

Ursula Gelis

## The Bomb and the Empire

Interview with Mr. Michio Hakariya from Nagasaki.



Yosuke Yamahata. The Rice Ball. Nagasaki 1945.

*Japan's three non-nuclear principles: Japan shall neither possess nor manufacture nuclear weapons, nor shall it permit their introduction into Japanese territory.*

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/nnp/announce.html>.

Mr. Michio Hakariya: In 1945, although I was only 8 years old, we had military education. Drawing airplanes for instance, and the fleet, was part of our organized activities. On the way to school we walked in lines of ten as a military exercise and when we heard the sound of airplanes, we looked for shelter.

At the gym we were kicking pictures of Roosevelt. We had to be prepared to fight against invaders. My teacher Kohe Kubutshi blew a trumpet and we had to follow...

I lived about 3.8 kilometers away from the epicenter of the detonation of the atomic bomb. I heard the blast on August 9<sup>th</sup>, but my parents did not allow me to go out. Our house was still standing even if the blast blew through the whole building. Unfortunately my older brother was injured by broken glass. I had no wounds.

Greater damage happened to places in the distance from 'ground zero' to 3.5 kilometers away.

I do not recall the days after the bombing. I only knew that a disaster had happened.



Mr. Michio Hakariya. Atomic Bomb museum. Nagasaki, 11<sup>th</sup> of August 2012.

After the defeat of Japan on August 15, 1945, I felt ashamed and thought about committing suicide. As you know, I was only 8 years old and had learned that Japanese must be prepared to die for the Emperor.

I had mixed feelings because after the war, we – as young boys – could finally go out. We were in a way free... We had no food and I was desperate to live and to eat!

We had no knowledge about radiation effects when the nuclear bomb exploded over Nagasaki. Later, my older brother died from lung cancer, and two others have diseases. I am ok.

Now the nuclear power plant disaster in Fukushima has happened, but I do not connect my childhood memories to this catastrophe of 2011. I am willing to share my experience while my brothers do not. With them, I cannot bring the subject up.

My message to the next generations is simple: I do not want young people to have to experience war as I did. No more 'Hibakushas', no more victims of the bomb!

I am talking here about the misery attached to any war: the sadness and agony of war. To prevent wars, we have to educate people about the perils and horrors of war. Another aspect is to take care of our Article 9, the peace paragraph, of the Japanese Constitution.

Human memory has a tendency to slip, and critical judgment to fade, with the years and with changes in life-style and circumstance. But the camera, just as it seized the grim realities of that time, brings the stark facts...before our eyes without the need for the slightest embellishment. Today, with the remarkable recovery made by both Nagasaki and Hiroshima, it may be difficult to recall the past, but these photographs will continue to provide us with an unwavering testimony to the realities of that time.

*-YOSUKE YAMAHATA*