

Tokyo recognizes Auschwitz: the rise and fall of Holocaust denial in Japan, 1989–1999¹

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In February of 1999 the Tokyo District Court ruled that Nazi Germany had murdered in its concentration camps many Jews by poison gas, as had been determined by the international tribunal for war crimes at Nuremberg. By confirming the basic fact of the Holocaust, the Japanese judicial system ended more than three years of confusion regarding the status of the Holocaust and the legitimacy of its denial in Japan (Kajimura *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, now one hopes that the decision will have extinguished the last embers of a fire of Holocaust denial that had burned in Japan for a decade.

The emergence of Holocaust-denial writings in distant Japan may surprise laymen unaware of the modern history of this nation. Japanese anti-Semitism has not evolved from an encounter with Jews and it does not have deep historical roots or religious origins. Anti-Semitism in Japan has never gained wholehearted governmental support; neither has it developed due to a significant conflict between Israel and Japan. In fact, Japanese anti-Semitism has appeared almost exclusively in written form and never sunk to the level of damage to property or physical attacks on Jews. For these reasons, Japan seems to occupy a special place in research on attitudes toward Jews in modern times (Kowner, 1997).

Although the Japanese lack most of the features that characterize anti-Semitic societies, they elaborated an intricate chronicle of anti- and pro-Jewish activities during the twentieth century. The Japanese–Jewish discourse began only after Japan was forced to open its ports in 1854, and the first outburst of anti-Jewish race hatred in Japan occurred with the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941–1945). In the latter half of the 1980s there was a resurrection of negative Jewish images, as a new wave of anti-Semitic writings swept Japan. During this literary “renaissance” the Christian pastor Uno Masami emerged as the most influential author of anti-Semitic material. In 1986 alone, two of his books sold a combined total of 1.1 million copies (Uno, 1986a,b). Uno was certainly the most successful promulgator of anti-Semitism in modern Japan, but of course he was not alone. By 1987 nearly a hundred books that carried the word “Jew” in their titles were in circulation and many large bookstores displayed them in a special “Jewish corner.”

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the Japanese have been intrigued

by the idea of Jewish power. In 1904, at the early stages of the Russo-Japanese War, anxious Japanese representative encountered Jacob H. Schiff, the president of the banking firm of Kuhn, Loeb, & Co. To their surprise, this Jewish American financier was willing to help Japan by joining an international syndicate, thereby enabling the Japanese government to raise more than half of its foreign loans at the time of the war (Adler, 1928; Best, 1972). But a decade after Emperor Meiji conferred upon Schiff the Order of the Rising Sun the Jewish image began to deteriorate. Following the Bolshevik Revolution many Japanese identified communism with the Jews, and with the end of the First World War Japan was exposed for the first time to contemporary anti-Semitic materials. The initial impetus was white Russian troops with whom the Japanese government cooperated in an attempt to halt the Bolshevik control of Siberia following the revolution. In 1919 the first translation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* appeared in Japanese (Ben-Ito, 1998).

With the end of the relatively liberal days of Taisho Era (1912–1925) and the outset of a far-reaching economic crisis at the end of the 1920s new winds were blowing. Various geopolitical interests and similar nationalistic mood during the 1930s catalyzed the warming of the relations with Germany. Although Japanese intellectuals and media seemed at first united in their criticism and condemnation of the Jewish persecution in Germany, with the time acceptance of Nazi propaganda was inevitable. Along with translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, a growing number of Japanese original publications on the "Jewish threat" started to appear (Kowner, 1997).

With the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941–1945), there was an outburst of anti-Jewish, along with anti-Christian, race hatred in Japan, which "has no explanation," points out the historian John Dower, "beyond mindless adherence to Nazi doctrine" (Dower, 1986, p 258). During this period, a number of Japanese writers accepted Nazi theories of the Jews as an alien, sinister, and corrupted element in the Western civilization (Shillony, 1992). Japan's mission, argued some anti-Semites, was not only to liberate Asia from white colonialism but to free all humankind from the Jews. So pervasive anti-Semitism had become in that period that Japan's major dailies promoted occasionally articles on Jewish influence and peril. While the government may have manipulated the image of Jews in invoking ultra-nationalist motion, anti-Semitism was never an official ideology in Japan. Moreover, Jews living in areas controlled by Japan remained unharmed, and thousands of Jewish refugees owe their lives to actions of Japanese officials (Kranzler, 1976, 1977).

The re-emergence of the Japanese concern with Jewish power after three decades of hibernation has mystified even specialists in the field. They have advanced diverse theories regarding the role Jews occupy in contemporary Japanese mind. By the socio-psychological approach, the most common view is that Jews serve as reflection of the image of other groups. Jews represent or displace preoccupation with external groups (e.g. the West, foreigners in Japan) with whom Japan is in conflict but are less "legitimate" for criticism (see Goodman and Miyazawa, 1995; Shillony, 1992). Neil Sandberg, director of the

American Jewish Committee's Pacific Rim Institute, argues that more than frustration with the West, Japanese anti-Semitism may have recently become "a strand of anti-Americanism. It's not fashionable to attack America, so Jews become scapegoats" (cited in Lee *et al.*, 1994, p 46).

Jews may also be used to meet internal needs: they serve as a beacon of Japan's quest for self-definition, namely, as a reinforcement of a sense of uniqueness, as well as an explanation for Japan's current problems (e.g. economic distress and international position), and as a warning for a future developments (cf. Raz, 1992). Laws of supply and demand also may motivate writers of anti-Semitic publications. Alongside national needs and psychological motives, the Japanese appear to be attracted to occultism, supernatural phenomena, and a wide range of conspiracies (e.g. Crump, 1992, Davis, 1980; Hayashida, 1976). Within this milieu, the Jews, as unfamiliar and legendary people, play the role of world manipulators, and eager writers are ready to satisfy this interest.

This article reviews the rise and apparent fall of Japanese Holocaust-denial activities in the 1990s, and to examine the lesson drawn from this almost unique example of "Jewish-free" anti-Semitism.

Early Japanese attitudes to the Holocaust

Following their surrender in September of 1945, the Japanese people began to realize the full-scale, horrendous consequences of their eight-year war (1937–1945). During the Occupation period (1945–1952) and the subsequent years they dedicated themselves to the reconstruction of their ruined economy as well as to introspection into the causes of the war. From an ultra-nationalist and expansionist nation, Japan swiftly turned into a pacifist nation, and the forced demilitarization soon touched individual hearts with a strong quest for a universal halt to bloodshed. Whereas peaceful existence and remorse for its previous military path became a major trend in Japan, coming to terms with a disturbing legacy of war crimes was constrained. Atrocities perpetrated by Japan in its occupied zones remained relatively obscure, and even German atrocities were tacitly ignored (Dower, 1999).

In 1952 the Japanese made their first acquaintance with the Holocaust in general and its human victims in particular through the writings of Anne Frank, whose *Diary of a Young Girl* became a bestseller in Japan only a year after its first publication in Europe. Since then more than four million copies of the Japanese translation of the diary have been sold, and it became a symbol of the misery of war or of persecution in general rather than a source of identification with Jews. In the following years the Japanese public became aware of the murderous German persecution of the Jews through various publications (Goodman & Miyazawa, 1995).

For many Japanese, however, genuine understanding of the Holocaust came only during the trial of Adolf Eichmann in the early 1960s. The trial attracted several Japanese journalists to Jerusalem, and their dispatches were accompanied

with detailed reports on Jewish history and suffering as well as impartial accounts of contemporary life in Israel (e.g. Kaiko, 1962). In the following decades the Holocaust penetrated Japanese terminology and intellectual discourse, and about 15 works of Holocaust literature (including books by Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, and Paul Celan) were translated to Japanese in the 20 years from 1965 to 1984 (UNESCO Index Translation, cited in Kurihara, 1993).

Japan, in fact, had its own grand sites of calamity, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There, according to current estimates, about 400,000 people lost their lives during and after the bombing. With the years, and especially after the end of the Allied Occupation in 1952, the American bombing of these two cities became a national symbol of Japanese victimization. Following the Eichmann trial many Japanese began to associate Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the Holocaust. Currently most of them, argues historian Gavan McCormack, see the atomic bombing “as a crime of such magnitude as to warrant analogy with Auschwitz” (McCormack, 1996, p 242).

Although the link between the atomic bombing and the Holocaust, Auschwitz in particular, is not unique to Japan (e.g. Bosworth, 1993; see also Goodman & Miyazawa, 1995), it probably became more explicit there. A number of Japanese writers and artists made the association with Auschwitz very vivid. The Japanese poet and peace activist Kurihara Sadako, for example, has likened Hiroshima to Auschwitz in her poetical work since the 1960s (Kurihara, 1999). “Of the world’s two great holocausts,” she wrote, “Auschwitz was a major atrocity carried out by the enemies of the victorious Allies; Hiroshima/Nagasaki was a major atrocity carried out by the Allies” (Kurihara, 1993, p 86). Also artists Maurki Iri and Maruki Toshi, who attained international fame for their depiction of the suffering of Hiroshima’s victims, dedicated in 1977 a second mural to Auschwitz and its victims (Dower & Junkerman, 1985).

Hiroshima and Nagasaki clarified the differences between the Japanese and the German wartime conduct: not only did imperial Japan not persecute any people in the systematic way that Nazi Germany did, but Japan itself was the victim of the first atomic attack in history. Unconsciously, the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent Japanese civilians served to balance the guilt feelings toward Asia (Broderick, 1996; Hogan, 1996), and the linkage with Jewish victimization became a further means of attracting attention to Japanese misery.

Nevertheless, associating Hiroshima with Auschwitz hid the dissimilarities in scale and in the background of the tragedies. Kurihara Sadako, for example, believed that for the survivors the legacy of Hiroshima is worse than that of the Holocaust. In a review of Lawrence Langer’s *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*, Kurihara wrote in 1984: “Auschwitz ended, but the survivors of Hiroshima/Nagasaki have lived with the hell of invisible radioactivity inside their bodies. So the reality today of Hiroshima/Nagasaki makes one feel Langer’s disparity, disjunction, and discontinuity even more strongly” (Kurihara, 1993, p 87).

The onset of a wave of Holocaust denial

Negative Jewish images in popular writing in Japan began to emerge during the latter half of the 1980s, the time when Holocaust-denial literature was appearing in the West. It was only a matter of time before the Japanese writers of Jewish conspiracies learned the new gospel and joined the hordes of Holocaust deniers. The first to join the new trend was indeed the aforementioned prolific writer of anti-Semitic books Uno Masami. Ever since, he has undoubtedly been the leading Holocaust denier in Japan and has well-established connections with various international Holocaust-denying organizations such as the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) (Goodman & Miyazawa, 1995; on the IHR see Lipstadt, 1993).

In a book published in 1989 Uno contended that the Holocaust is a fabrication spread by Ashkenazi Jews who exploited it to legitimize the establishment of the state of Israel. The Holocaust, Uno wrote, was the ground for Jewish demands for economic support, either in the form of compensation from Germany or of free aid from the United States. Uno held that enough evidence existed to refute the occurrence of the Holocaust, but strong forces kept it alive. It had become a Zionist myth and the core of the Israeli propaganda. Furthermore, the Holocaust had become a sort of religion for the Jews to such a degree that anyone who questioned it was condemned as an anti-Semite (Uno, 1989a).

In another book published 1989, Uno also attempted to demolish the image of Anne Frank, the chief individual symbol of Jewish suffering in Japanese eyes. Ironically, the fact that Anne was Jewish was almost forgotten in Japan, but the success of her *Diary* was upsetting enough for Uno to denounce it as a forgery. In the preface to that book Uno attacked the myth of Anne as proof of how far Jewish power and intrigue may reach. Citing Holocaust-deniers such as the Frenchman Robert Faurisson and the American Arthur Butz, he contended that Anne's diary was mere propaganda fabricated to invoke sympathy for the Jews. Uno maintained that the diary was a fiction written by an American Jew who received \$50,000 from Anne's father. Uno's evidence for the forgery is based on two points. The diary, Uno argued, consists of two types of handwriting, and it is written with red, green, or black ballpoint pens, items available on the market only in 1951. Secondly, Anne herself was not murdered, as is known, but died of typhus in Bergen-Belsen just before the end of the war (Uno, 1989b, pp 3–6).

During the early 1990s Holocaust-denying activities in Japan reached the attention of mainstream intellectuals. In 1992 Keiichiro Kobori, a professor at the University of Tokyo, praised the work of, the California-based anti-Semitic and principal Holocaust-denying group, in an article published in the important daily *Sankei Shimbun*. The IHR found Japan a receptive place for its agenda. The group invited Japanese speakers to its annual convention and several Japanese revisionists published pieces in its newsletter. The link between IHR and Japanese revisionism is fascinating. At the 1990 annual conference of IHR, Albert Kawachi, the author of *Why I Survived the A-Bomb*, thanked "... IHR and Revisionism for offering his nation a potential for escape from one-sided

materialism and return to authentic Japanese values [since] he placed the roots of Japan's current crisis of soul on the American imposition of unilateral Japanese guilt for the East Asian and Pacific War" (*IHR Newsletter*, No 76, November, 1990, cited in Stern, 1994, p 49).

The “*Marco Polo* affair”

During the early 1990s the small but constant publication of Holocaust denial broke an unwritten taboo about the topic. This trend reached its climax with the publication of an explicit Holocaust-denial article in the monthly *Marco Polo* on January 14, 1995. Belonging to the prestigious publishing house of Bungei Shunju, the three-year-old *Marco Polo* had a circulation of about 200,000, and it aimed at young, affluent, and educated male readers. Entitled “There were no Nazi ‘gas chambers’,” the 10-page article argued that there is scant evidence that Jews were systematically killed in gas chambers. The Final Solution was simply a plan to resettle the Jews in the East, and Hitler never desired the annihilation of the Jews. The “Holocaust,” the article concluded, was mere propaganda precipitated by the Allied Forces (Nishioka, 1995).

The author, a neurologist named Nishioka Masanori, based his article on secondary sources written by Western Holocaust-deniers. He had read no primary sources nor interviewed survivors or participants in the Nazi Final Solution (Iwakami, 1995). Nishioka was a supporter of IHR and had tried in vain to publish his article in more than 60 Japanese journals for a few years. Although *Marco Polo* finally accepted the article in June, 1994, the editor, Hanada Kazuyoshi, withheld publication until January, 1995 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In this concentration camp, the editor added in his own introduction on the article's front page, “the greatest taboo of post-war history is being kept secret ... Why do only Japan's media not write on this matter?” (Nishioka, 1995, p 171).

The responses to the article after its publication can be divided into three separate stages.

Ignorance and denial

For the first few days after the publication of Nishioka's article the Japanese media ignored it completely. The article was “discovered” by members of the Committee against Anti-Semitism in Japan, a watchdog group consisting of Jewish residents of the country. The group decided to inform several Jewish organizations and a few embassies about the content of the article but postponed public announcement due to the media's attention to the devastating earthquake in Kobe.

Within days several non-Japanese organizations started to act. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League in the United States, wrote to the editor and demanded a published retraction in the next issue of the magazine. Simultaneously, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center sent

a protest to the Japanese ambassador to the United States, sending Rabbi Abraham Cooper, a veteran opponent of Japanese anti-Semitism, to coordinate its activities in Japan. A day later, the Israeli embassy sent its press attaché to *Marco Polo*'s headquarters to protest the publication and demand an apology. The assistant editor who met the attaché made no sign of apology but offered space in the next issue when the embassy could try to refute the allegations of the article (“Publisher closes ...,” 1995).

Threats of boycott and its consequences

Since Bungei Shunju expressed no remorse, Cooper decided to contact eight companies whose advertisements appeared in the last issue of *Marco Polo*. The German concern Volkswagen was the first to respond and announced it would cease advertising in that magazine. Two days later two large Japanese corporations, Mitsubishi Motors and Mitsubishi Electric, as well as Cartier Japan, decided to withdraw their advertisements from the magazine.

Foreign pressure

The Japanese media first reacted to the article and wrote about the affair 12 days after the issue had gone on sale. At this stage the editor still defended the article as a sign of free speech and expression of non-conformist views. Nevertheless, over the following days numerous newspapers in Japan and overseas wrote about the article, and ever-louder criticism was heard. On January 27, Bungei Shunju showed the first signs of capitulation. It sent its agent in the United States to notify Cooper that it considered closing the newspaper.

The end of the affair and its consequences

Under mounting pressure, Bungei Shunju announced on January 30 its decision to dismiss the editor of *Marco Polo* and to permanently halt publication of the magazine. The dismissal announcement was accompanied by a letter of apology written by Tanaka Kengo, the president of Bungei Shunju, to Cooper, in which the former admitted an overall lack of understanding regarding the Holocaust. Three weeks later Tanaka was forced to step down, naming the affair as one of the causes (Kawado, 1995). Sources in the Japanese media argued afterwards that the affair was simply the last straw in a long series of scandals that led the company to get rid of Tanaka, and that in fact both Tanaka and Hanada were reassigned within the company. Nevertheless, these sources pointed out that the advertisement boycott made an impact on the decision (Shinoda, 1995; Goodman, 1997).

In the wake of the scandal even the Japanese government, which was usually reluctant to intervene in media affairs, especially in foreign-related matters, felt obliged to state its position and it denounced the article (“Holocaust-denying ...,” 1995). Even more dramatic, and arguably more successful conse-

quences of the campaign against the publication of Holocaust-denying material, was the sensation the “*Marco Polo* affair” sparked in the Japanese media. The joint press conference held by Cooper and Tanaka was attended by hundreds of print journalists and TV reporters, and in the following weeks numerous articles and programs were dedicated to various aspects of the affair.

While many articles focused on the backstage power struggle in Bungei Shunju and the company’s fall from grace, others examined some more profound aspects of the affair. A few writers criticized the hasty submission of Bungei Shunju under foreign pressure, and saw the Jewish response either as proof of Jewish power and influence or as a barrier to legitimate discussion on the issue in the future (e.g. Egawa, 1995). The majority, however, did not criticize the Jewish intervention, and some even felt it was justified in light of Japanese insensitivity to earlier protests. A few writers grabbed the opportunity to reprove the sensationalist tendency of the Japanese media and to question their professional judgment (e.g. Fukuda, 1995).

Still, a number of writers looked at the core of the problem and sought to examine the roots of Japanese ignorance of Jewish suffering in particular, and of the condition of the “Other” in general. Several journals even dedicated full or partial issues to inform their readers about the Jews and the Holocaust, this time in a rather informative and occasionally even sympathetic manner (see for example, *Sapio*, March 23, 1995; *Takarajima* 30, April, 1995; *Seiron*, April, 1995; *Brutus*, July 1, 1995). Some writers again emphasized the link between the Holocaust and Japan’s own calamity. In March of 1995, Motoshima Hitoshi, the mayor of Nagasaki, restated explicitly that Auschwitz and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the two greatest crimes against humanity of the twentieth century (McCormack, 1996). A month later Japanese historian Ohe Shinobu singled out the two episodes, as well as the activities of Japan’s Unit 731, as the chief criminal acts of World War II (Ohe, 1995). In August, 1995 the religious group Soka Gakkai held a major exhibition titled “The courage to remember—Anne Frank and the Holocaust exhibition.” To the opening the organizers invited a representative of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Israeli Ambassador to Japan. Not surprisingly, the exhibition was held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Auschwitz’s “twin cities” in the Japanese mind (“Holocaust exhibition in Hiroshima,” 1995).

The publication of Nishioka’s article also signaled a turning point in a long struggle over the Jewish image. In March, 1995, after a decade of “intellectual,” text-only, anti-Semitic activities, fear and suspicion of Jews turned into violent action. That month, members of the occult sect *Aum Shinrikyo* attacked Tokyo’s underground with lethal gas, and their terror ended with 12 dead and more than 5000 wounded.

Two months before the attack, at the same time as Nishioka’s article was issued, the sect’s publication *Vajrayana Sacca* published an article titled “Manual of fear: the Jewish ambition—total world conquest.” This anti-Semitic tract claimed that the Jews had exploited the defeat of Japan after the war in their conspiracy to control the world. The Jews were presented as a universal enemy,

which, with the aid of “internationalized” Japanese, was plotting to exterminate three billion people in the next five years (Brackett, 1996; Karmon, 1999; Porat, 1996).

Based on writing of Uno and his like, children of the sect were taught in schools that Hitler was a hero and was still alive. Subsequent investigation revealed that members of the sect feared Jews were planning enormous mass extermination of half of the world population. Engulfed in paranoia, *Aum* members also believed many Japanese leaders and part of the public were in fact Jews in disguise, and thus the sect turned its fury toward its own folk (Nosaka, 1995). A few days after the arrest of Murai Hideo, one of the leaders of the sect, he was stabbed to death. Dying, Murai whispered the identity of the assassin. Some bystanders heard him saying “Yuda” (Judas Iscariot), while others were certain it was “Yudaya” (the Jews) (“Hanin wa ‘Yuda’ to Murai shi,” 1995).

In the aftermath of the *Marco Polo* affair and the attack by *Aum Shinrikyo*, some foreign critics argued that the Japanese response was insufficient. For example, David Goodman, a leading American scholar of Japanese attitudes to Jews, criticized the Japanese failure to engage foreigners in an open debate instead of conducting “an intense, solipsistic monologue” about Jews and anti-Semitism. Goodman contended that such a reaction “was typical of the way many Japanese have dealt with the outside world for centuries” (Goodman, 1997, p 195). By contrast, the revisionist and anti-Semitic *Journal of Historical Review*, which reported on the affair in March, 1995, predicted that in Japan “a long struggle for historical truth and open inquiry ... has begun in a dramatic fashion” (“‘No gas chambers’ ... ,” 1995, p 5).

The “*Shukan Kinyobi* affair”

The IHR prediction was in fact not far from the truth. Two years later a small-scale publicized affair demonstrated that insensitivity to the Holocaust on the one hand and the penchant for historical revisionism regarding World War II on the other had not ceased in Japan. In view of the interest in the topic of Holocaust denial, it should not be a surprise that another author, Kimura Aiji, joined Nishioka’s efforts with a book called *Controversial Points about Auschwitz*, also published in 1995. Like most of the publications of this genre, Kimura’s book, aimed at the fast-reading, train-riding legions of white-collar businessmen, seemed destined to sink into oblivion (on the shelves of used-book shops) within a few weeks. Unfortunately, the fate of this book proved otherwise, following criticism of it by Professor Kaneko Martin, an Austrian citizen of Japanese origins living and teaching in Japan for the past few years, and Kajimura Taichiro, a Berlin-based freelance journalist, in a series of articles in the popular weekly *Shukan Kinyobi*. In response, Kimura sued his critics as well as the publisher on counts of libel, arguing he was not given enough space for rebuttal (Kohno, 1999).

Whereas Kimura naturally sought quick and low-cost public relations during the unfolding trial, the judge was remarkably slow and indecisive. In one of its

interim rulings, the Tokyo District Court stated that it could not “decide whether or not gas chambers existed,” and thus it focused only on the question of whether the suit would count as a libel case (Jacobs, 1997; “Kajimura Taichiro shi ...,” 1997).

The final verdict of the court was delivered on February 16, 1999, more than three years after the onset of the affair. The verdict, covering 207 pages, constituted a complete reversal of the opinion expressed by the same court in its interim ruling on September 7, 1997, and it dismissed Kimura’s libel suit. The chief justice Koike Nobuyuki ruled that “as acknowledged by the International Nuremberg Trial, Nazi Germany murdered in its concentration camps great numbers of Jews by poison gas. This fact is also acknowledged in the general historical understanding of Japan. The destruction of the Jewish people is known as the Holocaust.” More specifically, the judge also announced that “a careful examination and perusal of defendant Kaneko’s rebuttal makes it evident that it is not only penetrating but also extremely scholarly. His argumentation is even restrained ... The plaintiff is not entitled to recover any damages. His claims have no merits” (for the entire text, see Kajimura *et al.*, 1999).

Motives for Holocaust denial in Japan

The majority of Japanese have not been interested in the Jewish question, although Jews in their virtual non-existence in Japanese life may function as demonic conspirators for some. Accordingly, the anti-Semitic publications are not intended for the majority, but precisely for those who are concerned about Japan’s “misfortune” in the past and present, as well as its path in the future; these are white-collar company employees (the so-called *sarariman*), politicians, and the more educated classes. Thus, although it is written mostly for pure economic motives, the anti-Semitic literature seems to perpetuate itself through the rise of new generations of readers with periodical fluctuations (Kowner, 1997).

The publications of Holocaust denial emerged in a period when Japanese war wounds not only had not healed but many felt had reopened. During the 1990s, painful and humiliating issues related to Japanese military conduct during the eight-year war period were publicly revealed. These issues included, among other things, the loud demand for compensation and recognition made by former sex-slaves of the Japanese army, euphemized as “comfort-women,” and the shocking revelation regarding the biological warfare experimentation Unit 731, which used humans as guinea pigs (cf. Hicks, 1995; Williams and Wallace, 1989).

Still, the most problematic and controversial issue for the Japanese public has remained the atrocious killing of an estimated 100–200,000 Chinese civilians by soldiers of the Japanese Army in the capital city of Nanjing during December, 1937, known as the “rape of Nanjing” or simply the Nanjing massacre. The first meaningful and in-depth reference to the massacre in Japanese postwar historiography took place in 1967 when historian Hora Tomio published a long chapter

on the “Nanjing incident.” Hora’s publication remained obscure to the Japanese public as Japan kept its pro-Taipei and anti-China (PRC) policy. Four years later, at the time Henry Kissinger secretly visited China and arranged for the historical visit of President Richard Nixon, Japanese journalist Honda Katsuichi went to China to explore the wartime conduct of the Imperial Army. His series of articles and subsequent book were the first shot fired over the issue of Nanjing massacre, and they sparked a heated debate in Japan (Honda, 1972; see also Wakabayashi, 2000). With the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two states, and further with decline of communism in China, the solidly documented Nanjing massacre penetrated public consciousness in Japan and was recognized as the most heinous war crime Japan ever committed (Fogel, 2000; Honda, 1999).

During the early 1980s a shift to conservatism became apparent in Japan. This was reflected in various political actions, statements, and mainly in the government authorization system for high school textbooks in 1982. The government attempts to tone down descriptions of Japan’s military conduct during the massacre sparked protests throughout eastern Asia, China in particular. While the government promised to revise the textbooks, the number of revisionist books and articles published rose dramatically. In 1986, the year when the wave of anti-Semitic publications burst onto the scene, Hora, who organized the anti-revisionist “Study Group on the Nanjing Incident,” published his seminal account in which he refuted revisionist denial of the massacre (Burgess, 1985; Yang, 1999; Yoshida, 2000).

After half a century of relative silence and efforts at rehabilitation, Japanese activists of the extreme right and even ordinary conservative politicians became appalled by the sudden erosion of their nation’s inner and international image. Some of them fought hard to deny the newly revealed facts. A few journalists and critics, led by Yamamoto Shichihei and Suzuki Akira, have kept a revisionist stand regarding Japanese military behavior in China, and their position expanded from a marginal issue (“The Nanjing 100-man killing contest debate”; see Wakabayashi, 2000) to the comprehensive denial of the Nanjing massacre (e.g. Suzuki, 1983, 1999). Their position has been supported by statements of leading politicians: in 1994, for example, Justice Minister Nagano Shigeto remarked that the 1937 Nanjing massacre was a “fabrication” (“Nagano retracts ...,” 1994), whereas Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara conceded in 1999 after years of total denial that only “about 10,000 people got killed” (Asahi Shimbun, April 20, 1999; cited in Wakabayashi, 2000, p 337).

In the summer of 1998, following the publication of Iris Chang’s book *The Rape of Nanking*, six Japanese academics convened in Tokyo and called the book “the most outrageous, world-class lie” (Chang, 1997, 1998, p 19). In the same year, Japanese moviegoers could watch *Puraïdo, Unmei no Toki (Pride, the Fateful Moment)*, which portrayed Japan’s war leader, General Tojo Hideki, in a positive, revisionist, image. Endorsed by members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the movie became a “resounding” success. It was, foreign observers felt, “the latest sign of a growing frustration in Japan about the

way the war is seen, the endless apologizing the country is asked to do for the war, and how that still shapes the country today” (Gaouette, 1998, p 1).

The outburst of a wave of anti-Semitic writings in Japan, which led soon after to Holocaust-denial writings, also coincided with geopolitical and historiographic developments outside Japan. During the 1980s Japan’s position as the second largest economy became evident. The spectacular expansion of Japanese export as well as its hegemony in many industrial fields were followed by soaring national pride and the demand for international recognition. In the mid-1980s the United States began in its decisive efforts to overcome the Soviet Union in a headlong arms race and leaned on Japan as one of its major allies. Moreover, in the same period Western historiography seemed willing to accept postmodernist and occasionally revisionist historical narratives regarding World War II. The historians’ debate (“*Historikerstreit*”) in Germany, and the seeming appeal of Holocaust-denial literature in the West, created the impression that the victors’ truth at the end of the war was giving way to revisionist reconstruction of German conduct during World War II (cf. Baldwin, 1990, Thomas, 1990).

On May 5, 1985, on the 40th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, American President Ronald Reagan reinforced this impression with his unprecedented visit to a German cemetery in Bitburg, a place where SS soldiers were buried (Levkov, 1987). Despite the controversial character of Reagan’s visit it was emulated dutifully in Japan. Three months later, on the 40th anniversary of the end of the war in the Pacific, Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, an admirer and friend of Reagan, attempted to repeat the gesture. Nakasone conducted the first official visit since the war to Yasukuni, a Shinto shrine where the souls of more than 2.4 million soldiers, including notorious war criminals, are enshrined (Fukatsu, 1986).

In the next few years, Japanese’s fragile perspective of their recent history has become more rickety than ever. The death of Emperor Hirohito in January, 1989 brought about an intensive and bitter debate about the Shōwa period (1926–1988), the responsibility for war, and its postwar legacy (see Field, 1991). In 1994 another challenge to the conventional Japanese view of the war arose in the United States, as the Senate resolved to cancel the special exhibit devoted to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington. The exhibit was the first public attempt in the USA to question the motives of the bombing and its moral basis, and the Senate resolution criticized it as revisionist, unbalanced, and offensive (Nobile, 1995).

The rising national pride and arrogance in Japan, the need for assurance of its uniqueness, and changing attitudes toward history were some of the causes of the spread of anti-Semitic writings in 1986. A decade later, following years of diffusion of these writings and within the context of increasing efforts to deny the “rape of Nanjing,” an atrocity on a genocidal scale, one may understand the attraction of certain segments in the Japanese public to publications of Holocaust denial. If, indeed, the Holocaust, the most notorious war crime ever, was a hoax, as some uninformed Japanese may have believed, Japan’s war crime too could be a fabrication. Others, more informed perhaps, did not question the existence

of the Holocaust and Nanjing massacre, but may have viewed the trend of Holocaust denial as an opportunity to instill doubt and revise Japan's historical image. No wonder, then, that 1995, the 50th anniversary of Japan's defeat, became the watershed of the forced retrospection on Japan's military past as well as the trend of publication of Holocaust denial.

Future prospects

The Holocaust-denial publications of Nishioka and Kimura were only links in a long chain of anti-Jewish intellectual activities in Japan during the previous decade. Earlier, Uno Masami had explicitly denied the Holocaust, and the same publisher, Bungei Shunju, had published Uno's books. More importantly, these two publications were a mere offshoot of broader anti-Semitic discourse that referred to Jews as the evil source of Japan's misfortune. Nevertheless, although anti-Semitism has deep roots in Japan and stems from a variety of reasons, Holocaust denial is a rather novel and feeble phenomenon in this country.

At this stage, especially after Chief Justice Koike's ruling, one may dismiss it or regard it as a reflection of a broader trend. Holocaust denial has only a few promulgators, whose motives are not necessarily related to anti-Semitism. These individuals may mirror a Japanese tendency to emulate almost any foreign fashion or fad. At the same time, acceptance of Holocaust denial in Japan also has a historical context. It is associated, as argued before, with half a century of concealment of Japan's recent dark past, mainly the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War. It also reflects a growing body of Japanese historiography that presents Japan as a victim rather than an aggressor in those wars (Buruma, 1994; Hicks, 1997).

Unrelated to the *Aum's* attack, special circumstances made the *Marco Polo* affair the most salient case of anti-Semitism in the postwar history of Japan. It was the first time a Jewish response was effective and drew attention to the entire issue of Japanese anti-Semitism. Despite warranted criticism of the conduct of the Japanese media during the affair a new attitude emerged after it took place. Not only did Jews win massive positive exposure in the Japanese media but for the first time a warning was issued to producers of anti-Semitic material that their activities were being monitored and would no longer be tolerated.

The Jewish reaction and the Japanese response to it provide some insights for future dealings with Holocaust-denying activities and the broader phenomenon of "intellectual" anti-Semitism in countries with limited acquaintance with Jews, such as Japan. First, any defense against anti-Semitism requires a body that surveys the media and warns of any expression of anti-Semitism. One of the reasons Japanese politicians and media repeatedly express ethnocentric, prejudiced, or even racist remarks is their intrinsic belief that foreigners cannot read or understand them because of language difficulties (Kowner, 1999).

The success of the Jewish campaign after almost a decade of feeble and futile protests suggests that appealing to editors' or publishers' goodwill is ineffective

since they are often interested in a well-published scandal and consequently higher sales. Also, leaving sporadic cases of Holocaust denial without a response or waiting for the local media to act does not solve the problem but stimulates interest and demand for further publications. There is probably a kernel of truth in the notion that some publishers exploit short-lived public interest in an artificially bolstered phenomenon. No wonder that for some “It’s simply supply and demand ...” In an interview with a foreign journalist, Takahiro Shimizu, one of the most prolific publishers of anti-Semitic books in Japan in the early 1990s, admitted: “I understand that there is a market for these books, they offer a different perspective on history.” Shimizu’s company is an example of a publishing house that “specialized” in Jews: five of the six books issued in 1994 by Shimizu’s company dealt with Jews in one way or another (Lazarus, 1994, p 14).

The growing awareness in Japan of Jewish suffering in general and Holocaust denial in particular following the *Marco Polo* affair was one of the factors that led to the *Shukan Kinyobi* affair. Not only did the weekly find space to criticize Kimura’s book, but heightened public awareness in Japan probably forced the court after long delays to take a position on the debate about Holocaust and its place in history. Furthermore, both defendants and their lawyers fought their battle by themselves, without the help of any Jewish organization or the support of the Jewish/Israeli press.

The solution to the rising tide of anti-Semitic writing lies mostly in internal factors within Japanese society, unrelated either to Jews or to Israel. Nevertheless, among several options, apparently the most efficient way to deal with anti-Semitism in general and Holocaust denial in particular is to launch fully orchestrated operations that combine the use of Japanese and foreign media, criticism of well-known foreign personalities, political intervention, and even economic sanctions. When all are realized, as happened in the case described here, we may witness the continuation of a slow change—until, some may sardonically add, another group emerges as a scapegoat.

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Note

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