

Japan: Nuke opponents feud over bombs vs. power

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OSAKA — Every August, thousands of visitors from Japan and around the world gather in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to commemorate the dropping of the atomic bombs. In addition to the solemn ceremonies that draw survivors and VIPs, there are numerous side events dedicated to seeking the elimination of nuclear weapons.

But while most everyone in Hiroshima and Nagasaki shares a determination to ensure that atomic weapons are never used again, long-standing, fundamental differences over nuclear power have split Japan's peace and nonproliferation movements.

Two of the main groups seeking an end to the weapons are the Japan Conference Against A- and H-Bombs (Gensuikin), and the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo). Gensuikin's activities have traditionally been supported by the Social Democratic Party and its predecessors, while Gensuikyo has been supported by the Japanese Communist Party.

Gensuikyo was established in 1955, after the Fukuryu Maru No. 5 incident of 1954, when the Japanese vessel was exposed to radiation contamination following a U.S. hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll.

Later, infighting and factionalism split Gensuikyo into several groups, one of which was the Socialist-backed Gensuikin.

Two other groups working to abolish nuclear weapons include the National Council for Peace and Against Nuclear Weapons (Kakkin) and the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo), whose 6.8 million members make it the country's largest trade union.

Since 2005, Rengo, Gensuikin and Kakkin have worked together during international peace conferences held every year in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while Gensuikyo has held separate events.

In its annual declaration this time around, Gensuikyo noted the situation at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant remains serious but did not call for abolishing nuclear power in general, only the kind that has the possibility for dual civilian and military use.

"We oppose the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and the accumulation of plutonium and the military use of nuclear power," the declaration states.

The alliance between Rengo, Gensuikin and Kakkin has always been uneasy due to their differences over nuclear power. Kakkin calls for the abolishment of nuclear weapons and offers support to *hibakusha*, but it also promotes the "peaceful use of nuclear power."

Gensuikin opposes nuclear power and Rengo tries to take a middle-of-the-road approach.

Since the catastrophe started in Fukushima, the philosophies of the groups, especially Kakkin's, toward nuclear power could not be glossed over after Gensuikin came out very strongly against

atomic energy, angering Kakkin, whose members include people in the Federation of Electric Power Related Industry Workers' Unions of Japan (Denryoku Soren), a group of utility company workers who favor nuclear power.

Last August, prior to last year's Hiroshima conference, Koichi Kawano, the Gensuikin head, who survived the Nagasaki bombing, declared that nuclear materials, including those used for nuclear power, and the human race cannot coexist, a comment that angered Kakukin's utility supporters.

In the end, differences between Gensuikin and Kakkin could not be overcome. Each of the three groups held its own conference this year. Spokesmen for Gensuikin and Kakkin indicated they remain apart on nuclear power, though Gensuikin at least is willing to keep talking.

"The idea of eliminating nuclear power altogether has been born in the national debate. We have to include that in our activities. That (the three groups) couldn't do things together is a shame," said Gensuikin Secretary-General Yasunari Fujimoto.

Eric Johnston, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, August 6, 2013

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<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/06/national/nuke-opponents-feud-over-bombs-vs-power-2/#.UgxBZNgsrlc>