

**Speech by Senator Gavin Marshall to the opening of an
exhibition to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the atomic
bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in August 1945.
Trades Hall – Wednesday 3 August, 2005. 5.30pm**

Introduction

Thanks John (Speight) and to Pauline Mitchell for the invitation to attend tonight's opening and to say a few words

Can I begin firstly by congratulating those involved with the conception of this fantastic idea, its organisation, curatorship and publicity, the event tonight, and everything else.

It's a wonderful exhibition and expression, and to Pauline, Joe Staats and Heather Corry in particular, can I say on behalf of everyone here tonight, and those who will attend the exhibition over the coming days, thank you and well done.

The event that changed the world forever

As we know, in three days time, people everywhere will stop to remember an event that forever changed the world.

At 8.15 on the morning of the 6th of August 1945, the Enola Gay, a B-29 Superfortress named after its pilot's mother unleashed the largest weapon of mass destruction ever seen by the world in a theatre of war.

An atomic bomb nicknamed "Little Boy" was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, which at the time was a military centre and the seventh largest city in Japan.

Those on board the Enola Gay – the ones in charge of delivering upon the order to drop the bomb weren't sure whether the weapon would actually detonate or not and certainly did not know the likely affect if it actually did.

It was soon evident.

Little Boy produced a yield of approximately 20,000 tonnes of TNT, and as President Truman boasted in his press release of 6 August, it had "more than 2,000 times the blast power of the

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British "Grand Slam" which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare".

Half of the bomb's energy produced an airburst some 300 metres above the city creating a fireball with a diameter greater than the length of three football fields and a mushroom cloud which rose six kilometres in the air.

It vapourised, crushed or burned around 70,000 people instantaneously.

Tens of thousands more were still alive initially and those who could began to mill around the city, seeking relief from shock, fire and pain. Thousands threw themselves into the Ota River, which by the end of the day was awash with corpses.

One third of the bomb's energy was generated into heat. On the

ground, beneath the explosion centre (hypocentre), the temperature rose to approximately 5,000 degrees Celsius.

Ceramic roof tiles on houses within a half-a-kilometre radius of the explosion centre melted, and gray stones which contained silicon

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particles became white. The clothes which people wore were burnt by the heat within a two kilometre radius of the explosion centre.

The wind velocity on the ground beneath the explosion centre was 1580 km/hr, which is nine times stronger than the wind generated by severe tropical cyclones. The pressure was 3.5kg per square centimetre.

At a point that was half-a-kilometre from the explosion centre, the wind velocity was 1,000 km/hour; the pressure was 1.9kg per square centimetre. Most concrete buildings inside this range were completely destroyed. One further kilometre and all brick buildings were completely destroyed.

60 per cent of the city of Hiroshima was destroyed by the atomic bomb.

Three days later, at 11.15 in the morning, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb on Japan.

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Its target, Nagasaki, a port city in southern Japan was 30 per cent destroyed by the bomb and approximately 40,000 of its citizens were killed.

By the end of 1945, the estimated number of people who had died as a direct result of the Hiroshima bombing was 140,000. It is estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 people eventually died as a result of the two.

Manhattan Project

The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the result of a \$2 billion crash program code-named Manhattan Project,

ordered by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The project was undertaken in secret laboratories in the US from December 1941, before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour.

Disagreement with the decision

President Harry Truman's decision to unleash the bombs at the end of World War II was rightly condemned in many quarters at the time and afterwards.

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On August 8, 1945, two days after the bombing of Hiroshima and one day before the bombing of Nagasaki, Herbert Hoover wrote to *Army and Navy Journal* publisher, Colonel John Callan O'Laughlin and exclaimed that "the use of the atomic bomb, with its indiscriminate killing of women and children, revolts [his] soul".

(Quoted from Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, p.635)

Brigadier General Carter Clarke, the military intelligence officer in charge of preparing intercepted Japanese cables for President Truman said "...when we didn't need to do it, and we knew we

didn't need to do it, and they knew that we knew we didn't need to do it, we used them as an experiment for two atomic bombs."

(Quoted in Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, p.359)

It's a poignant quote that leaves me with a sickening feeling.

And moreover, Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman has written,

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It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons.

The lethal possibilities of atomic warfare in the future are frightening. My own feeling was that in being the first to use

it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children. (William Leahy, I Was There, p.441)

A point we would all agree is very fairly made.

And how right he would be proven to be about where this precedent would lead the world.

The Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty and the nuclear status of the world today

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The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which came into force in 1970 committed countries without nuclear weapons not to acquire them but at the same time gave all the "inalienable right" to develop nuclear technology and to participate in "the fullest possible exchange" of nuclear materials for peaceful purposes.

As a result, around 1,900 tonnes of highly enriched uranium is now in the possession of some 46 countries. Another 1,855 tonnes of plutonium, about a quarter of it reprocessed and separated, has been stockpiled around the world, mostly in the UK, France, Russia and Japan.

The reprocessed plutonium alone is enough to build more than 100,000 nuclear bombs.

And despite the destruction of some 38,000 U.S. and Russian nuclear warheads since 1986, the world's current stockpile of nuclear bombs stands at 27,000, most of which are much more powerful than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 60 years ago.

Notwithstanding the fact that more than 20 countries have rejected and/or dismantled nuclear weapons programmes since the 1960s, the most recent of which being Libya, the Treaty has failed to stop countries developing nuclear weapons. Indeed, India, Israel and Pakistan have refused to sign the Treaty and North Korea formally

opted out of it in 2003.

At present, as many as nine countries may possess nuclear weapons and dozens more have access to nuclear materials and the technology to turn them into bombs.

Israel's secret nuclear weapons programme, and its stockpile of hundreds of nuclear warheads has at times raised tensions in the Middle East. Iraq, Libya and perhaps Iran have all pursued nuclear weapons programmes.

And we can hardly forget France's nuclear tests undertaken on our doorstep at Moruroa atoll in French Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean in the 1990's.

Today, North Korea seems to be on the verge of testing a bomb and Iran is defiant about enriching uranium for civilian nuclear

power, a situation many countries consider to be a smokescreen for more sinister intentions.

There are also signs that the US and UK are developing new nuclear weapons. Last month, the US Senate agreed to a \$4 million appropriation for the Bush Administration to assess the feasibility of nuclear "bunker busters", and the UK is actively investigating new warheads to replace those carried by the Trident submarines.

So here we are some 60 years on from the horrific experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet we have to ask how far have we as a world community and the human race really come? The question we have to ask ourselves is in 60 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the indiscriminate killing of some 300,000 people, what on earth have we learned?

Conclusion

Just finally, can I take this opportunity to again thank Pauline and John for their invitation for me to be here tonight and for the opportunity to speak with you.

Can I also again congratulate the efforts of those from the

Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament

involved in organising the exhibition and tonight's event.

May we never forget the events of August 1945 and may we use this anniversary and the events commemorating it as a launching pad to strive even harder for worldwide nuclear disarmament.

Thank you.

