

Manhattan in May

NPT 2010

Which way will our world ultimately go?

Dorothy Dufour

I saw the Statue of Liberty signing a petition. Really! Well, it was not *the* actual Lady in her gown of oxidized copper who has been standing in New York Harbor since 1886, but it was *a* Statue of Liberty nonetheless. This one was a person on stilts dressed in a long gown. With her torch raised high and her *tabula ansata* cradled in her left arm she was towering above all the other marchers in the demonstration parade that was winding its way from Times Square to Hammar skjöld Plaza on the 2nd of May, 2010. But she was stopped by a team of Japanese people doing a petition drive.

Now you may ask: “Why was the Statue of Liberty walking in a demonstration parade?” “Why were there almost ten thousand marchers, including 1,700 who had come all the way from Japan to take part in this parade?” “And what petition was so important that the Statue of Liberty stopped, got down off of “her” stilts, sat down and signed that petition right there on her way to Hammar skjöld

Plaza?”

Well, to begin at the beginning we would have to go back to August 6th and 9th, 1945, the beginning of what is now called the Nuclear Age. But let us fast forward to 1970 when the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT 核拡散防止条約) went into force. The stated purpose of the Treaty is to prevent the proliferation of more nuclear weapons (article IV) and to gradually and “in good faith” eliminate those in existence (article VI). But in practice this treaty has been used to prevent other nations who did not have them yet from acquiring them in the future while nations already members of the “Nuclear Club”, especially the US and the USSR, felt free to stockpile.

In 1985 there were estimated to be as many as 65,000 active weapons. Since then many were stored or partially dismantled, not destroyed. According to the Guardian. co. uk for Sept. 25, 2009:

...even with some being dismantled there are still 23,574. ...The thing is, counting nuclear weapons is a bit like counting votes—a lot depends on who is doing the counting and how.¹⁾

The argument in favor of nuclear weapons given by US weapons designers, producers and other proponents is that the US must have so much nuclear power that no other country would ever think that it was worth it to attack the US. So for the US the main objective since the 1950s until the peak in the mid 1980s was about winning the

nuclear race and becoming the world's mightiest nuclear power. Therefore the elimination of all nuclear weapons (Article VI) was rendered lip-service only. The focus was on preventing other nations from *going nuclear*.

However, in order for any country or terrorist group to be afraid of attacking the US or the Soviet Union because of their huge nuclear arsenal, they would have to believe that those members of the "Nuclear Club" would in fact be willing to actually *use* their weapons of mass destruction. And former US President Richard Nixon had a solution for this. It was called his "mad man theory." America's enemies had to believe that the president was a little bit crazy and therefore would authorize the use of nuclear weapons if challenged. American citizens were assured that their valiant leader would use them only in *self-defense*.

On the other hand one reason for *using* nuclear weapons would be to reduce the stockpile. This of course is very rational if you are thinking within the framework of funding weapons manufacture. It is a basic economic principle. If you are over stocked, you have to reduce your stock before you produce more. Let us not forget that weapons cost money and are paid for with tax dollars. How could a president possibly justify spending millions of tax dollars on nuclear weapons if everyone knew or suspected that he would *never* authorize their use? And conversely, how could citizens feel safe if they thought that their president was somewhat of a "mad man" and *would* use them? Or perhaps they would think that he did not really

fathom the destructive power of nuclear weapons? Such a perpetual contradiction and lack of understanding would probably not inspire much confidence.

So on May 2nd, 2010 10,000 like-minded people were having a big peace rally...a save—our-planet day of action!!! Contingents had been sent from across the United States and from countries around the world to take part in the governmental Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and the non governmental workshops, conferences, nuclear-weapons-free world rallies and other various events, large and small, that had been planned for the week before the governmental NPT Review Conference. This conference had taken place every five years since the treaty had gone into force in 1970, but this was the first time that the Japanese government had sent so many delegates...there were more than 50. And the number of Japanese citizen-delegates organized by the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (原水協) was also the highest ever. There were 1,700 Japanese citizens on the streets of Manhattan during the last days of April and the early days of May 2010. But why? Why was 2010 thought to be so special? Why had the New Japan Women's Association (新日本婦人の会) and other Japanese citizens groups, been organized to collect more than 6,900,000 signatures in Japan on paper-based (not web-base) petitions to present to this conference. And why was it that so many people had hopes and expectations of this 2010 NPT review conference?

After the failure of the 2005 NPT Rev Con, due in part to the

hegemonic tendencies of the “You-are-with-us-or-you-are-against-us” delegation, there was doubt that any future conferences could be successful. But things started coming together to make expectations rise.

US president Obama’s speech in Prague on April 5, 2009 gave rise to hope that a nuclear-weapons-free world might be possible and that the US would be in favor of this. He said:

So today, I state clearly and with conviction America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a **world without nuclear weapons**. ... To put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and urge others to do the same. ...To reduce our warheads and stockpiles, we will negotiate a new **Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty** with the Russians this year. ...To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty**. After more than five decades of talks, it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned.²⁾

Ban Ki-moon addressed a NPT preparatory conference. It was the first time a sitting United Nations Secretary General had done so. Optimism was on the rise. On August 3rd, 2009, he said:

Today the world is at another turning point. The assumption that nuclear weapons are indispensable to keeping the peace is crumbling. ***Disarmament is back on the global agenda***—and not a moment too soon. A groundswell of new international initiatives will soon emerge to move this agenda forward.³⁾

On May 1st, the eve of the 2010 NPT, Review Conference Ban Ki-moon made a ground breaking speech. He addressed the organizers of the “Nuclear-Free, Peaceful, Just and Sustainable World” Conference at Riverside Church on the upper West Side of Manhattan.

...Our shared vision is within reach: a nuclear-free world. Ladies and gentlemen, from my first day in office, I have made nuclear disarmament a top priority. Perhaps, in part, this deep personal commitment comes from my experience as a boy in Korea growing up after the war. My school was in rubble. There were no walls. We studied in the open air.

The United Nations rebuilt my country. I was lucky enough to receive a good education. But more than that, I learned about peace, solidarity, and above all, the power of community action. These values are not abstract principles to me. I owe my life to them. I try to embody them in all of my work.

...Yet 65 years later, the world still lives under a nuclear shadow. How long must we wait to rid ourselves of this threat? How long will we keep passing the problem to succeeding generations?²⁴⁾

As you can see from the above very short quotations, the words of world leaders can inspire hope and determination to succeed. But also important is that the reasons for the failure of the 2005 NPT conference had been analyzed and strategies on how to avoid the pitfalls of 2005 had been hammered out in the three preparatory conferences. The plans for the 2010 Review Conference had been brought back to the home countries for approval. The guiding principle was to focus on goals that were attainable. Ideas for the first draft of the outcome document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference were prepar-

ed. These things all happened before the actual conference and they are a primary reason that the conference was able to succeed.

But, to return to the questions I posed earlier: “What was in that petition that the Statue of Liberty was signing and who were those people running around collecting signatures?” This story too is an interesting one. It is the NGO side of the story. There are 189 countries that have signed and are party to the NPT which has three aims: to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to foster nuclear energy’s peaceful uses and to speed nuclear disarmament. These are called the “three pillars” of the NPT. The vast majority of peoples of all those 189 nations are in agreement with these three aims. Some dictators or hegemonic governments, however, have not always been so. For historical reasons, the people of Japan feel they have a special role to play as citizens of the world in as concerns the abolishment of nuclear weapons. So when the winds of change began to blow, the sails of the Japan Gensuikyo (原水協) had already caught the first breezes.

The Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (原水爆禁止日本協議会) organizes annual world conferences against nuclear weapons which are held every year in Japan Gensuikyo (原水協) of course takes part in the conferences held by other like-minded associations as well. One such conference was the International Symposium for a Peaceful and Just World which took place in Sapporo, Japan. It was held parallel to and in the spirit of challenging the G8 Summit taking place at Toyako, Hokkaido, Japan. The words of Hiroshi Takakusaki (高草木博), the Secretary General of

the Japan Council against A and H Bombs, from a speech he gave at that conference on July 5th, 2008 are quoted below.

The world is lively changing towards Spring 2010, when the next NPT Review Conference will take place. The underlying dynamism is the fact that the present order of dominating the world by force by the small minority can no longer be acceptable for the very **survival of the humanity**. The ongoing global warming, soaring grain and energy prices, the unbearable damage to humans seen in Iraq and Afghanistan have all resulted from the **pursuit of an unjust world order**.⁵⁾

The NGOs of the world have a platform from which to speak and what they have to say can often be closer to the truth. People in power tend to give their versions of the truth. NGOs are not obliged to believe these official versions and usually take it upon themselves to see things from a different perspective. But, as was the case in 2008~2010, if there is some common ground in what world leaders and NGOs around the world are thinking, saying and acting upon, than this augurs well. Successful outcomes in arguing the case for a strengthening of the NPT...for the survival of humanity, could be hoped for.

And returning to the petition that the Statue of Liberty was signing, well, for those of you who haven't guessed by now, it was a petition in favor of abolishing nuclear weapons. Stated in other words, it is simply saying that the right to survival of the human species is an inalienable international human right. But sometimes some policy makers do not seem to understand this. They seem to

think that it might be possible to survive a nuclear war. Nixon had his “mad man theory.” Regan had his “Star Wars.” Clinton had “full spectrum dominance.” George Bush Junior had his WMD and mushroom -cloud scare tactics followed by his “pre-emptive strike” policy. Please pardon my audacity, but I think somebody ought to write a book for these people by the title of: *They Just Don’t Get It.*

I would like to stress once again the great importance of NGOs and to recommend to anyone who is interested to go on the internet and do a search for: “NPT TV Young Media for a Nuclear-weapons-free World.” Here you can view video clips of interviews with a whole range NPT conference participants. There are interviews with staff who worked on the preparation, with ambassadors to the conference and with NGO delegates. I especially recommend the two interviews with Ira Helfand. He is an emergency room doctor of internal medicine who since 1978 has been an activist for the NGO Physicians for Social Responsibility which is an American doctors’ organization and part of the world wide organization called International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. I recommend video clips #76 and #77 in which Dr. Helfand talks about the immediate effects of a nuclear detonation and the climate effects of a nuclear war.⁶⁾ And of course do listen to any of the other video clips with titles that spark your interest. These NPT TV interviews were done by Reaching Critical Will⁷⁾, which is a project of the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom⁸⁾. The WLPF, founded in 1915 is an NPO/NGO working “to bring together women of different political views and philosophical and religious

backgrounds determined to study and make known the causes of war and work for a permanent peace”

Yes, we are now in what is called the Nuclear Age. Many governmental and non-governmental organizations are working hard to foster peace. But for me as a dual national born in the US and who has been living in Japan since 1973, what has been difficult to comprehend is why the Nuclear Weapons Age started to begin with and why it has continued as long as it has. It’s a long story. Please allow me to flashback.

It is May, 1945. Germany is beaten and surrenders to the Allied Forces. By August of 1945 Japan has suffered many losses and is ready to surrender. But there is a problem. In Japan the emperor is considered to be a god by many of the people. Japan wants to keep him as nominal emperor-deity after surrender. The US refuses. Truman authorizes the first atomic bombs to be dropped. After defeat, Japan is in fact allowed to keep her emperor anyway. But why could this not have been agreed to in July or early August of 1945? Could one of the reasons have been that those two atomic bombs, the total funding of the Manhattan Project, cost 2.4 billion dollars of US tax dollars to research and develop. Was Truman perhaps worried that he could not justify the expenditure of such a large sum of money⁹⁾ if in fact these bombs were never used? 150,000 people died instantly or soon after those bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The total of deaths including those of persons who died of nuclear radiation related cancers and other

diseases is now placed at 230,000. Sadako, the heroine of *The 1000 Folded Paper Cranes*, is a famous example. Exposed to nuclear radiation at the age of two and a half years, she died of leukemia ten years later.

At first the people in the US did not believe the number of bomb victims. They said it was propaganda. Many people said and believed that dropping the bomb had been necessary to end the war. They said that the bomb was dropped to *save* lives. They said if there had been a ground invasion of Japan by the US many more lives would have been lost. Look at how many people died in Iwo Jima they said. They conveniently forgot to mention that most of the major Japanese cities had already been fire-bombed and literally razed to the ground, and that they posed little threat to armed US soldiers. In nations at war, such as the US as well as Japan, metals had been confiscated or donated to be melted down and made into weapons. It is said, however, that the die-hard loyal Japanese citizens, old grandmothers included, were preparing to fight the invading US army with spears made of bamboo. How can it be possible that atomic bombs were necessary to win a war against people armed with little more than bamboo spears? Actually, the question of whether or not it was really necessary to drop those first atomic bombs was settled by the research of American historians long ago. And not only historians have said that it was not necessary. There was also a study done by the Strategic Bombing Survey that entered Japan right after the end of the war in 1945. Their findings clearly show that Japan would have surrendered anyway. Their prediction

was that Japan would have surrendered by November at the latest.¹⁰⁾ But it is a truism that in the history books of victorious nations the victor is always right. So some people in the US even today probably think that bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki was right or at least unavoidable.

So for me it was an honor be asked to assist Ms. Hisae Ogawa (尾川寿江), founder of Code Pink Japan, and to join with the Osaka Gensuikyo (大阪原水協) delegation to take part in NGO nuclear-weapons-free world work shops and activities that were taking place on the streets, in the churches and in the meeting halls of Manhattan. Ms. Ogawa had spent months planning and organizing a cultural exchange event between Japanese and American peace groups and she named the event The Green Tea Party. It was advertised as “an inspiring and creative grassroots exchange.” Sponsored by Code Pink Osaka, Code Pink NYC and The Granny Peace Brigade, it was held on the evening of May 4th, 2010 at the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (316 E. 88th St., NYC).

With Ms. Hisae Ogawa as the Master of Ceremonies, greetings from the American and Japanese delegations were exchanged. Ms. Akiko Ueda (植田晃子), the Osaka Mothers’ Congress Liaison Committee Chairperson (大阪母親大会連絡会委員長) spoke for the Japanese side.

Next traditional Japanese dance (日本舞踊) was performed and songs of peace were sung (折り鶴、原爆許すまじ...)

Our Green Tea Party tea-ceremony master was Ms. Machiko Fujita (藤田まちこ). She prepared the Japanese bitter green tea called *mattcha* which was served with dainty little sweet cakes. A near by bakery donated American style layer cake to accompany this. Moreover, due to there being a large number of guests, more than a few had to drink their *mattcha* in coffee mugs. *Exchange...it was cultural exchange.*

While tea was being served to the nearly 100 guests, origami was demonstrated and taught by the Japanese participants to the American ones. And it worked very well as an ice breaker to get conversations going between all present.

Our Japanese guitarist, Mr. Hiroyuki Yamane (山根広之), was a labor union man who sang the English version of the song *にんげんをかえせ* by the poet Sankichi Togeï (三吉 峠) and he had everyone singing along. Several other poems by Sankichi Togeï in Japanese with their English translations were passed out to the guests. Granny Peace Brigade and Code Pink NYC joined voices to sing a few songs. One of these was sung to the tune of *Mac-the Knife...with lyrics like:*

We must tell all the nation,
We cannot have Nuclear War.
Peace and justice, calm and safety,
That is what we are marching for.

Ms. Sonoe Nishimura (西村園江) gave an impassioned reading of a poem, a call to resist the proposal of choosing her home island of Tokunoshima as a possible site of an unwanted American military base.

These cultural exchanges were quite successful. But there was more to come.

Two *hibakusha* were present and shared their memories of *that day* with us. First was Mr. Shiro Kawamoto (川本司郎) from Hiroshima. He is now the Chairman as well as the Secretary General of the Shizuoka chapter of the Japan Confederation of A and H bomb Sufferers Organization (静岡原水爆被害者団体協議会の会長と事務局長を兼任.) He was 8 years old when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. He spoke of the difficult life of his mother with five sons from age 3 to 16 after she had lost her husband to the A bomb. Mr. Kawamoto also spoke of the heroic efforts and death of Mr. Aikichi Kuboyama a crew member of a Japanese trawler and of the residents of Rongelap Island whose deaths were caused by the 1954 test of a hydrogen bomb on the Bikini Atoll. It was 1000 times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Mr. Kawamoto explained how the Bikini testing caused the Japanese people to remember once again the harrowing experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and how this incident led to the formation of the nationwide movement in Japan for the banning of nuclear bombs.

The second *hibakusha* testimony was by Ms. Masako Suzuki (鈴木聖子) from Nagasaki, Assistant Secretary General of the Shizuoka chapter of A and H Bomb Sufferers Organization (静岡原水爆被害者団体協議会の事務局次長.) She was only a year and a half when the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki so she doesn't remember much about that day. It was from her mother that she had heard about them... them, the bomb victims walking past her house ...begging for “water... water...water...” Ms. Suzuki told of her parents and how they had died of cancer sometime after when still in what should have been the prime of their lives and how it was her sister who had brought her up. Among the *hibakusha* there was a continuously high rate of cancer deaths for years after. Ms. Suzuki believes that *never again...never again...must we allow that kind of suffering to be inflicted on anyone anywhere on the face of the Earth.*

Their testimonies were very moving and members of the Granny Peace Brigade said they were honored to have them there. It was because of and just after Mr. Kawamoto and Ms. Suzuki spoke that the manager of the assembly hall decided to break the rules and allow our program to run overtime. Because Mr. Kawamoto and Ms. Suzuki had spoken with such passion, special requests were made and granted so that so that we could continue past the usual closing time.

Our next item on the program was *kamishibai* (紙芝居) illustrated story telling by Maki Saji (佐治麻紀). Ms. Saji, 23 years old at the time and from Shizuoka Prefecture (伊豆市八木沢の日蓮宗妙蔵寺) is the daughter a Buddhist priest and is in training to become one

herself (僧侶修行中). She for more that ten years she had been doing her *kamishibai* performance of The Story of Sadako and the 1000 Folded Paper Cranes. She continues to pass on to her listeners the story of a 12 year old girl, Sadako, in sixth grade of a Hiroshima elementary school who was struggling with a fatal illness. Sadako's mother was remembering *that day* ten years before.

On *that day*, Sadako was a young child of two years old.

Pika! A blinding light was seen.

Donn! A terrifically loud sound was heard!

Maki Saji's *Kamishibai* had become well know in Shizuoka prefecture. The television documentary crew that had been filming her performances and her life in Japan had come with her to the US and was filming her participation in the NPT NGO events as a faith based peace activist. On film are some of the audience responses to Ms. Saji's *kamishibai*. One American woman said this about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

I am ashamed of my country for having done it. And since America is the only country in the world that has ever dropped *the* bomb, we should be the country in the lead to abolish nuclear weapons.

Ms. Saji's *kamishibai* performance at The Green Tea Party was filmed as part of a 30 and a 50 minute documentary about her life. Directed by Ms. Naomi Sugimura (杉村直美), it was broadcast nationwide in Japan by 33 broadcasting stations from the 1st to the

22nd of August, 2010.

My role in preparing for and during The Green Tea Party had been to help Ms. Hisae Ogawa, founder of Code Pink Japan, by doing the translations for and the English readings of the *hibakusha* testimonies of Mr. Shiro Kawaoto, Ms. Masako Suzuki, and for the illustrated story telling (紙芝居) of Ms. Maki Saji, as well as on the spot interpretations for guests at the Green Tea Party and other events on the streets of Manhattan. Government and NGO delegations had converged on New York ahead of and for the four week review conference. I presume that they realized the vast majority of the world population is in favor of nuclear disarmament though they may have been unaware that even the Statue of Liberty was signing a petition in favor of this. At 1:00 P.M. on May 4th, 2010 more than 6,900,000 signatures in favor of the abolishment of nuclear weapons had been presented to the 2010 NPT Review Conference Chairman, Mr. Libran Cabactulan (Philippines), by Gensuikyo Secretary General Mr. Hiroshi Takakusaki as the representative of the world's NGOs in a special ceremony at the United Nations General Assembly hall.

On the evening of 4th of May 2010, the participants at our Green Tea Party were not sure what the outcome of this, the 8th NPT Review Conference, would be. But we had met and spoken with many like-minded citizens of the world. We had been able to refresh our optimism and our determination to persevere, because we had once again realized that the work of ordinary citizens like us is necessary to the propagation of the belief that a nuclear-weapons-

free world is both *necessary* and *possible*.

It is necessary because, when all the rhetoric and posturing has been said and done, what everyone knows is that as long as nuclear stockpiles do exist, they will one day be used. A world without nuclear weapons *is* possible because that is what the vast majority of the almost 6,900,000,000¹¹⁾ people on our planet want. It is what the people of the 189 member nations of the NPT want. It is what is wanted by the 10,000 marchers who on May 2nd were carrying banners and placards with words like NO NUKES, NO WARS, FUND HUMAN NEEDS, PROTECT THE PLANET. One way or another nuclear weapons *will* cease to exist on this planet. One way, or another. Which way will it be?

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- 1) www.guardian.co.uk
- 2) www.whitehouse.gov/.../Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/
- 3) www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/aug/03/nuclear-disarmament
- 4) [www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-luce/ground-breaking-speech-by b-559917.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-luce/ground-breaking-speech-by-b-559917.html) May 1, 2010.
- 5) Gensuikyo (Japan Council against A & H Bombs)
- 6) do a search for: NPT TV on vimeo, click: see all 157 videos, go to bottom of page and click #7, then click on to the ones with the photo of Ira Helfand.
- 7) www.reachingcriticalwill.org/
- 8) www.wilpf.org
- 9) 2.4 billion US dollars is 24 billion US dollars if calculated at the

Consumer Price Index currency rate for 2009.

- 10) Hiroshima Mayor Calls on All Countries “Including U.S.” to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Tadatoshi Akiba (秋葉 忠利), *Democracy Now the War and Peace Report*, May 2nd, 2005.
- 11) census for 2010