

Hiroshima and Peace 2009

by Neo Alagić

When the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, visited Hiroshima on September the 2nd, 2008 – the world remembered yet again the tragedy that struck Japanese City of Hiroshima. After the city of Hiroshima was struck by a nuclear bomb, the city of Nagasaki has suffered the same consequences three days later. Japan surrendered one week later. Nuclear weapon has been used in a war, for the first time in the entire world's history. Above mentioned are the consequences which describe the bomb dropping alone on the city of Hiroshima by the American B-29 bomber – Enola Gay. 140, 000 people died from the impact of the bomb, many more have suffered from the impact of the bomb.

When people think of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they think of war. Their immediate thought is the first use of nuclear bomb in the history of mankind, loss of civilian lives, and the aftermath which is hard to forget years after this tragedy took place. While Hiroshima certainly is a remainder of all of the above, today's Hiroshima is first and foremost a testimony to peace. People called "hibakusha", survivors of the atomic bomb, are telling their stories to new generations of students and young professionals in this vibrant city full of greenery. Their message is never to forget what kind of tragedy happened (and can happen again if we don't pay attention to history's lessons), but strive for peace by working for it and by not holding hate in our own hearts.

In fact, "a roadmap to a nuclear weapon-weapon-free world by 2020" with "Mayors for Peace" program has been started by Hiroshima's Mayor Tadatashi Akiba and Mayor Tomihisa Taue of Nagasaki. Mayors are spokespersons of peace in CANT (Cities Are Not Targets) Petition Drive. In the above mentioned project one of the key points is to bring awareness of increasing nuclear powers of today. The goal of this important mission is to notify the world that cities and civilians are not nuclear targets, and also to bring awareness of "Hiroshima Nagasaki Protocol". "Hiroshima Nagasaki Protocol" is a concrete commitment to a nuclear free world. It is imperative to bring awareness to future Mayors for Peace Member Cities because in the next few years the international community will decide either to eliminate nuclear weapons or to use them. Currently, there are 2,963 member cities in 134 countries and regions. Momentarily, Asia counts 29 countries and regions with 653 cities, Africa with 30 countries and regions with 129 cities, Oceania with 9 countries and regions with 88 cities, Europe with 42 countries and regions with 1, 713 cities, North America with 13 countries and regions with 307 cities and finally, South America with 11 countries and regions with 55 cities. It is worth mentioning that Croatia stands at number 10 in Europe, along with Czech Republic, in this project with its 28 city members.

Coincidentally, one of Hiroshima's pivotal buildings is the A-Bomb Dome is designed by the founder of modern architecture in Czechoslovakia. It stands proud as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. Surviving the atomic bombing, it is now located near the beautiful Ōta River as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a memorial to the people who died in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Perhaps the most astounding thing about Hiroshima is that not only it exists as a beautiful city, but this city is a

present day testimony of peace. With their mayors and non-governmental profit organizations, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are Japan's landmarks of peace and harmony, testimonies of war and monuments of peace.

Croatian Japanese Cultural and Economic Society sent a delegate this year, as well, to deliver paper cranes made by children of elementary schools all over Croatia. "1000 Cranes from Croatia to Hiroshima" is an ongoing project conducted by Croatian Japanese Cultural and Economic Society where children, inspired by Sadako Soseki's story, make cranes which are sent to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Croatia joins Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a prayer for world peace as Croatian cranes are placed underneath the statue of Sadako Soseki, along with cranes from all over the world.

"1000 Cranes from Hiroshima to Croatia" is a peace project. This project is accomplished by being proactive for peace, working all year round to bring the awareness of devastation that happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to school pupils. Children in Croatia's elementary schools are taught about Sadako Saseki's story, and they are taught the meaning of folding origami cranes. Most of the children are taught how to fold origami cranes for the first time in their life. But it is certainly an important lesson when a child is taught a skill such as origami by folding a crane in the name of peace.

And that is one of the life lessons Hiroshima has for people to witness; it is imperative to be proactive when working for peace; to learn things such as the presence of social justice through equal opportunity; a fair distribution of power of resources; equal protection and impartial enforcement by law. Hiroshima City University conducts a course where students from all over the world are taught just that; definition of peace is more than just focus on the absence of war (in fact, this is a definition of negative peace); being proactive for peace is to focus on the underlying structures of warfare such as dynamics of structural violence and inequality.

Perhaps the most memorable thing about Hiroshima is something which can only be felt rather than described. One thing Croatian Japanese Cultural and Economic Society experienced this year as well was peace amongst people, acceptance and the learning the concept of being proactive for peace. While there are constant testimonies of nuclear bombings and war atrocities, they are reminders what can happen if we, as humanity, do not strive for harmony and peaceful co-existence. Hiroshima and Nagasaki teach us that it is possible to enter the future not by holding a grudge but by simply learning from the past.