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by

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Working Paper No. 16

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Ballyvaughn, Ireland

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**Roots of Nuclearism:
Censorship and Reportage of Atomic Damage
in Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

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The conference held at Ballyvaughn, Ireland, in August 1987 was the beginning of an on-going international intellectual interchange on topics related to the discourse of peace and security and international society. It will include annual meetings, the second to be held in summer 1988, again in Ballyvaughn. Sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, the conferences are intended to foster general inquiry into these scholarly topics and to stimulate research and teaching that incorporates these perspectives at University of California campuses. This year's series of working papers comprises the writings which seventeen authors submitted to their colleague-participants in preparation for the 1987 conference. Some have been updated somewhat before publication here. Some have been published elsewhere and are reissued here by permission. The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation hopes that these working papers will help to interest even more scholars in pursuing these lines of thought.

James M. Skelly
Series Editor

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Roots of Nuclearism: Censorship and Reportage of Atomic Damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Introduction

In the summer of 1945 a number of the leading scientists on the Manhattan Project, members of the newly created Committee on Social and Political Implications headed by James Franck, argued against the unannounced use of the atomic bomb against Japan. The committee's report, known as the Franck Report, was shaped by Leo Szilard, who focused on the problem of using the bomb during the war rather than the problem of developing atomic energy after the war, as did many of his colleagues. Although the report did not take up the moral question of the bomb's use so much as the pragmatic question of its international control, it did contain the following comments on the moral implications of the first atomic attack:

the military advantages and the saving of American lives achieved by the sudden use of atomic bombs against Japan may be outweighed by the ensuing loss of confidence and by a wave of horror and repulsion sweeping over the rest of the world and perhaps even dividing public opinion at home (Smith, 1971: 377).

It is true that, in the immediate aftermath of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, "horror and repulsion" did arise, even in the United States (Manoff, 1983); however, the report was surely off the mark in predicting "a wave of horror and repulsion sweeping over the rest of the world." Why was this so?

This article addresses the above question by examining the mode of censorship and reportage of atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in one of Japan's leading newspapers, the *Asahi Shimbun*,¹ during the months of August and September 1945, as well as representative cases of censorship during the early years of the Allied Occupation.² By thus going back to the very start of press coverage of atomic damage we hope to be able to shed light on the evolution of nuclear discourse in Japan, and, to a lesser extent, the United States. During this time the Japanese media operated in three distinctly different political environments: first, when the Japanese authorities carried out censorship of atomic damage as an extension of war-time censorship (7-14 August 1945),³ second, when the media were virtually free from censorship (15 August-18 September 1945),⁴ and third, when the Occupation authorities imposed censorship under the Press Code (19 September 1945-31 October 1949).⁵ The similarities and differences in censorship and reportage of atomic damage during these three periods should elucidate the political motivations of the Japanese and American authorities in censoring, suppressing, reporting or permitting reporting of information on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This should deepen our understanding of the formation of pro- and anti-nuclear discourses.

Reportage Under Japanese Censorship

7-14 August 1945

Reportage on atomic damage during the first period, 7-14 August, centered on the official announcements of the Japanese authorities. These announcements, together with other information on the atomic bombings, contained three salient characteristics: first, they minimized the damage and power of the "new-type bomb"; second, they emphasized the possibility of adopting countermeasures against future atomic damage; third, they highlighted the contradiction between the declared values of the enemy, "justice and humanity" (*seigijindō*), and the injustice and inhumanity of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

A few hours after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August the managing editors of the *Asahi Shimbun*, other major dailies and Dōmei Tsushinsha, the news agency responsible for telegraphing news of the bombing to Tokyo, were called to the Information and Intelligence Agency, the government agency in charge of censorship. As the Agency decided that information on the Hiroshima attack was still insufficient, the editors were told to "bury the news of the bombing in some obscure place" (Braw, 1986: 18). Thus news of the attack in the 7 August edition of the *Asahi*, which appeared under the headline, "Small- and Medium-sized Cities Attacked by 400 B-29s," was no more than a few lines on how Hiroshima and its vicinity had been "slightly damaged" (*jakkan no songai*) by incendiary bombs.⁶ The front page headlines in the *Asahi* on the following day, which were based on an announcement from Imperial Headquarters, were more informative: "New-type Enemy Bomb Dropped on Hiroshima," and in smaller print: "Considerable Damage (*sōtō no higa*), Details Being Investigated." Still, the announcement conveyed no more about the enormity of death and destruction in Hiroshima than the following: "A considerable number of buildings were destroyed and, along with this, fires broke out everywhere."

On 8 August the government received scientific confirmation that the new-type bomb dropped on Hiroshima was an atomic bomb. On the evening of that day Professor Nishina Yoshio, the leading Japanese nuclear scientist and the head of Japan's atomic bomb project at the Riken Institute in Toyko, who had been sent to Hiroshima to investigate the damage, reported back to the Prime Minister's office with the following information:

"What I've seen so far is unspeakable. Tens of thousands dead. Bodies piled up everywhere. Sick, wounded, naked people wandering around in a daze....Almost no buildings left standing."

"It's all true then? Hiroshima is completely wiped out?"

"Completely....I'm very sorry to tell you this....the so-called new-type bomb is actually an atomic bomb" (Kurzman, 1986: 419).

Despite this information from Nishina, however, the announcements made by the authorities during the next few days still give absolutely no sense of the tremendous damage suffered by Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and continue to refer to the atomic bomb as the "new-type bomb." Moreover, even though the *Asahi* mentioned that the "new-type bomb" was an atomic bomb and carried news of the Japanese government's official protest to the United States in the 11 August edition under the headline, "Disregard of International Law. Cruel New-type Bomb," the 12 August edition, which gave the first news of the Nagasaki attack, simply states in a small headline: "New-type Bomb also Dropped on Nagasaki." The few lines of commentary do little more than mention the time and place of the bombing and state: "The damage, now under investigation, is expected to be relatively light" (*hikakuteki kinshō*). This typifies the Japanese authorities' attempt to minimize the damage of the atomic bombings.

The attempt to minimize the power of the bomb is evident from the *Asahi*'s lead story of 9 August. It suggests that, as in the case of the German V1, "the power of new types of offensive weapons to appear during the course of war is in many cases greatly exaggerated." On 10 August, moreover, a staff officer of the Chugoku district (where Hiroshima is located), who had arrived in Osaka from the bombed city, informed the *Asahi* readers that: "A bomb of this level is already in the process of being tested in our country, too...the new-type bomb is hardly something beyond what we could imagine."

Second, reportage consistently emphasized the possibility of adopting countermeasures against future atomic attacks, which also served to minimize the damage and power of the new-type bomb. Three announcements made by the Air Defense Headquarters are typical of the authorities' attempt to treat the atomic bomb as nothing more than a powerful conventional bomb. So, too, are the comments made in support of the official view of the atomic damage by the above-mentioned staff officer and a nuclear physicist. Finally, even three *Asahi* reporters, who provide at least some sense of the scope of damage in Hiroshima, conclude this mostly resulted from the people's lack of familiarity with the new-type bomb.

The first announcement by Air Defense Headquarters was made on 8 August and published on the front page of the *Asahi* on the following day. It starts out by warning of the dangers from the blast and thermal heat of the "new-type bomb," but soon goes on to recommend a number of countermeasures, including the following: take cover in air-raid shelters, reduce the exposed part of the body, and take care to extinguish open flames in the kitchen and elsewhere when evacuating.

The second announcement, made on 9 August, appeared in the 10 August edition of the *Asahi*. The military authorities continued to offer advice on "The Way to Beat the New-type Bomb," as the sub-headline runs, advising people to "trust in air-raid shelters as these are extremely effective against the new-type bomb," to wear gloves in order to "completely protect

your hands from being burned," and to "lie on the ground or utilize the shadow of a sturdy building" for protection, if, for some reason, the air-raid shelter cannot be used.

The third announcement was made on 11 August and published in the 12 August edition of the *Asahi*. Additional advice at this time was based on surveys conducted by the military and specialists sent to the atom-bombed cities. Even so, the "new-type bomb" is not referred to as an atomic bomb. In fact, under the headline, "Wear White and Head for the Air-Raid Shelter," Defense Headquarters continued to inform the populace in the same vein as in the previous two announcements, adding advice such as beware of flying glass shards when sheltering in ferroconcrete buildings, put oil on burns from thermal heat, and suggests "white underwear is effective for protection against burns."

Comments by the staff officer and the nuclear physicist, Dr. Fushimi Kōji of Osaka University, which appeared in the 10 August edition of the *Asahi*, helped to legitimate the official view of the atomic damage. The staff officer, after prefacing his observations with the comment, "there is absolutely no reason to fear the new-type bomb," draws a number of "military lessons" from Hiroshima. One lesson is to refrain from wearing short-sleeved shirts and shorts, because, so long as you cover yourself, you are "absolutely safe" (*zettai anzen*) from exposure to thermal rays. The fact that ferroconcrete buildings remained standing despite the destruction or collapse of almost all Japanese-style buildings led the officer to conclude confidently, "we are absolutely safe even against the blast of this bomb so long as we construct sturdy buildings." Dr. Fushimi adds to the staff officer's advice. Under the headline, "Make Ready to Live Underground," he states: "The path to victory so far as air defense is concerned is to live underground." However, as living in an air-raid shelter twenty-four hours a day is impractical as well as being bad for production, he recommends, "at the earliest possible moment to start the rapid construction of factories in caves."

A more realistic description of the damage in Hiroshima is given by the three *Asahi* reporters in the 12 August edition of the paper under the headline, "Hiroshima Transformed Instantaneously." The reporters state that "Hiroshima was for the most part reduced to ashes and a large number of innocent people were killed or injured," and go on to discuss the details of the devastation. They none the less consider the reason for the large amount of damage to be not so much the lethal nature of the "new-type bomb" as "unfamiliarity" with it. So, as with the official announcements, they end on a positive note: "We cannot even dream of the Japanese race losing the will to fight just because of this."

The third characteristic of reportage at this time, the emphasis on the contradiction between the declared values of the enemy in fighting the war and the injustice and inhumanity of dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is salient in foreign as well as Japanese comments on the bombings. Most prominent, of course, is criticism by the Japanese authorities,

which focuses on the contradiction between the enemy's values of "justice and humanity" and the unjust and inhuman effect of the means used to pursue these values, that is, mass extermination of innocent civilians. Typical is the initial announcement of the Hiroshima bombing made by the Imperial Headquarters on 7 August: "The enemy's use of this new-type bomb plainly reveals his brutal aim of shedding the innocent blood of civilians...the enemy, who dared such inhuman cruelty, should not for some time once again be able to utter the terms justice and humanity."

This point is stressed in further reporting on the bomb. For instance, under the headline, "The Enemy's Inhumanity. Resolute Retaliation," the *Asahi's* lead story of 9 August declares: "The fact that the enemy is resorting to the violence of bombing the innocent masses while advocating justice and humanity has been finally made clear by the results of the survey [of Hiroshima]." Again, by reporting the reactions in Europe, the *Asahi* demonstrates that the Japanese are not alone in criticizing the inhumanity of the atomic bombings. Thus, in the 13 August edition, the *Asahi's* correspondent in Stockholm reports on criticism by Anglican ministers, European newspapers, and then a Swedish newspaper, which states:

The leaders of the United States responsible for prosecuting the war should have been able to select a target other than a major city to demonstrate the power of the atomic bomb. If it was necessary for the United States to test the atomic bomb against a city, then ample time should have been allowed for the evacuation of the residents prior to its use. This...[action] by the United States is a truly inhuman, frightful thing.

With the Japanese government's official protest to the United States, moreover, criticism of the use of the new-type bomb was placed squarely in the context of not only justice and humanity, but also humanitarian and international laws. The protest was published in the *Asahi* on 11 August:

It has been established on-the-scene that the damage extends over a great area and that combatant and non-combatant men and women, old and young, are massacred without discrimination by the blast of the explosion, as well as by radiating heat which results therefrom. Accordingly, this bomb has the most cruel effects humanity has ever known....

[The Americans] have shown complete defiance of the essential principles of humanitarian laws, as well as international law. They now use this new bomb, having an uncontrollable and cruel effect much greater than any other arms or projectiles ever used to date. This constitutes a new crime against humanity and civilization.

This protest by the Japanese government was delivered to the United States State Department via the Swiss Legation on 11 August. The Japanese ambassador to Switzerland was also instructed to explain the gist of the protest to the International Red Cross. The United States State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, which discussed the protest on 5 September 1945, made the following recommendations:

1. That the receipt of the Swiss Memorandum be merely acknowledged.
2. That no reply to this Japanese protest should be made in view of the events that have transpired since the receipt of this note from the Swiss Legation.
3. That no publicity whatsoever be given to the receipt of this protest from the Japanese Government (*Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. VI, 1969: 474).

That the United States government was highly sensitive to criticism of having violated international and humanitarian laws will become clearer as we discuss American censorship in Japan. Before that, however, let us examine reportage on the atomic damage during the brief interval between Japanese and American censorship.

15 August - 18 September 1945

The emperor's announcement of surrender, which appeared in the 15 August edition of the *Asahi*, includes the following reference to the atomic bombings: "...the enemy has for the first time used new, cruel bombs to kill and maim extremely large numbers of innocent people, and the heavy casualties are beyond measure. Continuing the war would not only bring the downfall of our nation but also the destruction of all human civilization." The dropping of the atomic bomb, the accompanying *Asahi* commentary suggests, was one of the reasons for the termination of hostilities, along with the Soviet Union's entry into the war (8 August 1945).

The emperor's concern over the cruel impact of the atomic bomb on "innocent people" and the possible destruction of "all human civilization" should perhaps be regarded as part of a convoluted excuse for losing the war. But these comments can also be taken to symbolize a growing awareness of the irreversible transformation in the nature of warfare resulting from the first use of nuclear weapons. This is not to say that, even after the end of the war, the possibility of exploiting the bomb for political purposes was not entertained by government officials: at least one suggested starting a world-wide campaign on the horrors of the atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the express purpose of creating a counterbalance to Allied accusations of Japanese war crimes, as we will see below. But the mode of reportage on atomic damage in the month or so between the end of Japanese censorship and the imposition of the Press Code does seem to suggest a more profound awareness of the meaning of being atom-bombed.

The media's role in the political vacuum between Japanese and American censorship is crucial here. Three points deserve mention: first, critical comment on the American bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as in the period of Japanese censorship, continues to be voiced by both Japanese and foreigners. This point of commonality stands in marked contrast to the other two points, which suggest the Japanese media were taking advantage of their new-found freedom: (1) criticism of the Japanese authorities is tentatively voiced; (2) the atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is reported from the perspective of the bombs' victims. As we shall see below, to

the chagrin of American officials, at least one foreign journalist also adopted this perspective in reporting on Hiroshima.

Direct criticism of the United States for the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was openly voiced by Hatoyama Ichirō, a leading politician who later became prime minister, who pointed to the incompatibility between United States actions and international law. In an article in the 15 September edition of the *Asahi* he declared: "So long as the United States advocates 'right is might,' it cannot deny that the use of the atomic bomb and the killing of innocent people is a violation of international law and a war crime worse than an attack on a hospital ship or the use of poison gas." The charge was too much for the Occupation authorities. With these remarks as the catalyst, the *Asahi* was suspended from publication for forty-eight hours. This action was the first concrete manifestation of how the Press Code was to be used in order to prevent the media from not only voicing approval of ultra-nationalist ideology, but airing criticism of the United States too.

Indirect criticism of the United States through reference to the cruelty of the bomb, which surfaces in Japanese reportage on the victims, discussed below, was also voiced outside Japan. For instance, in the 21 August edition of the *Asahi*, an overseas dispatch reports how the Bishop of St. Albans had "severely criticized the inhumanity of the atomic bomb" in a sermon on 19 August. Again, in an interview with an American GI in Japan printed in the 12 September edition of the *Asahi*, the public is made aware of the division of opinion in the United States:

GI: "How do the Japanese people feel about our use of the atomic bomb?"

Reporter: "They feel resentment. As someone who witnessed the terrible destruction of Hiroshima at the time I can well understand them."

GI: "I guess so. Even in the United States loud voices are being raised in criticism of the atomic bombings. They are saying that, if any bombs are left, they should be dumped into the Pacific Ocean."

Second, unlike in the period under Japanese censorship, when the *Asahi* simply followed the official line, tentative criticism is now voiced of the way the authorities tried to minimize the atomic damage. In the editorial of 9 September, for instance, the *Asahi* complains: "Treatment of the atomic bombing and the terrible destruction caused by it should be scientific from start to finish. Nevertheless, in the case of Hiroshima, it seems that the initial policy of the authorities was to make announcements minimizing the facts to the extreme."

The third and most striking characteristic of reporting on atomic damage to surface during this brief period of press freedom is the salience of the victims' perspectives. Apart from the first pictures of the atom-bombed cities, which appeared respectively in the 19 and 25 August editions of the *Asahi*, information on the atomic damage is provided through eye-witness accounts and scientific evidence, rather than announcements by the Japanese authorities as previously. Such information exposes the reader to the tremendous damage inflicted by the bombings. In the 23 August edition of the *Asahi*, for instance, one of the three reporters who had

earlier described conditions in Hiroshima provides concrete details on the actual destruction "Little Boy" had caused: ninety per cent of the buildings destroyed, 200,000 casualties, even mosquitoes totally wiped out.⁷ Unlike previously, when "unfamiliarity" was given as the reason for the large-scale damage, the reporter this time states flatly: "There was no time to evacuate nor time to extinguish flames. There was absolutely no time to put into effect the countermeasures already established for air defense or fire prevention."

The cruelty of the Hiroshima bomb is clear from the suffering of its first victims, as his description shows:

...although initially the number of dead was given as 10,000, the number increased with the passage of time and it is finally said to have reached 100,000. It can be imagined from this just how cruel the atomic bomb's power is. Moreover, as is usual with those who succumb to burns, the victims were fully conscious until their death. Those who were looking after the patients, who continued to scream out 'kill me quickly,' declared in unison, with a sense of anguish going straight to the bone, 'it's a living hell on earth.'

A journalist's comments on Nagasaki in the same edition of the *Asahi* provide a similar picture of the damage wreaked by "Fat Man." Under the headline, "Baked [to Death] in Air-Raid Shelters. 23,000 Dead or Missing," which belie the earlier optimistic reports on a shelter's protective value, he starts out by contextualizing the power of this new weapon: "The atomic bomb's power of destruction and slaughter is completely beyond imagination." He then goes on to give concrete details of the destruction, which includes "two kilometers in every direction being instantly turned into a scorched wasteland." As for the victims of the Nagasaki bomb:

They are lying around in every conceivable place. Just their eyes are burning with indignation; their faces and bodies are covered with blood due to glass shards. They are groaning, their faces distorted, with the skin peeled off their faces due to being burned. Some, with half the body turned to skeleton, could at last be distinguished as to whether they are male or female. But that's all. You cannot tell who anyone is.

The bombs' cruelty to human beings, it is stressed in a later edition of the *Asahi*, does not draw to a close with the actual bombings, nor with Japan's surrender, but continues even after the formal end of the war. Under the headline, "Hiroshima Possessed by an 'Evil Spirit.' Death Toll Continues to Rise Two Weeks Later," the 25 August edition describes the situation as follows: "Even though this is said to be after the war has ended, the citizens of Hiroshima, who have lost home and kin, are being whipped cruelly by continuing damage, which shows no sign of abating." This is clear from the death toll: whereas a survey conducted three days after the bombing gave a total of 30,000 dead and 160,000 injured, the *Asahi* reported the number of dead had mounted to 60,000 within two weeks and was still rising.

The reasons for the increasing number of deaths is discussed in the 29 August edition of the *Asahi* by Dr. Tsuzuki Masao, head of the Department of Surgery at Tokyo Imperial University,

Japan's most prestigious institution of higher learning, who visited Hiroshima shortly after the attack. Tsuzuki focuses on the pathological implications of the atomic bombings, and describes how "victims, who had suffered nothing more than a scratch at the time, lost their hair a few days later...and died." Based on autopsies and other scientific evidence, Tsuzuki concludes:

We had originally thought that the range of [damage by] the atomic bomb was limited to two: destruction from the blast and burns from thermal rays. It has now been proven that, in addition to these two, harmful after-effects also result from the action of 'radioactive particles.'

Despite Tsuzuki's conclusion, those speaking on behalf of the United States government denied any such harmful after-effects from radiation. Wilfred Burchett, the "maverick" Australian reporter who first entered Hiroshima, found this out when he returned to Tokyo on 7 September.

Unknown to the Occupation authorities, Burchett had made his own way to Hiroshima, arriving on 3 September slightly ahead of the officially-sanctioned Occupation press corps. Unlike his colleagues, who concerned themselves principally with the physical destruction of Hiroshima, Burchett focused on the bomb's impact on human beings. As he laconically commented to one of the press corps (who paid no heed): "The real story is in the hospitals" (Burchett, 1983: 41). His first-hand account of the damage in Hiroshima, "The Atomic Plague," which appeared on the front page of the 5 September edition of Britain's *Daily Express*, and then worldwide, describes the situation as follows:

In these hospitals I found people who, when the bomb fell [,] suffered absolutely no injuries, but now are dying from the uncanny after-effects.

For no apparent reasons their health began to fail. They lost appetite. Their hair fell out. Bluish spots appeared on their bodies. And then bleeding began from the ears, nose and mouth.

At first, the doctors told me, they thought these were the symptoms of general debility. They gave their patients Vitamin A injections. The results were horrible. The flesh started rotting away from the hole caused by the injection of the needle. And in every case the victim died.

That is one of the after-effects of the first atomic bomb man ever dropped and I do not want to see any more examples of it (Burchett, 1983: 35).

Shortly after returning to the capital Burchett appeared at a briefing on Hiroshima being held by the American "top brass," the main purpose of which was "to deny my [Burchett's] dispatch from Hiroshima that people were dying from the after-effects of the bomb" (1983: 22). On insisting to the briefing officer, Brigadier-General Thomas Farrell, deputy-chief of the Manhattan Project and chief of the Special Manhattan Engineering District Investigation Group, that he had seen convincing evidence of the effects of radiation in Hiroshima, he was told: "I'm afraid you've fallen victim to Japanese propaganda" (1983: 22-23).

According to Farrell, who at the time had not visited Hiroshima, the people seen by Burchett in the hospitals in Hiroshima were not victims of radiation, but "victims of blast and burn, normal after any big explosion" (1983: 22). The height of the bomb's explosion, Farrell explained,

precluded any "residual radiation" in Hiroshima (1983: 22). Farrell's response to Burchett actually touches on two related yet separate issues, although he does not seem to distinguish them: delayed death due to prompt radiation, and delayed death due to residual (lingering) radiation.⁸ In both respects, however, Burchett was correct in insisting on the after-effects of the bomb: first, the delayed death of some of the hospitalized victims would have been due to not only blast and burn, as stated by Farrell, but more importantly to prompt as well as residual radiation. Second, despite Farrell's disclaimer, the bomb did produce residual radiation, as is clear from the existence of atomic-bomb victims who were not in Hiroshima at the time of the blast, but entered the city soon after.⁹

The scope of the atomic damage was to some extent confirmed by Farrell's own visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His comments on visiting Hiroshima, as reported in the 11 September edition of the *Asahi*, are illuminating:

I fairly well understood from various mid-air photographs that the damage in Hiroshima was enormous, but after coming here and inspecting the scene I have learned that the damage is enormous and beyond description (*gengo ni zessuru*). I think something so horrible should never be used again.

Another member of the party expresses similar surprise at the devastation: "The devastation in Hiroshima is terrible (*hidoi*), quite beyond what we had imagined." He similarly opposes future use: "We should never again use this kind of thing." In Nagasaki, as reported in the 17 September edition of the *Asahi*, Farrell states: "As the atomic bomb was tested on an open plain, military personnel, obviously, and even those scientists directly involved in production could not predict at all what kind of influence the atomic bomb would have on the human body and buildings."

The surprise registered by Farrell's party on visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki suggests the difficulty the Americans experienced in foreseeing the scope of the atomic damage in the two cities. As Norman Ramsey, chief of the Delivery Group at Los Alamos was to later reflect:

The people who made the decision to drop the bomb made it on the assumption that all casualties would be standard explosion casualties.... The region over which there would have been radiation injury was to be a much smaller one than the region of so-called 100% blast kill.... Any person with radiation damage would have been killed with a brick first (Wyden, 1984: 16).

Farrell's denial of Burchett's report of people dying from the after-effects of the atomic bombing may have rested on this selfsame assumption. Nevertheless, even if we accept at face value a degree of ignorance on the part of Farrell and others involved in the Manhattan Project as to the *scope* of damage from radiation, this in no way implies ignorance of the *facts* of radiation damage. Three points bear mentioning.

First, the safety precautions taken at Los Alamos and other atomic facilities demonstrate a keen awareness of the danger from exposure to radiation. Second, on 21 August 1945 Farrell and others at Los Alamos gained firsthand knowledge of this danger when one of the scientists, Harry Daghlion, broke a safety rule and was exposed to a temporarily uncontrolled chain reaction. Phyllis K. Fisher, the wife of one of the physicists, describes the consequences:

Daghlion died by inches over the next twenty-four days. We learned of his suffering from those working in the hospital. It was a horrible death and sobering knowledge for those who learned about it. Our first death by radiation was an example of what was happening to thousands in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a result of the work done at Los Alamos (Fisher, 1985: 133).

Third, not everyone in the United States regarded reports of death from after-effects as Japanese propaganda. As is shown by the Records of the Chief of Engineers, Manhattan Engineering District, Howard W. Blakeslee, Associated Press Science Editor, thought those reported to have died mysteriously in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were probably the "victims of a phenomenon which is well known in the great radiation laboratories of America. They died from the after-effects of rays created at the instant of the explosion" (US National Archives, 1945).

The denial of after-effects by those speaking in an official capacity would help to undermine such opinions, which indirectly supported criticism of the inhuman nature of atomic weapons. Burchett's experience, together with other facts accumulated over the years, convinced him of the reason for Farrell's attempt to deny his report: "the existence of an official policy to suppress accurate reportage of the terrible after-effects of nuclear war" (Burchett, 1983: 9).

The different coverage of Farrell's own visit to Hiroshima in the Japanese and American press is revealing. As we see below, there is no mention in the *Asahi*, as there is in the *New York Times*, of Farrell's denial of "lingering radioactivity." Moreover, with the imposition of the Press Code, critical comments on the atomic bomb, such as those made by Farrell and one of his party, no longer surface in the *Asahi*. In this we can see the utility of censorship for shaping the nuclear discourse in Japan.

19 September Onwards

The aim of denying radiation after-effects was furthered by William Laurence, the *New York Times* reporter-cum-War-Department correspondent on the atomic bomb, who entered Hiroshima as chief of the Occupation press corps. Despite this visit to Hiroshima, Laurence's report on Hiroshima in the *New York Times*, which "unaccountably" did not appear until 13 September (Burchett, 1983: 18) did not give a first-hand account of his observations in the ruined city. Instead, under the headline "No Radioactivity in Hiroshima Ruin," he relates how Farrell "denied categorically that it [the atomic bomb] produced a dangerous, lingering radioactivity in the

ruins of the town." He makes no mention of Farrell's opposition to the bomb's future use, as does the *Asahi*. Laurence's delayed report on the Alamogordo test, which appeared in the *New York Times* the day prior to his Hiroshima report, also dismisses the possibility of after-effects due to radiation: "This historic ground in New Mexico...gave the most effective answer to Japanese propaganda that radiations were responsible for deaths even the day after the explosion, Aug. 6, and that persons entering Hiroshima had contracted mysterious maladies due to persistent radioactivity."

It is true that, as we saw earlier, ignorance as to the scope of radiation after-effects existed at this time. But blanket statements such as these, which were not based on a proper, scientific assessment of the effect of radiation on human beings, fail to reflect any such ignorance. Instead, they reflect an attempt to restrict information on the uglier aspects of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Continuing the war-time policy of nuclear secrecy helped to ensure that this ignorance remained hidden from public view.¹⁰ Accusing the Japanese of "propaganda" served to cast doubt on the validity of information on the atomic bombings based on Japanese sources.

If we regard these denials of after-effects as a means to promote disinformation on the bomb's cruel effects on human beings, the Press Code can be regarded as a means to restrict, suppress, or censor such information. It is in this sense an extension of the policy of nuclear secrecy. Although the Press Code guidelines do not refer specifically to the atomic bomb, as they list ten general points, such as "[n]othing shall be printed which might, directly or by inference, disturb the public tranquility" (Braw, 1986: 42), material on the atomic bombings could be brought within its range of application. This was to profoundly affect reportage on the damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, although as Braw concludes in her pathbreaking study: "American censorship, from the viewpoint of efficiency and consistency, was lacking in almost all respects" (1986: 148).¹¹

Despite this lack of efficiency and consistency in terms of the principles of censorship, the Press Code none the less effectively reduced the quantity and perverted the quality of information on the atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The reduction in the quantity of information is clear from a study by Ubuki Satoru: whereas in the forty-three days between the day following the first atomic bombing (August 7) and the day prior to the imposition of the Press Code (September 18), the *Asahi* carried news related to the atomic bomb on all but three days, the quantity of information was drastically reduced after the Press Code came into force.

	<u>7/8/1945 - 18/9/1945</u>	<u>21/9/1945 - 6/8/1946</u>
Editorials	8	3
Foreign News Dispatches	30	66
Domestic News	77	30
Total	115	99

(Source: Ubuki, unpublished)

Of course, a reduced volume of material may not be the direct result of censorship, as even without the censor's pen the editors of the *Asahi* may have decided that the atomic bomb's "news worthiness" had declined. This brings us to the second point. It is in the perversion of the quality of information that we can see the role of the Press Code, either directly through censorship or indirectly through the creation of an environment of self-censorship. For along with the overall decrease in the amount of information published, an accompanying increase occurs in uncritical reportage on the atomic bomb. Ubuki summarizes the difference in reportage before and after the imposition of the Press Code as follows: "Articles criticizing the atomic bombing completely disappeared" (Ubuki, unpublished).

The material of particular concern to the censors can be understood from the forty-eight-hour suspension of the *Asahi*. In this case, as discussed above, Hatoyama had charged that the use of the atomic bomb was both a violation of international law and a war crime. Dōmei Tsushinsha, the Japanese news agency, was also put on twenty-four-hour suspension on 14 September for sending out news likely to "disturb public tranquility," such as: "Japan might have won the war but for the atomic bomb, a weapon too terrible to face and one which only barbarians would use" (Braw, 1986: 97).

With the passage of time, moreover, some victims of the atomic-bombings who were able to overcome self-censorship attempted to gain authorization to publish eye-witness accounts of their experience. Some of these were suppressed by the Occupation authorities. For instance, a personal account of the atomic bombing by a fifteen-year-old girl, *Masako Does Not Collapse*, which was submitted to the censors in March 1947, was suppressed for fear it "would disturb public tranquility in Japan and that it implies the bombing was a crime against humanity" (Braw, 1986: 99). Sentences such as "many innocent people were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki" were deleted (1986: 139). This novel did not reach the Japanese public until 1949. Nagai Takashi's *The Bells of Nagasaki* was similarly delayed for two years. It, too, was allowed to be published in 1949, but only on condition that "The Sack of Manila," a description of Japanese atrocities in the Philippines prepared by the Military Intelligence Division, Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), was appended to the work.¹² The personal

accounts of members of the Hiroshima YMCA collected in 1947 suffered a similar two-year delay due to the Press Code.¹³ Finally, as a result of the suppression or delay in publication of such accounts, many other Japanese did not even submit their materials to the Occupation authorities' censors.

Whereas suppression of these personal accounts can be viewed as an attempt to restrict the free circulation of information likely to provoke charges of American humanity, barbarity or violation of international and humanitarian laws, suppression of medical research findings, a particularly perverse application of the rule of nuclear secrecy, helped justify such charges. The delay in publishing research findings in Japan, which must have directly or indirectly led to undue suffering and an increase in fatalities, was intimately linked to the overall aim of the United States government to regard the atom-bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as test sites to be investigated in case of future involvement in nuclear war.

This approach surfaces in the memorandum on Study of Casualty Producing Effects of Atomic Bombs, drafted on 28 August 1945 and approved by the chief surgeon of the General Headquarters, United States Armed Forces in the Pacific. The memorandum states: "A study of the effects of the two atomic bombs used in Japan is of vital importance to our country. This unique opportunity may not again be offered until another world war. Plans for recording all of the available data therefore should receive first priority" (Liebow, 1970: 36). The aim of American medical investigators, who visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki together with Japanese researchers from September to December 1945 as part of the Joint Commission for the Investigation of the Effects of the Atomic Bomb in Japan, was thus the study, not treatment, of the atomic-bomb victims.

That the American investigators focused on the study of the bomb's victims and not their treatment, a charge to be later made against the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, is suggested by a first-hand account of the work of the Joint Commission:

To obtain any given number of persons from any particular locality it has only been necessary to speak to the police chief, who obtains precisely what is requested at precisely the right time. The people who appear have been entirely docile, submit readily to questioning and examination, and seem grateful for the vitamin pills which are doled out after the examination (Liebow, 1970: 138).

Moreover, masses of records, slides, and tissues collected by the Commission were sent to the United States for use in writing up the final report of the survey (Liebow, 1970: 177-178, 199-209). Furthermore, the reports prepared by Japanese researchers, which contained "suggestions for treatment and protection in the light of experience," were submitted to the American side (Braw, 1986: 121).

Japanese researchers had started collecting material on atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki from virtually when the bombs exploded. They also gained much knowledge through their work on the Joint Commission. Thus, they were naturally eager to publish their findings. As Braw comments:

The Japanese scientists were eager to publish their papers. They wanted to discuss their findings from a scientific point of view with colleagues. But maybe most eager to present their observations were the medical doctors. They were battling every day with trying to cure the illnesses caused by the atomic bomb, illnesses and injuries they had never seen before and which they were at a loss how to treat. Only by exchanging information with colleagues could they hope to be able to help their mysteriously dying patients (Braw, 1986: 113).

Although oral reports on the effects of the atomic bombings were given at the annual meeting of the Japanese Association of Medical Sciences in April 1947, and some reports on the bombs' effects were in fact written up,¹⁴ it was not until January 1949, three and a half years after the atomic bombs exploded, that the Occupation authorities, following a policy change in the United States which permitted declassification of Japanese research, first cleared scientific manuscripts for publication in Japan (Braw, 1986: 127). The Occupation authorities were bringing their policy into line with new instructions issued by the Atomic Energy Commission, which allowed publication by Japanese "if they had had no access to United States classified technical information and if they had had no collaboration involving classified technical information with Americans who had had access to restricted data" (1986: 127). This deep-seated concern for secrecy, which had characterized the Manhattan Project, was thus carried over to Japanese medical research of use for treating atomic-bomb patients after the termination of the war.

Implications of Atomic Censorship and Reportage

How does censorship and reportage of the atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the period of Japanese censorship, press freedom, and American censorship facilitate our understanding of why the indiscriminate killing of tens of thousands of noncombatants did not create a "wave of horror and repulsion sweeping over the rest of the world?" Apart from the public's acquiescence in the erosion of the moral and legal constraints on legitimate targets as a result of the advent of "total war" (Dower, 1986: 294), the following five points, which bear specifically on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, warrant attention.

First, for both the Japanese and Occupation authorities, censorship proved an efficacious means to obfuscate the victims' perspectives on atomic damage in the two cities (Hook, 1986: 9-13), albeit for different reasons. The Japanese authorities obfuscated the victims' perspectives by excluding concrete information on the actual effects of the atomic bombs on human beings. Nishina's vivid description of the horrendous damage in Hiroshima was not reflected in any of the

authorities' announcements. The goal here was to prevent the erosion of the Japanese people's will to continue the war. The Occupation authorities obfuscated the victims' perspectives by suppressing material on the atomic damage written by the victims themselves. The suppression of *Masako Does Not Collapse* and *The Bells of Nagasaki* is typical. The goal here was to restrict publication of information implying the atomic bombings were inhuman and a violation of international and humanitarian laws. It was thus only during the interval between Japanese and American censorship that the victims' perspectives surfaced freely, suggesting press freedom is a necessary, though not in itself a sufficient, condition for reporting on nuclear issues from the perspectives of the victims.

A second point common to the treatment of the atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by both the Japanese and American authorities is the use of expert opinion to bolster the desired perspective. The Japanese authorities, aiming to minimize the damage and power of the atomic bomb and convince the population of the effectiveness of countermeasures, utilized the "expert opinion" of a military staff officer and a nuclear scientist to substantiate their perspectives on the bomb. These opinions were duly reported in the *Asahi*. The Occupation authorities, aiming to undermine charges of American inhumanity and violation of international and humanitarian laws, utilized the "expert opinion" of a high-ranking military officer to deny people were dying from the after-effects of the atomic bombings. William Laurence, the War Department's "nuclear propagandist" (Burchett, 1983: 16), faithfully reported these denials in the *New York Times*, claiming such charges by the Japanese were nothing more than "propaganda." In this we can see the critical role journalists and newspapers can play in shaping the nuclear discourse (Shapley, 1982: 199-209).

Third, the Japanese authorities and the Japanese press, as evidenced by the *Asahi*, continued throughout these three periods to insist upon the incompatibility between the espoused values of the United States in fighting the war and the actual means used to pursue these values. The goal here was to demonstrate that, even though Allied propaganda painted the Japanese as the barbarian, inhuman enemy (Dower, 1986), the Allies themselves were capable of inhuman acts in violation of international and humanitarian laws, as especially manifest in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is not to say that the motivation of the Japanese authorities in making these charges was pure -- a result of concern for the bombs' devastating effects on the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The possibility of exploiting the

and the accusation of violating international and humanitarian laws, even during the period of press freedom and American Occupation, not to mention during the period since the end of the Occupation, suggests this criticism was not simply against the United States, but against the atomic bombs as intrinsically inhumane weapons.

Fourth, the accusation of "Japanese propaganda" should be viewed as much as a denial of the incompatibility between the ends and means of war as a denial of the after-effects *per se*. For the denial of after-effects did not result solely from ignorance, although this may be part of the reason, but from the need to establish America's moral superiority in the postwar world. In short, unless the United States denied the inhumanity of the atomic bombings and established a position superior to the Japanese in terms of "justice and humanity," then the trial of Japanese leaders for "war crimes" would be regarded as nothing but victor's justice. If the victor as well as the vanquished had committed acts of comparable barbarity in pursuit of his espoused values and goals, then why should only the latter be tried for war crimes? And if the United States could not retain moral integrity in respect of the atomic bombings, then how could the public be persuaded to *knowingly* support, through Congress, the disbursement of funds to produce more nuclear weapons?

Finally, the American attempt to keep the "nuclear secret" compounded the inhumanity of using the atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The logic up to the end of the war may quite well have been that, as no Japanese is "innocent" (as implied by the censorship of *Masako Does Not Collapse*), then the death of noncombatant men, women, and children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was unavoidable in order to "end the war quickly and save lives."¹⁵ Thus the atomic bomb could be seen as necessary to end the inhumanity of a war started by Japan. But even this logic, if conceded, should not extend beyond the war's end. Secrecy meant that the war ran a longer course: by delaying publication of medical research useful for the treatment of atomic-bomb patients, innocent Japanese died or suffered unduly even after surrender.

Conclusion

The above discussion on the implications of censorship and reportage of the atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki should help to shed light on the reasons for the formation of pro- or anti-nuclear discourses. A pro-nuclear discourse is taken to hinder a "wave of horror and repulsion" from sweeping over the world; an anti-nuclear discourse seeks to facilitate it.

I have suggested elsewhere how important a victim's perspective on nuclear war may be as the core of an anti-nuclear discourse (Hook, 1987). The censorship and reportage of the atomic damage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki seems to substantiate the importance of such a perspective by negative example: the suppression of information on the cruel effects of the

atomic bomb on human beings. By obfuscating the victims' perspectives on the atomic damage, at least in the period immediately after the explosion of the bombs, the perspective on nuclear weapons as inhuman and a violation of international and humanitarian laws was undermined, and the possibility of building more such bombs greatly enhanced. This can be seen to have contributed to a long-term trend: a decline in normativity, where a state-level taboo exists on discussions of whether nuclear weapons should even be permitted as instruments of war (Matsumoto, 1986: 8). The Japanese government's change of attitude toward the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki epitomizes the *acceptance* of the bomb's use from an "objective" point of view. As stated by the government in the 1963 "atomic-bomb" court case:

This [the protest by the Japanese government during the war] emphasized that the use of a new-type weapon by an enemy nation violates the principles of international law as well as fundamental principles of humanity. But seen objectively, not from the position of one of the belligerent parties, such a conclusion cannot necessarily be drawn (Matsumoto, 1986: 19).

In this sense, it is not so much the Japanese state as the Japanese people who have continued to adopt a victim's perspective of nuclear war by insisting that the use of nuclear weapons is inhuman and a violation of international and humanitarian laws. Needless to say, the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, supported by a relatively free and independent press, have been in the vanguard of the movement to spread the victims' perspectives on nuclear war in Japan and overseas.¹⁶

The second point is that, as in the case of the nuclear power industry (Ford, 1982), expert opinion may be utilized to promote a pro- or anti-nuclear discourse. That the denial of "after-effects" was useful for promoting a pro- rather than an anti-nuclear discourse should be clear from the above. This suggests care needs to be taken in evaluating expert opinion. How Farrell's remarks were used by Laurence and the *Asahi* is here instructive: in the former case, they were used to deny radiation; in the latter, to show how even those responsible for the atomic bombings recognized their fundamental inhumanity -- hence, Farrell's call to never use atomic weapons again. In this way, an expert's comments could be used in the United States to undermine the formation of an anti-nuclear discourse centering on the inhumanity of the bomb; on the other hand, they could be used in Japan to reinforce the perspective on the atomic bombings as inhuman and a violation of international and humanitarian laws. How journalists and newspapers employ expert opinion is thus of crucial significance for shaping the nuclear discourse.

Third, the Japanese attack on the legitimacy of using atomic weapons was placed in a universalistic rather than a particularistic framework (Wertsch, 1987). The appeal to a universalistic criterion can be seen in the stress on the bomb's inhumanity: the atomic bomb should be condemned for its cruel effects on human beings, irrespective of the particularistic identity of most of the victims as Japanese.¹⁷ The charge that the United States violated international and humanitarian laws similarly attempts to place the atomic bombings squarely in a universalistic

context. The Occupation authorities, in contrast, attempted to relativize the cruelty of the atomic bombings by placing them in a particularistic context: the appending of "The Sack of Manila" to Nagai's book symbolized how the universalistic criterion for judging the attacks of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was undermined by placing the atomic bombings in the particularistic context of the atrocities the Japanese had committed. The retort of "Remember Pearl Harbor!" to criticism of the atomic bombings is another way the appeal to a universalistic criterion has been relativized in the intervening years. The success or failure of such rhetoric can be taken as one indication of the extent to which American values have become nuclearized and nuclearism has taken root in society (Lifton and Falk, 1982).

Fourth, the discussion of the impact of "nuclear secrecy" on the suppression of medical research is instructive in highlighting the degree to which the nuclear agenda in the United States has centered on military secrecy. Such secrecy, it is argued, is essential in order to maintain American security. What the suppression of medical research none the less suggests is that, irrespective of the validity any claim of "military security" may have, "nuclear secrecy," itself, ineluctably leads to a gap between state security and "people's security," with the latter suffering as a consequence. When Judge Sherman Christiansen, who reversed his ruling in favor of the government in the famous "fallout trial," declared "the US government deliberately concealed evidence, pressured witnesses and engaged in deceitful conduct" he was providing evidence that "nuclear secrecy" has not only affected the lives of former enemies, but the lives of citizens of the United States, too (Burchett, 1983: 14).

These four conclusions suggest an anti-nuclear discourse may be strengthened by:

1. Promoting a victim's perspective under a free and independent press;
2. Challenging or utilizing expert opinion;
3. Criticizing the cruelty of nuclear weapons from a universalistic, unrelativized perspective;
4. Undermining "nuclear secrecy."

Notes

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1. The *Asahi Shimbun* was selected for this study as it is now, and was even more so in the early postwar years, the most authoritative newspaper in Japan, particularly in the political, bureaucratic and academic world. Moreover, as all newspapers were censored by the Japanese and Occupation authorities, any difference between the censorship and reportage of atomic damage in the *Asahi* and other newspapers should not be so significant as to invalidate the conclusions drawn in this article, although research focusing on other newspapers naturally needs to be carried out in the future.
2. The Allied Occupation of Japan, which was dominated by the United States, lasted until April 1952.
3. From 1941 onward nothing in Japan could be published without an advance permit. In the confusion attending the war's end, censorship by the Japanese authorities may perhaps have lasted a little longer than 14 August. Braw states: "The time between the announcement of Japan's surrender August 15 and the actual signing of the surrender documents September 2...was possibly the freest that the Japanese press had experienced and would experience until the end of 1949" (1986: 21).
4. Even though the Occupation authorities set up the censorship machinery immediately after Japan's surrender, as there appeared to be no significant difference in reportage between the 2 and 18 September (except the incidents of censorship noted below), we have taken the actual imposition of the Press Code on 19 September as our starting point.
5. Although the Press Code officially ended on 31 October 1949, this does not necessarily mean that the Japanese media were free from "self-censorship" as a result of the continued Allied Occupation. In this sense, Braw's study (1986) needs to be extended to the period between the end of the Press Code and the end of the Occupation.
6. By the end of the war, the Japanese people were probably distrustful of government announcements claiming that a city had been only "slightly damaged." Such announcements were thus of most utility in restricting concrete information on which people could form an independent judgment of the damage. The mode of reporting in the next period of press freedom is markedly different in this respect.
7. Various casualty figures for Hiroshima and Nagasaki appeared at the time and in the years to follow. Figures submitted by the two cities to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1976 give the total deaths to the end of 1945 as 140,000 (plus-minus 10,000) for Hiroshima and 70,000 (plus-minus 10,000) for Nagasaki. For details, see The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1981: 113).
8. At the time, the expression "lingering radiation" appears to have been used interchangeably with "residual radiation."
9. For details, see The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1981), herein called "secondary victims."
10. On the importance of undermining nuclear secrecy, see Morland (1984: 20-21; 1979: 31-35).

11. It should nevertheless be added that the "efficiency rating" of censorship is much higher when the self-censorship among Japanese writers and editors, which resulted from the existence not application of censorship, is taken into account.
12. For details, see Braw (1986: 99-104). This is the most extensive treatment of the suppression of Nagai's book, although it should be noted that, from the Occupation authorities' point of view, Nagai's mystification of atomic destruction as "atonement" for the war was not at odds with the overall purpose of censoring atomic damage.
13. Preface, unpublished translation of the collection in the author's possession.
14. The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1981: 512).
15. For a discussion of the myth of "saving lives," see Miles Jr. (1985, especially p. 121).
16. For details, see The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1981, Part IV).
17. Allied prisoners-of-war as well as laborers from Japanese colonies, particularly those forced to come to Japan from the Korean peninsula, were also victims of the atomic bombings.

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