

REMINISCENCES OF RELIGION IN POSTWAR JAPAN

(Continued from Vol. VII, No. 1)

SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND RELIGION

Crowds of people on the ruins

For several years after the termination of the war, many difficult social problems presented themselves within the country. The solution of these problems was expected from the positive voice and devoted service of religious organizations. It may be said that the religious organizations were given the best opportunity for serving society by the defeat of the country in war.

What were the social conditions at that time? Let us briefly recollect.

When the war was over, almost all the cities had been reduced to ruins as a result of the continuous air raids, and the people who had lost their houses looked for shelter in temporary sheds or dug-out shanties.

Three million six hundred and fifty thousand soldiers were demobilized from overseas and a million and five hundred thousand civilians were repatriated. It goes without saying that this caused great confusion and a severe shortage of housing.

Rapidly increasing numbers of vagabonds and offenders

In the home country itself 3,960,000 soldiers were demobilized by October, 1945, and as many as 4,880,000 people (including 750,000 women) had to leave their employment due to the closing down of factories working for the military.

In other words, as many as 13,990,000 people, including demobilized soldiers from the overseas and repatriates, suddenly lost their employment.

As a natural result a serious unemployment problem arose, and as a by-product vagabonds and offenders increased with violent speed.

Vagabonds wandering about the streets and using the precincts of shrines, temples or burnt buildings as their shelter were found everywhere. Especially the underpass of the Ueno Station at Tokyo became a rendezvous of vagabonds and for this reason became one of the new "sights" of Tokyo.

It was not unusual to find people who had died on the roadside because of hunger and cold.

The most miserable among the vagabonds were juvenile vagrants. According to a survey of the Welfare Ministry in 1948, the number of juvenile vagrants all over the country amounted to 120,000 among whom about 30,000 were said to be war orphans.

The figure of women who were selling their bodies on the streets because they had lost their relatives or their means of living through the war became remarkable day by day. At that time such disgraceful new terms as "*yoru no onna*"

(streetwalker), “*panpan*” (streetwalker; word taken over from Indonesian) and “only” (women living temporarily with Occupation soldiers) were borne in succession.

One evening in November, 1948, the Chief of the Metropolitan Police was beaten by sodomites and robbed of his hat in Ueno Park during his investigation of conditions there.

Not a few sick and wounded soldiers from among 200,000 at the time of the end of the war begged on the streets or in public conveyances. Their poor figures in white symbolized the misery of the defeat in war.

If the law is observed, death from hunger waits

Since the food situation was extreme, the Government authorities predicted that, “In the spring of 1946 about ten million people would die from hunger.”

Even the smooth delivery of the food rations which were barely enough to make hunger bearable was delayed and delayed; and in Hokkaidō food distribution was 75 days in arrears.

Everybody was absorbed in hunting for food. Although the people managed to make a scanty living through the food released by the Americans, “malnutrition” became a kind of national disease.

A certain judge died from malnutrition, because, according to his conscience he refused all black-market dealings. It was in November, 1947, when he demonstrated by his example the fact that if one observed the law faithfully, there was no other way than to die from hunger.

Ninety million people on the four islands

The difficulty of the population problem was fully realized. In addition to ninety million people shut within the four islands, the increasing percentage of the population rose in a steep curve.

Birth control was under serious consideration, and termination of pregnancy without due reasons was committed half-openly. The decadence of sexual morality due to the so-called "release of sex" accelerated the tendency more and more. (It was presumed that around 1950 two or three million of unborn children were aborted per year.)

The illegitimate children of the Occupation, "mixed-blood orphans," were by and by growing into a big social problem.

The loss of the racial self-confidence caused by the defeat was also a serious problem.

The abnormal vogue of sports and motion pictures and vulgar sexual public morals seemed to make the people boneless all the more. The rumors were whispered among the people that the Occupation Forces were trying to make the Japanese lose their racial consciousness and plotting to colonize Japan by means of the 3S (sports, screen, sex) policy.

Moreover, it was a lamentable fact that officially recognized gambling, such as horse races, cycle races, auto races, lotteries, etc., stirred up the gambling spirit of the people.

Crimes increased from day to day with many of these problems as the background. As if resisting the tendency of the new time of democracy which stresses respect for human life, crimes of throwing this same human life away like dust

were committed as if they were nothing.

The case of Kotobuki Maternity Hospital which frightened the whole country in January, 1948, may serve as a good illustration. The owner of the hospital, Miyuki Ishikawa, received more than two hundred infants since 1944 and turned goods rationed for them, including milk, into illegal channels. This resulted in the death from hunger or cold of one hundred and three infants. It may be said that this case reflected the dark situation of the country at that time.

This was the social aspect confronting the religions at the end of the war.

Rehabilitation of the land and the people ; protection and salvation of repatriates, jobless and vagabonds ; solution of the food, housing and population problems ; measures against the rapid increase of crimes, etc.—all these grave problems lay in a heap waiting for religious organizations to step in.

The housing shortage and shrines, temples and churches

What was done by religious organizations and men of religion to solve these social problems ?

First let us take up the housing problem. Many people thought that for the solution of this problem shrines, temples and churches would have been of great use.

Although it was said that many shrines, temples and churches had been damaged by the war, their number was really only 4% of the total, and many buildings still remained uninjured.

The *Chūgai-nippō* in January, 1947, reported the figures concerning temples which released buildings to the people

suffering from the housing shortage. As it is an article reporting vividly the condition at that time, it is reproduced here.

(The housing shortage in Tokyo and the actual condition of released temples.)

Tokyo damaged by war is suffering from an extreme shortage of housing. There are many pitiful people who literally have no roof over their heads.

Actually in the under-pass in front of Ueno Station, more than four thousand people without a house to live in lie down on the way jostling one another every day and every night. The others stay under the eaves of a gate which remained unburnt or in a public lavatory. Someone uses as a house a big tub which was once used for brewing, changed into a water tank during wartime and has been tumbled on the side, and others still live in dugouts left over from the time of air raids.

On the other side, there are a pretty many temples and mansions remaining unburnt which, although they have many rooms, their owners dare not release to accommodate these people. Under these conditions there are not a few temples which take the lead of offering a greater part of the buildings to repatriates or sufferers of war damage. The main temples studied are as follows :

Sensōji

At Sensōji, famous for its veneration of Kannon (Avalokiteśvara), the main hall was burnt but the building used as the office and priests' residence, Dembōin, has remained. The great drawing room always offers shelter to hundred fifty or sixty repatriates. The other rooms are occupied by more than twenty families of war sufferers. The old and elegant large room with a garden in front of it which is one of the ten famous gardens in Tokyo gives endless con-

solation to the repatriates, and in many fine guestrooms even alcoves and corridors are used as kitchens by the war sufferers.

The chief abbot, Rev. Ryōjun Ōmori, however, said that it was not a matter for regret at all even if the mats were spoiled and the sliding screens broken when he thought that this building of Dembōin could also have been burnt. The benevolence of Kannon touching the mind of these people without their knowledge would surely help them to their rebirth and rehabilitation. Therefore the abbot of Sensōji considered it the temple's good fortune to be able to serve in this field. Of course, the temple collected no rent for rooms or something like that, but all was done in service.

Asakusa Honganji

In Asakusa the Tokyo Branch Temple of Ōtani-ha, popularly named Asakusa Honganji, was a gigantic ferroconcrete temple in Shishinden Hall style with unfinished ornaments due to the war control, when in a moment it was reduced to an empty hall by a disastrous conflagration. Also the rooms where the chief abbot stayed during his visits to Tokyo and the offices of the temple in the basement were all burnt to ashes.

Here vagrants nesting around Ueno Station were hunted together and brought on trucks so that Honganji was at a loss at a time because also suspicious characters were mixed among them. Soon they established self-government, and at present 350-360 families divide the basement among themselves. There are quite a few black-marketeers among them, but the others are engaged in regular business and go from here to their working places. They are a well administered community that does not allow outsiders to move in.

As the Metropolitan Government supplies everything necessary, they are able to divide the place into rooms equipped with electric lamps. These rooms are certainly

better than the sheds without mats and window glass, where the rain leaks through the roof, which were designed and sold by the Housing Public Corporation.

In contrast to this, the main hall, which soon will have doors made of zelkova wood, is so devastated that the priests perform memorial services or funerals in the cold wind blowing violently as if the priests as well as the believers were going through a cold-resistance training. The corridor in the rear of the main hall is used as office but it is so miserable and gloomy that only strong religious convictions encourage the deputy chief priest and others to persevere in their work.

(*Chūgai-nippō*, January 8, 1947.)

A daughter of zaibatsu and the mixed-blood orphans

Side by side with these religious organizations and devoted men, there were also many believers who with full confidence in their religion made strong efforts for settling social problems.

Among those people, one whose work is most widely known would be Mrs. Miki Sawada who has wrestled with the problem of the mixed-blood orphans.

Mrs. Sawada, a member of the Japan Episcopal Church, is of strong religious convictions, and while she lived abroad as the wife of a diplomat, she investigated orphanages and other institutions in various countries and has been deeply interested in work of this kind.

It was in February, 1948, when she opened an orphanage for mixed-blood orphans, the "Elizabeth Saunders Home," in the former Iwasaki villa at Ōiso-machi, Kanagawa prefecture. As mixed-blood children were mostly born from 1946 to 1947, it was just the time when this problem began to attract public

attention.

The site was 15,000 tsubo (14 acres), a hill commanding a beautiful sight. A perfectly equipped school, a chapel, and several colorful buildings were the bright surroundings where one hundred and forty children enjoyed an orderly education.

Looking back now, some ten years later, at Saunders Home one may get the impression that the charitable enterprise of Mrs. Sawada was a rather luxurious one. She was the eldest daughter of Hisaya Iwasaki and came thus from the great Mitsubishi family. However, in reality her path has not been an easy one.

One day she found in a train a dead baby of mixed blood, only a few days old. At that moment she made up her mind. It was one year before the institute was established. Her attempt, however, met with a very cold attitude from the side of the Occupation Forces and also from the Japanese Government.

The Occupation Forces thought that the establishment of an institute which would gather the mixed-blood children would bring into daylight a shameful side of the Occupation. They recognized the establishment reluctantly and continued for a long time afterwards to display bad feelings toward the Home.

Within the country the title of "a daughter of the *zaibatsu*" was an obstacle because it was just the time that the *zaibatsu* had been dissolved and thus she had to face disagreeable treatment from the officials.

However, her long stay overseas had developed in her a subtle sense for diplomacy. In addition to that, she was by nature a woman of strong self-confidence. Thus, braving all

difficulties she collected the necessary funds and started the Home by buying back Iwasaki's villa which had just before been taken away as a payment in kind for the property tax.

For several years then the maintenance of the Home was extremely difficult. One can say she barely managed to support it by selling her own property. Besides that she displayed energetic activity during that period. She visited many places in the world, travelled to America several times, always looking for aid for her mixed-blood orphans.

In 1952, the year of the end of the Occupation, the eldest orphans attained school age and St. Stephan Academy was established in the institute. The same year this institute was officially recognized as a children's welfare institute.

It was around that time that more helping hands were extended from America: the endeavors of Mrs. Sawada in behalf of her orphans began to bear fruit.

The children whose parents were not known were gradually adopted into American families. Many donations were sent. The former American Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Grew, sent the royalties of a book he had written.

Then Japan also stepped in. The significance of this enterprise became more appreciated and influential people in the economic world started to make voluntary contributions.

This was the way the actual Elizabeth Saunders Home was erected.

In 1963, the oldest orphans reached the age of eighteen and thus could not count any more on state subsidy; they had to make their own way in the world. Mrs. Sawada is said to be making steady preparations to send them as emigrants to

Brazil where she bought farmland. Her idea could not be realized without the background of the great Mitsubishi, but what will be the future of these children who have been brought up completely separated from the world?

In this sense, it may be said that a real evaluation of this institute will be reserved for the future.

Anyway, the strong conviction with which Mrs. Sawada, in those difficult times, coped with this problem, completely alone, and succeeded in moving public opinion at home and abroad should be praised before any formulation of criticism.

The mixed-blood children whom the Elizabeth Saunders Home has been dealing with until now number about eight hundred. Of these about six hundred have been adopted in America. According to a survey in 1959, the mixed-blood children accommodated in all the children's welfare institutes in the country number 279, and about 3,600 are being brought up in ordinary homes.

These figures alone already show how big a role the Saunders Home has played in solving the problem of the mixed-blood orphans.

Lagging social activity

If many religious organizations and religious leaders had made serious efforts to solve such social problems, then religion would not have been absent from the reconstruction of Japan. As a matter of fact, from different quarters such a service was expected at the time.

However, only a disappointingly small number coped in a positive way with social problems; the great majority of the

religious organizations and their leaders were negative and without inspiration.

As already mentioned, some temples and churches opened their doors to the homeless, but on the other hand not a few temples, shrines and churches lost all religious authority by turning their buildings into restaurants when restaurants and food shops were closed. There were a few religious organizations which positively made efforts to protect and save repatriates, the unemployed and vagabonds.

In May, 1946, the Emperor who could not ignore the critical food situation made an unusual appeal through the radio for mutual aid, in order to overcome the crisis, but the religious world hardly showed any reaction.

Neither the religious sects which had been advocating unquestioning compliance with the Emperor's wishes, nor those which had been proud of their special connection with the Imperial household showed any sign of responding to the Emperor's appeal.

As far as the population problem is concerned — especially in relation to the problem of birth control — positive proposals and guidance were expected on the part of religious organizations, but none of them offered clear guiding principles, except for the declarations by the Catholics.

But those Catholic declarations which held that contraception was a sin and that "the only way of birth control is ascetic self-control" was too far removed from reality to be of any relevance for solving real problems.

The interest of the religious world in social problems during this period of confusion was thus generally low.

The reason was that the established religions were preoccupied with their self-protection, while the newly arisen religions had their hands full with the expansion of their religious influence, and neither had time or strength to extend their attention to social problems.

However, the greatest social work of religious organizations lays in their religious activity itself.

And it is an undeniable fact that there were not a few persons in the established religions, and also in the new religions, who took great pains to bring salvation through their missionary work to those that were at a loss among the innumerable difficulties immediately after the defeat.

Therefore, it can be said that the religions contributed in their own way toward the solution of the social problems — and thus toward the reconstruction of Japan.

However, whenever we look back at those hard times, we cannot but think that we should have found more religious personalities who could face the social problems in a positive way.

COMMUNISM AND BELIEVERS

The beginnings of Communism

How to deal with Communism which started growing rapidly once it was freed after a long oppression? This was a major problem in the early stage of the Occupation.

The Occupation Forces released many communists from prison and followed a policy of actively favoring labor unions

and farmer unions.

With such a policy of the GHQ against a background of social confusion with the old order crumbling, Communism began to spread like a prairie fire. For several years the appeal of communists and their cohorts was irresistible.

Taking advantage from a freedom it enjoyed for the first time, Communism began to spread rapidly. And religious organizations, whether they liked it or not, had to confront it.

Moreover, they found themselves in this situation which suddenly demanded an early solution.

Shrine Shinto, Sectarian Shinto and a greater part of the new religions as well, took a strongly negative attitude toward Communism.

But most of this attitude was nothing more than a very conservative dislike for anything "red," and lacked completely any theoretical ground.

The great majority of Buddhists had the same dislike for anything "red." But since Buddhism includes something which is not necessarily contradictory to communist doctrine, a few controversialists, like Mr. Shōjun Mibu insisted that communism was an ideal type of government, and under a Communist regime Buddhism would be able to display its supreme value. Their views attracted attention.

"When capitalism will be reformed and will have developed through socialism into Communism, the idea of God will have completely changed (the Christian idea of God, that is, so-called religion will cease to exist), the philosophy of selflessness of Buddhism — the atheistic humanistic world view, social love and cooperative spirit will be our guides, a greater

humanity will be needed and faith will master and purify the sufferings of the human mind and strengthen human love. Once our natural fears are dispelled, our economic and social sufferings dissolved, the inner requirements will be looked after. Here the Buddhist truth will demonstrate its dialectic character more clearly." (The Rev. Shōjun Mibu, *Chūgai-nippō*, October, 1949.)

Catholicism, the leader of anti-Communism

Against the background of the unabiding opposition between the countries of the Soviet block and the Vatican, the followers of the Catholic Church took a very firm stand against Communism.

Catholicism had originally been inconsistent ideologically as well as politically with the communist countries, but the oppression of the Church behind the iron curtain in 1948-49 sharpened their opposition.

Against the aggression of Communism, the Catholic Church was forced into a life or death struggle.

After World War II an acute opposition rose in the East European countries (Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Poland etc.), and struggles between the governments and the Church continued. But in the beginning, no country showed any sign of resorting to a drastic oppression.

The faithful could go to church and religious services were allowed, but the freedom of speech of the preachers was restricted by law. Thus the method was one of silently driving the churches into a gradual decline.

In the beginning of 1948, however, the governments started

simultaneously a severe campaign against the Christian churches — especially the Catholic Church.

In Hungary, the so-called “Mindzenti Case” was notorious : Joseph Cardinal Mindzenti was arrested on charges of *lèse majesté* and sentenced to a life penalty. In other countries also many priests, pastors, sisters and others were sentenced to a heavy penalty on charges of *lèse majesté*, espionage, violation of the foreign exchange control law, etc.

The state-owned system of church property was enforced (Rumania); measures were taken in order to put churches under government control, and local governors were endowed with power to appoint or dismiss priests (Czechoslovakia).

In some countries certain denominations were suppressed, abjuration was enforced, churches were requisitioned, and church schools were nationalized.

It was further reported that the Cominform (Communist International Information Exchange Organ) was training anti-religious militants and forming several thousands of false priests at a special school, in order to spread confusion in the religious world of the West.

The oppression of Christianity in 1948-49 in Eastern Europe was aimed at both Catholicism and Protestantism, but it was the Roman Catholic Church that suffered most.

The Vatican which had more than forty-seven million faithful closed off behind the iron curtain and whose churches suffered under a severe oppression at once gathered its forces for a counterattack against Communism.

Pope Pius XII issued a drastic declaration in July, 1949, saying that Catholics, affiliated with the Communist Party or

cooperating with it, were excommunicated.

The development of anti-communist theory among Japanese Catholics has to be understood against the background of the above international situation. Therefore, it was only normal that they were far more serious and more tense than other religions, in their attitude against Communism.

The oppression in Eastern European countries came very soon to an end, and the governments shifted their policy again to what it had been before : one of harassing the churches so as to provoke their gradual decline.

Therefore, although church-state relations appeared calm on the surface, the peace between the communist states and the Catholic Church was always a very precarious one.

It is only normal then that Catholics in Japan still continue to display a strong anti-communist feeling.

Pro-Communism among Protestants

In contrast to Catholicism which made an open declaration of war against Communism, the attitude of the Protestant denominations was more complex.

The meeting of the World Council of Churches held at Amsterdam in the summer of 1948, representing 147 denominations from 44 countries, decided on the following policy: "The Christian Churches should reject both the ideology of Communism and that of liberal capitalism." But the control of the denominations over their members was weak and, although anti-communists were in the majority, there were some pastors, not to speak of young believers, who secretly sympathized with Communism as a political theory. Their line of

thought was, "Christian faith for belief, but Communism for social realizations."

The 1950 Christian Year book summarized the view of anti-communists and pro-communists who opposed each other within Japanese Protestantism at that time.

The reason of those who claim Christianity and Communism to be incompatible are as follows :

- (a) Communism insists upon atheism.
- (b) According to the materialistic philosophy followed by the communists, man is only matter.
- (c) Communism is anti-religious and anti-Christian.
- (d) Communism stands for violent revolution and dictatorship.
- (e) Communism restricts the freedom of man and reduces the whole world to a prison.
- (f) If Communism gets power, Japan will be under Soviet rule.

On the other hand, the pro-communists argued as follows :

(a) Christians, especially Protestants, should not be closed up within their world of faith alone.

(b) Christian ethics, that is, love toward those in need, suffering, or poverty cannot be sufficiently practised if one limits oneself to individual acts or the social works. Christian ethics cannot be realized until a communist society is realized thanks to Communism which is political theory and practice at the same time.

(c) For Christians, Communism is the only political princi-

ple for practicing Christian love in modern times. There are no other means of realizing Christian love.

The red storm, Pastor Akaiwa

There were, however, only a few pastors who did sympathize with Communism. Normally, their existence would not have attracted public attention as much as it did, and the Church would not have been pressed again to make clear its stand in this matter.

However, in January, 1949, an incident occurred which at once called for the attention of the public.

The Rev. Sakae Akaiwa, pastor of the Uehara Church at Yoyogi, belonging to the Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan, not only campaigned on the street corners for a member of the Communist Party, a candidate for the House of Representatives, but he also declared that as a pastor he was going to join the Communist Party.

“I sleep in a warm bed,” said he, “but if I would really put into practice the teaching of Christ, I should take in vagabonds into my room and give them a place to sleep. If I would do so, my room and bed would soon be filled with them. But this would not help the many thousands of others who are suffering from hunger and cold. Therefore, if we obey the order of love of Christ in the present society, we should establish a society where there is no place for misery. For Christians, love gets its meaning from the fact that the eternal God has taken upon himself human existence in order to save mankind. Therefore, if we truly feel the love of God, we should be ready to abandon eternity and to descend into the

temporal world The gospel should not be a mere idea for us. If we are men worthy of proclaiming the gospel, we should be more enthusiastic for really improving society. Therefore my decision to join the Communist Party is indeed a religious act." Thus Mr. Akaiwa stated his conviction. (He is also author of *Christianity and Communism*.) He made it clear that it was his firm conviction that because of his faith as a Christian he took the misfortunes of the people to heart and that the only political doctrine capable of saving modern society was Communism.

Mr. Akaiwa's view that a believer in God can also be a communist at the same time, suddenly created a great sensation.

Newspapers and magazines competed for his writings. His conference and publications brought him at once to the top of publicity.

Needless to say, the Church which is not indifferent to such views reacted with severe criticism. Dr. Kōtarō Tanaka, a Catholic, took the lead, and stated in the *Asahi Shimbun*: "It is clear that he who says such things has no real faith and that he does also lack a deep knowledge of Communism."

Nevertheless, however severely attacked, Pastor Akaiwa was unyielding. When asked how Marxism, which is fundamentally atheistic and has a completely different world-view, could be brought into harmony with Christianity, it seems that he answered with the following ambitious statement: "By joining the communist camp, I am determined to improve Communism in such a way as to adopt only its economic theory completely separated from the communist world-view."

Among the famous controversialists, Messrs. Kazō Kitamori, Yukizō Abe, Tsugimaro Imanaka, Kazu Yamamoto and others, some supported Mr. Akaiwa, others merely sympathized.

However, the "red storm" which swept over the journalistic world ended in a sudden disappointment.

The leaders of Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan who were bewildered by the whole situation announced that "we think it undesirable for a teacher of the Church to join the Communist Party" (according to the head of the Department of General Affairs), and they expected Mr. Akaiwa to reverse his decision. However, as Mr. Akaiwa's speeches multiplied, they publicly required him to reconsider his position in July, 1949.

On the other hand, the Communist Party which had welcomed Mr. Akaiwa in the beginning released the following: "Although pastors and Christians are welcome in the Party, a plurality of '-isms' within the Party runs counter to the Party regulations and is not permitted." The grand dream of Mr. Akaiwa, who intended to improve Communism from within according to the principle of "the Christian faith as belief and Communism for social practice," went up in smoke.

Thereupon, Mr. Akaiwa refrained from joining the Party and responded to the request of reconsideration by his Church through pledging loyalty in the future.

China and Korea

Immediately after the end of the war the Allied Forces freed communists who, taking advantage of the confusion caused by the defeat, saw their ranks swell rapidly. The problem of the relation between Communism and religion was a pressing issue.

But soon GHQ oppressed it again, which eased the tension exactly at the time when the Akaiwa case was brought to an end.

However, the terror of Communism continued to be real.

In the same year the Akaiwa case was settled, the Republic of Communist China was established on the continent and one year later many missionaries left China, now under Communist rule. Many of these missionaries came to Japan in search for a new mission field.

In the same year, 1950, the Korean War broke out and many missionaries were seen with no other possessions but the clothes they wore at the moment.

Terror was pressing not only from abroad but also from within the country because leftist thought began to spread among the intellectual class.

Therefore, it is obvious that in order to face the problems of the time, the relation between religion and Communism continued to be discussed as one of the biggest topics in the religious world.

(To be continued.)