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‘The Flower of Culture’
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The history of Gensuikyo, then the leading Japanese anti-nuclear organization, is recounted, including the public clash in 1962 among its members.

Shin’ichi Yamamoto continued persuasively to make his case: “The third point is that you, the youth division members who embrace this great Buddhist philosophy of life, grow to be fine leaders in every area of society. And that you fight with all your might for the people’s happiness and for world peace.

“We mustn’t be narrow-minded, thinking of ourselves only as Nichiren Shoshu or Soka Gakkai members. As true disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, let’s advance with the proud determination that we will enable every person in our country, every person in the world, to savor genuine happiness and fulfillment.”

Shin’ichi’s words were brief, but he managed to express the most fundamental and gradualist approach to the elimination of nuclear weapons, an approach deeply rooted in the lives of the people, in humanity itself.

Shin’ichi had referred to the public clash among members of Gensuikyo, then the leading Japanese anti-nuclear organization, at the plenary session of the 8th World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs held at the Taito Gymnasium in Tokyo, on Aug. 6, 1962.

Gensuikyo had been founded in September 1955 after a Japanese fishing boat, the *Lucky Dragon V*, was exposed to radioactive fallout from the U.S. hydrogen bomb testing on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific in March 1954. This tragedy motivated a women’s group in Sugunami Ward, Tokyo, to begin a petition drive for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Their grass-roots campaign spread throughout Japan, eventually leading to the founding in August 1954 of the Japan Council for the Petition to Abolish Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs.

In May 1955, the Japan Preparatory Committee for the World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs was established, and the 1st World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs was held in Hiroshima for three days from Aug. 6, 1955, coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the atomic bombing there.

The success of that international convention led to a merger of the Japan Council for the Petition to Abolish Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs and the Japan Preparatory Committee for the World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, thus giving birth to Gensuikyo, the largest Japanese organization in the movement to abolish nuclear weapons.

Gensuikyo began as a people’s peace movement, drawing from all levels and sectors of society and transcending political persuasions. But gradually the Japan Communist Party and other radical forces came to dominate the council. They claimed that the United States was an aggressor and the Soviet Union a peaceful power. Soviet nuclear weapons testing, they said, was simply an unavoidable, defensive measure. They tried to recast the anti-nuclear weapons movement as an anti-American movement.

In 1960, with the signing of a new U.S.-Japan Security Treaty on the horizon, Gensuikyo came out against the treaty. And as the organization’s anti-American position became stronger and clearer, its more conservative members resigned. In addition, organizations linked to the Democratic Socialist Party and the Japan Labor Council parted ways with Gensuikyo and in November 1961 formed another organization, the National Council for

Peace and Against Nuclear Weapons.

Wrangling over control of Gensuikyo continued. The Communist Party, which held the majority, pitted itself against the Japan Socialist Party and the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan within Gensuikyo. The latter two groups opposed all nuclear testing, including that conducted by the Soviet Union.

Their differences surfaced during the 7th World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in 1961, but did not result in a further split. The JSP and General Council of Trade Unions decided to remain with Gensuikyo and work from within the organization for change. Their hope was to redirect the council politically and improve its overall effectiveness through having their will reflected in personnel appointments and operations.

At the 8th World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in August 1962, the JSP succeeded, at least in part, in achieving this. A statement of opposition to all nuclear weapons testing, by both the United States and the Soviet Union, was included in the keynote report.

But right in the midst of the conference, on Aug. 5, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission announced that the Soviet Union had that morning resumed atmospheric nuclear testing. This prompted the Socialist and Trade Unions delegates to submit an emergency motion to protest the Soviet nuclear test in the name of the World Congress of Gensuikyo at the Steering Committee meeting prior to the plenary session. The motion, however, was voted down by the Communist Party delegates and foreign representatives from the Soviet Union and other nations of the Communist bloc.

The plenary session opened at 3:30 p.m. Immediately after it started, several dozen youth shouting "An emergency motion!" rushed to the podium. They were from the JSP and Trade Unions factions, taking direct action to have the motion adopted by the World Congress.

Pandemonium broke out in the Taito Gymnasium as a group of JCP youth joined in trying to prevent their JSP and Trade Unions counterparts from reaching the podium. They jostled and traded angry shouts: "Bring our motion to a vote!" "Sit down!" "Shut up!"

Representatives from other countries watched the tussle with expressions of alarm and disgust.

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