

<p style="text-align: center;">JAPANESE RELIGIONS AND THE ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT</p>
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It sounds somewhat like a battle cry: "No more Hiroshima! No more Nagasaki! No more *hibakusha* (nuclear victims)!" Since the end of the Pacific War, there has been no dearth of movements in Japan urging the world to have done with nuclear arms, if not with the development of nuclear power altogether. After all, Japan is the only country ever to have suffered an actual nuclear attack, and not a few of its people have been eager to keep that memory alive, and perhaps even occasionally to exploit it for ends somewhat less noble than those of everlasting peace. The fact that the victimized country was also to some extent responsible for the tragedy is not, however, a very pleasant memory, and the young people of Japan have been duly instructed to distinguish between memories that are worth cherishing and those that are not.

Even though religious organizations in this country have seldom been the most outstanding promoters of activities with social implications, in all fairness it must be said that, for many of them, the peace issue has been a recurrent theme in their endeavors. Some of the so-called new religious movements in particular have been in the vanguard of the peace movement in religious circles and, among them, laurels should be given first to groups of the Nichiren tradition, such as the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōsei Kai, which have been strong rivals of each other in this respect as well as others. The Sōka Gakkai, for example, has for years been active in sponsoring exhibitions exposing the horrors of war and in publishing books on the same line, not to mention the world-wide "travels for peace" of its (now) honorary president Ikeda Daisaku and his meetings with political and cultural personalities of different persuasions (while mostly keeping at a respectful distance from other religious leaders...). The Risshō Kōsei Kai can boast, among other things, of regular Peace Seminars, the Niwano Peace Foundation, and its leading role in the WCRP (World Conference on Religion and Peace). Its leader, Niwano Nikkyō, has equally traveled all over the world and met with outstanding personalities, although he limits himself mostly to religious circles. No wonder, then, that

commentators in Japan, seemingly interested only in the seamy side of this country's religious scene, like to point out that behind these activities lurks the latent aspirations of these leaders to be awarded the Nobel Prize for all what they do for peace, and for the glory of their religious organization,

The peace activities promoted by the new religious organizations—and those by the established religions as well, insofar as such activities exist—have mainly been limited, however, to their own members and can hardly be said to have exerted a great influence on the wider society of Japan. In other words, they have manifested an interest in social matters, not commonly seen in Japan's religious circles, and, by this, have attempted to overcome the "social lethargy" that has often characterized the life of the established (particularly Buddhist) sects. On the other hand, however, the religions seem to have been rather careful not to push the movement too far into concrete problems related to specifically Japanese issues, since most peace movements conducted by non-religious organizations, not afraid of tackling these issues, are colored with the hue of reformist overtones of a leftist political nature. A few exceptions aside, Japan's religions have kept faithfully to their tradition of being contributors to social harmony, and their speaking about "world peace" in terms not directly affecting sensible issues within the country has proved to be the appropriate means both for mobilizing their own adherents in favor of a noble cause and also for entering into interreligious dialogue, at least for those religious groups that have seen a benefit and necessity in that other "popular" cause of recent years.

When in 1981 anti-nuclear movements all over Europe and America arose at the grass-roots level, this came over in peace-loving Japan, still suffering from nuclear allergy, as one of those many "shokku" which, at regular intervals, remind the Japanese that the Meiji era principle of "catch up and overtake (the West)" is still a vigorous incentive for making people aware that they constitute part of the world, albeit in a special way. The waves that this "shokku" produced become to a certain extent understandable if we take into account that, for the majority of the people, hitherto the Japanese peace movements were not much more than rituals performed at the fringes of society by radical leftists and religious devotees who could afford to be

idealistic. The reaction of Japan was the usual one: that of the man who sees a train passing by and manages at the very last moment to jump on the last car; he then works his way forward until he gets at the controls. For the non-religious organizations involved for years in peace issues, the new situation whereby the whole populace was suddenly urged to do something for peace proved to be a golden opportunity to get wider popular support for their endeavors: "If Westerners do...!" For the religious organizations too it was a welcome development both in that now they could convincingly show their adherents to have been on the right track for a long time already, and also in that they were allowed to expand their activities without harboring any fears that these would harm the precious harmony of Japanese society: "If everybody does...!"

While in the West the anti-nuclear movement was already showing signs of losing its first vigor, the beginning of 1982 was in Japan the symbolic perfect moment for catching up. A look at what various religious periodicals wrote in the first days of the new year shows that most of them were very serious about the problem.

Focusing on the world of Buddhism, we must first point out, however that the widely-read, non-sectarian *Chūgai Nippō*, which uses to give equal space to both established and new Buddhist groups (including those that are not particularly on friendly terms with each other), was remarkable in its absence of any reference to the problem of war and peace in the first issues of the new year. But, as we will point out, that newspaper certainly made up for this lack of interest in later issues! On the other hand, in the publications of the lay-Buddhist Sōka Gakkai, the new year offered an excellent occasion for further stepping up the campaign for peace that had been going on for years. To its credit we should mention that already in the editorial of their daily newspaper *Seikyō Shinbun* on 8 December 1981, the fortieth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the start of the Pacific War, the Sōka Gakkai referred very explicitly to the culpability of Japan in words seldom found in the publications of other organizations. The paper wrote: "Having suffered the tragedy of war, the Japanese victims fully realize the value of peace and the need to promote the peace movement. But at the same time, we should not forget

that, having been the perpetrators of war we must take upon ourselves the task of arousing peace awareness so that such a folly will not be repeated." The editorial of 7 January 1982 urged greater support on the non-governmental level for the United Nations effort to achieve lasting world peace and recalled the endeavors made in this respect by honorary president (and Sōka Gakkai International president) Ikeda Daisaku. It also pointed out that, based on the pacifist spirit of Buddhism, Sōka Gakkai had become a non-governmental organization (NGO) associated with the U.N. Department of Public Information, and that it planned to send a big delegation to New York for the June session of the UNGA on disarmament. Subsequent editorials as well, widely publicized in the English-language *The Soka Gakkai News*, continued to take up different aspects of the anti-nuclear movement, all of them expressing a resolute stance in favor of nuclear disarmament and exalting the efforts done by the own organization under its enlightened leadership.

In their turn, the rival organization Risshō Kōsei Kai and the Shinshūren (Union of New Religious Organizations of Japan) that it controls also intensified their peace campaign at the beginning of 1982. In the special New Year's edition of their (monthly) newspaper *Shin Shūkyō Shinbun*, only some vague references were made to the problem, but on 25 January the headlines clearly announced their objectives: "Toward abolition of nuclear weapons and disarmament." According to the paper, at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Shinshūren on 23 January, an "urgent motion" was proposed—and carried immediately—for starting a campaign to collect at least 20 million "anti-nuclear signatures" to be forwarded to the special UNGA session of June. If this decision somehow appeared like a last minute leap on the bandwagon of the anti-nuclear movement that was gradually gaining momentum in Japanese society at large, it must be repeated that the Risshō Kōsei Kai and most of the other Shinshūren member-organizations had long been active in peace movements of a different yet very meaningful kind, particularly through their actions in favor of the Asian refugees and drawing the attention of their members toward the problem of hunger and poverty in South-East Asian countries.

If the new Buddhist religious movements had certainly caught the spirit of the times, neither was established Buddhism left behind,

although—as we will see—their enthusiasm was quickly tempered by more realistic considerations. A look at the *Bukkyō Times*, one of the most powerful mouth-pieces for traditional Buddhism, gives us some insights in their attitude. Already in its editorial of 15 November 1981, the paper had referred to the growing possibility of nuclear war and made an appeal for stronger Buddhist involvement in this cause. "Today, the danger of nuclear conflict, threatening the well-being of the whole human race, is increasingly becoming a real issue. If Japanese Buddhism turns a deaf ear to this issue, it will in the eyes of society appear as having exhausted all of its vitality as a religion. We pray for the awakening of Japanese Buddhism."

The leading article of its first issue of 1982 (5 Jan.), "Human-kind, where are you headed?", is almost exclusively dedicated to the anti-nuclear movement, and from it we can earn some good insights into the attitude of Japan's established Buddhism toward the problem. Here are a few excerpts.

*The New year has started with the problem of administrative reform [in Japan] and with the anti-nuclear movement... The anti-nuclear movement is certainly an important movement, but it looks to become quite complicated because of the intrusion of various ideologies. When thinking about the problem of nuclear power, one cannot suppress a feeling of irony. Nuclear power, indeed, is a product of European civilization. But it could very well happen that now Europe will be blown away by it. It has not only been something of Hiroshima and Nagasaki... In the past twenty-thirty years, the world has considerably changed. The main characteristic of these changes has been that clouds have begun to appear over Europe, which until now was the power dominating the whole world. Suspicions are aroused that in European civilization, which boasted to be the apex of civilization both for itself and for others, mistakes have been made..... For some time past, people have argued that the history of the world, with Europe at the center, should be re-written. If we look at the development of civilization, we see how during the last 300 years civilization has really bloomed in Europe. But a characteristic of this civilization has been—in the words of*

*the late Dr. Toynbee—that it was a scientific, material-centered civilization. Precisely for this reason, Europeans repulsed other civilizations and dominated the whole world... Modern European civilization has polluted the atmosphere and even come so far as to make us fear for the death of the human race and the destruction of our planet... In former times, in Europe religion and science were engaged in a fierce struggle. Victory apparently went to science. But now Europeans are trembling with fear for nuclear power and eagerly looking forward to a reversal of civilization. Looking back, our own country has since the Meiji era for more than hundred years been completely devoted to that scientific civilization that dispensed with religion... In the midst of fear of nuclear power and the growth of international tensions, we fortunately possess the legacy of Eastern spiritual culture. Buddhists should do away with the established concepts of the past that have become sterile, and resolutely stand up for saving human life. Let me quote the words of the late philosopher Berdiaeff, who devoted himself first to the Russian revolution but then fled to France, disillusioned as he was with the reality of the revolution. How should we confront communism? Established civilization is no longer a match for it. The dreadfulness of communism exists in that it simultaneously contains both truth and falsehood. Only absolute truth, that is, religion, is able to withstand it. After having visited communist countries, these words are, even today, reverberating loudly in my heart.*

Let me just add, here, that, at the end of the article, the reference to communism appears as a flash of lightning completely out of a blue sky without much relation to the foregoing. But the later development of this Buddhist attitude toward the anti-nuclear movement makes clear what the reference really means. Let us, however, now turn to the Shintō world and its newspaper *Jinja Shinpō*.

It will surprise nobody that for the Shintō people—and by this is meant, of course, not the ordinary Japanese citizen but the "specialists" of the Shintō tradition—war and peace constitutes an issue that concerns them very deeply. Since the survival of the Japanese

nation and the Japanese state belongs to the very essence of Shintō faith, the present predicament in which Japan, being part of the world, finds itself cannot but interest the Shintoists. And neither will it surprise anybody that their reaction to the nuclear threat is somewhat different from those of the other religions. Indeed, two half pages of the New Year's edition of the *Jinja Shinpō* (5 Jan. 1982) were dedicated to that problem under the significant headings "How does our country cope with the increasing nuclear crisis?" and "The world's shelters, by way of precaution against nuclear attack." The gist of the articles is clear from the introductory lines which, among other things, state this:

*We live at present under the threat of nuclear weapons. We certainly have to make all possible efforts in order to stop the tragic situation that would arise if these weapons were used. If by any chance the time should come that such a situation cannot be avoided, the people of countries like the U.S., Europe, the Soviet Union, China, and South-Korea, which are sparing no efforts to protect the lives of their citizens against the nuclear threat, will survive. On the other hand, all of the 100 million Japanese, who have no defense at all, will certainly be among the 500 million people expected to perish in a nuclear conflict. To appeal for peace and for the abolition of nuclear weapons is important. But that does not mean that Japan should be the only country that is defenseless in the face of unfortunate nuclear damage. The Japanese are the only people forced to experience the wretchedness of nuclear power. Is this not a reason for us to put more real strength in our efforts to protect our people against nuclear damages? It is for this reason that, in this special issue, we introduce the problem of nuclear shelters.*

These lines do not need comment. As might be expected, the Shintō leaders are fully behind the Japanese government policy of remilitarization, of course in order to enhance world peace. If they do not go so far as to ask for nuclear armament—as some rightist circles in Japan do—neither do they refrain from criticizing at times the government for what they feel to be its too cautious attitude in that respect. Yet,

it is also worth noticing that, in later issues of the *Jinja Shinpō*, no mention has been made of the participation of the other religions in the anti-nuclear movement. Could this possibly manifest a certain embarrassment with regard to these actions at a time that, for different reasons, Shinto is very eager to show a willing attitude toward interreligious cooperation? And could it show a reluctance to push too far opinions that go against the general mood of the populace? Anyhow, it was only in an editorial comment in the paper of 1 March that again short, and indirect, mention was made of the anti-war movement.

Rejoicing over survey results indicating that the Japanese university and high school students are gradually showing a more positive attitude toward a revision of Japan's war-renouncing Constitution and the necessity of self-defense, the commentator cited the following words of a Tokyo-based high school teacher:

*The fact that, after thirty years of continuous peace education in terms of "protect the Constitution" and "anti-war" by the leftist teacher unions, even one fourth of the high school students agree with a revision of the Constitution, shows that these students have seen through the falsehood of this "peace education."*

We will only briefly dwell on the contribution of Japan's Christian minority. The Protestant Churches in particular have a long history of social involvement, mostly critical of existing Japanese structures. Moreover, lingering feelings of guilt for their cooperation with the militarists during the Pacific War have made many of them still more sensible to the issue. The Catholics, on the other hand, have usually been rather cautious in expressing "anti" sentiments, although this time they feel very much strengthened by the peace appeal of Pope John-Paul II in Hiroshima last year, which reverberated throughout the whole of Japan. (But it should be noticed that practically no non-Christian anti-nuclear movements seem, one year later, to remember this appeal. Did it, indeed, follow the fate of many "happenings" in Japan? Very moving and beautiful at the time, but...rapidly forgotten, with little lasting impact...?) Let us add that Japanese Christians evidently undergo a much deeper influence from what happens in the "Christian" West, including the field of peace issues.



The peace movement figured very outstandingly in the New Year's edition of the Protestant weekly *Kirisuto Shinbun*. Its front page carried pictures of children from different countries with the captions "Peace education now" and "With a heart that shares suffering," accompanied by a big-letter type excerpt from Pope John-Paul's Hiroshima message. The Catholic weekly *Katorikku Shinbun*, on the other hand, was relatively slow to enter the race. Although it gave full coverage of the Pope's initiatives for peace, it was only in the last week of January that it announced *in extenso* the campaign launched by the Japanese bishops to collect "anti-nuclear signatures" to be submitted to the United Nations. We should also mention, however, that—reminding us of a similar editorial in the *Sōka Gakkai's* newspaper cited above—as early as December 1981, an editorial of the Catholic weekly appealed to the Japanese to reflect upon the infringements made on peace and human lives perpetrated by Japan. "Why do we always remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki while forgetting Pearl Harbor?" it asked. While the "American nation" is always blamed for the atrocity of the atomic bomb, the Japanese tend, it further pointed out, to put the blame of the Pacific War on the military, excusing the "Japanese nation" of its responsibility.

The enthusiasm which characterized the beginning of 1982 did certainly not cool down in the following months. The special UNGA session on disarmament to be opened in June served as the target by excellence for all Japanese anti-nuclear movements to enhance the "fever" and... also opened the eyes of many people to the political implications of the issue. Anyway, all organizations involved pledged to send a delegation to New York loaded with boxes of anti-nuclear petitions, obviously giving rise to the remarks of "outsiders" that a news release and a picture taken together with the U.N. General Secretary at that occasion would benefit not only the cause of world peace. Among the various activities sponsored by Japan's religions, let us mention a few of the most conspicuous ones.

Besides sponsoring anti-war exhibitions throughout the country and other similar projects, the *Sōka Gakkai* is, after an interval of more than fifteen years, again staging spectacular mass shows in different cities of Japan, called "Youth Festivals for Peace," complete with peace declarations and congratulatory messages from the N.N. Secretary General and other high dignitaries. For the thousands of young *Sōka Gakkai* members who participate, these gorgeous pageants undoubtedly constitute a tremendous increase in the

level of consciousness for peace. For the audience—besides top leaders and representatives of the religious organization itself, a "carefully selected" group of guests from educational, cultural, business, industrial and local government circles, who are kindly invited to offer a few sympathetic comments—they serve as a reminder that a concrete longing for peace is alive at the grass-roots level, and that this constitutes in Japanese society a force to be reckoned with.

For the Rissho Kōsei Kai and the Shinshūren, we have to mention the anti-nuclear signature campaign which is said to have reached the huge figure of 36 million. In this connection we should also allude to the continuing peace activities of the WCRP (World Conference on Religion and Peace), the Japanese branch of which is headed by the President of the Risshō Kōsei Kai. As a first step, ten religious leaders from this organization—among them four Japanese—visited Beijing in May on a "multi-religious" mission to discuss the nuclear disarmament issue with Chinese leaders. It is reported that a similar peace mission will shortly visit four other nuclear weapon countries, urging them to conclude a treaty outlining that "the use of nuclear weapons is a crime against humanity."

On the other hand, the established Buddhist sects seem to be rather divided in their enthusiasm. A clear exponent of this uncertain attitude is the non-sectarian *Chūgai Nippō*. While giving full coverage to the anti-nuclear activities of both the Sōka Gakkai and the Risshō Kōsei Kai as well as other religious groups, the paper has in recent months increasingly published editorials and leading articles that point out the "dangerous" political implications of the movement as a tool in the hands of international communism to conquer the free world, now protected by the "benevolent" American military power. In this, the paper echoes the attitude of Japan's governing Liberal-Democratic Party which, while paying lip-service to the promotion of disarmament, has at times instructed its members not to be involved in the anti-nuclear movement, labelling it, indeed, as dangerous and benefitting only the Soviet Union. We could also notice, *en passant*, that in 1980 and 1981 Japan's official representative at the United Nations cast a negative vote to the proposed prohibition of nuclear weapons, a fact that is seldom stressed in the Japanese press and that certainly would surprise many people in Japan if they would learn about it. Moreover, on 27 May 1982, the Japanese Diet unanimously passed an anti-

nuclear motion, fervently endorsed by the Prime Minister. But nobody seemed to feel serious qualms when almost immediately after the Diet session, in another entourage, the same Prime Minister expressed some reservations about the "irrealism" of petitioning the total abolition of nuclear arms.

The *Bukkyō Times*, a mouth-piece for Japan's traditional Buddhism, has followed the same line. Although not as pronounced as the *Chūgai Nippō*, succeeding editorials have warned against the danger of being used by the communists, giving with this the impression that many, if not most, Buddhist sects participate in the movement only with some reluctance and under the pressure of the general mood. An interesting detail in this respect is the fact that, on March 6, the chief abbot of the Hōnganji branch of the Shin sect (Pure Land Buddhism), the largest of the traditional Japanese Buddhist organizations, went to Hiroshima with more than ten thousand of the sect's faithful and made a public appeal to the whole world for peace and the abolition of nuclear arms. Rumors say that he did so under pressure from various circles which resented the fact that it was only a foreign religious leader—Pope John-Paul in February 1981—who made such a dramatic appeal from the place itself where an atomic bomb brought destruction, while Japanese religious leaders have excelled by their silence.

Needless to repeat that Shrine Shinto has firmly remained in the camp of those who are most perspicacious in discovering a "red hand" everywhere and who opt for increasing self-defense. It must be said, however, that two leaders of Japan's Sect Shinto were members of the WCRP Peace Delegation to China.

Finally, the Christian Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have enthusiastically continued their campaigns, often linking the problem of expenditures for weapons with that of poverty in the world, a thing seldom done in non-Christian circles. Protestants in particular have been eager to expose what they call the hypocritical attitude of the Japanese government in its official anti-nuclear pronouncements. On the other hand, the Catholic campaign to collect signatures fell far short of its aim of one million. The *Katorikku Shinbun* attributed the poor performance at the parish level to the fact that some priests interpreted the campaign as a "political" movement and expressed some reservations about it.

At the end of this brief, and necessarily incomplete, survey of the role

of Japan's religious organizations in the anti-nuclear movement, two final remarks have to be made.

One is that, amidst the established trend of interreligious cooperation in Japan—an exception made for the Sōka Gakkai which has consistently shunned this trend—cooperation in this issue is far from conspicuous. Admittedly, the WCRP delegation consisted of members belonging to different religious traditions. But this is only a high level project and has little to do with cooperation at the grass roots. Signature campaigns and mass demonstrations have been conducted separately (admittedly, the Shinshūren-affiliated people are together as one unit, under the leadership of the Risshō Kōsei Kai), and, if efforts have been made to come to joint action, they aborted somewhere in the process. The real reason behind this lack of cooperation, which otherwise is so strongly emphasized and glorified as a unique feature of Japan's religious scene, is hard to assess. Could it possibly prove the contention of some sociologists of religion that religions only feel compelled to cooperate when they find themselves in a situation of weakness? Anyhow, they have now found a cause in the current peace issue which follows the general mood of society, and they do not need the help of others to make their claims more attractive and more powerful to their members.

A rather strange "justification" of going it alone was published in the 25 April issue of the *Katorikku Shinbun* which, of course, only applies to the small Japanese Catholic Church but might well reflect similar feelings in other religious groups.

*The Catholic Church has its own philosophy about justice and peace, manifested in many encyclicals and messages of the Pope. We have the duty of studying this philosophy. We should not align ourselves with movements that rest on ideas and methods that do not follow this line, even if this would go against ecumenism. In the present anti-war peace movement, Japanese Catholics should give preference to cooperation with other Catholics in the world over cooperation with other (Japanese) organizations, and stick to the independence and purity of Catholicism."*

While the above lines were clearly written in the light of the political implications of the anti-nuclear movement, they also seem to intimate that

the celebrated interreligious dialogue in Japan is far from being established on the solid grounds that this dialogue is commonly said to possess.

A second remark concerns the impact of the anti-nuclear movement conducted by Japan's religious organizations on the wider society. While the 36 million signatures collected by the Shinsbūren, combined with those of the Sōka Gakkai and others, is certainly a feat, it does not follow that this represents a strong "religious" influence on society. It does represent, though, organizational efficiency. In fact, the Japanese mass media have only sporadically referred to the contribution of the religions. Where it has been done, it was often in a tone which was, if not critical, at least interrogative about their true intentions. One of those "sporadic" references to religion is an editorial of the *Asahi Shinbun* of 22 April (English translation in the *Asahi Evening News* of 26 April), which we give here *in extenso*.

*Because of the United Nations Special General Assembly on Disarmament, which opens in June, religious circles here have been organizing movements against nuclear weapons,*

*Though they are basically conservative, these religious circles have been tackling the "peace issue," which has hitherto been considered a matter for reformists, so their influence is not restricted to the members of the latter circles.*

*The Soka Gakkai has published a collection of testimonies concerning wartime experiences and has been sponsoring anti-war and anti-nuclear exhibitions throughout Japan. The Risshō Kōseikai has established a committee for the abolition of nuclear weapons and for progress on disarmament, collected about 20 million signatures for its campaign and sponsored exhibitions of photographs of the atomic bomb victims. In addition, the acolytes' organizations of various religious sects are conducting signature drives and making "peace declarations." Both Buddhists and Christians are organizing many other sorts of movements.*

*Many of these movements still have a short history and their methods are by no means well established. But it is to be hoped that attention will be paid to the way in which the enthusiasm of these religious groups is linked with the realities of the day.*

*Religious leaders see families and religious groups from the inside,*

and they have now begun to direct their attention to society as a whole, And religious groups also feel the public's desire for peace, and they are acting accordingly. The signature campaigns and meetings they organize attract many people who are not members of such groups, and because of their position they can draw attention to the public's desire for peace and anxiety over arms expansion,

It should also be noted that those individual believers who participate in these movements confirm their desire for peace by approaching people in the street and asking them to consider the arguments against nuclear weapons. Another matter worth noting is that the leaders of one religious group have said that in the future it will be difficult for them to support candidates for election who advocate a major defense buildup.

Nevertheless, the expression of certain doubts is in order.

First, these movements have adopted slogans such as "peace rather than destruction," which do not invite political confrontation. Vague slogans like these may prove useful in attracting people from many walks of life, but their defect is that they fail to address actual issues, such as that of the three non-nuclear principles.

Of course, religious bodies are, by nature, unpolitical and they cannot be expected to propose political programs for the realization of peace. But religious leaders should discuss political methods of achieving peace from a religious viewpoint, and call for their being carried out. And those religious groups which solicit votes for candidates in elections do have contact with politics, and they should express their opinions about arms reduction and nuclear weapons.

Second, there are doubts whether the somewhat idyllic circumstances of Japan's anti-nuclear movement has much resemblance to the movements in foreign countries, where feelings of danger run deep. In comparison with the difficult situation faced by religious leaders in East Germany or Korea, Japan is affluent and enjoys a peaceful social environment.

After the war, the issue of responsibility for the war was an important matter for religious circles. For many years, they conducted meetings at which they expressed their repentance. Religious, political and educational leaders gathered in the Tsukiji Honganji Temple at peace conferences and read confessions aloud.

It was said that this was because the religious circles believed that

*the militaristic climate had not been entirely changed. "You might think that it's quiet now, but religion must work to achieve its real purposes and conduct campaigns to preserve peace and life before an appalling war breaks out," they said.*

*We hope that the present movements will take strong root and continue after the N.N. special assembly, so that religious leaders do not have to recite confessions again.*

And, to finish, may be the most striking example of—for whatever reason—both the lack of interreligious cooperation and the lack of involvement in the actions of the wider society is the fact that the religious organizations have held separate anti-war rallies. On 23 May, I went to a mass anti-war rally held in Tokyo and participated in by an estimated 300,000 people, apparently the biggest of this kind in Japan's history. About 400 groups of different persuasions and social classes organized the meeting. If religious organizations were part of it, they certainly were not very visible, to say the least. The only "religious note" I encountered was on the way to the meeting, when there was an opportunity to sign an anti-nuclear petition at the entrance of the Protestant Yamate Church, which itself was safely guarded by a propaganda car of a rightist group blaring out that Christ was not present in that Church and that Christians better pray for something else than anti-nuclear peace.

At the time of this writing, scores of Japanese delegates from different organizations, including religionists, have left for the UNGA session in New York, followed by the Prime Minister himself. For me they are a living proof that Japan is not the "homogeneous" country that it so often purports to be. One Japanese newspaper put it in a fairly crude but still very lucid way: "Various groups gather in New York" as the heading, with the subtitle "Even religious people and lesbians."

Jan Swyngedouw