On the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, something happened to break the monotony of the previous months.

Excerpts from:

Recollections and Reflections of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

By PEDRO ARRUPE

HIROSHIMA WAS A CITY of some 400,000 inhabitants. It was built in a completely Japanese style, except for some large buildings of reinforced concrete in midtown. The dominant architectural style employed hard woods. Most of the houses were of one story, but some had two. The streets were narrow and winding. All around the perimeter of the city, one saw buildings with heavy roofs, fragile walls made of thick paper and floors of *tatami* or of straw.

Militarily, Hiroshima was very important: It was the second general headquarters for the Japanese troops and one of the principal ports for transporting armed divisions. Before the landing of the Americans, thousands of soldiers passed weekly through Hiroshima. The Jesuits had two houses in Hiroshima: One was the parish church in the very center of town; the other was the novitiate, six kilometers from the center of the atomic explosion. This was in a place called Nagatsuka, and I was there at the time with 35 young Jesuits.

From the outset of the war, and more so as it ran its course, one fact attracted our attention: All the other large urban centers surrounding it had been bombarded in a devastating manner, while Hiroshima remained intact. Only once did a bomb fall, almost as if by accident, in the heart of the city without causing much damage.

On the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, something happened to break the monotony of the previous months. At about 7:55 in the morning a B-29 appeared. The air-raid alarm did not cause us any undue worry since we had grown accustomed to seeing squadrons of a hundred planes flying over our heads. There seemed to be no reason to be concerned. Ten minutes after the alarm began to sound we were sure the enemy had left the city. We then resumed our usual activities in peace.

I was in my room with another priest at 8:15 when suddenly we saw a blinding light, like a flash of magnesium. Naturally we were surprised and jumped up to see what was happening. As I opened the door that faced the city, we heard a formidable explosion similar to the blast of a hurricane. At the same time doors, windows and walls fell upon us in smithereens.

WE THREW OURSELVES or were thrown to the floor. I say we were thrown because a German priest, who weighed more than 90 kilos [about 200 pounds] and had been resting against the windowsill of his room, found himself sitting in the hall several meters away with a book in his hand. The shower of roof tiles, bricks and glass rained upon us....Three or four seconds seemed an eternity because when one fears that a beam is about to crash down and flatten one's skull, time is incredibly prolonged.

When we were able to stand, we went running through the house. I had the responsibility for 35 young men who were under my direction. I found none of them had even a scratch. We went out into the garden to see where the bomb had fallen, since none of us doubted that that was what had happened. But when we got there, we looked at one another in surprise: There was no hole in the ground nor any sign of an explosion. The trees and flowers all seemed quite normal. We searched the rice fields surrounding our house, looking for the site of the blast, but to no avail. After about 15 minutes, we noticed that in the direction of the city, dense smoke was rising. Soon we could see enormous flames.

We climbed a hill to get a better view. From there

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we could see a ruined city: Before us was a decimated Hiroshima.

Since the houses were made of wood, paper and straw, and it was at a time when the first meal of the day was being prepared in all the kitchens, the flames coming into contact with the electric current turned the entire city into one enormous lake of fire within two and a half hours.

I turn this narrative now from what we saw and felt in Nagatsuka to the situation in Hiroshima.

I shall never forget my first sight of what was the result of the atomic bomb: a group of young women, 18 or 20 years old, clinging to one another as they dragged themselves along the road. One had a blister that almost covered her chest; she had burns across half of her face, and a cut in her scalp caused probably by a falling tile, while great quantities of blood coursed freely down her face. On and on they came... a steady procession numbering some 150,000. This gives some idea of the scene of horror that was Hiroshima.

We did the only thing that could be done in the presence of such mass slaughter: We fell on our knees and prayed for guidance.

We continued looking for some way of entering the city, but it was impossible. We did the only thing that could be done in the presence of such mass slaughter: We fell on our knees and prayed for guidance, as we were destitute of all human help.

I had studied medicine many years earlier, and I ran back to the house to find medical supplies. I found the medicine chest under some ruins with the door off its hinges. I retrieved some iodine, aspirins and bicarbonate of soda. Those were the only supplies at a time when 200,000 victims needed help. What could I do? Where to begin? Again I fell on my knees and implored God's help.

It was then that He helped me in a very special way, not with medications but with a simple and essential idea. We quickly decided to clean the house as best we could and tried to accommodate as many of the sick and wounded as we could possibly fit inside. We were able to take only 150.

The first thing that had to be done was to gather up extra food to provide those patients with sufficient energy to react against hemorrhages, fever and infection caused by burns. Our young people, on foot or on bicycles, rushed about the outskirts of Hiroshima. Without thinking how or from where, they came dashing back with more fish, meat, eggs and butter than we had seen in four years. With these we were able to care for our patients.

Some success crowned our efforts because almost without realizing it, we were attacking from the outset the anemia and leukemia that would develop in the majority of the wounded who had been exposed to atomic radiation. We can rejoice that none of those hospitalized in our house died, except one child who suffered an attack of meningitis as a result of the accumulation of fluid on the brain and died the following day. All the rest survived.

After 12 hours we were able to enter the city. As usually happens after great fires, an enormous amount of water vapor condensed and descended in torrential showers. In this way, at least, the burning embers were extinguished.

It was 5 in the afternoon. An indescribable spectacle met our gaze: a macabre vision that staggered the imagination. Before us lay a city completely destroyed. Through its streets we walked, stepping on ruins under which embers still felt warm. Any carelessness on our part could have been fatal.

Much more terrible, however, was the tragic sight of those thousands of injured people begging for help. One such was a child who had a piece of glass imbedded in the pupil of his left eye, and another who had a large wooden splinter protruding like a dagger from between his ribs. Sobbing, he called out: "Father, save me!" Another victim was caught between two beams with his legs calcified up to the knees. Moving along, we saw a young man running toward us half-crazed and calling for help. For 20 minutes he had been hearing his mother's voice as she lay buried under the rubble of what had been their home. The flames were already enveloping her body, and his efforts to lift the large wooden beams that held her captive had been in vain.

MORE HEARTBREAKING, perhaps, were the cries of the children calling to their parents. Some 200 children had perished in one school when the roof collapsed on them.

At about 10 o'clock in the evening we were able, at last, to locate the residence of our fathers.

We were to witness more horrible scenes that night. As we approached the river, the spectacle was awful beyond words. Fleeing the flames and availing themselves of low tide, the people lay across both shores, but in the middle of the night the tide began to rise, and the wounded, exhausted now and half buried in mud, could not move. The cries of those drowning are something I shall never forget.

At 5 in the morning, we finally arrived at our destination and began our first treatments on the fathers. In spite of the urgency of our work, we had first stopped to celebrate our Masses. Assuredly, it was in such moments of tragedy that we felt God most near to us. It is at such moments one feels in need of supernatural assistance.

The external surroundings in which the Holy Sacrifice was being offered were not such as might promote sensible devotion. In turning around to say "Dominus vobis-

cum," I saw before my eyes many wounded, suffering terribly. While reading the Epistle and the Gospel, I had to be careful not to touch with my feet the children who lay so close to me. They wanted to see closely this stranger who was wearing such odd clothing and performing those ceremonies they had never seen before. In spite of it all, I do not think I have ever said Mass with such devotion.

After Mass, when we began to think what more we could do, since natural healing with the help of a good diet was not enough, the Lord came to our aid once again.

At 8 in the morning, one of our employees came to me with a sack in his hand, and said: "Father, I wanted to help these poor people too and, looking here and there to see what I might find, I came upon this sack filled with little bottles that look like medicine. See if they are any good."

The contents were 15 kilos of boric acid. There lay the solution to our problem. Using our underwear and sheets we made many bandages and began our work, which, though primitive, gave us fine results.

We would place bandages on the wounds, keeping them moist all day with an antiseptic solution of boric acid. In this way, the pain was somewhat relieved and the lesions were kept relatively clean and in contact with the air. The discharge from the wounds would adhere to the dressing, and by changing it four or five times a day we were able to assure asepsis. Continuing this curative process, we could see, in less than a week, the gradual formation of granulations of scar tissue that brought, slowly but surely, a total cure to all. We had no cases of malignant degeneration of the scars.

Much could be written of individual cases that we encountered in that holocaust. I shall briefly describe a few.

I was in Nagatsuka treating some wounded when a young couple came to me. The woman was very well since she had been out of the city at the moment of the explosion. Her husband, a young man of 22, was in a lamentable state. He could hardly move. Assisted by his wife who was dragging him along, he came into the house. A trail of pus followed his entrance. Half of his body was one big wound.

A priest cannot remain outside the city just to preserve his life.

It was the most serious case I had yet seen, and I thought to myself that the poor man had come to die in our midst. But he, when he realized I was hesitating, took hold of my hand and said in anguish:

"Father, help me!"

And his wife, taking my other hand, explained: "Father, we're married just one month. Save my husband!"

I did not know what to say. At a moment like that, a thousand thoughts pass through one's mind all at once. Finally, I answered, almost meditatively: "Very well, let's see what we can do, but... it's going to hurt a lot."

Fixing his eyes on me, he said: "Hurt me all you want, I can bear it."

Accordingly, we put him on the operating table, which was my office desk, and began to clean the wounds. The poor man, how he twisted and turned! It had to be done in cold blood because the pus had hardened underneath the burns, yet, in the midst of his pain, he kept repeating: "Father, don't hesitate to hurt me; I can take it, but just save me."

Someone whispered in my ear: "Would it be possible to cause him less anguish?"

But this was impossible. I had to become like an executioner to this man if I was to save his life. And this I was for two and a half hours. At the end he was prostrate with suffering, and I was exhausted with the tension I felt while crucifying him with so much pain.

In Japan, since the walls are so thin, one can hear every word spoken on the other side; but the young man, forgetting this, as soon as we were out of sight, let go with a volley of verbal abuse against his poor wife, using

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"As men and women dedicated in a special way to loving that God Who both transcends and is active in history, we are sent to witness to, and educate the mind and heart of others concerning the love of Christ which goes beyond the human power to know."

Father Pedro Arupe, S.J.,
November, 1970

The College of the Holy Cross, New England's oldest Catholic, Jesuit college, honors Father Pedro Arupe, S.J., by its fidelity to his inspiring leadership.

refugees. And special mention must be made of the attitudes of loyalty and filial obedience shown toward the church and the Holy Father, particularly in these last years. For all of this, thanks be to God...."

"I am full of hope, seeing the Society at the service of the one Lord and of the church, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth. May she keep going along this path, and may God bless us with good vocations of priests and brothers: for this I offer to the Lord what is left of my life, my prayers and the sufferings imposed by my ailments...."

After the election of his successor, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Father Arrupe was brought to the assembly hall where he greeted the new Father General with a warm embrace and a smile that lit up the whole room. A photograph caught the historic moment and became another of Don Pedro's favorites.

From his resignation as General until his death on Feb. 5, 1991, Pedro Arrupe's life was one of silent prayer and suffering, of utter dependence on others for daily and devoted care, and of waiting patiently for his Lord. His speech had become more and more difficult and limited, but he said a great deal with his eyes and his face. In any case, he has left a rich spiritual and apostolic legacy in his addresses and writings. There is developed in these documents, as the 33rd General Congregation said, "a spiritual doctrine at once profoundly rooted in the Gospel and our tradition and yet one which responds to the challenges of our times."

But the man himself was the most striking message. At the end of a television interview while he was still General, the interviewer threw a surprise question at Don Pedro Arrupe: "Who is Jesus Christ for you?" The answer came right back: "Jesus Christ for me is everything!

PEDRO ARRUPE
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every epithet in the dictionary, thus venting the accumulated anger caused by those hours of torment.

She remained passive. As a good Japanese woman, she listened to him smilingly, lighting his cigarette, wiping away perspiration and giving him something cool to drink. And there she remained by his side day and night. We could never find out when she slept.

IN MEMORIAM

Very Reverend Father General Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

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this great Jesuit
that we are
called to be
"MEN AND WOMEN
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After eight months this couple left our house. On an April morning I saw them walking down the hill by the garden, smiling, happy... and baptized. I felt a deep joy at that moment, which fully compensated for all the pain of the past eight months. If we had not treated that young man he most certainly would have died.

Among all the cases we treated, perhaps those that caused us the most suffering were the children.

Our hearts were torn apart during these treatments, but greater was the consolation at being able to restore the children to their parents. Through the Japanese police, who were well organized, we were able to contact all the families whose children we had in the house.

Memorable are those scenes of reunion with children that were thought dead in the explosion, and now were found alive and well, or at least in the process of healing. Those mothers and fathers, overcome with joy, did not know how to express their gratitude, and throwing themselves at our feet, reminded us of the Acts of the Apostles when pagans, falling on their knees adored the disciples of Christ as gods.

Apart from all these understandable events, there was one development that disconcerted us greatly. Many who were in the city at the moment of the explosion and had suffered no apparent injuries whatsoever nevertheless after a few days felt weak and came to us saying that they felt a terrible interior heat, that perhaps they had inhaled a poisonous gas... and in a short time they were dead.

The first case occurred for me when I was treating an elderly man for two deep wounds on his back. A man came to me and said: "Please, Father, come to my house because my son tells me he has a very bad sore throat."

Since the man I was treating was gravely ill, I answered: "It's probably a cold. Give him some aspirin and make him perspire; you'll see he'll get well." Within two hours the boy died.

Later a girl of 13 came weeping and said: "Father, look what's happening to me."

And opening her mouth, she showed me bleeding gums, small sores on the lining of the mouth and an acute pharyngitis. She showed me, too, how her hair was falling out in her hands in bunches. In two days she was dead.

Of the dead, 50,000 died the moment of the explosion itself, another 200,000 during the following weeks, and others much later as a result of wounds or radiation. Until the day after the explosion, we did not know that we were dealing with the first atomic bomb to explode in our world.

At first, without electricity or radio, we were cut off from the rest of the world. The following day, cars and trains began arriving from Tokyo and Osaka with help for Hiroshima.

They stayed in the outskirts of the city, and when we questioned them as to what happened, they answered very mysteriously:

"The first atomic bomb has exploded."

"But what is the atomic bomb?"

They would answer: "The atom bomb is a terrible thing." "We have seen how terrible it is; but what is it?" And they would repeat: "It's the atomic bomb... the atomic bomb."

They knew nothing but the name. It was a new word that was coming for the first time into the vocabulary. Besides, the knowledge that it was the atomic bomb that had exploded was no help to us at all from a

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medical standpoint, as no one in the world knew its full effects on the human organism. We were, in effect, the first guinea pigs in such experimentation.

But from a missionary standpoint, they did challenge us when they said: "Do not enter the city because there is a gas in the air that kills for 70 years."

It is at such times that one feels most a priest, when one knows that in the city there are 50,000 bodies that, unless they are cremated, will cause a terrible plague. There were besides some 120,000 wounded to care for. In light of these facts, a priest cannot remain outside the city just to preserve his life.

Of course, when one is told that in the city there is a gas that kills, one must be very determined to ignore that fact and go in. And we did. And we soon began to raise pyramids of bodies and pour fuel on them to set them afire.

Within three or four days, with the August sun and the humid heat, our sense of smell told us where the bodies lay. Sifting the ruins of a house, we would often find families of five or six persons crushed underneath. Helped by passersby, we would gather and pile up 50 or 60 bodies and incinerate them at one time. In this way the bodies dug out from the ruins or abandoned on the streets gradually disappeared. ■

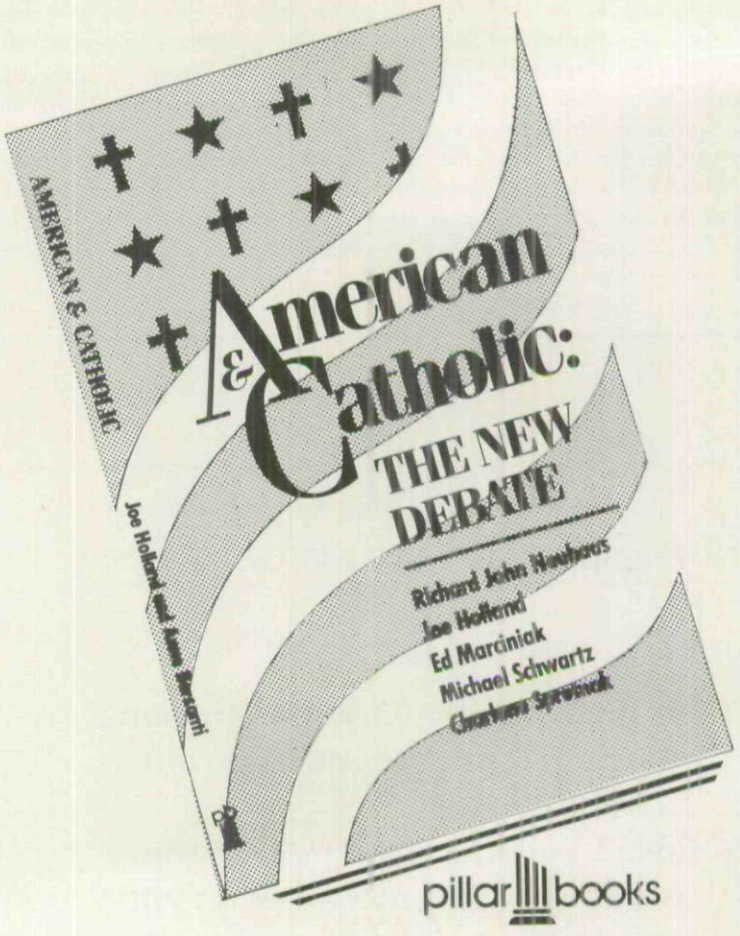
PARMANANDA R. DIVARKAR

(Continued from p. 155)

so. Father Arrupe was keen on having an opportunity to show that the new legislation was effective. In the end he did resign, but in circumstances that he had not at all foreseen.

These circumstances are sufficiently known and too painful to bear recounting. But what many will not have realized is that he was put into a situation that was exactly the opposite of what he had envisaged and looked forward to. He had wanted to be General as long as he could function, and to cease from office when he could not. Now he could not function, not just because of physical disability but because he was deprived of authority while retaining the title—and he could not renounce the title because he was prevented from calling a General Congregation, or plenary assembly, that alone could accept his resignation. This was not merely a fresh cross to carry; it was crucifixion.

It is a bitter-sweet consolation, and a po-



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