

These words had a tremendous calming influence in Nagasaki, and for more than three decades they effectively silenced political protest by those most ravaged by the Bomb.

Thirty years ago, Hiroshima built a beautiful Peace Park in the center of the city and provided it with a museum and dozens of striking memorials to the dead. After much debate it left standing, at the edge of the park, the half-destroyed "A-Bomb Dome" which has become the symbol of the bombing around the world. Hiroshima proudly proclaims itself a Peace City and its mayors (including the present one, Takeshi Araki) have inevitably been "hibakusha" — survivors of the bombing.

The Peace Park in Nagasaki is smaller, less impressive and somewhat off the beaten path. The building which displays the city's A-bomb artifacts is not a peace museum but an international cultural hall. Its major monument is not a graceful cenotaph but a stupendous muscle-bound statue that looks like a cross between Buddha and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

A visitor to Hiroshima feels touched, or overwhelmed, by the atomic tragedy in a matter of minutes. Some leave Nagasaki unmoved, confused.

For years it was said in Japan that while Hiroshima agitated for peace, Nagasaki simply prayed. But this began to change in 1981, when Pope John Paul II visited the city and told fifty thousand Catholics at a mass that God was not responsible for the bombing, humanity was, and humanity should do something about getting rid of nuclear weapons, soon. Many in Nagasaki finally studied the reasons for the bombing and began expressing pent-up resentments. Now Nagasaki, not Hiroshima (where peace has been institutionalized and brightly packaged), is the angry A-bomb city.

But why is Nagasaki angry? Brutal and unnecessary as it may have been, the bombing of Hiroshima was cloaked in high drama; it was inexorable, precise, and possibly even militarily significant. Nothing adorns the bombing of Nagasaki except chance, cynicism, and coldblooded slaughter.

"We are the inferior A-bomb city," says sociologist Takahashi. Nagasaki, in fact, was not on the original list of U.S. atomic targets. It met the criteria — it was a militarized city (so the bombing could be justified) and had not already been leveled by conventional bombing (so the effects of the Bomb could be studied more easily) — but it was added to the list only after Secretary of War Henry Stimson objected to Kyoto as a target. Stimson felt that destroying Japan's most historic and revered city would turn the Japanese people away from the United States (and possibly toward the Soviet Union) after the war.

And so, on July 24, 1945, Kyoto was dropped from the list and Nagasaki added. Just like that, hundreds of thousands of people in one city were spared and thousands of others elsewhere were marked for death.

As late as the morning of August 9, Nagasaki had a chance to escape. When "Bock's Car" took off from Tinian at 3:49 a.m., Kokura, another city on Kyushu just west of Hiroshima, was its primary target. But Kokura was obscured by clouds, and after making three passes over the city, "Bock's Car" turned southwest toward Nagasaki. The crew knew it only had enough fuel to make one run over Nagasaki, and when they got there that target, too, was hidden. But a hole opened in the clouds and Nagasaki, so close to reprieve, was instead half-obliterated.

What many in Nagasaki rage against, however, is not fate but foul play. In Hiroshima, many believe they were bombed for experimental purposes (or to justify the two billion dollar investment in the Manhattan Project), but a large number seem to accept the official American explanation: that the bombing, how-



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ever cruel, was intended merely to bring the savage war to an end.

The residents of Nagasaki do not accept that explanation for the bombing of their city. They cannot understand why destroying one city and one hundred thousand of its citizens in one fell swoop was not a sufficient demonstration of U.S. superiority over what had become a second-rate power. Why couldn't the United States have waited more than three days after Hiroshima for Japan to surrender?

The reason, offered in Nagasaki (and by some historians elsewhere), is that the United States was bent on field testing the plutonium bomb. It had been tested in the New Mexico desert on July 16, 1945, but in that case it was detonated on the ground. There was no proof that such a weapon could be exploded in the air. The uranium bomb was used first at Hiroshima because it was considered fail-safe. But making the uranium bomb was far too time consuming and expensive. The plutonium bomb was clearly the weapon of choice.

Without a field test, however, the scientists would not know if it would work, or what its effects might be. And it was, in fact, the plutonium bomb that was built and tested exclusively after Nagasaki.

Others believe the Bomb was dropped on Nagasaki not to frighten Emperor Hirohito but to impress Joseph Stalin. "Bock's Car" took off from Tinian only hours after the Soviet Union had finally declared war on Japan and begun moving troops into Manchuria. President Truman's Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, and atomic scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer were only two of the many high-level officials who later admitted that preventing the Soviets from gaining ground in Asia (and staking any claim to Japan) was a prime concern in the summer of 1945. The same dramatic show of strength that might shock Tokyo into surrender could also intimidate the Soviets and allow the Americans "to dictate our own terms at the end of the war," as Byrnes later put it. The atomic bombings, Truman wrote, gave the world "a chance to face the facts."

Many U.S. military leaders (including General Dwight Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur, and Admiral Chester Nimitz) declared, years later, that the war would have

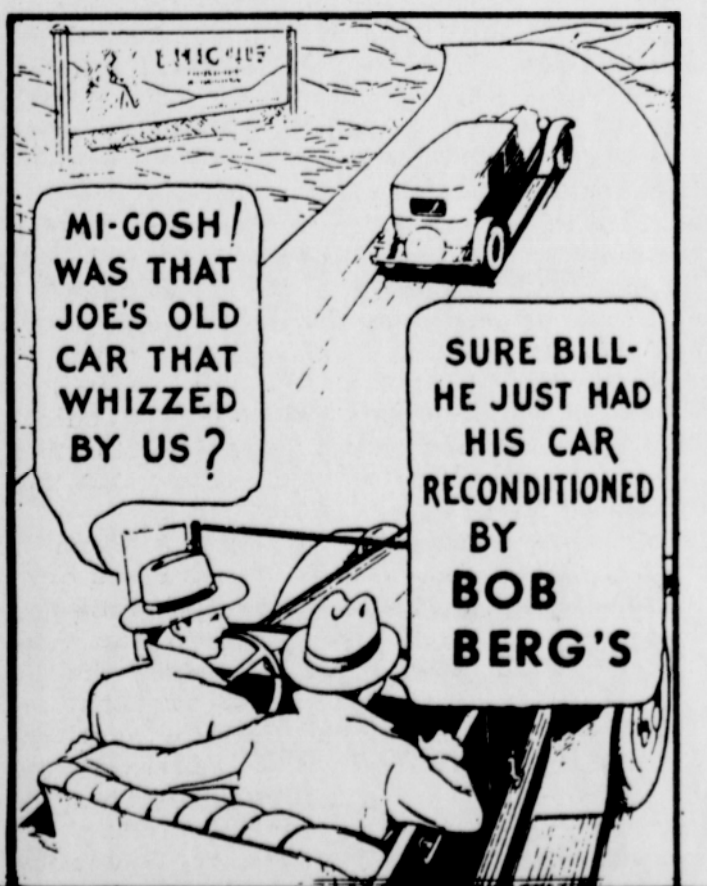
ended in 1945 without the use of atomic weapons. Just before Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed, Truman rejected the concept of a Japanese surrender that would allow the Emperor to keep his throne. After the atomic bombings, Truman accepted that very condition and called the surrender "unconditional." One hundred thousand had died, hundreds of thousands more were fated to suffer or die — and the Emperor remained on the throne. What had changed? The plutonium bomb had been field tested successfully, and the Soviet advance had been checked.

But at what price? Besides the casualties, this display of force helped create and set the tone for the Cold War and guaranteed that a nuclear arms race would develop.

The ambiguous Hiroshima bomb could have been read by the Soviets as nothing more than a war-ending weapon. But the Nagasaki bomb was probably seen for what it was: the first strike in the battle to control the postwar world.

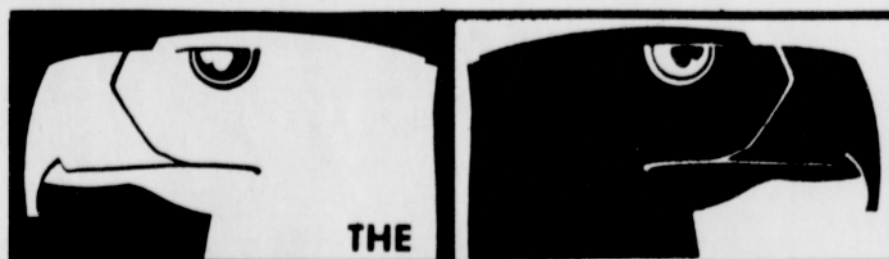
Greg Mitchell is the editor of Nuclear Times and co-author of "Acceptable Risks," which was published last year by Viking. He spent three weeks in the summer of 1984 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki under a grant from the Hiroshima International Cultural Foundation. "Forgotten Bomb, Forgotten City" has been reprinted from The Progressive.

The plutonium for "Fat Man," the bomb that was dropped on Nagasaki, was manufactured at Hanford, Washington.



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