

March 28, 1995

PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL APPEAL FOR GLOBAL PEACE ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Fifty years are about to pass since the conclusion of World War II, which brought unimaginable suffering to peoples throughout the world. The passage of months and years that now amount to half a century compels us to mourn all of the war's victims, irrespective of which side they were on during the war, and to renew our resolution never to repeat the tragedy of war.

It is regrettable, however, that among the various events being planned throughout the world in commemoration of the fiftieth-year anniversary, there are some that threaten to exacerbate mutual mistrust by emphasizing the differing positions at the time of the war. Forty years ago, in 1955, Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein warned that the elimination of war will remain difficult so long as our sense of common humanity remains ambiguous and abstract.

As individuals engaged in scholarly and cultural activities in Japan, we believe it necessary to first clearly promote self-reflection on Japan's war responsibility in the Asia-Pacific War. Based on this, we then wish to present an international appeal that clarifies common ground for working toward global peace. By obtaining the support of many people throughout the world, it is our desire to turn this fiftieth-year anniversary into an opportunity to strengthen international public opinion in support of world peace.

As prelude to our proposal for an international appeal, we offer the following self-reflections concerning Japan's war responsibility:

First, it is obvious that the Asia-Pacific War began with the invasion of China, starting with the "Manchurian Incident" of September 1931, and subsequent military invasion of Southeast Asian countries that were European and U.S. colonies. We recognize that apology and compensation for damages to the Asian peoples whom we victimized are necessary.

Second, at that time in Japan there was a tendency to regard the European and American colonial powers as "have" (as opposed to "have-not") countries, and to demand a redistribution of colonial possessions. Such an attitude neglected the demand for national self-determination that had been on the rise since World War I, however, and is anachronistic in the post World War II world. Keeping in mind the fact that 1995 is also the one-hundredth year since the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese War, we believe self-reflection is necessary concerning Japan's own colonial rule, which started in Formosa (Taiwan) in 1895 and was extended to Korea in 1910.

Third, against a background of confrontation concerning Japan's aggression against China and Indochina, Japan commenced war against the Allied Powers in December 1941 with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor (while a notice to terminate Japan-U.S. negotiations was delayed in the Japanese embassy), coupled with a military assault on the Malay Peninsular. We give serious consideration to the fact that these actions have caused prolonged U.S. distrust of Japan. If Japan is to take a position of seeking peaceful solutions to disputes in today's world, we believe that it is more than ever necessary to clearly self-reflect upon our responsibility for starting the war in the past.

Forth, heart-felt apology and self-reflection are necessary concerning the mass slaughter of

civilians symbolized by the "Nanjing Massacre," as well as the atrocious treatment of Allied prisoners of war and civilian captives such as took place in the "Bataan Death March."

The Asia-Pacific War, which caused enormous suffering in neighboring countries, also was accompanied by indescribable sacrifices on the part of the Japanese people, as symbolized by Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a result, a common consciousness of "no more war" became widespread in post-defeat Japan, and the country chose the path of concentrating on economic recovery while avoiding foreign disputes as much as possible.

As a result, until quite recently Japanese have tended to emphasize their own victimization while neglecting their role as victimizers who brought enormous suffering to foreigners and foreign countries. That is, it can not be denied that peace consciousness in postwar Japan has had the limitation of being self-centered. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that postwar government compensation policies for individual war victims applied only to Japanese.

In the 1990s, however, problems such as the "military comfort women" became widely known and Japanese public opinion in support of apologizing to foreign war victims and providing compensation to them has risen conspicuously. Also, in recent years local public peace-memorial centers such as those in Hiroshima and Okinawa have begun to address not only Japanese suffering but also the suffering of non-Japanese. In this fiftieth year since Japan's defeat, we recognize that it is necessary to strengthen this trend whereby peace consciousness transcends the boundaries of "one-country" preoccupation.

Thus, on this historically important juncture of the fiftieth anniversary of Japan's defeat, we urge the Japanese government and Diet to carry out the following five-part agenda:

1. By August 15, 1995, officially do the following: clearly articulate the government's self-reflection on Japan's responsibility for past colonial rule as well as the Asia-Pacific War, which caused enormous suffering both outside and within the country; express renewed resolution to uphold Article Nine of the Constitution and never invade the territory of other countries; resolve to act as a thoroughly peaceful nation by taking the initiative to work for peaceful dispute resolution and armaments reduction in the future.

2. Make efforts to make the miserable realities of the war known to the world by, first, releasing to the public all official documents and pertinent materials possessed by the Japanese side, and second, assisting in the identification and maintenance of materials pertaining to war damages in other countries, especially in Asia.

3. Set up appropriate mechanisms within the government and Diet to quickly investigate war damages to foreigners; apologize to such confirmed victims, and provide early compensation to them; quickly take measures to also establish national compensation to Japanese civilian war victims who have been neglected up to now, such as victims of conventional air raids as well as the atomic bombs.

4. To ensure that younger generations without war experience will possess accurate historical consciousness, make efforts to provide historical education concerning the Asia-Pacific War based on sound scholarship; also, in constructing memorial facilities such as the presently contemplated "Peace Prayer Hall", always include exhibits dealing with the causes and realities of suffering in foreign countries.

5. Make widely known to the world the terrible human experience of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic-bomb victims, and also the realities of survivors of postwar nuclear experiments such as in the Bikini Incident of 1954. At the same time, with the ultimate end in view of prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons by international law and attaining the early abolishment of nuclear arsenals, take the lead by passing legislation affirming Japan's "three non-nuclear principles" (prohibiting the production or possession of nuclear weapons, or their being brought into Japan by another country).

With the understanding that we ourselves will engage in self-reflection on Japan's war responsibility, and will present the above concrete proposals to the Japanese government and Diet, we offer the International Appeal for Peace that is presented separately here.

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On the International Appeal for Global Peace

At the end of March 1995 thirty-five Japanese scholars (historians, social scientists and physicists) launched a campaign to collect signatures from all over the world to an "International Appeal for Global Peace on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the End of World War II". At the time of writing (the beginning of July) 220 signatures from 23 countries have been put to the appeal and lots of comments on this campaign have been sent to the campaign office. In this report I would like to explain briefly the background of this movement and to introduce some of the comments made by signatories.

Just like in Europe the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, the Asian part of which is now widely called in Japan the "Asia-Pacific War", is a very good opportunity to look back upon the history of one's country and to contemplate about the role which one's country played in that calamitous war. In the case of Japan Prime Minister Murayama's speech on 31 August 1994 triggered off heated debates on the posture which the Japanese government should take at the time of the fiftieth anniversary. In that speech Murayama admitted that Japan's past aggression and colonial rule in Asia inflicted still incurable damage to the peoples in neighbouring countries and proposed to start a plan to promote international exchanges for peace in Asia.

Compared with the attitude of successive Japanese governments, which did not dare to look directly at the Japan's past acts of aggression and oppression, the stance taken by the Murayama cabinet, which is headed by a life-long socialist, is a sincere one. But as the government's reluctance to provide individual compensation to the so-called "comforts women" (lots of Asian and some European women who were forcefully used by the Japanese military to satisfy the sexual desire of soldiers) demonstrates, the critical self-reflection on Japan's past conduct has not yet reached the stage which can turn into the solid basis of the future cooperation with the peoples in Asia and the Pacific.

While the debates about Japan's role in the war gathered momentum in the autumn and winter 1994-95, there occurred a similarly fierce controversy in the United States about the planned exhibition of the calamities of the victims of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To our great disappointment, the Smithsonian Institution finally gave up its plan under the strong pressures from those Americans who regarded such an exhibition and the critical reevaluation of the motives of the dropping of the atomic bombs as an unforgivable act of treachery against the United States.

Some Japanese historians thought that in such a circumstance what was needed both in Japan and in the United States was to promote the attitude to reflect deeply about the history of World War II with critical eyes and to build the scheme for future peace on the basis of this self-reflection. "The Japan Committee to Appeal for World Peace '95" was thus formed in January 1995 and the "International Appeal for Global Peace" and the accompanying the "Proposal for an International Appeal" were drafted in Japanese. These two documents were then translated into English, Chinese and Korean and despatched to various countries.

On 9 June the Japanese Diet adopted a "Resolution to Renew the Determination for Peace on the Basis of Lessons Learned from History", which included the passage: "Solemnly reflecting upon many instances of colonial rule and acts of aggression in the modern history of the world, and recognizing that Japan carried out those acts in the past, inflicting pain and suffering upon the peoples of other countries, especially in Asia, the members of this House express a sense of deep remorse." On surface reading, this resolution may be seen as an expression of critical self-reflection on the part of the Japanese Diet. But, in actual fact, the above passage blurs Japan's position as the subject of aggression by mentioning other nations' imperialistic acts. It should be stressed that this kind of resolution increases the significance of our campaign.

The importance of this appeal is appreciated by the signatories. The following are some of the comments conveyed to us, including those which point out the shortcomings of our appeal.

* From an American historian:

I commend your insistence on accepting responsibility for Japan's victimization of others. And I agree that Americans must be made aware and consider the horrors of our attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki--irrespective of the motives for their use at the time.

*From an American social scientist:

Your eight principles are a wise and compelling statement. They are more impressive than any comparable statement issued in the United States about our terrible intervention in Vietnam.

*From a New Zealand author:

I never believed it possible that a Movement within Nippon would have the courage or conscience to address Nippon's past grim history.

*From a Dutch historian:

It would be a good thing, in my opinion, if the then Allies were brought to reflect on their actions in the way this proposal wants Japan to do; e.g. Soviets--Warsaw 1944, Anglo-Americans--Dresden 1945.

*From a Chinese historian:

While agreeing with your appeal, I think it is necessary to revise the fourth point which seems to presuppose that the invaders and the invaded people can reach mutual understanding.

*From a Chinese historian:

It is impossible to distinguish the atomic bomb from other bombs in terms of the inhumanity of their uses. Therefore the expression in the point 6 should be amended accordingly.

*From a Korean historian:

The point 5 should include mentions about the bitter experiences of the peoples who were colonized by Japan.

*From an Indian physicist:

If the UN is to play an effective role (the point 8), then it has to be restructured, in particular it must have an enlarged Security Council (not some more OECD countries only).

We are going to have an international symposium in Tokyo in the middle of August to talk about the issues raised in the course of our campaign.

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