

THE LOST LESSONS OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

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“ . . . it is the threat of universal extinction hanging over all the world today that changes, totally and for ever, the nature of reality and brings into devastating question the true meaning of man's history. We human beings now have the power to exterminate ourselves; this seems to be the entire sum of our achievement.”

— JAMES BALDWIN, *The Fire Next Time*

What happened on August 6, 1945, in Hiroshima and two days later and even more spectacularly in Nagasaki have been described often before: the ruined buildings; the unrecognizable charred corpses piled up everywhere like stacks of charcoal; the burning and the stench; the darkness at mid-morning; the hell-on-earth that these two cities became on those days. The destruction of Nagasaki was worse. The plutonium bomb dropped there was several times more powerful than the uranium bomb used in Hiroshima, and more people were killed immediately and more survivors died off within a shorter space of time. There are, therefore, fewer Nagasaki victims around today, and that is the reason Hiroshima is more often memorialized than Nagasaki. This much is common knowledge to Japanese over the age of thirty, although it is generally not known in other places. It is also believed in places other than Japan that, because the bomb at Nagasaki was dropped off-target due to a cloud cover that morning, it did less damage, was less 'successful' than the Hiroshima explosion. Unfortunately, however, a plutonium

bomb exploded slightly off target will do exactly as much damage as one exploded on target, since it is no longer a question of destroying a specific railroad or factory or of annihilating a given number of people but simply of destroying and annihilating.

In Hiroshima and Nagasaki on those two days, therefore, the skin of people exposed to the flash was instantly and irreparably burned. The wounds were at first slightly red, then redder, then turned yellow and began to stink. Later on, when the burned areas started to heal, they would leave thick growths of weirdly deformed flesh, the keloid scar, that until the end of the victim's life would, at the very least, itch and burn, and depending on the area of the body where it was, might also prevent him from moving his arms or legs or hands or bending over, among other possibilities.

These scars are hideous. Attempts to repair damage with plastic surgery are generally failures because more than the skin is damaged: the cells of the body have also been altered in ways still not entirely known, and have lost the capacity to rebuild themselves. No matter how often the keloid is cut away, it virtually always grows back just the way it was.

There were also countless people who died then and later with no marks on the outside of their bodies. This was the effect of atomic radiation. Hair everywhere on the body would fall out; later paralysis would occur accompanied by internal bleeding, and the victim would die, days, months, even years later. A physician without special training would find these cases impossible to diagnose. It is now well known that excessive exposure to radiation produces leukemia, anemia and cancers and alters, in still unknowable ways, the genetic structure of the body. Those who were young people in 1945 are now grandparents; those who were children then would be trying now to have their own. Even should they appear normal, they carry within their bodies permanently the possibility of diseases that could appear or reappear at any time and could certainly, as has happened in fact, be passed down to their children in the form of brain defects, physical deformities or merely assorted constitutional weaknesses. Such cases have been documented by the hundreds, but they are kept private.

Treatment and care for radiation-caused specifically atomic bomb-caused diseases is expensive and difficult to come by. Because of its very special nature, very particular methods and knowledge are necessary.

As soon as they could after the surrender, the American government moved in and set up a medical research facility in Hiroshima called the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission Hospital. It is still in operation. At this hospital, they are glad to confirm for the victims that they still have radiation poisoning, or that their keloid growths are still there, or that a developing or progressed cancer is probably due to the effects of the atomic bomb, but they do not treat the patients. That is not the purpose of the ABCC Hospital. It is an exclusive research laboratory of the U.S. Government whose purpose is to examine patients and collect data and useful information. Research findings, based on their unquestionably superior knowledge and access to data, are not released to anyone. The reason is that this material is classified and an important part of the research in and manufacture of nuclear weapons that is being conducted by the United States. The latest result of this effort was an announcement in February this year that the U.S. has exploded the biggest bomb yet somewhere in its desert testing grounds.

It is indeed unfortunate that the ABCC does not want anyone else to know what they know. They have all the technical information about those two bombs and have been examining thousands of victims regularly for more than 30 years and their accumulated knowledge would be invaluable to the Japanese physicians and researchers desperately trying to find ways to help their patients.

With the end of the occupation, the problem of dealing with the victims was turned over to the Japanese themselves. And beginning in 1957, eleven and one-half years after the fact and five years after the end of the occupation, the newly democratized Japanese Diet began to pass a series of laws related to medical treatment for financial aid to the victims. These laws have a particular significance. Since they are naturally a reflection of the government's attitude toward the atomic bomb victims, they also help reveal how Japan officially views the implications of finding herself the only country in the world to have suffered nuclear attack. Also, the method of their enforcement and the details and definitions of their provisions provide insight into some of the ways the Japanese government uses its bureaucracy, which has not changed basically from pre-war years, as a tool for its own purposes. And, inasmuch as the laws are also indirectly related to Japan's role in the American defense mechanism, they, and the conception of reality of its makers that they reveal, indicate in part how Japan thinks of herself in regard to the U.S. and to U.S. demands.

Law for medical treatment and financial aid

There are two kinds of laws: those relating to medical treatment and those dealing with financial aid. The medical aid measures are incorporated into the national health insurance plan; the laws for financial aid are part of the general state welfare system. The laws do not actually say that they are applicable to Japanese only, but the fact remains that Japanese make and have always made a clear distinction between themselves and others. The 'others' in this particular case are Koreans, mainly, who are second-class citizens within Japan. Making these traditional distinctions in the case of atomic bomb victims raises some embarrassing questions however. The hosts of non-Japanese who were, like their Japanese counterparts, also on the ground in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on those two days were not in Japan because they wanted to be, but because they were forced to be. The legal restrictions and prejudices they face as atomic bomb victims and as Koreans will be dealt with in greater detail further on.

The laws meant to provide medical treatment for the victims all require the individual to prove he is an atomic bomb victim before he can be considered eligible for any kind of treatment, examination, or medication. And having done that, he must further prove that what is wrong with him is an actively proceeding disease caused directly by the bomb. (Although some may wonder why anyone would seek such treatment in the first place if he were not an atomic bomb victim.)

The laws extending state financial assistance to the victims, since they are part of the welfare system, require not only the aforementioned proofs, but also proof that the individual is a combination of indigent, handicapped, unable to work and the sole support of his family, or any two of these. In spite of the quite obvious fact that atomic bomb victims do not constitute either ordinary medical cases or ordinary welfare cases, there is no special legal provision for them.

Although the bombings took place in 1945, and the Occupation by Allied Forces was over by 1952; and by 1954, the new Japanese Self-Defence Force had been created, it was not until March 31, 1957, that the first Medical Treatment Law for Atomic Bomb Victims was enacted. This law provides for free medical care to qualified persons. It states that this care can be received only at clinics, hospitals and pharmacies

* It is a part of the state medical insurance plan that everyone hold a 'medical booklet' or 'health booklet,' and this is presented when the patient desires treatment.

authorized by the Welfare Ministry which will reimburse said institutions upon request. The law then proceeds to define 'qualified' individuals as those who hold what is called a 'victim's health booklet'. What the individual needs to do to get his booklet is not actually specified in the law itself, but Article 5 of this law's first Enforcement Ordinance says that all details pertaining to the law are decided by other enforcement ordinances issued directly by the Welfare Ministry. (All the enforcement ordinances to these laws, both medical and financial, are issued directly by the Ministry without first having to go through the Diet.)

One of the enforcement ordinances indicates the following requirements for obtaining a 'victim's health booklet': the individual must show a 'disaster certification,' a paper that was supposed to be issued to people in the area after the explosion stating that the holder was in one of the affected areas at the time. If the victim was not issued one of these, or if he was and it has been lost or damaged, he will have to find two witnesses, not relatives, who will testify that he was in the authorized or in the adjacent authorized areas. (The specific block names are listed in a different enforcement ordinance.)

Now, it should be pointed out that if the victim happens to be a Korean or a member of the Buraku-min, the Japanese untouchable group, the chances of his finding anyone who wants to be a witness for him will be slight indeed, and more likely, non-existent. And even among ordinary Japanese this means that one has to keep up good relations with those he needs for witnesses, Japanese society being incomparably clanish and exclusive. In addition to these things another problem with witnesses is that mostly, people do not want to reveal that they are atomic bomb victims because they are discriminated against by others, particularly with regard to marriages. No one is really happy to see their son or daughter marry someone who was exposed to the atomic bomb.

Another enforcement ordinance of this law gives the following categories or levels of victims according to what type of 'health booklet' they hold or would be qualified to hold: (1) those who were within 4 kilometers from the center of the blast; (2) those entering to within 2 kilometers from the center within 2 weeks afterward (many of these where medical staff and people who helped with burying and moving the corpses); (3) those who received residual radiation (again a category defined and authorized in a separate ordinance somewhere in the

Welfare Ministry, but in general, meaning those who picked up radiation from the ground later on); and (4) fetuses of any of the above three categories.

Yet another enforcement ordinance categorizes the victims this way: (1) people within three kilometers of the center and fetuses thereof (the first one said four kilometers); (2) patients previously authorized by the Welfare Minister (another separate ordinance); (3) victims previously defined in Clause 2 of the law and those having 'authorized' diseases (another ordinance); (4) people entering to within two kilometers of the center within three days (the first one said two weeks) and fetuses thereof; (5) persons receiving residual radiation from specified areas, areas to be specified in another ordinance. Nowhere, apparently, is there any mention made of or reason given for the discrepancies and contradictions in the ordinances. The second one is dated later than the first.

The law itself manages to state that the prefectural governments are responsible for conducting a medical examination for the victims and bearing the responsibility of ascertaining whether or not a victim's illness can be classified in any of the 'authorized' disease groups as defined by the Welfare Ministry (Clause 3 of the law). Also provisions are made for (1) medical examinations; (2) distribution of medicines and medical materials; (3) medical treatment; (4) hospitalization; (5) nursing care; and (6) transportation from smaller treatment centers to larger ones. Because of a shortage of trained physicians and nurses, there is no legal provision for medical consultation. According to reports of patients, as a result of this lack, the examining doctors have very little time to spend with them and they are often summarily dismissed. This is particularly the case when their complaints, as so often happens, are not really specific. That is, if they are in danger of bleeding to death or have suddenly developed extreme paralysis, they are more likely to receive attention than if they are merely so tired from anemia that they no longer have any desire to live, or if they merely say that they feel 'strange'. These are by far the most common complaints.

Whether or not a patient would be eligible to receive any treatment at all depends entirely on whether or not it can be proved that he has a disease originating from radiation from the bombs or other effects of the bombs. If a patient merely has what the Welfare Ministry calls 'radiation damage', regardless of its deadliness or the extent of the patient's suffering, and if this disease cannot be classified as one of the already recognized radiation diseases (certainly not all have been isolated

yet), he will be put into the "incurable" category and his illness defined as 'irreparable physical damage'. So before he can treat his patient, the physician must be able to prove that the patient is ill with an actively proceeding disease caused directly by effects of the atomic bomb.

The methods doctors are expected to use to classify diseases are the ones developed by Louis Pasteur. They are: (1) research involving artificial generation of the disease in animals; (2) statistics which have been compiled about past known cases of the disease; and (3) statistics comparing victims with non-victims. (This is something like the statistical results which predict 'contractability' of cancer for smokers as opposed to non-smokers.) Using these methods to classify the diseases of atomic bomb victims presents some problems. In the first place, Louis Pasteur did not have an opportunity to study the illnesses of the atomic bomb victims. In the second place, the Welfare Ministry refuses to accept as proof research results based on animal subjects because they say that animals are not physiologically identical to human beings. So the first method of disease classification, which is the most logical to use when something as irreversible and deadly as radiation is being studied, cannot be used at all.

As far as the second method goes, although there are certainly other cases of radiation-induced sicknesses, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are precedents for actual explosions over populated areas and, needless to say, in order to accumulate statistics about the diseases on which to base cause and effect diagnosis for the present patients, more bombs will need to be dropped on more people. As for the third method, in order to acquire reliable statistics comparing victims and non-victims, the present patients shall have to develop more disease symptoms and then die so that statistics in numbers large enough for comparison purposes may be built up. Asking doctors to seriously undertake diagnosis of the atomic bomb victims' illnesses under such conditions is like asking a double amputee to feed himself using his hands. Nevertheless, the medical people keep trying.

Among those who have tried hardest and longest is the head of the Red Cross Hospital and of the Hospital for Atomic Bomb Victims in Hiroshima, Dr. Fumio Shigeto. On the morning the main event of which produced the material for his life's work, Dr. Shibeto was standing at Hiroshima Station with his medical bag in hand, waiting for a street car that never came. In conversation with the writer Kenzaburo Oe, Dr. Shigeto explained how the medical aid laws contrast with the actual situations of the patients.

"In my hospital, there are usually 150 patients hospitalized at a time; 70 to 80 of them die every year. Out of this number, only about 10 of them are 'authorized' by the Welfare Ministry. People often want to know why the patients who have keloid cannot be authorized. The reason given is that the keloid is a symptom after the fact, not an actively proceeding disease. But the patients complain that the keloid area itches horribly, that they cannot sleep and so on, but nevertheless, it is not classifiable as a radiation-induced disease. And patients who cannot move their limbs because of the keloid might be eligible under other welfare rulings to have themselves categorized as handicapped and receive state aid. But, if the patient is able to do as much as write his own name or feed himself, regardless of the actual keloid damage, he cannot get a 'handicapped' persons classification and therefore cannot receive any aid at all under the law."

Many people who came into the city after the explosion have developed lung cancer and cancer of the liver, and Dr. Shigeto is of the opinion that these diseases are caused by the patients' having been exposed to the residual radiation that was still in the ground all around the area. But because there are many causes for cancer, and all of them are not recognized and categorized, there is no way to prove that the cancers of his patients are atomic bomb-induced, and no way to get them authorized so that they may receive medical care and financial aid.

The group in charge of authorizing the victim's diseases is a specialist commission chosen by the government, each member of which serves a term of two years. Dr. Shigeto is one of the physicians who reports to this group. According to him, "they do their best to interpret the law in terms that would be the most generous to the patient, but it is impossible to really do justice because the law is not good enough." Within the context of the Japanese way of thinking and of expressing one's opinion, this constitutes a rather strong statement.

Dr. Shigeto reports that 'certain parties' have put pressure on him not to publicize the deaths of his patients. He had been in the practice of releasing reports each time one of them died, and these 'certain parties' strongly suggested that he limit this to only twice a year. At that point, Dr. Shigeto says that he jokingly asked these 'parties' whether it would be all right to do 'extra' publicity in special cases, such as if Dr. Tzusuki, a well-known physician in the field of radiation who entered Hiroshima immediately after the blast to investigate, should die of lung cancer or if he, himself, should die of leukemia. Later, in fact, Dr. Tsuzuki did die of lung cancer.

To put it mildly, it is an extraordinary situation when a recognized authority in a certain field, a man who has won a number of achievement awards, can make a statement about the inadequacy of the laws he is forced to work with and have those statements totally ignored by the people making the laws. And that is precisely the situation with regards to the medical aid laws for atomic bomb victims.

If it took 11 years for the Medical Aid Law, it took 23 for the first law extending state financial aid to the victims. It was not until 1968 that the law, called Special Measures for Atomic Bomb Victims, was passed.

Clause 2, Item 3 of these 'special measures' is an allowance of Y10,000 per month to people authorized according to the above explained Medical Care Law. Japan is one of the world's most expensive places to live, and although worth slightly more than now, this Y10,000 is roughly equivalent to \$30.00 (American). With this amount, a housewife, if she is extremely careful, can buy enough very plain groceries to feed her family for half a week. Although such an amount will help toward buying a few extras, it will not help at all toward actually raising the standard of living. And it will not support one single person. In a country where the average rent for a crowded, unfurnished apartment runs around \$200.00 per month, and it is more in Tokyo, an extra \$30.00 is not going to help much.

Clause 5 of the Special Measures is a 'Health Control Allowance'. This is intended to mean that with the extra financial assistance this measure grants, the victim would need to work less and therefore become able to take care of and 'control' his health more efficiently. This particular clause, then, gives Y3,000 per month to persons having 'authorized' diseases who are not already receiving the allowance mentioned in Clause 2; to persons 65 years or older, physically disabled by some 'authorized' disease; and to spouseless women having minor dependents. This law was subsequently amended three times: in 1969, 1974, and 1975.

The amendment of 1969 raised the special allowance of the law's Clause 2 from Y10,000 per month to Y11,000 (with which increase a mother might buy one half of a summer shirt for her son); it decreased the lower age limit from 65 to 50 for those persons receiving the "Health Control Allowance" of the previously explained Clause 5; and it increased the amount of this allowance from Y3,000 to Y5,000.

The amendment of 1974 *decreased* to Y7,500 per month the amount for those not currently receiving medical treatment. There is no expla-

nation given as to how this was determined, but the decision was apparently based on a government-conducted survey which will be discussed further on. The 1974 amendment then went on to increase to ¥15,000 the monthly allowance for those who were, in the eyes of the government, receiving medical treatment. The lower age limit of persons eligible for the 'Health Control Allowance' was decreased to 45 years and the allowance increased to ¥7,700.

The last amendment to date, 1975, allows the special allowance for those not receiving care currently to go up from ¥7,500 to ¥12,000, and for those receiving care, the amount is increased from ¥15,000 to ¥24,000. The age limit on the Clause 5 health control allowance was completely removed and the amount is increased to ¥12,000 per month. In addition, an enforcement ordinance issued in that same year stipulated in detail reimbursement allowances for hospitalization, out-patient and nursing care, and a particular allowance for funerals was set at ¥33,000. The 1975 amendment also included an income limit of ¥117,500 per month above which a patient cannot qualify for any allowances whatsoever. This amount is a little more than a skilled secretary would be qualified to earn. This Special Measures Law also provides for ¥6,000 to any person eligible for but not receiving any other aid.

It should be borne in mind that this money is given only to the 'authorized' ill, to the virtually indigent, and to the indigent, 'authorizedly' ill spouseless women with dependents. All of the allowances have to be reapplied for, and 're-proved' every year by the victim.

Now, a Japanese reading this 1975 amendment might notice two things right away. First, the amount extended to help the victims are so utterly piddling in present-day Japan that even welfare cases would not be happy to receive them. To receive them at all, the individual must prove that he is ill, and to actually benefit from such a small amount, his standard of living would have to be pitifully low to begin with — and this in the middle of a country having the highest standard of living in Asia, the veritable little America of the Orient.

What this law means, then, is that the victim will be helped a little only if he cannot help himself at all, and all of these have to be proved. It is as if they are being told to take the blame for their conditions, but whose responsibility is it that these people are ill with atomic bomb-induced diseases? The Welfare Ministry has certainly been making it clear all along that it does not feel it is theirs.

The second point a Japanese, especially one schooled in formal Confucian theory, might notice about this newest amendment is how very paternalistic, how very Confucian it was to have gradually lowered and then removed the age limit on the 'health control allowance'. If people of any age should be receiving aid in 1975, why were they not receiving it in 1968, along with the 65 and older group? Are we to believe that in 1968, younger people had greater resistance to and could effectively throw off the effects of the atomic bomb? Clearly, it was intended, whether consciously or not, that this gradual, suspenseful lowering and then removal of the age limit be viewed as a piece of magnanimity dispensed by the government.

And then, there is a third thing which could be noticed by anyone capable of elementary arithmetic. If all of the monthly and other allowances were put side by side on one sheet of paper, it could be seen that the most financially advantageous step a victim can take is to die and let his family receive the funeral allowance which is Y9,000 higher than the highest monthly allowance.

Since the new 1975 amendments provide the most generous allowances yet, and apparently a lot of people were expected to come forward and apply for them, the Public Hygiene Director issued special instructions to the officials dealing with the application of this law. The instructions begin by acknowledging sympathetically that since 30 years have passed it might be difficult for the victims who have not already done so to prove their eligibility. It then proceeds to instruct the officials in charge to ask the victims to specify their exact location at the time of the bombings within an area two kilometers from the center of the explosion as defined in a detailed table of block numbers. It goes on to require that should the victim no longer be in possession of his 'disaster certification' he must provide letters or photographs. (If his house had been within the two kilometer area this might be rather difficult.) Failing that, the mayor of the city has to approve the certification (the officials are left to imagine what this means as there are no detailed stipulations on this point). Should this also fail, the victim needs more than two witnesses, not related, who can certify for him. And should he not be able to find these witnesses, he can have someone other than himself write out a description in detail of the situation and sign, taking a written oath. (This 'someone other than' the victim would need to have a very good memory.) This last resort, which seems the simp'lest, can only be used after the victim has given sufficient proof that the above-mentioned proofs are not to be had.

The amendment allowing ¥6,000 a month for victims not receiving other aid is prefaced by a notice from the Vice Minister of Welfare to the effect that although these victims may actually be feeling quite all right, they were exposed to radiation and ought to take good care of their health. Now, it is not likely that 30 years after the fact, many qualified victims will enthusiastically appear, having been anxiously awaiting their opportunity all this time to go through the time-consuming and insulting medical and legal procedures necessary to get this ¥6,000 a month, which will in any case, not last them long in Japan these days.

For the sake of argument, we will assume that the Vice Minister of Welfare at least read this notice before he signed it (although in Japan, as any member of the press can verify, such officials are often only vaguely aware of which document they are putting their names to.) One is hard put, anyway, not to wonder how a government, democratic in form, justifies issuing, 30 years after one of the worst war disasters in history, a law amendment prefaced by remarks that mention in passing and in language most condescending and paternal, that people who had the bad luck to be standing 2 kilometers from the epicenter of an atomic bomb explosion in 1945 really ought, it being 30 years later and 1975, to watch their health. And having gotten those facts into the right perspective, one wonders further about the tenuous grasp of reality needed to offer to victims of the world's only two nuclear explosions, after having first made it nearly impossible for them to receive medical care, an amount of money so small as to be guaranteed to disappear into the inflationary void of present-day Japan.

If the realities of the victims' lives and sicknesses and the testimony of Dr. Shigeto are compared with what the Welfare Ministry has done, it would not be impossible to conclude that the government has decided that effects of atomic bomb disasters are greatly overestimated and has taken it upon itself to modify reality in accordance with its own lines of thinking.

Actually, the way the Welfare Ministry has justified these aid laws, particularly the first one of 1968, is that it carried out what it called an 'in-depth' survey in 1965. This was supposed to determine what conditions were in the daily lives of the atomic bomb victims and guide the lawmakers. The survey was done in three parts, the first conducted by mail for all medical treatment booklet holders with questions placing heavy emphasis on the conditions of victims who had been within two kilometers of the explosion center.

This format assumes that (1) people without a 'medical treatment booklet', regardless of the reasons why they may be without it, do not need any help; and that (2) people outside the two kilometers area have no problems worth considering. This is an assumption that contradicts the first Enforcement Ordinance of the earlier Medical Treatment Law which defines the most seriously damaged victims as those who were within four, not two kilometers of the epicenter.

The sole question the survey by mail asked the victims was whether or not they were receiving medical examinations. That was all. The fact that these examinations have been from the beginning the object of intense and bitter criticism from the victims was not even taken into consideration.

The second part of the survey, also done by mail, was called a 'living conditions survey'. It was conducted among all medical treatment booklet holders living in Okinawa prefecture and among a random sampling of booklet holders in other prefectures. The questionnaire included items intended to ascertain whether or not the victim was employed and to what extent his injuries or disease interfered with his life. The question claiming to address itself to the victim's financial situation asked only about expenditures. Therefore, the more dire a person's actual financial circumstances (for example, those living on borrowed money, those who are hospitalized or otherwise unable to work), the less the likelihood that their cases would be truthfully reflected or reflected at all in the survey results. In other words, someone might have been spending ¥50,000 a month on a ¥10,000 a month income, but the survey results would show him rather well-off financially.

The question concerning the extent and nature of the victim's illness and disease asked only whether the individual was 'hospitalized', 'receiving out-patient care', 'other' or 'none'. People unable to have themselves hospitalized or to receive out-patient treatment because they cannot afford it, or because, whether ill or not, they have to work, are simply excluded from the results of the survey.

The third part of this 'in-depth' survey was a complementary case study investigation done by interview among victims and their family members still residing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It asked precisely the same questions using the same formulations as the one just described, and in addition an item about the income of family members, apparently to determine whether the victim really was destitute enough to need state aid.

The government subsequently refused to publish any of the statistics and information obtained from this remarkable 'in-depth' survey, and merely concluded cheerfully and finally that "there is not appreciable difference in the lives of the victims as compared with non-victims".

Said somewhat less obliquely, one or two experimentally dropped atomic bombs have had no effect measurable in terms the government will allow itself to understand, and, therefore, this is not an important problem, and therefore government policies should be perfectly acceptable. The government is, after all, doing its best. It provides free medical examinations; it passes laws; it conducts surveys; it is willing to help pay for the victims's funerals. What more can anyone reasonably ask of them?

Treatment of non-Japanese victims

If bona fide Japanese citizens have so much trouble getting their government to believe them, what of the atomic bomb victims who were and are not Japanese? Koreans, as students of Japanese history know, were in Japan in the first place because Japan occupied Korea and brought them by force to Japan. The Koreans were needed in Japan to build railroads and work in factories and otherwise aid Japan in her efforts to annex the rest of Asia and acquire, thereby, the raw materials and population necessary to grow more powerful. A discussion of this period of history is neither vital nor particularly relevant here; what is relevant is that the Koreans who found themselves in Japan in 1945 did not have any choice in the matter, and this should be borne in mind. Their general situation and status, and especially, of course, that of the Korean atomic bomb victims, reveal unmistakably how Japan feels about taking responsibility for her past.

In Hiroshima at the time of the bombings, there were 60,000 Koreans. Of this number 35,000 died, and 20,000 returned to Korea later. In Nagasaki, 15,000 of the 30,000 Koreans there at the time of the plutonium bomb died and 13,000 returned to Korea when the war ended. This leaves approximately 7,000 Koreans, not counting their descendants, who were atomic bomb victims and still residing within Japan. For these people to receive aid, they must not only go through the procedures described previously, but must face extra burdens as a result of discrimination.

In Japan, it should be made clear, discrimination against Koreans is well-mannered, thorough and institutionalized. Even if a Korean, born and bred as a Japanese, takes a Japanese name and does his best to assimilate himself into the society, once it is known that he is Korean (and somehow Japanese have ways of knowing such things), he will be barred from jobs, universities, housing facilities and his children will most likely, unless they are unusually lucky, be reminded constantly by the other children in unkind ways that they are not Japanese. These are not groundless assertions. Documentation for this is voluminous, if scattered; and, besides, all that is really necessary to ascertain whether this is the case or not is to ask any Korean in Japan or any Japanese. The Korean victim's right to government aid is as valid as that of the Japanese victim's, but the burdens he must bear in order to receive that aid are much greater.

For the atomic bomb victims who have returned to Korea, there is no medical treatment or aid available at all. They likewise cannot apply to the Japanese government for aid because the Japan-South Korea Peace Treaty ended payment of all indemnities between the two countries. The victims living now in North Korea will not, of course, apply separately to the Japanese government for obvious political reasons. Also, and this might have occurred to some already, it was the American government, not the Japanese government, that bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and it is an obvious contradiction of international law to demand compensation from Japan. As far as the possibility of asking the American government about reparations goes, there is none. Japan signed the Peace Treaty in San Francisco in 1952 giving up her right to reparations for any damage done by the US as a result of the war or of the occupation.

Therefore, if a Korean atomic bomb victim now living in Korea wants to be helped, he has no choice but to return to Japan. It has been made extremely difficult for Koreans to get visas to legally enter Japan, and it is even more difficult, virtually impossible in fact, to obtain a permit to remain in the country for as long as would be necessary to receive medical treatment. What is, therefore, the choice of a Korean who wants to be helped but who is not rich and who also does not have any beneficial contacts among government officials? The usual procedure is that they try to enter Japan illegally.

One of the people who did just that has recently won a court case in which he appealed for his right to obtain government medical aid as

an atomic bomb victim. He is Son Chin-tu, born in Osaka in 1927 as a Japanese, and educated in that city at first and later in Hiroshima where he was with his family at the time of the bombing. In 1945, his father died from what appeared to be a radiation-caused disease; then his mother died in 1974 with the same symptoms. Neither had received any treatment. The family had gone back to Korea after the war. In December 1970, Son had entered Japan illegally in order to obtain treatment because he was ill and had apparently the same diseases that killed his father, and later his mother. He was arrested and convicted of illegal entry and sentenced to ten months of hard labor, upon completion of which he was to be deported. He appealed the sentence, but was imprisoned in Fukuoka in the Omura Camp, a special prison for Koreans who have entered Japan illegally. He was subsequently diagnosed as having tuberculosis, in addition to the sicknesses he already had as a result of having been exposed to the atomic bomb explosion. In 1971, he applied to the government for a national health insurance card which was refused in 1972. The reason given was that he was not eligible because he was not Japanese. He filed an appeal to this decision, and was temporarily transferred to the Red Cross Hospital in Hiroshima by the Welfare Ministry. After some time, however, he was removed and again imprisoned in the Omura Camp. It was intended that he complete his hard labor sentence. In the meantime, his appeal to be granted medical aid and treatment as an 'authorized' atomic bomb victim was upheld, and judgment declared on March 3, 1975, by the High Court of Fukuoka. The reason given for the judgment was that the present medical treatment law is, in the Court's opinion, "linked in the legal system as a help to war victims of the last war". The Fukuoka Prefectural government has filed a counter-appeal against the High Court's decision with a still higher court, saying that the High Court judgment is based on a false interpretation of the medical aid law. Son is still in the Omura Camp. He is still unable to obtain a visa. It is presumed that he is receiving medical attention, but it is difficult to determine because his situation on paper is so confusing.

Although it represents some kind of victory that Son Chin-Tu was able to prove legally that he, as well as a Japanese, also deserved consideration under the law, his life has not actually been improved by his having won the case. Furthermore, since the victorious judgment was based on a point of law, i.e., interpretation of the Medical Aid Law as a general "war victims" aid measure, it could just as easily be reversed

by a judge who does not happen to agree that the law is "linked in the legal system as a help to war victims . . ."

This is the heart of the matter, and precisely the reality the government pretends to refuse to face. Atomic bomb victims are not the same as welfare cases; they are not ill with diseases that just any physician can treat using the usual methods. Everyone who was in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on those two days was equally vulnerable to the atomic explosions. Being a Korean or a Buraku-min or any kind of foreigner does not offer immunity to radiation diseases as the Japanese Government continues to try to suggest with its laws and de facto policies of discrimination. Being either rich or poor has nothing whatever to do with an individual's also being a victim of the atomic bomb. The victims of epoch-making nuclear explosions constitute a very special case, historically and medically, and therefore legally, and it is brilliantly clear that they need a special set of laws. The government is deliberately trying to minimize the effects of the atomic bomb explosion by implying that the victims' situation is quite ordinary and that no special measures are needed for them.

This attempt at minimization extends to manipulation of statistical evidence as well. Official government statistics for Hiroshima put the number of dead at 78,000. This is the number always given in any general discussion of the first 'atom bomb'. It is customarily compared with the statistics for the Tokyo fire bombings and the bombardment of Dresden to show that less people were killed by the atomic bomb than in the latter two attacks by American airplanes that used 'conventional' weapons.

However, a report made by the Hiroshima Prefecture government to the Ministry of the Interior on October 21, 1945, showed 32,959 people dead. A subsequent report, four days later, reported 46,185 dead, 17,282 missing, totalling 63,612. A Hiroshima Prefecture Police Department investigation report released November 30, 1945, indicated 75,150 dead, 13,939 missing, totalling 92,133. These statistics include civilian victims only. A great number of the casualties were from the military based in Hiroshima, but their number is never added to the 78,000. Before August 6, 1945, the population of Hiroshima City was 420,000. A population survey taken in 1950 turned up 157,500 survivors of the bomb, from which numbers alone it may be deducted that 270,000 people died from or otherwise disappeared in the wake of the atomic bomb blast. This figure does not include those who have died since 1950, equally legi-

timate atomic bomb casualties. Official statistics continue to put the number of people killed by the atomic bomb in Hiroshima at 78,000.

Much less attention is paid to Nagasaki than in Hiroshima, and the statistics of that disaster are virtually never brought up in generalized contexts. It is not difficult to imagine why. The lowest official estimate for the total number of disaster victims, including the injured and not including anyone but civilians, is 120,820. This would not be, in a comparative discussion of World War I disasters, as comfortable a round figure as the official 77,000 for Hiroshima, and it would therefore be useless that the atomic bomb was not nearly so bad as conventional fire bombing. On the other hand, it would be quite useful as evidence that Nagasaki has suffered horribly.

US-Japan nuclear defence mechanism

We are speaking here, with these statistics and these law and these surveys, of people who are ill because they happened to be in a particular place at a particular time, and this is as far as their individual responsibility goes. They have terrible scars and disabling sicknesses and strange diseases that they know will kill them sooner or later. They live every day of their lives with this knowledge. They have been living with it for 30 years.

The way their government has behaved toward everything related to them indicates only one thing: Japan is attempting to minimize the problems of the atomic bomb victims out of existence while offering concessions to quiet the outcry. Indeed, for those familiar with Japanese cultural and historical patterns, it is not too much to suppose that what the government is really doing is simply waiting for the victims to die off, at which point, officials in charge of this mess hope, they will cease to be a problem.

There is good reason for this attitude. Although Japan renounced the right to make war and maintain war potential in her new constitution, and presently maintains only a 'self-defense' force, she has, in the interest of her national security and at the request of the victorious American army and its government, signed so many security treaties and mutual defense agreements that her entire 'self-defense' complex is completely tied up with the US strategic system. As political theorist Masao Maruyama succinctly puts it: the self-defense forces "can exist no other way".

In these security treaties and defense agreements, Japan has relinquished her right to war reparations, and has given to the US the right to use her territory for military bases. In return for this, the US has promised to defend and protect Japan. The latest of the security treaties was renewed for another ten years in 1970.

It would probably not be going overboard at this point to assert that Japan, indisputably the richest and most aggressive nation in Asia, no more actually needs US protection than Indira Gandhi needs advice. But Japan has promised and keeps promising not to play war games any more, and she does need a nuclear defense arrangement. The Japanese nuclear defense mechanism is synonymous with, is the US nuclear defense mechanism, and it should come as no surprise to anyone that the Japanese government line on these and related matters is the same as that of the US, modified in accordance with Japanese terminology.

By reason of this symbiosis, therefore, it is in the interests of the Japanese government to behave as if dropping an atomic bomb, and having it dropped on oneself, not just once, but twice, is natural, understandable, and to be expected in time of war. The Emperor himself had said so.

The Emperor, it should be noted, has been to Hiroshima only three times, and his son, the Crown Prince, has gone to Hiroshima only once and that quite recently. Both of them, however, have been around the world several times, and the Emperor has been to Washington to tell Gerald Ford that he was sorry about the war. Before he left on that trip, he did an extraordinary thing. He granted an unprecedented and now famous personal interview to the Japan correspondent for *Newsweek* magazine. The interview was kept secret until the day it appeared in print, and on the very day that that issue hit the stands, the Emperor, with consummate illogic and tactlessness, did another extraordinary thing: he had a premiere conference for the foreign press, all of whom were not told about the exclusive secret interview with the *Newsweek* correspondent and who thought they would be making history on that day until some of their group, arriving late, carried in with them copies of the *Newsweek* hot off the press.

It was subsequently noticed by the foreign reporters that the Emperor talks in circles and that he was unable to even give a straightforward answer as to how he felt about his impending pleasure trip to Disneyland.

The week after this fiasco, the Emperor went to Washington and told President Ford that he was sorry about the war, that he deeply regretted it and so forth. This marks the first time the President of the United States and the Emperor of Japan have found anything to say directly to each other about World War II.*

When the Emperor came home from this trip, he did one last unprecedented thing. He proceeded to hold the first news conference ever for the Japanese press. One of the newsmen there asked him whether, when he apologized to President Ford about the war, that this meant he was taking responsibility for it also. To this question, the Emperor actually replied that he had not studied literature and therefore did not know the meaning of the words he had used to the President. Immediately after this, another journalist asked the Emperor what he had to say about the atomic bombings. And it was at this point that the Emperor stood up and stuttered out his now famous line that made the Japan Citizen's Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs so angry: "They were unavoidable because it was a time of war."

A few days after this historic news conference, Prime Minister Miki paid an official visit to Hiroshima in connection with that city's baseball team. Wearing a baseball cap reading 'The Hiroshima Carp', and standing with three city government officials similarly capped, the Prime Minister proceeded to state that he did not feel the Emperor 'rounded out' what he meant to say about the atomic bombings, and that he thinks the Emperor, not being used to public speaking, was simply unable to communicate his real thoughts. He also mentioned by way of concluding discussion on the topic, that although aid would be extended within the scope of the two existing sets of laws, he did not believe there would be any special law passed for the atomic bomb victims. The following day, the Yomiuri Newspaper reminded its readers that this stand was a 'retreat' from Miki's previous statements as a member of the Tanaka cabinet when he had insisted on the need for a special law.

This stream of events presents an intriguing picture. It might have occurred to some to wonder, for example, looking at the order

* It was reported in the Japanese press the morning following a dinner party hosted by Ford for the Emperor, that the President became so frustrated with the Emperor's unvaried 'oh, is that right?' response to everything Ford said that, when the party was over, the President asked Ginger Rogers, also a guest, to remain behind and dance several hours with him to relieve the unbearable tension that had built up through the course of the evening.

of priority of the interview and the news conferences, why the Emperor was fit to bless, first the *Newsweek* correspondent, then the foreign press and lastly the Japanese press. It is certainly an unusual arrangement when the rights of a foreign press are recognized over those of a country's own. However, it is not really too difficult to guess what was going on there.

The Emperor, as an apolitical 'symbol' both inside and outside the country, is an obvious and most fortunate choice for goodwill ambassador. His authority is unquestioned and his theoretical political 'neutrality' makes it possible for him to say literally anything. His other assets include his traits of quaintness and his old-Japan charm which are good for public relations and make it impossible for anyone to get anything across to him.

Then, within Japan, to a Japanese, the Emperor is the Emperor. This means that, even if he should condescend to hold a press conference, all questions must be submitted in advance for approval by the Emperor's advisors and merely read off by the journalists at the 'press conference'. The Emperor's answers (if one may call them that) are also prepared in advance. No one is allowed to openly question anything he says, because to do so is not part of tradition; to do so would be tantamount to calling into question the legitimacy of the Emperor himself.

The government of the country exists in form and in theory apart from the Emperor, and therefore, nothing the Emperor says or does can be forthrightly and unambiguously construed as political in nature, as having direct political ends. The Emperor is a symbol of the nation, and has been the legitimizer of authority for whatever power group was controlling Japan for as long as the country has had a history. And, paradoxically, that being so, nothing the Emperor does or says can be unrelated to the political ends of the leaders of the nation. The Emperor is, therefore, a most convenient political tool for all parties concerned. General MacArthur perceived this quite clearly when he insisted that defeated Japan retain him.

Thus, the Emperor can say or be advised to say anything whatever, and in so doing endangers himself and his authority and his advisors' authority and the Cabinet's authority not a single jot within the country. He, and those ultimately responsible for what he says, cannot be made to play the political piper because the Emperor is not a politician. He is a symbol. By the same token, no government official could presume to

translate to the people what the Emperor has said because the Emperor is aloof from politics, somehow sacred, an embodiment of the spiritual and moral integrity of the nation, and a mere politician must not presume to deal with him as if he were on the Emperor's exalted level. Therefore, the Emperor's remarks can never be openly contradicted. They can never be openly and officially shown up as in this case what they are — a piece of asinine irresponsibility and a criminal insult to the people whose identity he symbolizes. This cannot be done even by the spokesman for the ruling party who is, in name at least, the spokesman for the people. Because the Prime Minister is only elected to his position, not an inheritor of it from centuries past stretching back to the very origins of the country, to what was before 1945, Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. All the Prime Minister is allowed to do, according to this line of reasoning, is reenforce the authority of the Emperor.

Likewise, when on those rare occasions the Emperor gives expression to or is advised to give expression to any idea even vaguely political in nature, any idea actually directly related to the state or the past state of his nation, these expressions take on a sacred officialness, an absoluteness, and a finality — because he is the Emperor. And so the circle is complete.

It is a most convenient state of affairs for the powers that be to have him there. For when he speaks out, as it were, what he says becomes the most natural, the surest, the most authoritatively plausible excuse for demanding that the nation accept as inevitable anything positively related to what he has said. And that being the case, it is simply unimaginable that the Emperor's answer to the question asked by the Japanese press and Prime Minister Miki's defense of those answers were intended to be taken as honest.

No one is really expected to believe that the Emperor, in whose sacred name the war was fought, cannot even speak for himself on the subject; and further, that the reason for this condition is that, as Prime Minister Miki says, the Emperor has had very little public speaking experience. This man is not the Mikado. He has been sashaying around the world on goodwill missions for something like 30 years, and everyone knows that perfectly well. There is not even any attempt being made to fool anyone.

It is simply that, by utilizing the Emperor at this juncture, those in power on whichever side of the ocean are merely making it clear that they will tolerate no opposition.

And the reason the Emperor talked first to *Newsweek*, then to the foreign press, and then insulted the Japanese press with, it should be remembered, prepared replies to previously approved questions, is that, even if the Emperor cannot be absolutely proved to know a single thing, the people running Japan know which side the bread is buttered. And they do not care, they do not *have* to care what the Japanese press thinks, nor, may we presume to add, what the Japanese people think.

If the government line of reasoning is pursued, then, it can be seen that it was no accident that the first personal interview ever granted to a foreign journalist should have been to the *Newsweek* correspondent. It likewise follows that it was politically expedient to have the foreign press meet the Emperor before the trip to the US, but not afterwards. They might well have asked some of the same embarrassing questions that the Japanese press asked, and they could not have been insulted with the same equanimity. They are not bound to venerate whatever the Emperor says.

Likewise, it is no accident that the Emperor was allowed to entertain questions from Japanese newsmen after his trip, after he had made the apology to President Ford about the war. Americans could listen to the Emperor say he was sorry about World War II and not make any more of it than a public relations effort on the part of the Japanese government. But a Japanese listener would have known that, for a Japanese, there is a direct correlation between apologies and responsibility; and he would also have known that so far, no one in Japan has heard any answers to the questions about responsibility for the war. Only a member of the Japanese press would have asked the question in the first place; and allowing the question to be asked directly of the Emperor, and then having him evade it like he did is the most final and authoritative possible method of silencing any further open and legitimate discussion of the issue.

The practical effect of this official attitude is, among other things, that it becomes impossible to realistically deal with existing problems related to the war. If the Emperor says the atomic bombs were an unavoidable result of the war and if no one can figure out what the war was the unavoidable result of, then it follows quite naturally that if atomic bomb victims continue to insist on their right to a special law that they will, by implication, bring themselves into conflict with the Emperor and with sanctified official policy.

And if, as sanctified official policy now has it, the bomb was unavoidable, then so are the victims' diseases, and, in that case, they should be grateful for anything they can get from the government.

It was precisely according to such line of reasoning that the government announced in the spring of 1975 that it would carry out another in-depth investigation to get "a clear picture of the living conditions of the victims and to obtain accurate data about what actually happened in terms of casualties as a result of the bombing". The survey method the Welfare Ministry proposed to use in order to obtain this "clear picture" after 30 years is exactly that of the 1965 "in-depth" survey which concluded that there were no appreciable differences between victims and non-victims.

Confucian practice

It might be instructive to add here that in Japan, the shadow of Confucianism still lies heavily on the land and interferes drastically at times with communication and clear thought. Thus, in the manner of a good Japanese wife relying on the authority of her husband, Japan relies on the authority and might of her powerful ally and former conqueror. Likewise, also in the tradition of the good Japanese wife, Japan can pretend not to know how to answer serious and important questions. She can legitimately refuse to openly admit anything whatsoever, regardless of its obvious truth, if, in so doing, she would not jeopardize her safety, the safety of her family or the security of her position.

For example, in 1968, Prime Minister Sato declared his new four-point policy concerning nuclear arms. This was: (1) their peaceful application; (2) their reduction; (3) Japanese dependence on American nuclear power; and (4) the three do not's: do not produce, do not own, and do not bring in. Now about this last item, according to reports of eyewitnesses in 1974 and 1975, the American government is transferring nuclear warheads through, and in some cases storing them in the Yokosuka Naval Base. The Japanese government has consistently denied that there was any truth to these reports; and all of the denials have taken exactly the same form. The Japanese government always says it has asked the U.S. authorities if they have put any nuclear warheads out at Yokosuka and the answer is 'no'. 'Therefore,' says the official government spokesman, 'there are no nuclear warheads out at Yokosuka'.

Unfortunately for the credibility of the official government spokesmen, however, these neat denials were somewhat besmirched in the

summer of 1975, when a well-known, now retired admiral of the U.S. Navy was heard to comment (he commented to the Japanese press, in fact) that he does not feel it is right for the U.S. to be using Yokosuka Naval Base as a storage area for nuclear weapons because that was not part of the agreement. Nevertheless, an official denial using the same formulations as the previous ones was issued again in December, 1975.

If the earlier analogy is pursued, this chain of events would be something like the good Japanese wife protesting indignantly to a group of gossip-mongers and other housewives that her husband absolutely has no girlfriends; and then having his picture appear on the front page of a newspaper the following day, naked in bed with one. Naturally, she would claim with finality and a serious, drawn face not to have noticed such a thing in that particular day's issue of the paper.

Another example is that previous to Prime Minister Sato's altruistic statement about Japanese nuclear policy, the Department of Education, in 1960, had the descriptions of the atomic bombings that had been appearing in school textbooks cut down from their former 20 pages or more to two or three lines. (1960 was also the year that the Security Treaty between Japan and the U.S. was revised and extended.) This textbook revision means that for the past 16 years, children in Japan have been taught about the atomic bombs only in terms that they were dropped and that they had something to do with ending the war.

Part and parcel of the Confucian thought the Japanese are immersed in from birth is a complicated and inflexible concept of submission to authority. This concept was manipulated and rationalized, under the Tokugawa rule, in such a way as to become more inflexible, and it was, in the process, developed to such a highly totalitarian and refined degree that it became an inseparable part of individual and national identity and consciousness. Thereafter, 'modernization' and 'industrialization' were able to do nothing to alter it. It is somewhat understandable that a nation with such a psychology would, in its present state of enforced powerlessness and therefore enforced defeat, find it most confusing to assert her rights in the face of the conqueror. And the more benevolent the conqueror, according to Confucian tenets, the less likely that the conquered will ever be able more precisely, ever desire to, assert their rights. The reputation of the United States for benevolence is worldwide.

Grim reminder

Outside of Japan, reminders of what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on those hot summer days are almost non-existent. But the Japanese people who love history and delight in keeping anniversaries commemorate those two days every year. Even if official explanations are not forthcoming to children who started school after 1960, there are unofficial reminders always around during the month of August.

In 1975, the Japanese National Television Network presented an hour-long program on the evening of August 6 in honor of Hiroshima. It was shown again on August 8 for Nagasaki. The makers of the film had simply gone to the victims and asked them to draw pictures of what they remembered of the events of those days.

It was a hard film to watch. In the voices and faces of the people interviewed, there was none of the mask of melodramatic role-playing and forced sentimentality Japanese seem to feel obligated to put on when asked to discuss private things in public. Instead, there was an atmosphere of grim and resigned calm. Many people from many different age and social groups showed their drawings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the camera. People who had been children then tended to draw people in flames and buildings in flames. Those who had been older at that time tended to draw black skeletons and stiffened likenesses of any animate thing. There was one elderly man whose drawing depicted the deaths of his mother, father and two brothers. Their bodies he had drawn stick-like, laid out on the floor and over their heads a space where the roof of his house had been. As the camera moved away from this man and began to take in his face and the face of his sister beside him, it could be seen that they were inhumanly scarred. They were also, they had said, ill with leukemia.

At the end of the program a woman in her early 50's spoke. She said she had anemia pretty badly and never had much energy. Her last remark was made without tears and drama, but somehow pleadingly — August 6, 1945, was the worst day on earth and "I hope it never comes again".

Of course, in Japan, what ordinary people say, even what the film editors of the National Television Network try to imply, have nothing to do with actual government policies. And, in any case, the tone of his program was something like a reminiscence of the past. Japanese appear to adore wrapping any given part of their history, even World

War II and the atomic bomb, with irrelevant tenderness and sentimentality. And it is part of the Confucian tradition in Japan to always allow everyone room for complaint. Such a system cannot be maintained otherwise. Paradoxically, what gets done or not done appears to have no connection with the grievances that were redressed, decision- and policy-making apparently belonging to a different category of thought.

But in any case, it is not impossible to imagine that the makers of the previously described laws could have watched that heart-rending program at home on their color television sets and cried for their memories and the memories of the people in the film. And then, the following day, it being 1975 and not 1945 or 1955, they would have jumped into their air-conditioned limousines and been chauffeured to work.

The victims here were, of course, appearing in a documentary film, but they were authentic. Anyone wanting to know what they think and feel about the way they are treated has merely to ask one of them. There are certainly plenty around. Their existence is a continual, troubling reminder to the Japanese government that all could not be well that ended like that. And the victims' persistent, incredible struggle to keep on with their lives; their insistence that the reality of their lives be recognized by their government, is, likewise, proof that it is not really possible, under any circumstances, to minimize something like an atomic bomb and what it does permanently to human beings. The only thing of importance to these people is their future, and in spite of overwhelming efforts by their government to convince them and everyone else that they need nothing more than what they already have, the victims refuse to be convinced. It seems to be their belief that it is they, themselves — not the Emperor, not Prime Minister Miki, and not the Welfare Minister — who should know what they need; they were the ones who were there.

But be all of their story as it might, the laws are as they are; the government is as it is; the Security Treaty is still in effect; and Prime Minister Miki drank the traditional celebration *sake* last November with sponsors of the Hiroshima Carp's baseball team and said, the cup hardly out of his mouth, that there would be no new law.

In the meantime, the victims — the handsome young man with keloid sleeving his right arm; the fragile, pretty wife of eight years still unable to conceive a child; the grandfather with his useless limbs and

his terrifying memories — these people and thousands like them, go on with getting through their days in high-speed, prosperous Japan; while the testimony of the atomic experiment that their lives and bodies are is gradually lost to the future and to everyone.

“Yet with another part of my mind, I am aware that no man is a villain in his own eyes. Something in the man knows — *must* know that what he is doing is evil; but in order to accept the knowledge the man would have to change. What is ghastly and really almost hopeless ... is that the crimes we have committed are so great and so unspeakable that the acceptance of this knowledge would lead, literally, to madness. The human being, then, in order to protect himself, closes his eyes, compulsively repeats his crimes, and enters a spiritual darkness which no one can describe.”

— JAMES BALDWIN, *Blues for Mister Charlie*

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