

A-Bombs and A Peace-Loving People



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Ir. Chin Mee Poon is a retired civil engineer who derives a great deal of joy and satisfaction from travelling to different parts of the globe, capturing fascinating insights of the places and people he encounters and sharing his experiences with others through his photographs and writing.

We are pleased to announce that a travel coffee-table book, published by IEM, is now available for purchase at the Secretariat:

"A Globe-Trotting Engineer's Footprints"
by Ir. Chin Mee Poon

The selling price is as follows:
Members : RM50
Non-Members : RM55

All proceeds will go to the IEM Building Fund.

For more information, kindly contact IEM Secretariat via telephone 03-7968 4001 and email address at : sec@iem.org.my

Thank you.

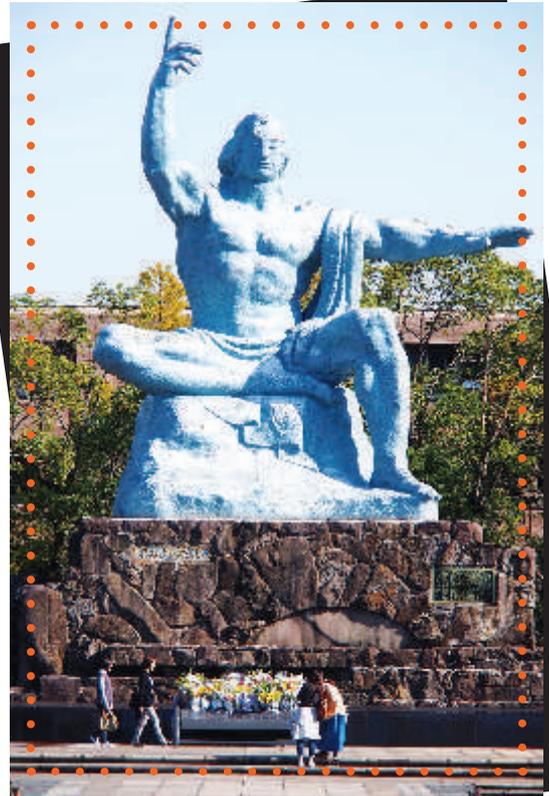
My wife and I visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki during a recent backpacking trip in West Japan. Both cities have the dubious distinction of being the targets of the only two nuclear bombs ever used in warfare in human history.

At 8.15 a.m. on 6 August, 1945, a uranium gun-type atomic bomb, nicknamed Little Boy, exploded at 580m over Hiroshima. The blast and resultant fire storm killed 70,000-80,000 people. Another 70,000 were injured. Three days later, Nagasaki was destroyed by another atomic bomb, a plutonium implosion bomb nicknamed Fat Man. This detonated 500m above the city at 11.02 a.m. on 9 August, 1945.

Now, 70 years after the end of the Second World War, visitors to Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be impressed by the charming cityscapes. At the same time, they will be amazed to see no signs of the horrors that the cities have gone through, except in their respective Peace Memorial Parks. Both cities have emerged from the ashes beautifully like the proverbial phoenix.

The main attractions of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park are the A-Bomb Dome (the skeletal remains of a building close to the hypocentre of the explosion), the Memorial Cenotaph, the Peach Flame and the Peace Memorial Museum. Spend an hour or more in the museum and one cannot help but be deeply moved by the suffering and misery of the people in Hiroshima as a result of the A-bomb. The exhibits successfully illustrate the immediate destruction and subsequent damages caused by the bomb. There are even accounts of the Manhattan Project that developed the A-bombs, the construction of Little Boy and the principle of nuclear fission behind the bombs. However, any visitor with some knowledge about WWII will notice a glaring omission. There is no answer to a simple question: Why did the Allied Forces, the USA in particular, choose to drop the A-bombs in, of all countries, Japan?

In Nagasaki, the Peace Park is dominated by a 10m-tall statue of a man with his right hand pointing at the sky and his left hand showing a peace sign. But, to my disappointment, the Atomic Bomb Museum also paints a similar incomplete picture as its counterpart in



Hiroshima.

I feel that both museums would present a more complete picture if they had also included the sufferings of the people in countries conquered and occupied by the Japanese forces during WWII. With so many lives lost and families broken, the sufferings of these people certainly deserve as much attention as that of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused by the A-bombs.

Recently, the Japanese government reached an agreement with the South Korean government on the longstanding issue of South Korean women forced to work as sex slaves (or comfort women) of Japanese soldiers during the war whereby the Prime Minister of Japan apologised to the President of South Korea and Japan would contribute a sizeable sum of money to a fund set up by the South Korean government to look after the welfare of scores of surviving comfort women. There are also some comfort women who are still alive elsewhere in other countries and a similar move to help these would certainly reinforce Japan's effort in projecting itself as a peace-loving nation. ■