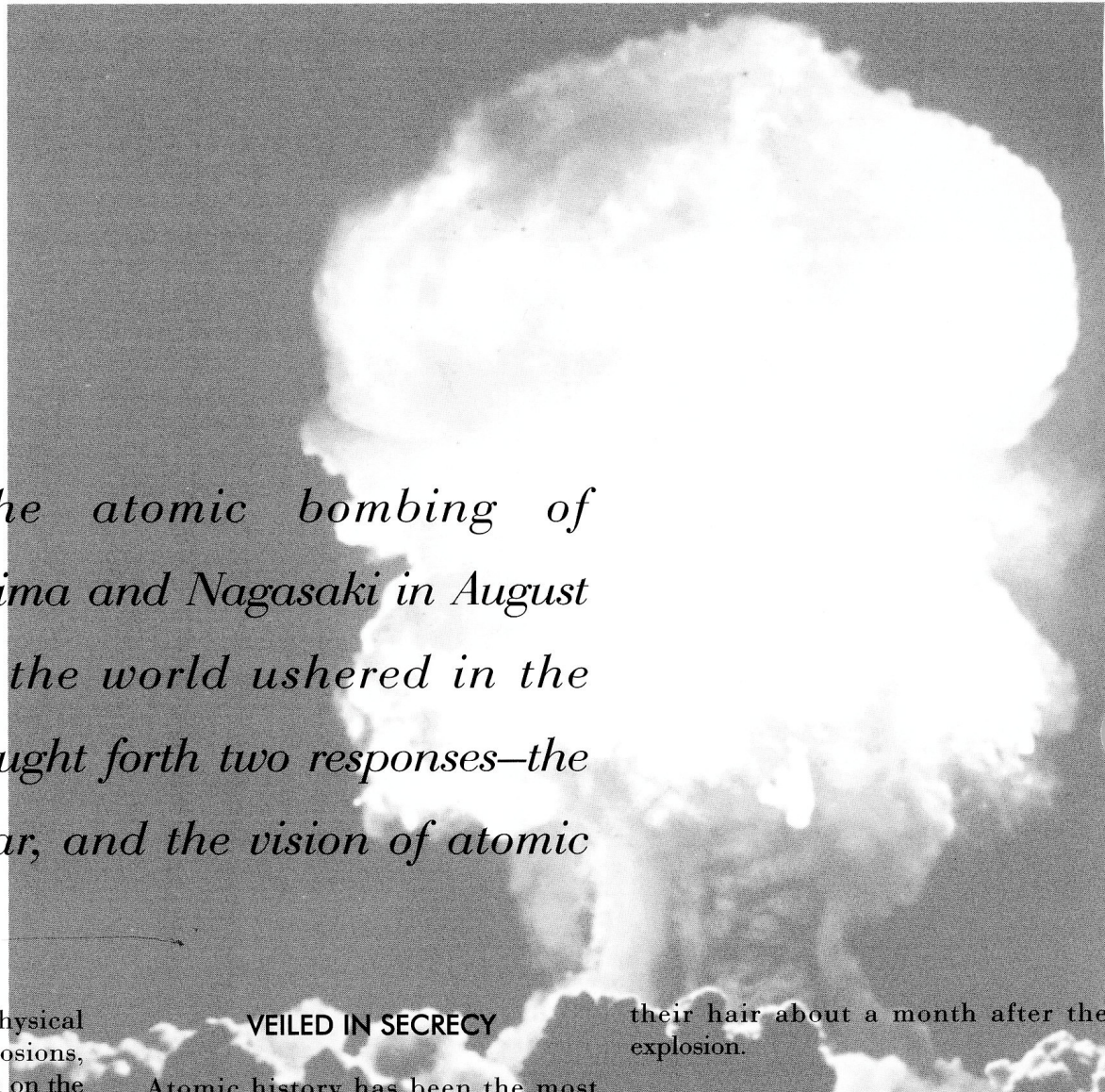


THE LEGACY OF ATOMIC BOMB

By Clifford Uyeda



W*ith the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the world ushered in the Nuclear Age. It brought forth two responses—the terror of atomic war, and the vision of atomic utopia.*

Apart from the immediate physical effects of nuclear weapons explosions, there are three effects of radiation on the human body. (1) Cells may be killed, (2) Cell multiplication may be affected, resulting in cancer, (3) Cells in the reproductive organs may be damaged, resulting in inherited abnormality. The long term effects on the health of the human body have become people's major concerns.

In the post-war euphoria of the 1950s, however, the liberated atom was believed to make life a heaven on earth. In 1954, Congress enticed private industry into collaboration with the government by offering partnership with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. Dr. James Conant, however, had predicted that the problem of radioactive waste disposal would prove virtually insoluble.

VEILED IN SECRECY

Atomic history has been the most intensive campaign of secrecy in human history. Some nuclear accidents could not be hidden from the public, but the public in general was not aware of vital information for years and decades.

When the first atom bomb "Trinity", was field tested in New Mexico on 16 July 1945, the government had a cover story prepared for the press which claimed an ammunition dump explosion. A 300 sq. mile area became coated with high radioactivity. Radiation was detected in Santa Fe, NM, in Las Vegas, NV, and in Trinidad, CO. From New Mexico the cloud drifted across Kansas, Iowa, upstate New York, New England, and out to sea. About 30 miles north of ground zero Hereford cows began losing

their hair about a month after the explosion.

The first North American (Harry Daghlian) to die of acute radiation sickness was at the Los Alamos laboratory in May 1946. He had accidentally contaminated himself experimenting with fissionable material.

In the summer of 1946, a series of tests were detonated within the Bikini Island lagoon. Two hours after the detonation, Navy personnel re-entered the lagoon; and before the day's end the lagoon was declared radiologically safe and the entire task force re-entered the lagoon. Many of the participants received radiation doses hundreds of thousands of times above doses considered safe today.

During Hanford's first two decades,

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the Columbia River became grossly contaminated by radiation from the plant. By 1954, with eight reactors churning out plutonium, the radioactive emission into the river was staggering.

In the 1950's, more than 150,000 U.S. military troops participated in the atmospheric nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site. The most notorious was the test named "Smokey" on 31 August 1957. The troops watched the test from a point 18 miles from ground zero and, three hours later, carried out combat tasks and retrieved contaminated equipment. At least ten of the 3,554 participants at Smokey died from leukemia before the age of 45.

John Wayne's death has a seldom told story. In 1954, "The Conqueror" starred John Wayne as Genghis Khan. The desert location for the Gobi Desert was in Utah, just 137 miles from the Nevada Test Site, where there had been eleven atmospheric tests the year before. Most of the filming took place in a canyon which turned out to be a radioactive "hot spot." By 1984, 91 of the cast and crew of 220 (41 percent) developed various tumors, and over half of them—including John Wayne, Dick Powell, Susan Hayward and Agnes Moorehead—had died.

There were 21 British nuclear tests in Australia, and the 1985 Australian Commission report concluded the increase in the level of cancer among the Australian population, in particular among the thousands of servicemen and civilians directly involved in the tests.

The Bikini tests in the 1950s were the

hydrogen bombs, hundreds to a thousand times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb. The best known to the world was the "Bravo" tested on 1 March 1954. The atolls were coated with powder to a depth of one and a half inches. It was three days before the U.S. Navy ships arrived to evacuate the 236 islanders and 28 American service personnel. By then, their hair was falling out. A Japanese tuna fishing boat was caught in the path of the fallout. By the time they reached Japan two weeks later, all 23 crew members were suffering from radiation sickness. The Bikini people believe that they were deliberately used by the U.S. as nuclear guinea pigs.

At Rocky Flats, Colorado, a few miles outside Denver, a fire at a plutonium plant sent thick black smoke into the air on 11 September 1957. No warning was given out. In May 1969, at the same plant, it was noted that hundreds of drums containing plutonium-contaminated oil had been leaking for more than a decade.

The first French nuclear test occurred in February 1960, and the first test in the French Polynesia was carried out on 2 July 1966. Between 1966 and 1974, France conducted 44 atmospheric tests in the Pacific. In June 1995, the French government announced the resumption of nuclear test in the South Pacific beginning in September.

China became a nuclear power in 1964 when it exploded an A-bomb in the atmosphere. After observing a world wide moratorium with other nations,

THE NUCLEAR FUTURE

by Clifford Uyeda

The tide of history is turning against the concept of security through nuclear weapons. "The Atom for peace and the Atom for war" are just different sides of the same nuclear coin.

Nuclear power now delivers only four percent of the world energy needs. Sweden is committed to easing out all nuclear power completely before the year 2010. Austria and the Philippines both decided to scrap their nuclear power plants before they even began operation, writing off billions of dollars of investment. Italy and Spain have called a halt to the further expansion of nuclear power. Nuclear power in private industry has caused some of the world's most spectacular bankruptcies. Today, nuclear powered vehicles are only used to transport nuclear weapons. Nuclear powered stations are glorified steam engines. For over 250 years, since the beginning of the industrial revolution, energy has been obtained by boiling water to create steam. In nuclear power stations, nuclear energy is used to boil water to raise steam.

Solar and wind powered are becoming economically competitive. Under research are the geothermal energy, the energy of waves and tides.

The nuclear age has taught us that suspicion, greed and conflict only lead to ultimate disaster. The Nuclear Age has left us with a legacy of fear. We live in an era of technology out of control.

Nuclear weapons continue the old imperial tradition of a threat of violence instead of discussion and negotiations. After five decades of nuclear arms race, every country lives in fear of a nuclear holocaust. The technology of the Nuclear Age has made war obsolete. Technology alone will not solve our problems. We need human imagination and vision of a secure world without nuclear weapons. We need a new way of thinking. War itself is the greatest atrocity of mankind. Peace is a debt we owe in memory of millions who perished in wars.