. They thought it was their mission to oppose nuclear weapons, and this sense of mission gave them the psychological support they needed to rise from the ashes of destruction. They did not seek to clarify who was responsible for the atomic

bombings, as the Japanese left the issue of responsibility for the war to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. Since this issue was not properly addressed then, we still face this issue today.

The citizens of Hiroshima, disillusioned by Japan's defeat, hoped for a world federation transcending national borders. In 1949 then Mayor Shinzo Hamai sent a petition to U.S. President Harry Truman requesting the establishment of a global federal government through further development of the United Nations.

On November 3, 1952, the World Federation Asian Conference was held at Honkawa Elementary School in Hiroshima. Eleven hundred participants attended, including representatives from 14 foreign countries. Dr. Albert Einstein contributed a message stating the need for "limitations on national sovereignty."

On October 30, 1954, the Hiroshima City Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution declaring Hiroshima a world federation city. In these ways, Hiroshima's early view of peace was embodied in its hope for a world federation transcending national borders.

At the same time, the citizens, who were still living in extreme poverty, hoped to see the city rebuilt. On August 5, 1946, a citizens' rally for the restoration of peace was held at the former site of Gokoku Shrine. At this rally, citizens demonstrated their desire to rise from the ashes declaring, "We, the citizens of Hiroshima, standing in the desert created by the atomic bomb, hold this citizens' rally with an ardent collective desire for recovery, to put the past behind us, to unite and to work together toward the peaceful reconstruction of our destroyed lives and the democratization of the local government as soon as possible."

Many people argued that "new building" was a better term than "rebuilding," but in any case, the most pressing issue was to restore the city's basic infrastructure to allow people to get on with their daily lives. To this end, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law was promulgated on August 6, 1949.

Although many other cities had also been destroyed in the war, because the impact of the atomic bomb was particularly devastating, this special law was passed to provide a legal basis for transferring state-owned land to local ownership. After the law was enacted, the city was rapidly rebuilt.

Article 1 of this law stipulated that, "It shall be the object of this law to provide for the construction of the city of Hiroshima as a peace memorial city to symbolize the human ideal of the sincere pursuit of a genuine and lasting peace." Article 6 stated, "The mayor of Hiroshima shall...establish a program of continuous activity toward completion of Hiroshima as a Peace Memorial City."

I don't think a city is ever complete, but it is true that this law set the tone for the City of Hiroshima. With the citizens' desire for peace, the city has become an "International City of Peace and Culture." This image is manifested in the Peace Memorial Park and the preservation of the Atomic Bomb Dome and its registration as a World Heritage Site.

With the end of the occupation of Japan by the Allied Forces in 1952, the people of Japan realized the extent of the destruction caused by the atomic bomb. Then in March 1954, a Japanese fishing boat, the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, was contaminated by fallout from a nuclear test on Bikini Atoll. There were new radiation victims following those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the anti-nuclear movement grew to a scale never seen before, involving both conservatives and liberals. The government pointed out that Japan was the only country to have suffered atomic bombing, and Hiroshima's sense of world citizenship was soon replaced by the national consciousness.

Around this time, the aftereffects of radiation become apparent. Typical symptoms of radiation exposure included keloids, leukemia, cataracts, thyroid cancer, breast cancer, lung cancer and other cancers. Those who were exposed in utero suffered from microcephaly. In this way, many *hibakusha* (A-bomb survivors) continued to suffer long after the end of the war. For this reason, they felt they were victims, and their memories of their involvement in the war were put aside. Without fully addressing the historical issues or the issue of responsibility for the war, they called for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Starting in the 1950s, as the Cold War between the East and West escalated, the U.S., the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union repeatedly carried out nuclear tests. In 1962, the Hiroshima Peace Pilgrimage set out for Europe and the U.S. From that time on, both Hiroshima and Nagasaki sent delegations to other countries to describe the horrors of atomic bombing. The people of the world feared that a large-scale nuclear war would break out and listened intently to the pleas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The notion that "Japan was the only country to have experienced atomic bombing" led to a change from the initial "human appeal" to a "national appeal." In the 1970s, there were numerous protests against Japan by Korean victims of the A-bombs. Korean *hibakusha* came to Japan, sometimes entering illegally, and petitioned the Japanese government to acknowledge responsibility. Hiroshima's view of peace came up against the issue of Japan's wartime aggression. The more Japanese *hibakusha* talked about the damage caused by the atomic bombs, the more they realized that they had to have a clear understanding of history. At this point Hiroshima's peace movement changed from an "appeal for peace" to "peace-building."

As both victim and aggressor in the war, Hiroshima felt it was difficult to convey the city's desire for peace. Meanwhile, the appeal for nuclear disarmament did not bear fruit, and the world headed toward nuclear proliferation. Nuclear tests by India and Pakistan made the people of Hiroshima aware of the great difficulty of abolishing nuclear weapons. At the same time, they came to realize the self-contradiction and hypocrisy of calling for a ban on nuclear tests and the abolition of nuclear weapons while Japan was under the nuclear umbrella of the U.S. Hiroshima recognized that it was pointless to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons without trying to change the situation in which Japan was closely entwined with the Japan-U.S. security regime.

In particular, since the 9/11 incident, the U.S. has been engaged in a new "war on terrorism," which has challenged Hiroshima to alter its view of peace. The Bush administration is trying to lower the threshold for using nuclear weapons. In addition, there are complexities involved in the nuclear issue, such as India-U.S. cooperation on nuclear energy, the Iran nuclear issue and North Korea's launch of missiles. Under these circumstances, people do not know how to best make their plea for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The US and Japanese forces are becoming more and more integrated, as has been seen in the realignment of U.S. forces. This has had a major impact on neighboring countries. Therefore, it is unrealistic to call for nuclear abolition without looking at the issue of American military bases in Japan. We must not just talk about nuclear abolition. We must overcome our parochial nationalism and renounce all forms of war. Otherwise, we cannot create a peaceful international environment.

If we continue to create tension in Asia and discuss the nuclear issue from a nationalistic point of view, we will never be able to achieve nuclear abolition or break away from the nuclear umbrella. If we are serious about creating a nuclear-free world and achieving security for humankind, Hiroshima must shed its national consciousness and regain the sense of world citizenship it once aspired to with the concept of a world federation.

With the support provided by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law, Hiroshima has developed rapidly along with Japan's rapid economic growth, and it is now a city of 1.1 million people. Few reminders of the devastation of the atomic bombing remain in the city. As the *hibakusha* grow old and die, their numbers are decreasing every year, and memories of the devastation are fading.

The citizens' way of thinking has also changed. For example, in a survey of 13,000 *hibakusha* conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper last year, 59 percent said they think nuclear weapons will be used in the future, while only 10 percent said it is

possible to abolish nuclear weapons. Forty-nine percent said nuclear weapons will never be abolished.

Of 1,600 *hibakusha* who responded to a survey conducted by the Japan Confederation of A and H Bomb Sufferers Organizations, 65.5 percent said they fear nuclear weapons will be used, and 52.4% said nuclear weapons will never be abolished.

Under these circumstances, what Hiroshima can do is to look at the issue of nuclear weapons from a humanitarian point of view. In other words, we must continue to tell the world how much destruction atomic bombs can wreak on humankind and how atrocious and inhumane the use of nuclear weapons is. We must create public opinion in favor of the abolition of nuclear weapons by showing how past experience relates to today's tragedies of the world. For this reason, the way we live matters. We must show our way of life to the people of the world.

When I was mayor of Hiroshima, I believed it was the duty of city government to create a framework to send a message of peace to the world while providing support for the *hibakusha*. To this end, I worked to establish various networks. First, we worked to establish a grassroots network by supporting activities to promote international peace conducted by community centers and other organizations. We also supported citizens' groups that conducted atomic bomb exhibitions, lectures and art activities overseas.

Second, we worked to establish a network of local governments. We wanted to influence the national policies of countries throughout the world by conducting peace campaigns uniting cities through the World Conference of Mayors for Peace through Inter-City Solidarity. Now called the Mayors for Peace, there are currently 1,403 member cities.

Thirdly, by establishing the Hiroshima Peace Institute, we worked to create a network of various peace institutes, the United Nations and international organizations in Japan and abroad. Through this network we tried to suggest specific policies that would reflect the hopes of the citizens of Hiroshima in politics.

We hoped these networks would work at different levels to unite international public opinion in support of the abolition of nuclear weapons. The citizens' ardent hope for peace is essential to making this network function and grow.

As a private citizen, I have supported medical assistance for the victims of nuclear tests at Semipalatinsk and the construction of Hiroshima House, which was completed this spring in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Both of these initiatives were the result of grassroots activities that sought solidarity with Asian countries.

With the holding of the 12th Asian Games in Hiroshima in 1994, citizens began to pay a great deal of attention to Asia. By meeting participants from various countries,

citizens learned about the diversity of Asian culture and the history of the relationship between Japan and Asia.

After the Asian Games, a citizens' group paid a goodwill visit to Kazakhstan and found that people exposed to radiation in Semipalatinsk did not have adequate medical supplies or medical care. They took action to support these people. Kazakhstan has abundant natural resources but insufficient economic infrastructure, and the country could not provide adequate assistance to the victims of the nuclear tests, which were conducted under the Soviet regime. Nor has Russia, successor to the Soviet Union, done anything for them. The citizens of Hiroshima, who suffered from the atomic bomb, could not ignore the suffering of these people and have been sending medical equipment and medicine every year since 1999. These activities are carried out in conjunction with the Hiroshima University Research Institute for Radiation Biology and Medicine, which is conducting research in Semipalatinsk. Medical research is essential for the future and the welfare of humankind, and I think this combination of medical research and humanitarian aid by citizens is a good example of Hiroshima's peace activities.

After learning of the plight of Cambodia at the Asian Games, the citizens of Hiroshima built Hiroshima House in Phnom Penh. This 4-story reinforced concrete building has a total floor space of 1,300 square meters. The citizens of Hiroshima hoped that this facility would offer hope to the people of Cambodia, which was still trying to recover from its civil war. They hoped that Hiroshima House would provide a base for people to receive training to rebuild their country and that it would serve as a center where people could meet.

Between 1.7 million to 2 million people are believed to have been murdered under the regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. The inhumane concept of indiscriminate genocide can also be seen in Hiroshima and Auschwitz.

The citizens of Hiroshima raised funds and worked hard to lay the bricks to build the walls of Hiroshima House. Through this process, they tried to find the answers to questions such as what is war, what are nuclear weapons, and who commits mass murder.

There are also organizations in Hiroshima that invite Korean *hibakusha* to Japan to receive medical care. Some groups support the victims of depleted uranium bombs in Iraq, while others conduct exchanges with young people in India and Pakistan. There are also many volunteers who are building schools and hospitals in various places in Asia, and those who are engaged in teaching agricultural methods and in various other activities. Efforts to alleviate the suffering of others contribute to building a peaceful world. Through these efforts, the citizens' view of peace was strengthened and

deepened.

While Hiroshima talks about the damage caused by the atomic bomb, many people in Asia say the dropping of the atomic bomb was justified, citing Japan's acts of aggression and its war responsibility. They say the atomic bomb freed Asia. The citizens of Hiroshima hope to narrow the gap between their perception of the atomic bomb and that of Asian people by conducting peace activities in Asia.

We must also envision the future of humankind. In other words, we must show what kind of society and what kind of world we want to create. The abolition of nuclear weapons alone is not enough to bring about world peace. Today, we see tragedies similar to those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki taking place in many parts of the world. When we see this reality, we must try to understand the irrational situations in Iraq, Africa and other places by recalling the tremendous suffering we experienced as a result of the atomic bomb. When Hiroshima holds a view that transcends national boundaries and acts in solidarity with others to solve the problems of humankind, such as nuclear and environmental issues, then the voices of Hiroshima will be heard and will reach the hearts of people around the world.