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Despite the destruction brought about by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, surrender was not an easy concept to accept by the Japanese. The hardliners in the military did not think that the war was lost and they were convinced that the enemy would suffer huge losses if it dared to come ashore and invade the Japanese islands. But after assessing the devastating effects of the two atomic bombs, a final conference in the emperor's bomb shelter in Tokyo was held and Hiro Hito himself spoke of the futility of continuing the fight. When his own status as Japanese "divine ruler" was settled, the Empire of the Rising Sun capitulated.

"Peace has come", said the editorial in

this newspaper that used its biggest type to report the end of World War II. Almost six years had passed and the result was 60 million casualties and 14 million killed in battle or dead because of wounds.

"We have met the test of war", proclaimed the newspaper. "In our exultation over victory we must not forget that we now face the crucial test of peace".

The warning was not rhetoric. Damage caused by the war was enormous. In the midst of the celebrations the reality of daily survival and its difficulties aggravated by the destruction caused by the war was coming to the fore. Food was the biggest headache. There were already reports from Europe of serious famine in some areas. Survival, even in

peace, was a tough task. Crops were plentiful in many parts of Europe but transport was seriously impeded by the destruction of infrastructure. Factories were only starting to function and even canned food was difficult to come by.

Food was not the only problem. There was scarcity of clothing, medicines, petrol... with peace came the need for austerity rather than the feeling of plenty. Nations were in financial trouble. Societies had to start almost afresh. Challenges arose everywhere. Europe faced years of rebuilding, since in some countries destruction of buildings was widespread. The war industry had to be now transformed into an industry for peace, an industry to deliver the goods that people most needed. And immense political challenges also lay ahead.

