

Lessons on Nuclear weapons as the world marks the 70th Anniversary of the first Atomic Bombing on earth

A few minutes before 8.15 a.m. on August 06, 1945, sirens sounded, warning that a plane was approaching Hiroshima in Japan, but the sirens soon stopped and everyone went about their work. At exactly 8.15 am, a three meter long and four ton heavy uranium gun-type atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, on August 09 1945, a plutonium implosion-type bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki, also in Japan.

In Hiroshima, 70,000 people died instantly. Another 70,000 died by the end of 1945. By 1950, the death toll had risen to 200,000. Survivors had been dying steadily since then up till today. These figures are estimates supplied by the city of Hiroshima to the United Nations. In Nagasaki an estimate of 80,000 people were killed.

These 1945 atomic bombings of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan were conducted by the allied forces led by the United States of America during the final stages of the Second World War. The two bombings were the first and remain the only use of nuclear weapons in wartime in the world.

August 06, 2015 marked the 70th anniversary of that unfortunate event in world history. The Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima never touched the ground. It came as a thunderous flash with an explosion of sound that produced an equivalent of a hurricane with a wind force of 90 meters per second within 1.5 kilometers from the hypocenter. All that was visible was a mushroom cloud hanging in the air.

The event that led to this end of the war bombing is not my concern here because the deed had been done and making justifications for or against the bombing to me is like crying over spilt milk. What I am bothered about, 70 years after, is the plight of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as habitable towns in Japan.

The proximate stimulus for my deep concern in this direction was the decision of the International Association of Methodist related Schools, Colleges, and Universities (IAMSCU) to host its 2014 Conference in Hiroshima in May 2014. Being a member of this Association, I attended the conference and seized the opportunity to assess the current state of Hiroshima. The theme of the Conference was: "Peace, Reconciliation and Human Rights" and the idea was to promote peace education for a new generation of global leaders. The Conference, which was attended by not less than 200 participants from all over the world, kicked off at Hiroshima Jogakuin University with an address from Stephen Leeper from USA on "Global Education and Culture of Peace in Hiroshima". He stated categorically that Nuclear weapons were considered illegal even before they were invented. He

broke down emotionally on the fate of his yet to be born grandchild in a world where nuclear attacks remain an option.

At the Plenary Panel on Education and Peace, Kabamba Kiboko, a Professor and Priest from the Democratic Republic of Congo revealed that the Uranium used to destroy Hiroshima was explored from her village, Shinkolobwe, in Congo. She stressed that life is unbearable today in Shinkolobwe due to Uranium exploration and described the shape of Africa as a gun whose trigger is in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She opined that we have to stop the rape of Mother Africa through exploration and exploitation of Uranium. Mark Harrison from North America in his submission opined that a global view that sees nothing wrong in Israel having nuclear weapon and condemns Iran for aspiring to have it should be revisited.

Koko Kondo, an Atomic Bomb survivor gave a Testimony that she was eight months old when the Atomic Bomb was dropped on August 06, 1945. She escaped unhurt miraculously. According to her, she was so upset when she grew up that she hated God. As a result, she got married to an Atheist. Ironically for her, this Atheist later became a Christian and a Minister. She has since converted to Christianity.

Delegates at the conference were divided into groups and conducted by teenage secondary school students round memorable sites in the Peace Memorial Park where we laid wreaths and took photographs. There was also a visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in the same location as the Peace Park where pieces of evidence of the devastation by Atomic Bomb were clearly visible. Collections of belongings left by the victims of the blast as well as their photographs were on display at this Museum where the horror of the bombing was evident. Each item on display expressed the grief, anger or pain of the innocent victims. In the Museum, I read a poem written by Junko Morimoto, a survivor of the Atomic Bomb Blast.

*“... I was hit by a thunderous flash and
an explosion of sound.*

*My eyes burnt ---- everything went
black. I held my sister.*

*Everything faded away --- I thought I
was dying.*

*I woke up. I was alive. But my home was completely destroyed. Everything was blown away,
torn apart. Everything was burning.*

*The banks of the river were crowded with people,
everyone wanted to be near water.*

*I saw a girl with her skin hanging from her nails.
There was a child screaming, trying to wake up her dead mother.*

*I was very lucky, my family was all alive and we were
together, sheltering in a cave. ...*

The physicists who invented the Atomic Bomb induced fission of uranium and plutonium to generate heat energy that is far more destructive than any known explosive. The gamma rays and neutron rays and other radiation are capable of causing serious physical damage to structures, inanimates and living creatures over decades. When the bomb was detonated, fierce heat rays that exceeded one million degrees Celsius was generated within one second. Radiations burst out in every direction, expanding the air around the fireball and creating a super-high-pressure-blast that crushed and burned nearly all the buildings within two kilometers of the hypocenter.

On the second day of the Conference, conference delegates converged again at Hiroshima Jogakuin University where Douglas Meeks from USA in obvious condemnation of the use of Atomic Bomb in warfare, stressed emphatically that Science can tell us what we can do but not what we should do. In her submission, Pamela Machakanja, Associate Director, Africa University, Democratic Republic of Congo, asked a rhetorical question: “How can we restore the confidence and integrity of UN Human rights system with this present situation where it is right for Britain to have nuclear power but it is wrong for Iraq and Iran to have same? This was apparently a reiteration or a declaration of support for the position expressed by Mark Harrison the previous day. Pamela concluded that **if we do not teach our children the rules of ethics of peace, someone else will teach them the rules and ethics of war.** Mab Huang of Suochor University in Tapei, in his presentation, described the situation with Chinese Intellectuals in respect of the idea of Universal Human Rights as 10 years of entanglement. Philip Wingeryer-Rayó’s approach was highly philosophical but punctuated with basic scientific principles. He talked about the Big Bang Theory of creation of the Earth, the Laws of Thermodynamics and stressed that everything in this world tends towards a state

of entropy, i.e. disorderliness. Man therefore has a big challenge in creating order out of this natural tendency towards disorder.

The theme of the second Plenary Session was: “Peace and Reconciliation in Intercultural Perspective”. The session was chaired by Kimba Evariste of the Democratic Republic of Congo. All the five Panelists (Nathaniel Ohouo (Cote d’Ivoire), Elisabeth Charles (India), Maria Manuelli (Germany), Guillermo Yoshikawa (Peru) and Edison Jackson (USA) addressed this theme from the point of view of careful juxtaposition of local and international experience to achieve the right blend of intercultural perception of reconciliation after gross violation of peace by political office holders.

The last plenary session of the conference took place in Hiroshima Nagarekawa Church where a blackened Atomic-Bombed Crucifix made from parts of the surviving wooden structure of the old Chapel after the 1945 bombing was hung conspicuously on the neatly whitewashed wall of the altar inside the church.

One interesting post-Conference programme that satisfied my curiosity was the excursion to Miyajima, a UNESCO World Heritage site inside which is located the Itsukushima Shrine that is positioned as a floating hut in the sea. The participants rode in a boat to this site where antelopes roamed around and took pictures with human beings as if they too, were humans. The Itsukushima shrine was an interesting place to behold. It was exciting seeing the chanting worshipers perform their rituals in ways that brought back my imagination of idol worshipers in Africa before the advent of Christianity.

This 2014 Conference afforded me the opportunity to obtain direct information on the reconstruction that had taken place in Hiroshima since the bombing. There is no doubt that Hiroshima has bounced back. Hiroshima today is one of the pivotal cities for industry, economics, and administration in western Japan. Nature is so rich in Hiroshima that one could wonder if it was indeed true that the environment once suffered from Atomic Bomb radiations. My journey to and from the Airport to the main city revealed a beautiful landscape rich in biodiversity of plants that are very green just like any relatively unexploited environment in the world.

In spite these observations, my trip to Hiroshima has left me more worried ever than before on the insatiable desire of man to exploit naturally occurring resources

in the earth indiscriminately. Earth scientists have explained that Uranium is a radioactive heavy metal that is in the mantle where it is serving the purpose of keeping the outer crust intact. The decay of Uranium in the mantle is one of the sources of heat that keeps the outer core liquid and drives the mantle convection which in turn drives plate tectonics. Man discovered Uranium and brought it to the surface of the earth where it serves a deadly purpose and many questionable useful purposes. For God's sake, why can't man keep Uranium in the ground and save the citizens of this world from another possible atomic bombing by insincere political office holders? I feel the same way as Stephen Leeper felt at the Hiroshima Conference. Our children and grandchildren will not be spared from a future Atomic Bomb disaster if Uranium exploration and utilization for whatever purpose is not completely abolished in this world. I say this because I read somewhere that the government of Nigeria is planning to consider the beneficial use of nuclear energy. This is dangerous in a country where there is no assurance of judicious control of the use of this dangerous heavy metal. As long as this world remains one where some countries cover nuclear arsenal in their domain with their left hands and prevent other countries from doing same with their right hands, there is no end in sight to the Nuclear Age and the path to lasting peace in the world will remain elusive. It will be interesting to know what the United Nations is doing to avert this.