

KeyOpinion

Japan to Blame for Hiroshima

By Tom Burgum
Contributing Writers

One would be inclined to pardon an alien from space who had just arrived in this country, or anyone educated in the United States after 1970, if news reports of the commemoration of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lead them to believe the United States incinerated 140,000 people in Hiroshima for want of something to do that day and then repeated the outrage three days later in Nagasaki, again for no good reason.

What we are lacking, of course, is some historical perspective, some mention of why the U.S. thought it necessary to use the atomic bomb, or how many would have died if World War II had gone on for another year or more. One might also ask if anyone in Japan remembers that the attack on Pearl Harbor predated Aug 6, 1945 and might have had something to do with our willingness to drop the bomb.

The Associated Press coverage from Hiroshima this year was typical. "Marking the 60th anniversary of the world's first atomic bomb attack, more than 55,000 people gathered Saturday in Peace Memorial Park, a sprawling, tree-covered expanse that for one day each year becomes the spiritual epicenter of the global antinuclear movement. A moment of silence was observed at 8:15 a.m., the instant of the blast, and next a flock of doves was released into the sky. Then wreaths and ladles of water symbolizing the suffering of those who died in the atomic inferno were offered at a simple, arch-shaped stone monument at the center of the park."

Forced Hand

Nowhere, it seems, is there any suggestion that events might have forced President Truman to come to the decision to drop the bomb. Truman was faced with a Japan unwilling to surrender. Its leaders had an army of over 3

million men in the Japanese home islands and over 5,000 planes. According to Saburo Ienaga, one of Japan's leading intellectuals and a virulent critic of the United States, "Japan's leaders showed a supreme indifference to the suffering and despair of the populace to the very end. That callous determination was unshaken by two atomic bombings." He further records in his book, "The Pacific War," that the army and its leaders were not prepared to obey the Emperor's surrender announcement. Even though many knew the war was lost, the military, who insisted on a final decisive battle to save the nation.

Truman and his military advisors were faced with the fanatical Japanese determination and the example of Okinawa that finally fell on June 22, 1945. Okinawa had been the bloodiest slaughter of the entire Pacific war. Over 110,000 Japanese soldiers perished, and at least 160,000 civilians died during the battle. The fanatical Japanese resistance by both the military and civilians on the island caused American casualties of more than 50,000 dead and wounded. The awful cost of capturing this small island caused General George Marshall to place the potential cost of invading Japan in American, British, and Australian lives at over one million. If Okinawa was an example of Japanese determination, it could easily be projected that over eight million Japanese soldiers and civilians would perish in their defense of the home islands. Meanwhile, the American bombing campaign had killed over 100,000 civilians, including 80,000 in the fire raid on Tokyo on March 8, 1945, and these raids would have continued until Japan surrendered. A blockade that caused a starving nation into submission might have worked, but we may well question just why this scenario would be considered more humane than the atomic bomb, for either side of the conflict.

Responsibility Shirked

It might be appropriate for press coverage of the Hiroshima commemoration activities to ask why there are not similar events to help all of us remember the almost 370,000 Chinese civilians put to death during the three month Rape of Nanking or the several hundred thousand Chinese who died as victims of germ warfare experiments or the over 25,000 American prisoners taken in the Philippines that perished at the hands of their Japanese captors. The Japanese, as a nation, have thus far only reluctantly shown any desire to acknowledge the suffering of others or their share in causing it to happen. Saburo Ienaga was critical of what he believed was the prevailing mood, "There is an unmistakable effort to shift war responsibility away from Japan."

The Japanese might borrow a page from their former German allies. If there ever was an indefensible bombing, most would agree it was the American and British destruction of Dresden. Over 1,200 British and American planes bombed Dresden during a three-day period in February 1945. Dresden was nearly totally destroyed. As a result of the firestorm, it was afterwards impossible to count the number of victims. Recent research suggests that 35,000 were killed, but some German sources have argued that it was over 100,000. In an earlier observance of this tragedy, the citizens of Dresden chose to make the following statement on a banner that was placed at the head of the commemoration parade. The banner read, "Germany loosed a lightning bolt that went around the world and touched Dresden." It would be surprising if Japan more emphatically acknowledged at one of these events that they loosed a lightning bolt that went around the world and touched Hiroshima. It would be even more surprising if any of our press or media reports voiced a similar sentiment.

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thing about the red tide. She thinks this is the No. 1 problem. "We are losing marine life, turtles are dying, businesses are hurting and Longboat Key needs to do something." St. Denis explained that the Town is doing something. Longboat Key is part of an effort to provide grant money for research. Research efforts in southwest

Florida have proven that pumping ozone into the affected area might help. In other areas some have tried spreading a clay-based solution in order to drive the blooms to the bottom of the Gulf. The ozone tests are going well but, like the use of the clay-based solution, the effects must be determined to insure that these methods are not doing more ultimate harm than good. One member suggested that lawn crews stop blowing leaves and debris into the canals. St. Denis agreed this hurts the situation and reminded the group that the reason the Town cleans the streets is to insure that the debris does not find its way into the Gulf or the bay.

Beach Renourishment

The question of who pays for the engineer's mistake was the 800-pound gorilla in this discussion. St. Denis reminded the group that the engineer made the mistake, not the contractor, and the Town is continuing to work with the engineer to insure the matter is settled equitably. He also was pleased to confirm the cost for remediation is around \$300,000, not the anticipated \$500,000. This seemed to offer little comfort to Dawson who stated categorically, "Anything over zero is too much. The engineering firm, with whom we have worked with for 10 years, is reputable, and they should be more than willing to accept responsibility. I don't feel better just because its \$300,000 rather than \$500,000." He then asked the group if they thought he was "all wet" on this issue. A few mumbled voices indicated that these attendees, at least, agreed with Dawson.

Some 14 people attended the morning session with some new faces joining the usual suspects. Dawson was at his best when he sounded the certain trumpet of resistance to anything resembling higher taxes. If nothing else was accomplished during the meeting, Dawson's pronouncements on taxes and the budget promised a very interesting commission workshop meeting on Sept. 12. Too bad you can't reserve seats for that one.

LongboatLetters

Longboat Key News encourages Letters to the Editor. Please mail, e-mail or fax to one of the following: 5370 Gulf of Mexico Drive, Ste. 210, Longboat Key, FL 34228; e-mail: sreid@lbknews.com; fax: 941-387-8288. We also print letters sent to Town Hall that address Key issues.

Penguins Make Better Moms

After seeing the wonderful movie "March of the Penguins" last night and then reading Mr. Hershatter's "Lament of the Loggerhead Turtles" article in this week's Longboat Key News, I am amazed at the differences of these two species. The dedication and time penguins

spend walking 70 miles to their birthplace, courting the right mate, and the caring by both the male and female for the egg produced is amazing. All the while not having anything to eat for two to three months at a time. A truly inspiring movie.

I must agree with Mr. Hershatter's column regarding the Loggerhead turtle. Compared to the above-mentioned dedication of Penguins to their young, I can feel sorry for the baby turtles who are on their own from day one.

Joyce B. Welch
Longboat Key

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beach. That area has been problematic for the past 10 years. There may be the need for a longer-term solution to the north end's erosion problems, such as some kind of structural groin, or a breakwater (a structure in the water, not connected to the land, that takes away some of the energy of the waves hitting the shore). With a groin, however, there is concern that the sea turtles and their hatchlings could get caught in them and not make it out into the Gulf of Mexico."

Another area of Longboat Key that has had problems with high levels of beach erosion is the Islander Club. According to Coastal Planning and Engineering, this portion of the key's beach is a headland or protrusion, and any protruding section of beach will erode quickly. It was included in the current beach renourishment project and the portion of beach in front of the building has just been placed.

Dave Brennar, president of the Islander Club, said now that the section of beach is done, "It looks terrific, it's almost 200 feet wide. We're very happy with it. There is three feet of gray sand on the bottom and three feet of white sand on top, so the beach looks beautiful."

Longboat Key News

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