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Kono Ko Wo Nokoshite

(Children Of Nagasaki)

(JAPANESE-COLOR)

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Karlovy Vary, July 18.

A Japanese Film Production. Features entire cast. Directed by Keisuke Kinoshita. Screenplay, Taichi Yamada, Kazuo Yoshida, Kinoshita, based on Takashi Nagai's book of same title; camera (color), Hirozo Okazaki. Reviewed at Karlovy Vary Film Fest, (Competition) July 12, '84.

Cast: Go Kato, Yukio Toake, Masamoto Nakabayashi, Mami Nishijima, Chikage Awashima.

Often compared with René Clair (whom the director once visited in France) and Frank Capra, Kiesuke Kinoshita made a string of highly popular social satires in the 1950s, perhaps the best to appear in the whole of Japanese cinema. Now, after many years of inactivity and neglected recognition of the body of his remarkable work, he's back in the competition at Karlovy Vary with "Children Of Nagasaki." It's a rather heavily sentimental feature on the dropping of the Atom Bomb there on Aug. 9, 1945. All the same, it has some saving features — not the least of which being thesp Chikage Awashima, one of Japan's most popular stars in the postwar period in the role of the grandmother.

Kinoshita built a career on poignant human tragedies, but will go down in the film history books as a master, too, of the social satire in which the characters were often more memorable than the films. His best features always demonstrated a professional polish: "The Port Of Blossoms" (1943), "A Morning With The Ozone Family" (1946), "Carmen Comes Home" (1951) and "Carmen's Pure Love" (1952) (two very popular films spotlighting a striptease dancer, the latter the first color feature in Japan), "A Japanese Tragedy" (1953), "Twenty-Four Eyes" (1954) (voted "Film of the Year"), "She Was Like A Wild Chrysanthemum" (1955), "Times Of Joy And Sorrow" (1957), "Candle In The Wind" (1957), "The Ballad Of Narayama" (1958) (its remake won the Golden Palm at Cannes last year), and "The River Fuefuka" (1960).

As for "Children Of Nagasaki," it's quite professionally made and acted. And it has a certain immediacy in view of its connection with Kinoshita's earlier antimilitaristic "Morning With The Ozone Family" and "A Japanese Tragedy," both made in the immediate postwar period under the watchful eye of Occupation censors. Undoubtedly, "Children Of Nagasaki" could not have been made back then, so one has the feeling now of being introduced to Keisuke Kinoshita's own film testament — that is, a summary of the director's past personal convictions

Based on the originally banned writings of Takashi Nagai, a young doctor who witnessed the holocaust in the city of Nagasaki, the film is a flashback through the eyes of the writer-doctor's son as the latter returns home on a plane from a convention abroad. He recalls how his father fought valiantly with leukemia and the after-effects of being exposed to atomic fallout while treating the survivors. The doctor's own wife died, but his two little children survived and are cared for in the film by the grandmother (Chikage Awashima) while the bedridden father struggles against time to complete his memoirs and scientific research on the after-effects of the atomic bomb.

It's this tragic experience that forms the pic's core, better understood, however, via the eyewitness' spoken words than in the closing sequence which visually reconstructs that horrendous fire over Nagasaki. —*Holl.*