

41 years ago this week the US atom-bombed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing hundreds of thousands of people. Star editor TONY CHATER looks at the real motive behind the bombing.

FORTY ONE years ago today, the most horrendous nuclear test in history was carried out on the city of Hiroshima in Japan.

At least 75,000 people perished immediately. The eventual death toll was at least 200,000; and this does not include those who died much later of cancer or through deformities at birth.

Three days later, on August 9, a similar atrocity was committed in the city of Nagasaki.

But what was the real motive behind the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs?

As Professor Blackett, British physicist and Nobel Prize winner, put it in 1948: "The dropping of the bomb was not so much the last military act of the Second World War, as the first act of the cold war with Russia."

The Soviet Union had agreed with its allies to attack Japan three months after the ending of the war in Europe. Germany surrendered on May 8. The deadline for the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan was therefore August 8 — two days after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

There was, thus, little time to ensure that Japan was occupied by the US rather than the Soviet Union.

The US government claimed that the bomb was used to end the war quickly and save the lives that would have been lost in an invasion of Japan. But this was a propaganda cover-up.

Unnecessary

The US military command has since been shown to have believed that no such use of the A-bomb was militarily necessary.

After the event, the US Strategic Bombing Survey made the following point:

"It seems clear that, even without the atomic bomb attacks, air supremacy over Japan could have exerted sufficient pressure to bring unconditional surrender and obviate the need for invasion.

"Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the survey's opinion that certainly prior to December 31 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

Thomas K. Finletter, who later became chairman of the US air policy committee and head of the US Marshall Plan mission in Lon-

don, explained the position clearly on June 15, 1946.

Answering the charge that the US should have set up a demonstration of the new weapon's power for the Japanese government, rather than launching it on Hiroshima, he said:

"There was not enough time between July 16, when we knew at New Mexico that the bomb would work, and August 8, the Russian deadline date, for us to have set up the very complicated machinery of a test atomic bombing involving time-consuming problems of area preparations, etc. . . .

"No, any test would have been impossible if the purpose was to knock Japan out before Russia came in — or at least before Russia could make anything other than a token of participation prior to a Japanese collapse."

Force

What those two quotes show is that the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs were used to force a quick surrender from Japan, so that it could be occupied by the US as part of its post-war anti-Soviet strategy.

Ever since, the US has tried to use its nuclear weapons to blackmail the Soviet Union into accepting its diktats.

Needless to say it has failed.

But US imperialism has not given up.

Its latest Star Wars adventure is an effort to gain military superiority over the Soviet Union in order to dictate terms.

But the US is chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. Military superiority is impossible.

The only result of US policy is an ever more expensive arms race and ever greater instability in the world.

Real steps

A test ban treaty is the most immediate and effective way of stopping this drive to world suicide, in the process creating the conditions for real steps toward disarmament.

The Soviet Proposals

One year ago today, the Soviet Union imposed a unilateral moratorium on all its nuclear tests, and invited the US to follow suit.

The moratorium was to last until January 1, 1986. Despite the fact that the US has replied to this gesture by carrying on with one test after another, the Soviet Union extended its moratorium twice, so that it has lasted 12 months up to today.

This decision has not been easy for the Soviet Union. It has meant cutting short its own test programme needed to develop its own weapons, at a time when the US and NATO have been involved

in large-scale military preparations.

But the Soviet Union made this decision in accord with the determined striving for ending the arms race at the heart of Soviet policy.

Its aim was not to achieve a respite between explosions, but to facilitate the signing of a treaty banning all tests.

Washington's only excuse for ignoring the Soviet initiative has been to argue that verification of compliance with a ban was impossible.

In the first place, this is quite untrue. As long ago as 1958 at a meeting in Geneva, Soviet, US, British and French experts agreed that nuclear explosions can be detected from outside national boundaries.

Inspection

Modern instruments can detect tests that are under 0.5 kilotons TNT equivalent at a distance of 4,000 to 5,000 kilometres.

The on-site inspection which the US has always demanded is not really necessary. But in view of US insistence, the Soviet Union has now agreed to on-site inspection.

There is no longer any legitimate reason why a test ban treaty cannot be signed.

Why does the Pentagon oppose a test ban treaty?

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