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Letters to The Editor, The New York Times.

Dear sir:

I realize it would be something of a miracle should you decide to print my rebuttal to the recent article by Mr. Gar Alperovitz that questioned the necessity of dropping an atomic bomb on Japan.

I am hoping that someone could take the time to read it and perhaps pass it on to the author.

It is important that someone understand the deep feelings shared by almost all veterans of The Pacific War and especially those of us who were prisoners of war of thew Japanese.

Cordially,

June, 1995

YES, HIROSHIMA WAS NECESSARY

No doubt it is presumptuous of me to question the validity of such sacred authority as the venerable *New York Times*, particularly the academic pundits quoted by Gar Alperovitz in "Hiroshima wasn't needed to end the war" (*Vancouver Sun*, June 24, 1995). Indeed, my credentials pale by comparison, only having read high school history, as it was then known, and never rising above the rank of a rifleman in the military.

However, unlike Mr. Alperovitz, I fought the Japanese, and quickly learned to respect their tenacity and fanaticism. Furthermore, I was in Japan at the time the bomb was dropped, a prisoner of war for over forty months, often working beside Japanese men and women, not to mention learning even more about their soldiers.

Mr. Alperovitz makes a big deal that Japan was on the verge of collapse at the time the bomb was dropped. So what else is new? Japan's collapse began as early as the Battle of Midway, when its leading admiral told the Emperor that Japan had lost the war. Collapse did not warrant surrender to the Japanese, who prided themselves in never surrendering.

Indeed, to use one of Mr. Alperovitz's quotations: ..."The Japanese leaders had decided to surrender and were merely looking for a sufficient pretext to convince the diehard Army Group that Japan had lost the war and must capitulate."

The demise of Germany, the horrendous losses in the Pacific,

culminating in the disaster at Okinawa and the destruction by incendiary bombs of Tokyo and other major cities were obviously not sufficient "pretext". Something catastrophic and literally world-shaking was needed. Only the bomb could accomplish this. Mr. Alperovitz conveniently neglects to add that after both bombs had been dropped and the Emperor had taped his speech there was an attempt by an army group to overpower the Emperor and cancel the speech.

Incidentally, the speech began with a wonderful understatement: "The war has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage."

Would Mr. Alperovitz be surprised to know that Japanese children have been taught that Japan would not have been defeated without the advent of the atomic bomb?

He later suggests that the western media are unaware of the truth of the decision to drop the bomb, and that "one source of the widening gap is that many journalists and other authors simply haven't caught up with the experts." Perhaps veteran journalists and authors have leaned long ago to be wary of experts!

He then gives a startling example from one of the unnamed inner circle of experts: "If an initial November, 1945 Kyushu landing had actually occurred the number of lives lost was estimated to be 20,000 to 26,000". What malarkey! He should have investigated what it often cost to conquer even an obscure little Pacific atoll. Better still he should have asked someone who was doing the fighting.

I assume even these vastly underestimated losses were only

American lives. What about Japanese casualties? In Okinawa, where not
all the civilians and soldiers were truly Japanese, conservative estimates
were that over a quarter million died.

Despite the evident overwhelming odds and increasing privations caused by the American blockade, it was my impression that most of the Japanese were prepared to fight to the finish. Even the women in our area were involved, training with long sharp poles with which to spear the invaders. Ridiculous as it sounds, such was the case.

What about the allied forces who having swept through Burma were about to attack Singapore?

What about the over 100,000 allied POWs still alive in Japanese hands?

Perhaps it is best that Field Marshal Tergauchi answer that question. Here are his orders, dated in July, 1945:

"At the moment the enemy lands on Honshu all prisoners of war are to be killed."

We were not exactly unaware of this, as about this time, the prisoners had to dig a large pit in front of our camp. This happened in other camps as well. As my grandchildren would say: "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to predict the reason for the pit."

Now that my hang-up on this issue has been aired and bared, I find it ironic that the article was printed under a column titled, *Modern Times*.

Mr. Alperovitz has joined the parade of cynics in the U.S.A. and Canada who are critical of those who fought and won the last war. The time has come to stop this self-flagellation. No doubt many mistakes were made. Dropping the bomb was not one.