Hiroshima Half-Century Update

David L. Swain

IN HIS 1965 BOOK of essays titled *Hiroshima Notes*, Nobel Prize laureate (1994) Ōe Kenzaburo opens his chapter on human dignity with these words:

> In this age of nuclear weapons, when their power gets more attention than the misery they cause, and when human events increasingly revolve around their production and proliferation, what must we Japanese try to remember? Or more pointedly, what must I myself remember and keep on remembering? (Ōe 1981, 90).

To gain a current perspective on the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their legacy today, we must ask not only *what* we must remember and keep on remembering but also *how* we are to remember. And in doing so, we must reckon with the stark differences between Japanese and American modes of remembering. More precisely, the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have focused intensely on the misery caused by the bombings, while America's nuclear-weapons managers have pushed the power component to apocalyptic extremes.

Moreover, we must also reckon with the fact that the production and deployment of the first atomic bombs and all nuclear arms since have been shrouded in systems of greatest secrecy, and sometimes even outright deception of the public (not just the enemy). Hence, this and every effort at updating our perspectives on the nuclear age inevitably involves a constant looking over our historical shoulders, because it is often years or even decades before we find out what really happened in the 1940s, in the first atomic decade or in crucial developments in later times. All too often the question of *how* to remember means, first of all, *how are we to find out?* Only when we have relevant information does our updating suffice.

THE SURVIVORS

There is hardly any need to recount the details of the 1945 bombs. We know that deaths far exceeded a hundred thousand in Hiroshima and approached that number in Nagasaki. We have heard of the horrors: thousands of human beings vaporized near ground zero; tens of thousands incinerated by firestorm and crushed under fallen buildings within a radius of one or two miles; and among the survivors, the awful burns, the ugly keloid scars, the prolonged effects of radiation sickness, and even the fetuses deformed in their mothers' wombs. We know about the lasting psychological trauma, and the wholesale breakdown of society.[1] And by today's standards the first atomic bombs were primitive and puny.

The survivors soon learned that the bomb was a radically new kind of weapon, one far more powerful than the conventional bombs used in the leveling of over sixty

cities in Japan. It released not only far greater heat and blast force but also a new and fearsome energy: *radiation*. In time the survivors realized that long after the heat and blast were spent, the radiation remained deeply embedded in human bodies to do its demonic work of disorder, deformity and death. And the damaging goes on even today, five decades later.

From the horror of it all arose the urge to record, to remember the complex experiences in public ways so that the world would know and, it is hoped, be able to avoid future nuclear holocausts. This urge gave birth to a vital "A-bomb literature" of personal memoirs, poems, novels and essays—a cause which, during the American Occupation (1945–52), was severely inhibited by a small army of military censors who checked everything: print copy, mail, telephone conversations and any scientific activity related, even remotely, to atomic matters. Following the radioactive contamination of a Japanese tuna trawler by fallout from the American H-bomb test on Bikini Atoll in 1954, this literature evolved toward a sharper antinuclear advocacy. In 1955 Hiroshima and Nagasaki opened their A-bomb museums to the public, and the first of a series of world rallies against atomic and hydrogen bombs was held.

Thus far this growing movement of public remembrance was focused singularly on the experiences and consequent appeals of the peoples of the two A-bombed cities, even though the ultimate goal was to awaken the whole world to the mounting nuclear threat. In other words, memory can become truncated precisely when it is intensely focused.[2] The survivors knew well of the millions victimized by their own country's aggressive wars in Asia and the Pacific, but saw themselves as victims of the same government and military leaders who had mounted those wars and thereby brought nuclear disaster down on their heads.

By the end of the 1960s, Japan's peace movement was hopelessly fragmented, and world rallies had become impossible. Peace advocates turned then to making principled appeals to other nations and especially to the United Nations, only to be reminded of Japan's part in starting the war in Asia and the Pacific. As the peace movement was from the outset inherently international—"No more Hiroshimas" meant *not anywhere*—it is not surprising that in time a major adjustment was made in Hiroshima: the city tore down an older two-story memorial hall in its Peace Park and in 1994 replaced it with a three-story structure that, in its first floor design, openly acknowledged Japan's, and specifically Hiroshima's, wartime responsibility.

From the entrance halfway around the large hall, a new exhibit now displays "Hiroshima at War." Ujina port on Hiroshima's south side was where thousands of troops embarked for Korea, China and Southeast Asia. The rest of the first-floor exhibit tells how, all the while, the United States was busy building the first atomic bombs. The consequential relation is unmistakably clear. The second floor details the effects of the atomic bombing, and the third recounts the postwar buildup of even more powerful nuclear weapons. The city's Peace Culture Foundation had taken a bold step toward recognition of Hiroshima's role in Japan's wars, and then placed this role within the larger picture of the nuclear age.

This epochal shift received considerable impetus from two sources. One was a mounting movement among Hiroshima citizens who denounced the annual commemorations for focusing too singularly on August 6, 1945. Prominent among such citizens were "second-generation survivors" (children of those directly affected by the bombings), who

> were the first to acknowledge clearly that Japan and the Japanese were aggressors in the Pacific War that brought on the atom-

ic bombings and, before that, in Japan's war on China. Thus they sought to comprehend the atomic bombings in relation to what the Japanese call the "Fifteen-year War" (1931–45). The second generation's views found common ground in the A-bomb survivors' organizations to which their fathers and mothers belonged. From this common ground emerged ideas and values by which they not only question both the American and Japanese governments' responsibilities for the atomic bombings but also have repeatedly urged the Japanese government to take international initiatives to abolish all nuclear arms (Ōe 1984).

Secondly, these themes were picked up by a number of Japanese writers for emphasis in the 1982 "Writers' Declaration on the Danger of Nuclear War" and at the 1983 International P.E.N. Congress with the theme "Literature in the Nuclear Age—Why Do We Write?" An active participant in both the Declaration and the Congress, Ōe Kenzaburo later wrote (in the "Introduction" to the 1995 reprint of his *Hiroshima Notes*):

> At the time of writing the essays [in the 1965 original] I was sadly lacking in the attitude and ability needed to recast Hiroshima in an Asian perspective. In that respect I reflected the prevailing Japanese outlook on Hiroshima. In response to criticisms from Korea and the Philippines, however, I have since revised my views of Hiroshima. I have focused more on Japan's wars of aggression against Asian peoples, on understanding the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as one result of those wars, and on the special hardships suffered by the many Koreans who [also] experienced the atomic bombings.

Meanwhile, in the 1980s Hiroshima shifted from appealing to national governments, whose defense and security concerns limited their freedom, to inviting mayors from major cities around the world to seminars on peacemaking. The mayors, having no military systems of their own, were freer to consider the health and safety of their citizens. The first call to the world's mayors was issued in 1983 and the first World Conference of Mayors for Peace was held in 1985. Thereafter, a similar conference was held every four years in 1989 and 1993. A fourth conference is planned for August 4–9, 1997. For the fiftieth anniversary, the 1995 seminar participants were mayors from Asian cities.

From the 1970s the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had persistently pressed the U.N. to take action, and in 1996 this effort paid off. On July 8 the International Court of Justice, based in The Hague, Netherlands, handed down an advisory opinion, in response to a U.N. request, stating that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law. (See sidebar next page, "International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons.")

How long will Hiroshima's voice for peace and nuclear disarmament hold? On a 1994 visit to the Hiroshima Peace Culture Center, I learned that A-bomb survivors are now only 20 percent of the city's total population, and the Center must recast the city's peace mission so as to attract the present and coming younger generations. On the national level, too, it is clear that Japanese idealism and pacifism are in serious decline, as younger people without scarring wartime memories become the majority. Meanwhile, in the dominant Liberal-Democratic Party, which is decidedly unsympathetic to pacifist notions, several leading figures openly express the view that, far from being the aggressor in Asia in the first half of this century, it was the "liberator of Asia from the bondage of Western colonialism" (Kunihiro 1997, 36).[3] And the Constitution's Article 9 renouncing war along with land, air and sea forces has been increasingly ignored as Japan

International Court of Justice
Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons
In Response to United Nations Request
July 8, 1996

The Court decides to comply with the request for an advisory opinion. (13 votes to 1)

There is in neither customary nor conventional international law any specific authorization of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. (unanimous)

There is in neither customary nor conventional international law any comprehensive and universal prohibition of the threat or use of nuclear weapons as such. (11 votes to 3)

A threat or use of force by means of nuclear weapons that is contrary to Article 2, paragraph 4, of the United National Charter and that fails to meet all other requirements of Article 51 providing for a nation's individual or collective right of self-defense is unlawful. (unanimous)

A threat or use of nuclear weapons should also be compatible with the requirements of the international law applicable in armed conflict, particularly those of the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, as well as with specific obligations under treaties and other undertakings which expressly deal with nuclear weapons. (unanimous)

It follows from the above-mentioned requirements that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law. However, in view of the current state of international law, and of the elements of fact at its disposal, the Court cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defenses, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake. (7 votes to 7, passed by president casting a vote)

There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. (unanimous)

Source: *Peace Culture* 1/37, November 1996, semiannual newsletter of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, pp. 1-2.

has become the world's second or third largest military spender, and its military outlays show the fastest growth rate of any nation.

Nor is there convincing evidence that the Hiroshima-Nagasaki experience, much less Japan's peace/antinuclear movement, is taken seriously among most American students of Japan. Indeed, a new 581-page book on "Japanese civilization" devotes but a few paragraphs to such issues.[4] The U.S. role in promoting the rearmament of Japan (despite having given it the postwar "peace constitution") is well known.[5]

THE BOMBERS

The global broadening of Hiroshima-Nagasaki ventures came only a few years before the United States retreated into its jingoistic rejection of the *Enola Gay* exhibit planned by the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum for the fiftieth anniversary of the 1945 atomic bombings and the end of World War II. This negative reaction seemed perfectly natural to veterans' groups and their supporters, but to many others it was seen as unwarranted suppression of the public's right to know the fuller story of something so vital to the nation's history. Before tackling the Smithsonian debacle, however, there are a couple of prior questions to clear up. One is Pearl Harbor.

Part of the national myth of innocence regarding the world's first use of atomic bombs can be simply put: without Japan's sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, atomic bombs would not have been needed.[6] There is no question, of course, that Japan intended the attack to be a complete surprise. The historical problem is that the U.S. actually had a fair chance at prior knowledge.

In the various investigations that followed the disaster at Pearl Harbor, the Army and Navy commanders in Hawaii claimed that "Washington withheld from them vital information that prevented them from being alert against a surprise attack" (Clausen and Lee 1992, 2). Knowing the investigations were flawed, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson appointed a special investigator, Major Henry C. Clausen of the Army's Judge Advocate General's Corps, to ferret out the truth. Armed with orders for those interrogated to respond truthfully and even volunteer information, as well as to sign an affidavit, Clausen learned a lot.

U.S. cryptologists had broken the Japanese secret code, including their code machines, in 1940, well before hostilities began. Thus, as early as January 24, 1941, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox sent a letter to Secretary of War Stimson, which said:

> "If war eventuates with Japan, it is believed easily possible that hostilities will be initiated by a surprise attack upon the fleet or the naval base at Pearl Harbor....The dangers envisaged, in their order of importance and probability, are considered to be: 1) air bombing attack; 2) air torpedo-plane attack; 3) sabotage; 4) submarine attack; 5) mining; 6) bombardment by gunfire. Defense against all but the first two of these dangers appears to have been provided for satisfactorily..." (Clausen and Lee 1992).

And this correspondence was shared with the Army and Navy commanders in Hawaii.

As the U.S. continued monitoring Japan's secret diplomatic communications throughout 1941, the Army and Navy both became sufficiently alarmed to send special warnings of war on November 24, only ten days before the Pearl Harbor attack, to their commanders at Pearl Harbor. The Navy's dispatch to Admiral Husband E. Kimmel said: "This dispatch is to be considered a war warning..." (Clausen and Lee 1992). The Army's dispatch to General Short read in part:

> NEGOTIATIONS WITH JAPAN APPEAR TO BE TERMINATED TO ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES WITH ONLY THE BAREST POSSIBILITIES THAT THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT MIGHT COME BACK AND OFFER TO CONTINUE. JAPANESE FUTURE ACTION UNPREDICTABLE BUT HOSTILE ACTION POSSIBLE AT ANY MOMENT... (Clausen and Lee 1992).

A "war warning" is more than an "alert." It is a signal to begin reconnaissance immediately. But as was discovered later, General Short had reversed the standard operating procedure (SOP) to deal first with item 3 (local sabotage) and later with "the first two of these dangers" (air bombing, air-torpedo-plane attack), although he did not inform Washington of this arbitrary change until

four months later, in March 1942 (Clausen and Lee 1992). Hence, no reconnaissance was done, and the American ships and planes were sitting ducks for the attack.

In the final days before the attack came, the U.S. intercepted thirteen messages of a fourteen-part communication ordering the Japanese diplomatic team in the U.S. to close down and destroy their code machines, and these were read by President Roosevelt and Secretary of War Stimson. The final message came through around midnight of December 6, but it was not delivered until the next morning.

Meanwhile, Stimson had made sure the new British invention, radar, was supplied to the Army and Navy stations at Pearl Harbor. Though not staffed twenty-four hours a day, the Army's unit was staffed that fateful morning, and indeed showed blips coming from the north. But these were thought to signal only a number of B-17 planes being flown out from San Diego.

As startling as these revelations may seem now, they could not be made public in 1941 without letting the Japanese know that their secret code had been broken, and this Secretary Stimson refused to do; putting the national interest above his own, he thereby suffered unwarranted criticism. Such secrecy is common in wartime, but peacetime obfuscation of the "hidden history" of Pearl Harbor communications has lent comfort to the U.S. military's cult of secrecy surrounding all things nuclear.[7]

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, however, there was in the United States a healthy, if temporary, readiness to confront the reality of the building and first use of the revolutionary new weapons. In the autumn of 1945, for instance, former Los Alamos physicist Philip Morrison put it in unmistakable terms: the atomic weapon, he said, is "not merely a new weapon: it is a revolution in war.... We can now destroy not cities, but nations" (Lifton and Mitchell 1995, 76).[8] Today, of course, we can destroy the whole earthly habitat.

The horror of it all was spelled out by renowned historian Lewis Mumford in a short essay published by the *Saturday Review* in late winter of 1946, under the title "Gentlemen: You Are Mad." "We in America are living among madmen," he proclaimed, naming the chief madmen as generals, senators, scientists, the secretary of state, even the president. Then he continued: "Without a public mandate of any kind, the madmen have taken it upon themselves to lead us by graded stages to that final act of madness which will corrupt the face of the earth and blot out nations of men, possibly put an end to all life on the planet itself." And what these madmen called "national security," Mumford termed "organized suicide" (Lifton and Mitchell 1995, 78).

It is nothing short of absolutely startling how accurately Mumford's warning applies to every year from 1946 to this, the fifty-second anniversary of the first puny atomic bomb. We still live among madmen. And this we need to remember.

For five decades the world's people have lived among madmen who have kept on designing and testing, building and deploying nuclear bombs and missiles until the world's whole arsenal of nuclear arms had by the 1980s reached an aggregate firepower of over six thousand times the total firepower of World War II, that is, *all* firepower expended by *all* participant nations in World War II.[9]

But there is more. Mumford explained in the same *Saturday Review* essay why the madmen could get away with it: "We are mad, too.... Our failure to act is the measure of our madness.... We know that the madmen are still making these machines, and we do not even ask them for what reason, still less do we bring their work to a halt."

Of course, he acknowledged, there were some scientists who showed a normal awareness of danger, but their warnings were of little

avail for still another reason: "...the President, the generals, the admirals, and the administrators have lied to us about their infernal machine: they have lied by their statements and even more they have lied by their silence."

So the revolutionary weapon in the hands of madmen has taken the nuclear regime to global proportions. But this too must be remembered: the United States wasn't alone. The Soviet Union, then Britain and France, joined the nuclear madness, followed by China, India, Israel, Pakistan and who knows who else? What makes this particular exercise of remembering especially painful, however, is that we, the United States of America, have led the pack in every technological leap of the arms race (see table 1).

Well, every step except one: *space*. The Soviets jumped ahead with their Sputnik (1957), an achievement that would soon advance missile delivery to intercontinental dimensions and set the stage, as well, for satellite surveillance and command posts in space. The missile-born nuclear warhead was now a weapon against which there was essentially *no* defense.

This may be the place to sharpen our view of how radically nuclear arms have changed the nature of war. The traditional distinction between combatants and noncombatants had already been completely

Table 1
Escalation of the Arms Race, 1942-1975

	U.S.	U.S.S.R.	Time Lapse (years)
First nuclear chain reaction	12/2/42	12/24/46	4
First atomic bomb exploded	7/16/45	8/23/49	4
First H-bomb exploded	11/1/52	8/12/53	1
European alliance in effect	8/24/49 (NATO)	5/14/55 (Warsaw Pact)	6
Tactical nuclear weapons in Europe	1954	1957	3
Accelerated buildup of strategic missiles	1961	1966	5
First supersonic bomber	1960	1975	15
First ballistic-missile launching submarine	1960 (Polaris)	1968 (Yankee)	8
First sold rocket fuel used in missiles	1960	1968	8
Multiple warheads on missiles	1964	1973	9
Penetration aids on missiles	1964	none to date	
High speed reentry bodies (warheads)	1970	1975	5
Multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles on missiles (MIRVs)	1970	1975	5

Source: Robert Aldridge, "A look at U.S.-USSR nuclear capabilities and intentions." In *Waging Peace*, edited by Jim Wallis. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1982.

erased by the carpet-bombing of German and Japanese cities (the latter did in five months, March–July 1945, what it took five years to do in the former). The wedding of mass-destruction warheads to intercontinental missile delivery *collapsed the time frame of war* from years or even months to mere moments. A nuclear holocaust capable of destroying civilized society on a global scale would last only long enough for the missiles to rise and fall. Therefore, all the mobilization for nuclear war must now be done in advance—the Cold War required permanent readiness. Thus the distinction between wartime and peacetime has vanished (Doctorow 1995, 173). Most of us have yet to recast our thinking so as to comprehend fully this foundational change.

The statements of Morrison and Mumford quoted above come from a remarkable new book issued July 18, 1995, by G. T. Putnam's Sons publishers. The title is *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial*, and the authors are Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell. This book documents in detail what many have for a long time felt is one of the most sinister aspects of the nuclear age: the secrecy and deceit surrounding nuclear arms.[10]

No American military leader better understood the collapsed time-frame of nuclear war and thus the need for permanent readiness than Air Force General Curtis LeMay, hero of the strategic bombing of Germany and later of the postwar Berlin airlift.[11] Early in 1945 he was put in charge of the bombing of Japan, which he changed from the ineffective daytime, high-altitude bombing of factories to the systematic destruction of urban Japan through nighttime, low-altitude, carpet-bombing of whole cities. Beginning with the March 10, 1945 night raid on Tokyo, which in six hours killed 140,000 civilians, LeMay's B-52s went on to completely waste sixty-three Japanese cities by July. Thus was forged the anything-goes "culture of destruction" which exempted military forces from distinguishing between civilians and combatants, indeed, from considerations of human life altogether.

LeMay expected "the next war" to happen, and was certain it would be fought with rockets, radar, television-guided missiles and atomic power. When he became head of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) in 1948, he insisted that the Air Force be permitted to develop unhindered and unlimited, and he persuaded Congress to fund his schemes.

General LeMay was responsible for cooking up the "bomber gap" (which his own secret spy flights over the Soviet Union soon disproved) and the "missile gap" as well. Such maneuvering enabled him to make SAC the front line of the Cold War, and he jealously guarded his command. Indeed, he was ready to usurp presidential prerogatives of control over the U.S. nuclear arsenal. When the Russians successfully exploded their first atomic bomb in 1949, LeMay went to Los Alamos, where U.S. atomic bombs were kept under civilian control, and made a secret deal to take command of and use those bombs should need arise and the president not be available for some reason.

Worse still, knowing that a nuclear war could start and end in a day, he laid secret plans called "Project Control" for a "preventive war" capability—or simply, a first strike to knock out the Soviet Union entirely. This plan included spy overflights, which he tested in 1954 without asking President Eisenhower's approval. The State Department under John Foster Dulles rejected the plan as unwise, but this did not stop LeMay from sending at least twenty-seven more spy flights over the Soviet Union. Key military personnel in Washington were briefed on this secret plan, and the Joint Chiefs heartily approved of it.

The first civilian to see this plan was a Pentagon analyst named Daniel Ellsberg, who informed his bosses, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and President

John Kennedy. Events during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis strengthened Kennedy's suspicions of "Project Control." For example, during the crisis SAC kept one-third of its bomber force on fifteen-minute alert in the air around the USSR, loaded with 7,000 megatons of nuclear bombs or the equivalent of 500,000 Hiroshima-type bombs. In addition, at the height of the crisis, LeMay had also launched a missile toward Russia, without a nuclear warhead but openly announced by command radio, an act that could have triggered a massive Soviet nuclear response, but instead, thank God, helped convince the Soviet leadership to back down.

General LeMay took the United States, and with it the world, closer to the brink of nuclear destruction than any military commander before or since. He retired in 1964, and in 1968 ran as vice-presidential candidate on George Wallace's ticket. Having spent his military career trying to limit civilian control over the military, he now sought to grasp it himself, but in vain. His reputation helped bring Wallace's presidential bid to naught. LeMay's last gasp came during the Vietnam War, when he urged the nuclear bombing of Vietnam "back to the Stone Age."

President Kennedy tempered LeMay's all-out nuclear policy to one of "flexible response"—a mixture of nuclear arms with a wide variety of non-nuclear weapons—though the "culture of indiscriminate destruction" and its guardian, the cult of nuclear secrecy, remain yet in place.

THE REVISIONISTS

The controversy over the Smithsonian's plan for a May–September exhibit of the restored *Enola Gay* in the summer of 1995 was a contest between the official government narrative of the building and first use of atomic bombs and a counter-narrative that had equally early 1945 roots, some of which were buried in classified documents and the rest of which were simply overwhelmed by the campaign to lock in the official account. The Smithsonian historians who dug into now declassified materials and resurrected the counter-narrative for use in an exhibit intended to be as educational as it would be commemorative were roundly denounced as "revisionists." In fact they were "restorationists" trying to restore America's A-bomb history to its rightful owners, the American public. It is rather their critics who are, and have been all along, the "revisionists," for the official narrative from the very start reduced the A-bomb story into a simple dictum: its use was necessary, indeed, a duty, to end the war early and save "over a million" lives.

Details of this contest have fortunately been preserved in *Judgment at the Smithsonian,* edited and introduced by Philip Nobile, a syndicated columnist who once studied for the priesthood and who holds graduate degrees in philosophy from Boston University and the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. This volume includes the original exhibit script, *The Crossroads: The End of World War II, The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War* (with the notation that its publication is unauthorized). More helpful to the beginner is the 114-page afterword, "The struggle over history: defining the Hiroshima narrative," by Barton J. Bernstein, professor of history at Stanford University and editor of *The Atomic Bomb: The Critical Issues* and other landmark monographs on the bomb. He was a member of the exhibit's Advisory Board and led the battle against the "historical cleansing" of the museum's review of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lifton and Mitchell's *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial* best elaborates the public context in which the contest took place.

Or better, in which the contest *has taken place,* for it began soon after the *Enola Gay*'s bomb bay doors opened. After official confirmation on August 7 that Hiroshima

had been devastated—60 percent of the city was wiped off the map—the *Washington Post* expressed one side of public opinion: "However much we deplore the necessity, a struggle commits all combatants to inflicting a maximum amount of destruction on the enemy within the shortest possible time." General LeMay would soon elevate this to the status of canonical nuclear doctrine.

The Federal Council of Churches urged that the U.S. drop no more bombs on Japan, in a statement by two of its leaders, Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam and Presbyterian layman John Foster Dulles: "If we, a professedly Christian nation, feel morally free to use atomic energy in that way, men elsewhere will accept that verdict.... Atomic weapons will be looked upon as a normal part of the arsenal of war and the stage will be set for the sudden and final destruction of mankind." By the time their statement was issued on August 9, the second bomb had already been used on Nagasaki (Lifton and Mitchell 1995, 24–26).

Other voices contributed to the emerging counter-narrative. The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, ordered by President Truman, in mid-summer 1946 reported its assessment that "certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated." Then in August 1946, John Hersey's "Hiroshima" essays were published by the *New Yorker,* prompting shock and moralizing about the bombings.

James Conant, president of Harvard University and a major adviser to the wartime Manhattan Project rose to the defense. He urged his wartime associate Harvey Bundy, former special assistant to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, to help Stimson produce a document that would stem the rising tide of criticism, which was coming not only from "professional pacifists and...certain religious leaders" but also from educators and others of greater concern to Conant. The authoritative Stimson essay was published in *Harper's Magazine* (February 1947) to wide acclaim. This essay pushed "two unsettling themes: that some policymakers had believed before Hiroshima that 'unless the bomb were used it would be impossible to persuade the world that the saving of civilization in the future would depend on a proper international control of atomic energy'; and that some policymakers 'saw large advantage to winning the Japanese war without the aid of Russia...'" (Nobile 1995, 138).

After publication of Stimson's article, four of America's highest-ranking wartime military officers—General Dwight D. Eisenhower, victorious commander in Europe; General Henry H. Arnold, commanding general of the Army Air Forces; Admiral William Leahy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs; and Admiral Ernest J. King, wartime chief of naval operations—in memoirs written between 1948 and 1952 joined General Douglas MacArthur's earlier assessment that "the August 1945 bombing of Japan had been unnecessary" (Nobile 1995, 147). Leahy's statement is particularly poignant:

> It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons. It was my reaction that the scientists and others wanted to make this test [dropping the bomb on Japan] because of the vast sums that had been spent on the project....
>
> My own feeling was that in being the first to use it [the bomb] we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion...by destroying women and children (Nobile 1995, 146–49).

From these instances it might be supposed that the counter-narrative had considerable, if not massive, public support. Sadly, such was not the case. The official narrative as articulated by the Stimson article carried the day easily. It did so on the claim that use of the bomb saved "half a million" or even "over a million lives," a claim that GIs once stationed in the Pacific theater were more than ready to believe. Declassified documents used by the Smithsonian curators show that wartime estimates of casualties, had invasions been undertaken, were quite low (63,000 in an invasion of the mainland, according to one account), and that Truman and others inflated the casualty figures after war's end to defend their use of the bomb. Moreover, the script argues sensibly that even half a million would have been almost *twice* the total number of American lives lost (292,000) in all theaters in almost four years of war (Nobile 1995, 225). Even so, the lives-saved position served to cement the official narrative in the American conscience.

The above must suffice to give a flavor of the Smithsonian controversy in which the greatest irony is that in accepting the official narrative, Americans are asked to believe in a "moral inversion" that converts the supreme *destroyer* of life into a celebrated *preserver* of life. Beyond that, the Smithsonian episode yields a more comprehensive picture: the bomb was born in secrecy; it was used in secrecy; the American decision-making processes affecting its use were buried in classified archives; its effects on the Japanese were carefully kept from both the Japanese and American publics by a small army of censors throughout the Occupation period (1945–52); atomic scientists who, having helped build the bomb, later came to have strong misgivings after learning about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were compelled into silence by threat of persecution under the Espionage Act.

Moreover, the fact that the lobbyists of the American Legion and of the Air Force Association were so successful in pressing for the canceling of the Smithsonian's educational exhibit of the *Enola Gay* shows that the military establishment still has the will and power to carry out censorship whenever anyone strikes what Lifton and Mitchell call "the raw Hiroshima nerve." The Smithsonian curators had the gall to challenge the "official narrative" of the bomb, in which the story ends when the bomb bays of the *Enola Gay* opened. What accounts there are of realities at ground zero in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are exactly what writer Ōe condemns: they stress the *power* of the bomb, not the *misery* it causes. They focus on the physical destruction wrought by the bomb, not the human suffering. So it is worth remembering that the most serious threat to effective democratic control over the continuing nuclear threat is the entrenched regime of secrecy and deceit.

But to leave that regime, and LeMay's culture of destruction, unchallenged is to remain trapped in a profound pathological condition, a willingness to destroy humankind and its habitat—to vaporize all in ground zero's breadth, to incinerate everything for miles around, and to leave the rest contaminated with lifetime doses of death-dealing radiation. What kind of *spiritual sickness* would permit a nation to produce, deploy worldwide and maintain for so long a time this system of mass overkill? Banishing this spiritual sickness is surely a key part of what we mean when we call for No More Hiroshimas.

THE WAY OUT

The resounding defeat of the "restorationists" by simply dubbing them "revisionists" was unnerving, but it should have taught us a clear lesson: the way out is not to rewrite history (though restoration is definitely necessary, for sanity if for no

other reason), but to write a new history of nuclear arms. If living pathologically under the constant threat of total annihilation, even global annihilation, is simply not acceptable, then the prescription is quite clear: *get rid of them*. And this step toward a new history will require not only enormous courage but also expert knowledge of how to do it. Have we become so cynical that we dare not hope for someone thus qualified to step forward?

In December 1996, retired Air Force General George Lee Butler, former commander-in-chief of the Strategic Air Command and its successor, Strategic Command, addressed the National Press Club and shared his determination to "bend every effort within [his] power and authority to promote the conditions and attitudes that might someday free mankind from the scourge of nuclear weapons" (Butler 1997). While commanding SAC he had led his staff in a "wrenching readjustment" of thinking and operations. In a few short months the SAC staff canceled $40 billion of strategic nuclear force modernization programs, converted the B-52 bomber to a conventional role (after thirty years of nuclear alert), downsized nuclear war plans from thousands to hundreds of targets, and most important to Butler, supported his recommendation that SAC itself be disestablished after forty-six years. He thus brings concrete experience and achievement to his new non-nuclear stance.

Not surprisingly, he warns

> There is as yet no cause for celebration or satisfaction. The harsh truth is that six years after the end of the Cold War we are still prisoner to its psychology of distrust, still enmeshed in the vocabulary of mutual assured destruction, still in thrall of the nuclear era. Worse, strategists persist in conjuring worlds that spiral toward chaos, and concocting threats they assert can only be discouraged or expunged by the existence or employment of nuclear weapons (Butler 1997).

Because we may yet lose the race between self-destructiveness and self-control, General Butler chose to enter once again the public arena, and for this he has been criticized, ridiculed and of course ignored. It is easy to be as dismayed as he is, that

> The lessons of fifty years at the nuclear brink can still be so grievously misread; that the assertions and assumptions underpinning an era of desperate threats and risks prevail unchallenged; that a handful of nations cling to the impossible notion that the power of nuclear weapons is so immense that their use can be threatened with impunity, yet their proliferation contained."

Butler does not, of course, advocate a precipitous scuttling of nuclear forces; he is too experienced and too smart to do that. He knows well that in the real world of politics, one cannot forfeit the good by insisting on the perfect. Even so, he insists that time is running out. Now we must "work painfully back through the tangled moral web of [the Cold War's] frightful fifty-year gauntlet, born of the hellish confluence of two unprecedented historical currents: the bipolar collision of ideology and the unleashing of the power of the atom."

Many would like to believe that it is precisely U.S. nuclear power that has prevented World War III and created the conditions leading to the collapse of the Soviet empire, yet we have no way of knowing if it is so. Meanwhile, "others are listening, have converted to our theology, are building their arsenals, are poised to rekindle the nuclear arms race—and to reawaken the specter of nuclear war."

> This cannot be the moral legacy of the Cold War. And it is our responsibility to ensure that it will not be. We have won, through Herculean courage and sacrifice, the opportunity to reset mankind's moral compass, to renew our belief in a world free from fear and deprivation, to win

global affirmation for the sanctity of life, and the opportunity to pursue a joyous existence.[12]

The lessons of Hiroshima for our time can be learned only wherever the voices of Hiroshima are heard and heeded. "Hiroshima in America"—in Lifton and Mitchell's apt phrase—need not forever be a psychology and posture of denial. It can become a truly American affirmation of freedom from "the scourge of nuclear weapons," in Butler's moving phrase. Will his bold vision suffer the fate of Philip Morrison, Lewis Mumford and others who spoke out bravely on the morn of the nuclear age, only to be shunted aside? Or will his vision be given a chance, so that we, already now late in the evening of nuclear times, might avoid its darkest night?

NOTES

[1] For the most comprehensive, scholarly accounting, see *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings,* by The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

[2] A good example is found in Todd Gitlin's review of *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (University of California Press, 1977) in *The New York Times Book Review*, March 2, 1977: "Maya Lin's brilliant Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., in recording the names of 58,196 dead Americans, writes off at least two million Vietnamese dead and converts the war into a solely American tragedy."

[3] Kunihiro, host of a television interview program, is a former foreign affairs adviser to Japan's prime minister and former member of the Diet upper house.

[4] The author, apparently not fluent in the Japanese language, relies extensively on the large corpus of scholarship from the hands of those who are—an indication in itself of how lightly the American scholarly community as a whole takes this issue.

[5] An excellent visual record of the U.S. formation and official Japanese reception of the postwar Constitution is video no. 5, *Reinventing Japan*, of the ten-video series, *The Pacific Century*, produced by the Annenberg Foundation in cooperation with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

[6] This simplistic formula ignores the fact that the initial U.S. rationale for its atomic bomb project was information from Europe arousing fear that Hitler might develop such a bomb first.

[7] Inexplicably, a recent 534-page book, Jeffrey T. Richelson's *A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ignores Clausen's book, based on signed affidavits, and, instead, treats the Pearl Harbor event in terms of now discredited investigative hearings and journalistic reports.

[8] Morrison's testimony appeared in the February 1946 issue of the *New Republic* almost in its entirety.

[9] The U.S. bill for this nuclear madness by 1995 had reached $4 trillion (including $385 million for the planned cleanup of weapons production fallout and waste). Calculated by the United States Nuclear Weapons Cost Study Project, a non-government group; cited in *The Washington Spectator* (August 15, 1995), p. 4.

[10] For a sensitive study of how public and private secrecy and denial are linked in the nuclear age, see Susan Griffin, *A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

[11] New information on Gen. Curtis LeMay comes from an investigative report broadcast by the Arts & Entertainment (Biography) television channel, March 1, 1997, titled "The Man Who Wanted World War III."

[12] In January 1997 Gen. George Lee Butler received the Henry L. Stimson Center Award for Distinguished Public Service; an essay adapted from his acceptance speech appeared in the March/April 1997 issue of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 53/2. Quotations herein are from the *Bulletin* essay.

REFERENCES

Butler, General George Lee. Acceptance Speech for the Henry L. Stimson Center Award for Distinguished Public Service. *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 53/2 (1997).

Clausen, Henry C. and Bruce Lee. *Pearl Harbor: The Final Judgment.* New York: Crown Publishers, 1992.

Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings.* Translated by Eisei Ishikawa and David L. Swain. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten; New York: Basic Books; and London: Hutchison, 1981.

Doctorow, E. L. "Mythologizing the bomb." *The Nation* 14/21 (1995).

Eisenstadt, S. N. *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Kunihiro, Masao. "The decline and fall of pacifism." *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 53/1 (1997).

Lifton, Robert Jay and Greg Mitchell. *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial.* New York: G. F. Putnam's Sons, 1995.

The Man Who Wanted World War III. Arts & Entertainment (Biography) Television Channel, broadcast March 1, 1997.

Nobile, Philip, ed. *Judgment at the Smithsonian.* New York: Marlowe and Company, 1995.

Ōe, Kenzaburo. *Hiroshima Notes.* Translated by David L. Swain and Toshi Yonezawa. Tokyo: YMCA Press, 1981.

———. Introduction. *Atomic Aftermath: Short Stories About Hiroshima and Nagasaki.* Tokyo: Shueisha, 1984.