

Special Lecture

Building a World Without Nuclear Weapons: 70 Years of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers' Organizations



Mr. Terumi TANAKA

(Co-Chairperson of Hidankyo, Japan Confederation of Atomic and
Hydrogen Bomb Sufferers Organizations, and Speaker of the 2024
Nobel Peace Prize Award Address)

Profile of Mr. Terumi Tanaka

By Tomoko Yamazaki (Chair of Association for Research on Disaster Culture)

Mr. Harumi Tanaka (I will refer him as “Tanaka Sensei”) has been serving as a representative committee member of the “Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations”(known as *Nihon Hidankyo*) since 2017. He delivered the acceptance speech at the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony held in Oslo, Norway, in 2024 when *Nihon Hidankyo* was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. That speech touched the hearts of people not only in Japan but all around the world.

Tanaka Sensei was born in Manchuria in 1932. He lost his father at the age of five, after which his mother took him and his two younger sisters to live in his mother’s hometown, Nagasaki. He grew up there and was exposed to the atomic bombing in August 1945, the very year he enrolled in Nagasaki Junior High School. The atomic bomb claimed many lives and forced those who survived to endure a path of severe hardship thereafter. I imagine that even as a middle school student, Tanaka Sensei had to take on the role of the family’s breadwinner. Despite such circumstances, he maintained the determination to continue his studies, working while pursuing a degree in materials engineering at a university in Tokyo. After graduation, he spent many years engaged in teaching and research at Tohoku University. He has a deep connection with this Tohoku region.

When he was a college student, he happened to witness the founding of *Nihon Hidankyo*, while he was visiting his hometown Nagasaki; since then, he has been involved in the confederation’s activities and has been advocating for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In Oslo, in the year marking 80 years since the end of the war and nearly 70 years since the founding of *Nihon Hidankyo*, he delivered an acceptance speech as a member of the “last generation” to pass on the experience of the atomic bombings, pleading, “Let us ensure that humanity does not destroy itself with nuclear weapons!” This speech not only reaffirmed the necessity of this cause to the world but also prompted the Japanese people to seriously reflect on the nature of Japan as a nation.

At the beginning of this speech, Tanaka Sensei outlined two fundamental tenets of *Japan Hidankyo*’s movement:

- That the movement has been carried out in opposition to the government’s “theory of endurance”
- That “nuclear weapons and humanity cannot coexist.”

While the second point is widely known, the first left a deep impression on me as an expression of Tanaka Sensei’s feelings toward the movement and his convictions regarding how the nation should be governed. I believe the “theory of endurance” is a philosophy that calls on everyone to accept and endure this harm and suffering together, thereby that draws a line against the pursuit of accountability. There is a ten-year gap between the end of World War II and the formation of *Japan Hidankyo*. This fact also reveals the reality of the

circumstances in which the atomic bomb survivors found themselves and their true feelings toward nuclear weapons. The phrase “resisting the ‘Theory of Endurance’” was an expression of their sentiments regarding this reality.

What about disasters? Were sufferers not forced to accept the theory of endurance? When I told Tanaka Sensei that 15 years have passed since 2011 and that the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake face various challenges—such as passing on the experiences of those affected, feelings of isolation, etc. He replied, “I take a simple approach.” He explained that what matters is not how we pass on these experiences, but WHAT we pass on. “The sole purpose of our activities is the abolition of nuclear weapons,” he said.

Tanaka Sensei arrived at Morioka Station a short while ago. When I said, “Thank you for coming all this way,” he replied, “It’s not that far. It’s only two hours by Shinkansen.” Tanaka Sensei is 93 years old. When we face serious and complex hardships or challenges, I believe Tanaka Sensei’s words will encourage us to think simply about the core of the problem. Tanaka Sensei, we look forward to listening to you!

[Full Text of the Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech] Reference URL
Japan Hidankyo —“Hidankyo” Newspaper, January 2025 Issue (No. 552)
<https://www.ne.jp/asahi/hidankyo/nihon/about/about5-202501.html>

Records of the Lecture

Building a World Without Nuclear Weapons:

— 70 Years of Japan Hidankyo —

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I have a lot to say, but since I imagine most of you haven't heard much from someone who actually experienced it, I'd like to share my experience of the atomic bombing.

As mentioned earlier, April 1945 was when I entered junior high school. Unlike today's compulsory education system, this was a school where students entered through an entrance exam with the goal of advancing to an old-system high school or vocational school after four to five years. I enrolled in that junior high school, but by April, U.S. forces had already landed in Okinawa. Consequently, it was simply not a situation where classes could be held. We spent most of our time turning the athletic field into a vegetable patch, going into the mountains to gather kudzu leaves to use as raw material for starch extraction, and digging large trenches designed to collapse if tanks landed. We also built "octopus pots"—traps that would collapse if U.S. soldiers landed. In fact, junior high school students were already doing things like that.

So, especially since Japan was going to suffer a defeat in Okinawa in June, we had already anticipated that they would land in Kyushu very soon. We figured they would land at Kujukuri Beach in the Kanto region and somewhere in Kyushu. Since Nagasaki is also a relatively easy place to land, from June onward we made various preparations for the landing. Honestly, we didn't have time to run schools or anything like that.

However, we had been informed that the cities—including Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka, and Sendai—had suffered devastating air raids and were in a state of ruin by July and August. I really want you to be aware of that fact. The Great Tokyo Air Raid is often reported in the news, but the fact is that it wasn't just Tokyo that was burned to the ground - all of Japan's major cities were reduced to ruins. After the war, Japan awarded Curtis Emerson LeMay the Order of the Rising Sun, First Class with Grand Cordon; it was this commander who issued the order to destroy Japan's cities. (Nowadays) international law prohibits the targeting of civilians. Since World War I, it has been established that facilities with civilians nearby must not be attacked, and that if such attacks are

unavoidable, measures must be taken to ensure civilians are not harmed. Despite this, the massive air raids on Japanese cities were carried out from the very beginning with the intent to kill civilians. Later, LeMay's argument was that Japanese civilians were effectively combatants - since the entire nation was mobilized for war, even civilians were considered combatants - and therefore, they were not killing non-combatants. While I cannot provide specific examples, all of Japan's major cities were completely destroyed.

From various newspaper reports, as I knew that Japan was being driven back and was rapidly withdrawing from its bases in the south, I assumed they would land in Nagasaki. However, Nagasaki hadn't been bombed — at least not the areas where civilians lived. The same was true of Hiroshima. In hindsight, I believe the purpose was to observe the effects of the atomic bomb. In the case of Hiroshima, absolutely no area was bombed at all. Nagasaki, on the other hand, had a large industrial zone. They still build many impressive ships there today — just like the battleships *Musashi* and *Yamato*, as you know — but in fact, those massive battleships were actually built in Nagasaki's shipyards. Therefore, there were quite extensive bombing raids targeting those factories. Specifically on July 29 and August 1, I believe there were two major air raids, — just before the atomic bombings in August. About 70 bombers would fly in. Over and over again. Since only about six planes could fit in the sky at a time, they'd come in formations of about six — for example, making ten such runs — so a total of about 70 bombers would arrive, dropping hundreds or even thousands of bombs. This almost entirely destroyed the factories, so there was absolutely no impact on the city itself.

An air raid siren went off just as I happened to be at school. Since there was a mountain behind the school, I fled into the mountains and witnessed the entire air raid on the industrial area across the river. I had this sort of conviction that the bombs would never fall on my head, so there was one air raid where I actually found myself impressed as I watched the bombs hit their targets one after another. Furthermore, we weren't given any detailed information about the atomic bomb being dropped on Hiroshima on the 6th. We only knew that a new type of bomb had apparently been dropped and that the damage was still being assessed, but just hearing that it was a "new type of bomb" made me sense that the situation was somewhat different. Since the attack on Hiroshima took place on the 6th, it wouldn't appear in the newspapers until around the 8th. I was wondering what kind of bomb they had developed. I never imagined that it would eventually explode right above my head.

The bombing of Nagasaki is recorded as having taken place at 11:02. Hiroshima's was at 8:15. As we saw later, the reason for this time discrepancy is that the primary target for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki was actually Kokura. That is why the bomber first headed for Kokura. Although it is now part of Kitakyushu City, Kokura - Yahata used to be a steel-making and industrial area. Kokura was the target they had selected, but the black smoke from the air raid the night before in neighboring Yahata completely shrouded Kokura, making it impossible to see it with the naked eye. So, after spending some time there, they decided to head to their second target, Nagasaki, and turned around. That's why it was 11:00.

Early that morning, the air raid siren went off. Thinking, “Maybe I shouldn’t go to school today,” I lay down at home and read a book. I don’t think I had any chores to do that day, but as I was lying on the second floor of my house reading, I heard a loud roar. It was the sound of bombing. I only heard the roar of a single plane. Quite a few people said they heard the roar of two planes, so I don’t know which account is correct, but I only heard the roar of one. A bomber flew overhead, and I thought it was probably just on a reconnaissance mission and would fly right past, but it turned out to be an atomic bomb. Just as I thought it was about to pass by, there was a flash —“Whoosh!” It’s hard to put into words, but the whole world turned completely white. It became so bright that I couldn’t see a thing. “What on earth is going on?!”—this, too, was a biological reaction to a perceived danger. Since I was facing an abnormal situation I hadn’t experienced in thirteen years, I sensed that it was dangerous. So I ran down from the second floor to the first, covered my eyes and ears with my fingers, and threw myself to the ground. Since the change in air pressure from the explosion can cause your eyes to pop out or your eardrums to rupture, I instinctively covered my eyes and ears. Immediately afterward, a deafening roar or blast hit me. It was a shock wave—a blast of compressed air. It destroyed the building and passed right through it, but since I was lying flat on the ground, I didn’t feel a thing. I didn’t even realize it was happening. I lost consciousness. Some people say the sound came later, but I didn’t hear anything either. I didn’t even notice the blast passing through. I wonder if a few minutes had passed by then. My mother and my two younger sisters were together on the first floor, and I heard my mother calling for me. She was shouting loudly. That’s when I realized I was pinned under a large glass door. So, since she couldn’t see me, I think my mother must have been so worried that she was calling out for me at the top of her lungs. When I tried to sit up because of her voice, I realized something heavy was on top of me. It was the large glass door by the entrance—two panels of it were lying on top of me. To put it simply, there were about six panes of glass there, but not a single one was broken. Generally speaking, in Nagasaki City, there’s hardly a single house with glass that hasn’t been shattered. It was nothing short of a miracle. Even the glass door that had fallen on top of me miraculously remained intact. I was unharmed. I think I must have had some bruises, but since I lost all my memory of that time, I have no recollection of anything happening. That was the situation at the very moment the atomic bomb exploded.

When I got up, I was fine myself, but the inside of the house was a complete mess; the building hadn’t collapsed, but it was completely destroyed. As for why the damage was limited to that extent, the truth is that the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki missed its target. They simply couldn’t see it clearly. When I got up, I was fine myself, but the inside of the house was a complete mess; the building hadn’t collapsed, but it was completely destroyed. As for why the damage was limited to that extent, the truth is that the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki missed its target. They simply couldn’t see it clearly. Since we were relying on visual observation rather than the kind of measurement targets we use today, we couldn’t just drop the bomb if we couldn’t see the target. The explosion occurred at the epicenter, which was a little over three kilometers away from the target site. Based

on that, my house was about 3.2 kilometers away, and there was a small hill in between. It was called Mount Konpira—a 366-meter-high hill—so I couldn't see it. I couldn't see the area that became the epicenter, but I soon realized that the bomb had fallen there. That's because the sky had already turned bright red. Before long, it turned pitch black. The sun was visible against that pitch-black backdrop—a red light, the sun's light, shining within a pitch-black column. I remember thinking, "Ah, that's the sun." By then, it was already a massive disaster; a huge fire had broken out.

As for how the energy stored in an atom is released, in the case of an atomic bomb, there is energy involved in nuclear fission—for example, the energy that holds two nuclei together—and this energy is released when the nuclei receive excess energy and undergo a new fission. The release of energy resulting from interactions among a large number of atomic nuclei is called a chain reaction; the principle behind an atomic bomb is to trigger an almost instantaneous release of energy through what could be described as an innumerable number of chain fissions. Because the energy is so immense, it is first converted into light. Simultaneously with the light, it is converted into radiation (such as gamma rays and neutron rays) and heat. That is what happens first. After that, the blast wave hits. Radiation is emitted at about the same time as the flash of light. Like light, radiation is invisible to the naked eye. It can pass right through small buildings and the human body, and exposure at close range is enough to kill you. The energy of the blast wave follows shortly after. So, an atomic bomb is one that attacks by releasing three forms of energy. As for what happens with a direct-impact type—neither in Hiroshima nor Nagasaki did the bomb explode on the ground like a conventional bomb. Instead, it exploded in the air, at an altitude of five or six hundred meters. That method is far more effective. Exploding in the air causes destruction to spread downward in an umbrella-like pattern. First, the light and heat rays caused severe burns over the entire bodies of those directly below. Then, wouldn't buildings within a radius of about 500 meters to 1 kilometer catch fire and burn completely? Since they're highly flammable, the fire spreads rapidly. Ultimately, the fire spread and the entire city was destroyed, but that's how the fires started. As for radiation, it's invisible. We didn't realize this until the very end. This was the most devastating form of energy that tormented the survivors afterward. It was the greatest source of suffering.

My house was destroyed, but it didn't burn down. Since the radiation was about three kilometers away, I think it had weakened considerably by then. After that, my entire family managed to survive. However, two of my aunts—from two different households—were living at the epicenter. I lost my father when I was five, so my family became a single-mother household. Japan invaded China. In 1931, there was a conflict known as the Manchurian War—or the Manchurian Incident. It was referred to as an "incident" rather than a "war." I was born in Manchuria the following year. When I was five, my father passed away there, so I am from a single-mother household. My mother, with her four children in tow, returned—or rather, moved—back to Nagasaki City, where her father and mother lived. It wasn't that we were returning; it was our first time going there. Unfortunately, my two aunts' families had moved to the area around the hypocenter. They

thought it would be safer there. They had moved there a year or half a year earlier, believing it was safer because the area was relatively sparsely populated. As a result, they became victims. We didn't hear anything from them on the day of the bombing or the day after, and since we'd heard about the massive fire, on the third day, we went into the ruins to check on them. Since the entire city was on fire, we couldn't enter from the city itself. So, we made our way in through the forest on the other side of the mountain. We crossed the mountain pass and entered the valley at the epicenter. A river flows from that valley, but on our way in, we already saw dozens of people who had died, as well as others who were injured but had received no assistance whatsoever. Even three days later, there was still no system in place for recovering bodies or caring for the sick. Thousands of people had already been killed or injured. The hospitals were almost completely destroyed. There were a large university and a medical school-affiliated hospital in the epicenter zone — the hospital that the citizens had relied on — but they, too, were completely destroyed. So, on my way over the mountain pass to reach my uncle and aunt's house to provide relief, I clearly saw hundreds of people who had been burned or injured and had died, as well as those who were not yet dead but were wounded, and those who, though wounded, lacked the strength to move and were simply staring down at the ground. I remember thinking, "This is so tragic; this is terrible," when I saw the first five or six people, but after that, I have absolutely no memory of anything. Only the images remain etched in my mind. I had become numb. I finally managed to find my aunt's house. The thing is, once all the surrounding houses are gone, it becomes really hard to tell where a building used to stand. All that's left are the foundation stones. So it took me about an hour to find my aunt's house. Based on the shape of the foundation and various other clues, I thought, "This is it — this has to be the right place." There were bodies scattered all over that area as well, but once we were able to confirm beyond a doubt, we found the bodies of my aunt and her grandson—a college student who had happened to return home from Tokyo to the countryside for vacation—lying there, completely charred. Once we identified the site of the house, we made estimates based on height and whether the bodies were male or female to confirm their identities. It turned out that my aunt's house had been located 400 meters from the hypocenter. I searched to see what had happened to my other aunt. We now know it was 700 meters away, and that house was a detached home. It was a fairly large house where, in peaceful times, they used to keep cows and produce milk. The surrounding area was all open fields—I think it had originally been mixed woodland or grassland where the cows grazed—and I assumed it hadn't burned down. Only my mother and I went there. We'd asked a neighbor to look after my younger sisters. "That place probably hasn't burned down," my mother and I had been saying from the start. Since that was truly the only house that had been destroyed but was still standing, I thought it might be okay, so I approached the house. Two of my uncle's relatives were there, and I heard that my aunt had already passed away. Since she had passed away before we arrived, they said, "We'll proceed with the cremation now," and asked my mother, "Would you like to see her one last time before that?" Since she had already passed away, and since we had seen so many people die from severe burns along the way, my mother was very stoic and said, "It's all

right.” At that time, I also helped in the field by piling up pieces of wood and placing the bodies on top of corrugated iron sheets to burn them. It took a long time. Chronologically speaking, we started by cremating the bodies first, and then we went to look for my aunt’s house, which had been reduced to a charred ruin. That aunt had also died from severe burns.

My mother’s father—my grandfather—was at my aunt’s house at the time. Although he had suffered severe burns, he was still alive. He was alive, but unconscious. I’m not sure exactly, but he was still breathing. He just sat there motionless. We knew he would likely pass away in two or three days. When we spoke to him, he could only sense that someone had come in; even when we called out, “Grandpa,” he showed no reaction at all. When I asked, “Why isn’t my uncle there?” I was told that since he wasn’t injured and was in good health, he had immediately set out for his hometown to seek help. I said, “Oh, that’s good,” but in the end, my uncle collapsed suddenly at the place where he had gone to seek help, and he passed away about a week later. He hadn’t suffered any injuries at all, but it turned out he died within a week from a high fever. This was clearly radiation. It’s an example of a life taken by radiation alone. So, there are people like that, too.

People who were exposed to radiation at relatively close range—700 meters in my uncle’s case, or within 1 kilometer or 1.5 kilometers who thought they had survived - were, in fact, suffering from radiation damage throughout their bodies, which ultimately proved fatal. That is how the atomic bomb killed people. Then it set everything ablaze. In both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the entire city within a radius of about 2 kilometers was wiped out; all the buildings were destroyed. That is the kind of devastation it caused. Then, all the wood inside the concrete buildings was completely burned away, leaving only the outer shells, which looked like rubble. When you look at Ukraine today, you can see some buildings that are still standing. They look just like that—only the concrete remains. It was a situation where not a single wooden house was left standing.

On the way back, a path had been cleared in the ruined town—wide enough for one or two people to walk side by side—so I followed that path home. Along the way, there was a river, and as I crossed the bridge, I saw dozens of bodies piled up on the riverbank below, most of them nearly naked. People were gathering wherever there seemed to be even a little water, and the cars were gone. Then, although it was about two kilometers away, when I got near the station, I found dozens of bodies — mostly women, middle-aged women, lined up, waiting to cremate them. After spending a whole day seeing scenes like that, I thought to myself, “Is this what war is like?”

I had aspired to be a soldier. Even when I entered middle school, I did so with the intention of becoming a military leader. So I had a certain amount of knowledge about military matters and war. I used to think that killing each other in war was unavoidable. But when I saw thousands of civilians dying right before my eyes — dying in such a gruesome manner — I intuitively thought, “This isn’t really war, is it?” That is why I now firmly believe that war must never be waged—and that nuclear weapons, in particular, must never be used. This is because nuclear weapons are different from conventional weapons. Ukraine has been subjected to such intense airstrikes, yet reports indicate that

the death toll is in the hundreds. However, there have been no reports of thousands or tens of thousands of people dying all at once. This means that nuclear weapons have not yet been used. If nuclear weapons were ever used, it would result in tens of thousands of deaths. Therefore, it is my firm belief that nuclear weapons are not weapons meant for use in war. I am saying that they do not deserve to be called weapons. They are tools of the devil — not weapons. I maintain that they are tools that cannot be used in war.

We absolutely must not allow nuclear weapons to be used. Unless all citizens of the world join forces to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth as quickly as possible, I believe the world will face dire consequences. I truly believe humanity could face annihilation. If a nuclear war were to break out and spread across the globe, humanity would be destroyed. Even if some survived, I don't think they would be the same kind of humanity we know today. That is why I believe we must absolutely eliminate nuclear weapons.

I would be truly delighted if what I shared today—the nature of the devastation caused by nuclear weapons—has helped you all perceive this issue in a different light than before. I believe that people today have reached a point where they no longer intuitively grasp the reality of such weapons. Even when people are aware of this, they still refer to them simply as “nuclear weapons.” They know that nuclear weapons cause immense damage. However, I believe there are members of the general public—and certainly many politicians—who discuss nuclear weapons without truly understanding what that immense damage actually entails.

It is utterly outrageous that even President Putin would go so far as to threaten to use nuclear weapons. This suggests that Putin is, in fact, determined to use them. Even Japan's ministers—including the newly appointed ones—are asking whether Japan should consider acquiring nuclear weapons. There is something called the “Three Non-Nuclear Principles.” These were declared by Eisaku Sato when he facilitated the return of Okinawa. The “Three Non-Nuclear Principles” are: not to manufacture, not to possess, and not to allow the introduction of nuclear weapons. The reason for prohibiting the bringing in of nuclear weapons was that U.S. forces were still stationed in Japan at the time, and they might, for example, have had nuclear weapons on board their warships. The assumption at the time was that, in the event of an emergency, U.S. forces might come to Japan with nuclear weapons to support wartime operations; since this was considered unacceptable, the policy was established to prohibit the introduction of nuclear weapons. Of course, nuclear weapons were also stationed at air bases in Okinawa, and because such a situation was deemed unacceptable, “prohibition of introduction” was added as one of the Three Principles. The very fact that they are even considering revisiting this issue leads me to believe that politicians, too, simply do not understand nuclear weapons. Therefore, this is a problem for the citizens who elected these people. That is why I believe the Japanese people as a whole must make it clear to politicians when electing them that “under no circumstances should you ever consider using or allowing the existence of nuclear weapons.”

I hope you will gain an intuitive understanding of what human suffering entails—the

combined effects of radiation, heat rays, and blast waves—and that you will share this understanding with as many people as possible. In Hiroshima, 140,000 people died as a result of such suffering. In Nagasaki, the death toll was 74,000. In total, 214,000 citizens lost their lives to those two bombs. Their lives were taken. This figure covers deaths up through December of that year; from December onward, people continued to die each year due to the effects of radiation. There are no records of this. Unfortunately, neither the local government nor the citizens kept records of these deaths, so we do not know how many tens of thousands of people have died in this way without their deaths being officially recorded.

It wasn't until 11 or 12 years later that a law providing relief for atomic bomb survivors was enacted. This came about because the survivors joined forces and launched a campaign demanding that the government properly address the damage caused by the atomic bombings—arguing that it was war-related damage—provide medical treatment for their illnesses, and take steps to alleviate their financial hardships. Actually, there was the “3.1” incident that occurred just the other day. On March 1, 1954, a Japanese tuna fishing vessel was caught in a hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll (Marshall Islands), and all 23 crew members returned to port suffering from acute radiation sickness. Among them, the radio operator, Aikichi Kuboyama, passed away. He passed away in September. It was through this incident that the Japanese people first came to understand what an atomic bomb was. You only come to realize that the atomic bomb is an inhumane weapon when you make a conscious effort to learn about it. This is because the United States occupied Japan for seven years. I want you to remember this fact clearly. Japan was under occupation for seven years. Under occupation, there is no freedom. During those seven years, atomic bomb survivors were not allowed to tell others about the reality of their experiences. They were not allowed to write about it. They were not even allowed to write about it in letters and send anyone else. So, while the citizens who remained in Nagasaki and Hiroshima all knew about it because they were in the same boat, those who had left those cities were all isolated. Even if they had friends, they wouldn't talk to them—in short, they couldn't talk or write about it—and so, for seven years, the Japanese people had no opportunity to learn what kind of bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And then, after seven years, they became independent. However, even seven years later, after Japan regained its independence, the Japanese government did nothing. They showed absolutely no interest in what had become of the atomic bomb victims. As I mentioned earlier, since all the major cities had been completely destroyed, their minds were entirely focused on how to rebuild those cities, and they had absolutely no thought of doing anything about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The local governments of Hiroshima and Nagasaki also lacked the resources to handle the situation on their own. As a result, the victims were left to fend for themselves for ten years. Eventually, while they had been left as they were, the March 1 hydrogen bomb test took place. When the public learned of the test, it sparked renewed interest in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This led to a nationwide movement asking whether atomic bomb survivors were suffering somewhere and whether we should help them.

The first World Conference Against Nuclear and Hydrogen Bombs was held in Hiroshima in 1955, following the release of the findings on radioactive contamination from the Bikini Atoll incident. The second World Conference was held in Nagasaki in 1956. At the Nagasaki conference, groups of atomic bomb survivors who had been located across the country formed organizations and invited others to join them, and many survivors came to Nagasaki. There was a subcommittee meeting held as part of the conference, specifically the Subcommittee on Relief for Atomic Bomb Survivors, where survivors who had come to Nagasaki gathered in one place. I happened to be there when someone called out, “Please gather here for a moment,” and the survivors moved to a separate room to prepare draft bylaws and a founding declaration. That subcommittee meeting served as the founding ceremony for the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo). The organization launched at that time was the Council of Organizations of Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Victims—the very organization we have been operating for the past 71 years. I currently serve as the representative committee member of that organization. Since the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers’ Organizations was formed in this way, its structure consists of consultative bodies for A- and H-bomb survivors’ organizations established in each prefecture, and the central executive bodies (the Representative Council and the Secretariat Executive Committee) are composed of representatives from those organizations. As you can see from those present here today, an organization was properly established in Iwate Prefecture as well. There was one in Aomori Prefecture as well; in fact, there were organizations in all six prefectures of the Tohoku region, as well as in Hokkaido. Within two or three years, organizations were established in all 47 prefectures, and the atomic bomb survivors joined forces to continue a movement for 71 years—advocating for support for themselves and for all atomic bomb survivors, and campaigning to ensure that atomic bombs, which caused them such suffering, are never used again and are eradicated from the face of the earth. However, we have not yet reached the point where nuclear weapons have been completely eliminated.

However, since an international treaty banning the use of nuclear weapons was established in 2017, if a large number of countries were to join it, it would effectively become impossible to actually use them. Personally, I don’t think we need any “Three Principles” or anything like that, but Japan has not acceded to that treaty. Furthermore, countries like the United States, France, Russia, China, and the United Kingdom—known as the five nuclear-weapon states—have not acceded to that ban treaty. They voted against it. This is because they want to use nuclear weapons to maintain their status as major powers in the eyes of the world indefinitely. That’s why I believe they opposed the treaty’s enactment as well. Even countries like France and the United Kingdom, which aren’t that large, possess about 200 to 250 nuclear weapons. Russia and the United States possess about 5,000 each.

The five countries have agreed to work toward reductions. Every five years since the treaty was established, a review conference is held. This year’s conference will be held in New York this April. I understand that a representative from the Japanese government will attend. I believe a representative from the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb

Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) will also attend and deliver a statement, and on such occasions, Nihon Hidankyo has held atomic bomb exhibitions in the lobby of the United Nations in New York. We have held these exhibitions at the quinquennial meetings since 2005, and I believe they have played a significant role in the development of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Finally, the movement calling for support for these atomic bomb survivors led to the enactment of two major, significant laws. As a result, support has now reached a considerable level. However, nothing has been done for those who have passed away. This has caused tremendous resentment and bitterness. This is the case for the families. There are many cases where an entire family has perished. Yet these families receive absolutely nothing. Given this situation—with all the resentment and bitterness—the concept of “endurance” (*junin*), as explained earlier, essentially tells them to simply put up with it. The government’s policy is that the people must all endure the hardships of war. It can’t be helped. The government’s stance is that war cannot happen unless the people endure these hardships. Therefore, even if war were to break out in the future, the message would be that people must put up with such suffering. That is unacceptable. We must continue to insist that we cannot simply endure this—that we will not endure it. Driven by that sense of grievance, when I delivered my Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, I deviated from my prepared remarks, saying, “Let me repeat this one more time,” which led me to say, “We have done nothing for the deceased.” I apologize for taking up extra time with this addition. Thank you very much.

*The Japanese transcript of the lecture, compiled by the Editorial Committee based on audio and video recordings, was translated into English by the Committee Chair and others using DeepL’s automatic translation feature. Copyright is held by the Association for Research on Disaster Culture.

<Transcript of the Q&A Session>

Moderator

Professor Tanaka, thank you very much for sharing such valuable insights with us. Now, I'd like to open the floor to questions and comments from the audience. Since this is an in-person event only today and we don't have much time, I expect we'll probably hear from about two people. If you'd like to speak, please raise your hand. We'd love to hear from you—this is a rare opportunity, after all. Feel free to ask questions or share your thoughts.

Questioner 1

I'm turning 80. I was born right after the war ended, but the number of people who actually experienced the war is dwindling rapidly. I was quite shocked recently when a young person told me that older people like us are "naive about peace." I was shocked to hear that, even though countries all over the world are currently engaged in war and hostilities, we seem to think that peace will come simply by having a "peace constitution" and calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. For the past 80 years, Japan has not waged war. We are the only developed nation to have achieved this, though in the past, we were also involved in wars of aggression. Several million Japanese citizens lost their lives. I believe the Peace Constitution was established based on that reflection. We have a track record of not waging war for 80 years. I think this is a noble achievement on a global scale. If we cannot use this to conduct strong diplomacy—for example, by telling Putin, "I will not invade your country; look at our 80-year record as proof"—then the number of people who have never known war will continue to grow. Right now, I truly feel that the tide is turning in a direction from which there is no turning back. We, too, will pass away before long. Most people don't know about this. Even when I think about how to convey these feelings in such a situation, it's hard to figure out. Fifteen years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the number of people who don't know about it will continue to grow. How to pass on these memories is now a key challenge in the context of disaster recovery. War is the greatest disaster of all. How should we approach this? There's no easy answer, but I'd like to ask you, Professor, for a few words of advice.

Professor Tanaka

First and foremost, I think it's about everyone gaining a realistic understanding of war. Even those elderly people who have become complacent about peace—they do, after all, have some experience of war, however small. That's why they naturally know it's something that must never be done, and besides, Japan's Constitution is a magnificent one. It wasn't just handed to us; It is a noble constitution created by the Japanese people. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, all of Japan's cities were completely destroyed. Children today may not be aware of this, but the experience of that devastation—the conviction that such suffering must never be repeated, and that we must not allow other countries to inflict it either—is what crystallized into the Peace Constitution. I really

hope that both moderate politicians and those on the far right will come to understand this one thing: we must not go to war. Even in the past, when I spoke with LDP leaders, there were many politicians who insisted that going to war was something we simply must not do. That's why we haven't done it until now. It's not that they're out of touch. The people who experienced war have managed to protect us this far. But I can't help but feel that people today, who have never known war, are treating it as if it were some kind of game.

The best approach is, after all, for everyone to talk things over together. What I've come to realize after traveling all over the country is that the atmosphere for people to discuss various issues with one another has all but disappeared. No one—not a single person—asks me what they should do or how they should go about seeking advice. I feel that the people—including workers—have become divided. This is because the way things are structured today—in the workplace, in education, and everywhere else—has ended up isolating each individual. Education is designed to foster competition, isn't it? The labor market creates inequality, doesn't it? People are already divided in so many other ways as well. They can't cooperate. They never know when they might be laid off. Since we're in this kind of situation, the first step is to change it. I think we should focus on bringing back the spirit of mutual support from the past—in a positive sense. I'd like to ask young people to do this. We need to start by trusting those around us, engaging in dialogue, and using the power of the collective to transform both the economy and politics. The current economic situation is terrible, after all. There are people who try to make huge profits by pitting others against each other. Those who make huge profits will absolutely never participate in war—they'll be in a safe place when the war ends. People keep dying one after another, but the profits just keep rolling in. Don't you get that impression when you watch Mr. Trump? He says that if he stirs things up and causes a commotion, it's a success. He even says so himself, doesn't he? This is going to be a long story, but the point is that we need to rebuild a situation where everyone trusts one another, and to ensure Japan doesn't head toward war, we really need to speak up to our politicians. After all, losing a competition doesn't mean you're going to die. It's true. And even if you rise to the top through competition, you'll only end up where you're destined to go anyway. People who truly become wealthy just keep getting richer and richer. People who rise to power just keep climbing higher and higher. Since they're naturally good at what they do, there's no need for others to aim for that. I'll try not to go on too long. I think the point is that we should just work to build a happy society.

Questioner 2

I'm from Kamaishi City. This is just the ordinary opinion of an ordinary citizen, but after hearing your special lecture, what really worries me is the issue of nuclear power plants. Even after what happened in Fukushima, I'm deeply frightened by news reports that nuclear power plants are set to be restarted or that new ones are being built. I do hear some news that makes it sound like a positive development, but I'm still very scared. I'd like to ask you, Professor, what your thoughts are on nuclear power plants.

Professor Tanaka

I originally studied in the Faculty of Science and had been conducting research in engineering up until then, so I believe that technological progress is a very good thing. I also believe that the principles of nuclear power generation are a very good thing. However, as I mentioned earlier, nuclear energy is an extremely powerful form of energy, so even the slightest mistake in how it is used can lead to serious consequences. We've been warning about this and saying that Japan isn't yet a country ready for nuclear power generation, but in the end, they brought in generators from Westinghouse—a major American company acting as a contractor—and built a nuclear power plant right there on the beach. Building a nuclear power plant in a location like that was an absolutely reckless mistake. I believe that accident happened because people who didn't really understand it were the ones building it. As someone who has trained engineers, I say that accidents are bound to happen no matter where you build such a plant. Human error is inevitable. When you look at it that way, nuclear power generation is bound to result in accidents.

Therefore, considering the damage that would result from an accident, it is my firm belief that we should not use nuclear power. No matter how good a source of energy it may be, no matter how cheap it is. (Actually, it can't be made cheap.) They simply couldn't ensure safety at a level close to 100%. Just the other day, there was a clear proposal asking, "What will we do when a tsunami hits?" The response was that raising the site elevation would be very expensive. They worried that this would drive up the cost of electricity, so the president didn't agree to it, right? After all, they've learned that a tsunami actually did breach the barriers. From my perspective, no matter what measures are taken, accidents—from a technical standpoint—are simply unavoidable when it comes to human work. I believe the same applies to the use of nuclear energy, which is why we should oppose the restart of nuclear power plants. Let's speak out loud and clear.

Question & Opinion by Questioner 3

Let me just say this. Since I've actually put down roots and made a life for myself in Iwate, I can tell you that in this small corner of the world, 10 percent of the area is at risk of damage from earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. There's no place more dangerous than this. If something were to happen, it would be irreversible. Even recently, near the Noto Peninsula, crustal movement caused the ground to rise by as much as 5 meters. I think the fact that the disaster didn't reach the Shika Nuclear Power Plant was perhaps due to divine protection. While I oppose nuclear power in this sense, there's something I want people in Iwate to know: actually, plans for a nuclear power plant were proposed in Tanohata Village back in the 1970s. Those plans were scrapped due to public opposition. I want you to fully understand the fact that if that plant had been built, Iwate Prefecture would have been devastated by the March 11 disaster. Taking all of that into account, if the public were to play a game of Russian roulette, thinking, "It probably won't hit me," and agreeing to it, then I suppose there might be room to move forward with it. However, many citizens currently have doubts. Yet the reality is that this is being pushed forward

based on certain economic principles, and as a researcher, I must say that I am deeply concerned about this situation.

Professor Hiromi Tanaka

People talk too much about making money and “development.” I think we’ve already developed enough. So when the government and local authorities talk about “development,” what they mean is that their own money keeps circulating, generating more and more profits—that’s what they call development. As far as I’m concerned, I think the Japanese people would be better off returning to a way of life that values farming communities much more.

Moderator

I’m sure there’s still much more to discuss, but our time is up. Therefore, we’ll bring Professor Tanaka’s special lecture to a close here. Now, please give Professor Tanaka a big round of applause.

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