The Fifty Years of the Two Japans

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A divided Japan emerged following the end of World War 11. Official Japan was largely composed of former agents of the old Imperial Japan who then allied themselves with U.S. occupation forces. This statist Japan was not really pro-West or pro-democracy, but it was pro-capitalism and devoted itself to rebuilding the country into an economic big power. The "other" Japan, consisting of the masses of the people, came to recognize the war as a systematic deception perpetrated by the state on its own people, for the wrong purposes. Popular appreciation of the meaning of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has given rise to a deeply held anti-militarism that has also stimulated a movement for democratization. Yet in counteracting remilitarization, the "other" Japan has fallen victim to a developmentalist economic model geared to rapid high growth led by an efficient state bureaucracy. This, in turn, has led to systemic corruption and individual dependence on the bureaucratic corporatist state, with severe political, moral, and environmental consequences. The task remains to the "other" Japan to establish democratic political and economic structures that are accountable not only to the Japanese people, but to civil society transnationally. [M&GS 1995:72-80]

The linguistic habit of treating the state as a person generally creates an impression that the state is a single unit. More specifically, the view held by a number of foreign observers tends to represent Japan as a distinctively unitary corporatist state.

It is true that the wartime militarist Japan of more than a half-century ago was a monolithic state where the "divine" Emperor system provided an integral ideology. Further, while the monolithic state gave rise

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to international conflict, war itself, in turn, made the state even more monolithic.

But to the extent that the myth of military invincibility constituted the nucleus of the integral state ideology, military defeat of Japan in 1945 brought about disintegration that was not merely military but also political, economic, social, and even cultural. A divided Japan emerged. Although the division might not be well known to foreign commentators, the history of postwar Japan was marked by the struggle between two Japans.

The Statist Japan

The first is official Japan, representing the state and visible to the outside world. It largely consisted of those who had been, in one way or another, the agents of the old Japanese empire. Except for the war crimi-

nals and the purged high-ranking military and civilian state officials, they survived the collapse of imperialist Japan. They were responsible for the invasion of China, which led to the attack on Pearl Harbor, and for the building of the "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." As illustrated by postwar Prime Minister Yoshida, some of them were pro-Anglo-Saxon "liberal." Yet, they were definitely not democrat but imperialist in a dual sense -- namely, espousing the hierarchical order centered on the Emperor, they had a sense of superiority vis-a-vis the Japanese common people at home and Asian nations abroad [1]. At times the "liberal" imperialists had disagreed with the militarists, not on the imperialist goal but on the means to attain that end.

After the surrender, the former agents of Japanese imperialism soon allied themselves with the U.S. occupation forces in their struggle with "communists," first internally and later internationally. In fact, Prince Konoe, who had served thrice as prime minister during the war, had insisted at the last phase of war on earlier surrender by Japan to preempt a "communist revolution" that a delayed defeat would entail. The patrician "liberals" harbored a profound fear of the plebs.

With the intensification of the Cold War, the U.S. occupation forces began to take the "reverse course," promoting rearmament rather than demilitarization and economic reconstruction rather than democratization; the Japanese mainstream conservative forces followed suit. This is how the official Japan began to be internationally recognized as a little brother of the United States in the context of the Cold War.

The fundamental problem of the conservative Japan concerned its identity. With its old imperialism internationally rejected, its identity was now defined only negatively -- as anticommunist. Its positive identity was unclear to itself; it was neither genuinely pro-American nor pro-West, because it was not really pro-liberal democracy though it was pro-capitalism. There was something unnatural and awkward in the alliance, which made "Japan" a politically inactive member of the West.

The main positive common denominator was capitalism. And since the U.S. strongly encouraged Japan's economic reconstruction and growth on a capitalist model as a bulwark against the communist bloc, the Japanese conservative governing forces, taking advantage of U.S. Cold War considerations, embarked on high rate economic growth by the beginning of the 1960s under the U.S. military umbrella. They had gained economic competitiveness by the beginning of the 1980s at the expense of the U.S. eco-

nomic and financial hegemony.

Hence the familiar international image of Japan being "an economic giant, a political dwarf." This is true. A question remains, however: Why did not Japan revive itself as a military big power that was militarist? The answer has much to do with the other Japan.

Peace from the Victims' Perspective

The other Japan consisted of the large masses of people, who, in the wake of Japan's surrender, identified themselves as the victims of the imperialist war. They came to realize that they had been deceived by the state to believe that the war had been for a just cause, that the war had been victorious, and that the Allied soldiers were so brutal that Japanese men would be exterminated and all women raped if captured as a result of surrender. They came to know that the enormous human sacrifices had been made to the state for wrong purposes. The truth was that the war was not only a massive futile suicide of the fanaticized people; it was a genocide of the people by their own state. The systematic deception, as well as the material and human loss, reinforced the sense of being betrayed and victimized.

The natural reaction was a deep-seated popular anti-militarism. It was, above all, the opposition to war -- a peace-oriented determination not to send their fathers, husbands, and sons to the battlefield again. It was a determination not to repeat the horrible devastation of all major cities, including Tokyo where, in excess of Dresden, approximately 100,000 citizens died overnight as the result of the massive incendiary bombing. The anti-militarism was so deep-seated in the minds of the people that the policy of demilitarization enforced by the Allied Powers at the initial phase of the occupation brought about not only military and political changes, but also a cultural transformation in postwar Japan. The people who used to be called a "war-like nation" became so averse to the symbols and institutions of the military that the newly built Japanese "self defense force" would have to face perennial difficulty in recruiting its personnel. Similarly, the persistent campaign of statist conservatives to amend or eliminate the pacifistic, non-war clause of the Constitution turned out to be an abortive undertaking.

No doubt the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki dealt a fatal blow to the traditional militarist mindset. The Japanese people came to be convinced that nuclear war (even "limited nuclear war" in these two cities) and nuclear weapons (which were small by later standards) confronted humankind with a danger of prospective cat-

astrophe that transcended in its magnitude the traditional framework of the sovereign state system. Thus, unlike the anti-Japanese catchphrase "Remember Pearl Harbor," the voice of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has never had anti-American overtones. (This is exemplified by the recollections of Hiroshima children who witnessed and survived the atomic devastation [2].)

In fact, anti-Americanism has never prevailed among atomic survivors or in the anti-nuclear movement that emerged in postwar Japan with the direct or indirect participation of the large masses of people. Through agonizing self-reflections, these people came to squarely face the reality that, first, the atomic bombings were the consequence of the aggressive war initiated by Japan and, second, nuclearism was a problem that would affect all humankind, going beyond any enmity or resentment a nation might entertain against another.

This deep popular appreciation of the meaning of Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave birth to a new sense of Japanese identity. To the extent that it was rather unique to the Japanese people -- not readily shared by other nations -- it represented a new "national" identity. To the extent that it represented a consciousness as human species, it was global "human" identity. It is not too much to say that this "national human identity," paradoxical as it may sound, was the only positive national identity that characterized the postwar Japanese people.

History abounds ii instances where military defeat gave rise to revanchist reactions. The near-absence of the psychology of revenge on the part of the Japanese people can be accounted for in terms of the cultural transformation that put an end to the militarist mentality. The change was so profound that those American strategists who wanted uninhibited access for U.S. nuclear-borne vessels and aircraft to the base in Japan would denounce what the Japanese people considered a sane objection as "nuclear allergy."

Peace as the Democratizing Process

Militarism was staunchly opposed not solely because of the danger of war involved. The Japanese people had a grave concern that remilitarization would stifle the postwar democracy that was still in its infancy. They realized that they had failed to prevent the aggressive war due to the absence of democracy. There had been a structural linkage between external aggression and internal oppression. To oppose the resurgence of militarism was to defend and consolidate democracy.

The importance of the democratic implications of the anti-militarist peace movement in postwar Japan will be fully appreciated if comparison is made with a number of front-line states of the "Western" camp in the Cold War context. The unholy alliance between the United States and many undemocratic anti-communist states, based on U.S. strategic interests, brought about military coups or authoritarian regimes in the Asian neighbors of Japan, such as South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. One may argue that, unlike these neighboring countries, Japan was advanced in industrialization. But the fragility of democracy in a highly industrialized country was tragically demonstrated by the inter war Weimar Republic.

As long as priority was given by the U.S. to an ally's strategic value, even at the expense of political democracy, the danger of Japan falling victim to the logic of militarism could not be readily ruled out. Under strong pressure from the U.S. in favor of Japan's remilitarization, there was a possibility that Japan could have turned into an authoritarian regime that was anti-communist and anti-democratic. This was not an utterly unfounded apprehension. As an extension of the "reverse course" paved by the U.S. during the latter half of the occupation period, post-occupation Japan was headed in the mid-1950s by a prime minister who had been purged by the occupation forces because of his association with Mussolini. The prime minister in the late 1950s, Nobusuke Kishi, had been a member of the Tojo cabinet that had declared war in 1941. In no other former Axis power did a war crime suspect imprisoned for years reemerge as the head of government in the postwar period.

This reactionary tendency in post-occupation Japan was stalled by a nationwide protest movement against the step taken by Kishi to consolidate Japan's military alliance with the United States -- a step that evoked a fear on the part of the peace-oriented public that it would intensify the East-West tension in East Asia. In the face of the popular protest, the Kishi cabinet fell in 1960 -- an incident that marked a turning point in Japan's postwar history.

What is noteworthy is the twofold character of the popular movement. First, it was anti-militarist in the sense that it was opposed to a policy that would increase the threat to peace. At the same time, it was anti-militarist in another sense, in that it was opposed to the anti-democratic tendency that would deal with the issue of war and peace in defiance of the concern of the attentive public. The protest movement generated an

unprecedented impact because the movement for peace and the movement for democratization merged, reinforcing each other.

It may now be clear why postwar Japan did not revive itself as a militarist big power. The reasons, of course, are complex. But, no doubt, the crucial factor was the presence of the other Japan -- namely, the powerful movement for peace and the popular resistance for democratization. The peace movement was powerful because the people learned from their experience that a "warfare state" was incompatible with human rights and democracy. The movement for democratization was persistent because the people were aware that democratic popular control of state power was essential to attain and maintain peace. In fact, to a considerable extent, the democratization of postwar Japan was indigenized through the nationwide anti-militarist peace movement.

In sum, looking back over the fifty years of the other Japan's experience, one may notice two messages of universal interest that are interrelated. First, the voice of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which has global implications for the peace and survival of humankind. Second, the struggle to link internal democratization and international peace-building, reminiscent of the Kantian thesis. The validity of the second message was demonstrated on a global scale when the democratization of the Soviet bloc brought about the end of the Cold War. The same will hold true of post-Cold-War regional and ethno-national conflicts.

The Pursuit of Growth as the Lifestyle

Precisely in the course of counteracting the remilitarization tendency, however, the other Japan fell victim to pitfalls in four respects:

1) As an alternative to militarism, the Japanese people opted for a non-military means to reconstruct and develop their society -- a means that was acceptable to the postwar Japanese and to world public opinion as well. To the extent militarism was depreciated, economic development was appreciated as the peaceful means to build a peaceful Japan. Being non-military and peaceful was equated with being economic. Further, since peace was considered by the other Japan to be a good in itself, economic development also began to be regarded as a good in itself.

This popular orientation was reinforced by the policy of the governing forces. In the first postwar phase up to 1949, they sought to rebuild the state by means acceptable to the U.S. occupation forces, which was capitalist reconstruction. Then, in parallel with the mounting Cold War strategy of the U.S., they took the reactionary course of remilitarization which, as mentioned above, culminated in the fall of the Kishi cabinet in 1960. This was followed by the shift of policy from reactionary militarization to a focus on economic growth represented by the policy of "doubling income" geared to high economic growth. This shift successfully depoliticized the masses of people and stabilized the conservative regime by considerably diverting their attention away from the critical international war/peace issues. Thus, privatization of interest infiltrated the minds of the people.

It may be recalled, in this connection, that the 1960s was the decade when both the West and the East were preoccupied with economic high growth. Even for developing countries, it was the time of the first "UN Development Decade." In Japan, economic interest coupled with its anti-militarist rationale turned into economism as the dominant lifestyle of the nation, comprising both the governing forces and the mass public.

Co-optation by the Corporatist State

2) This economic high growth was efficiently led by state bureaucracy. Bureaucracy was the only government machinery that had been left almost intact despite the overall post-surrender reform, because the occupation forces used it to implement reform. The subsequent high growth was attained within the framework of bureaucratic state capitalism.

Unlike most other state-led developing countries where growth was attained mainly by expanding export market abroad, the strength of Japanese state capitalism lay in its policy that achieved high growth by expanding the domestic market as well. This was the aim of the "doubling income" program, through the raising of wage levels and comparatively equitable income distribution[1] [3]. Although a significant gap remained between monetary income and the quality of life in terms of social welfare, particularly among those who were marginalized, more than 70 percent of respondents in opinion polls since the late 1970s have constantly identified themselves as "middle class," reflecting a degree of material complacency.

This was good in terms of narrow economics. But it gave rise to adverse political effects. The achievement of high-growth within the framework of corporatist state

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1. For instance, while the 1986 Gini coefficient (an indicator of the degree of inequality or concentration of income distribution, with 0 indicating perfect equality and 1 indicating maximum inequality) for the U.S. was 0.366, and the UK 0.380, that for Japan was 0.278.

capitalism contributed, on the one hand, to consolidating the "iron triangle" of the "politician-bureaucrat-big business complex" tainted by structured corruption. On the other hand, the high growth success fostered the economistic social climate in which an increasing number of people behaved, not as autonomous citizens, but as the beneficiaries or dependents of the bureaucratic corporatist state.

Unlike people's dedication to the former imperial state, this dependence on the state was no more than a pursuit of material self interest. But the result was the growing political co-optation of the people by the state, characterized by the proliferation of corporate regulations by state bureaucracy. Thus emerged a uniformist bureaucratic state without a human face. The statist rejection or discouragement of prompt disaster relief assistance offered by foreign governments and NGOs to the people of Kobe in the wake of the earthquake is a case in point.

Environmental Privatization

3) The popular preoccupation with high economic growth necessarily brought about serious environmental degradation, which came to the surface in the 1970s. Questions have often been raised by foreign commentators as to why the Japanese people -- internationally known for their traditional esthetic sensitivity to the harmony with nature -- became so disruptive ecologically. Besides economism, there seems to be an element of political sociology at work here.

In the ideology of the integral Emperor system, the state monopolized the public sphere. The "public" was equated with the state. When the integral state ideology lost its indoctrinating power as a result of the surrender in 1945, the mobilization and nationalization of people's psyches, as Masao Maruyama puts it, came to an end [4]. Identification with the state was placed under the scrutiny of people's dubious eyes. But this legitimate psychological departure from the state involved a problematic withdrawal from the "public." And with the demise of the state ideology, the demise of the notion of "public space" occurred. People began to live predominantly in "private space," which was non-state and non-public, and was represented by family and corporation. Family being essentially a private space, the primary, if not the only, social space left was held by firms that were social but private. Hence the notoriously strong identification of Japanese employees with the corporation. The people tended to lose sight of public space. Accordingly, nature also lost its character of public space. It ceased to be

"commons" -- used, enjoyed, and conserved publicly. It began to be sliced, mutilated, exploited, polluted, and depleted to satisfy private needs or greed, as illustrated by the nationwide anomalous land distribution due to the near-absence of public city planning. People still retain the traditional esthetic care for nature -- but in private space. One may find nicely arranged flowers in the tiny toilet of a private home!

Air and water pollution, of course, began to evoke people's resistance precisely because the environmental decay affected their private interests. Collective demonstration of private grievances forced the government and corporations to adopt rather strict environmental regulations that were not worse than those in most countries. Public awareness grew. Yet the persistence of the primacy of private space is exemplified by the general reticence of the people to acknowledge the hazards of nuclear plants that are ostensibly not located in their neighborhood. Similar privatization of interest is the source of indifference to the effects of the export of polluting industries on people in the recipient developing countries.

Political and Moral Isolationism

4) As this last example implies, the economically driven private orientation that served to counteract the legacy of militaristic statism tended to lack the notion of public space in the broader, international context.

Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, Japan stood out as the only and the last non-European empire that had caught up with the empires of the European and North American continents in terms of technological and industrial development. Because Japan was a late-starter sub-imperialist state, standing between the early starter non-Asian empires on the one hand, and even less developed Asian colonies on the other, it made every effort to join the club of industrial empires through its dissociation from Asia. Within the framework of this hierarchical imperialist world order, Japan's two-front position gave birth to a sort of self-deception -- that is, while Japan challenged the non-Asian empires by emulating them and established the Japanese empire in their place by invading and colonizing Asia, the Japanese deluded themselves by presenting Japan as the liberator of Asia from the yoke of non-Asian colonial rule.

As a result of the deep-rooted failure of Japanese mentality to treat Asian nations on equal terms, the ordinary Japanese people in the post-surrender phase ignored almost unconsciously the suffering and damage inflicted upon their Asian neighbors, and

identified themselves almost exclusively as the victims, not the perpetrators, of the aggressive war. The moral amnesia of the Japanese people in this respect was reinforced by the school education policy of the conservative government, which aimed to deemphasize the dark side of Japan's modern history, minimizing, for instance, reference to the Nanjing massacre of 1937 in the textbooks of lower education that were put under virtual censorship.

It is true that the Japanese people were victims. It is true that this sense of being victimized served well to demilitarize Japan. But the people denounced Japanese militarism because it victimized them, not because it left even more unbearable wounds in the minds of tens of millions of Asian people. This was an evasion of international public responsibility. Just as the Japanese people retreated from the statist public sphere to domestic private space, they withdrew from international public space to privatized Japan.

Thus, the popular pursuit of private economic interest served to generate non-militaristic, economic expansionism that was coupled with political, moral, and psychological isolationism. Hence the international image -- "an economic giant with no message."

Argument may be made against the diagnosis presented here that postwar Japan, particularly after the 1960s, has been non-militaristic. It is true that Japan has become a military big power, especially in terms of military expenditure that is not much smaller than that of Great Britain or France [5]. But thanks to the powerful popular anti-militarist sentiments, Japan has not become militaristic. (Ironically, the failure of the government to respond promptly to the Kobe earthquake revealed the weakness of Japan's "crisis management" system to deal with a national emergency.)

This by no means implies that Japan does not have the technological skills or financial resources to grow into a military big power that will be regarded as a source of imminent threat to other Asian nations. It is natural, for instance, that the large stockpile of plutonium in Japan has had alarming effects on Asian neighbors, even if Japan is open to the strict inspection of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Japanese, in fact, have often been struck by fear on the part of Asian peoples far deeper than they had imagined. At least for the time being, the problem seems to be more Japanese insensitivity to the historically well-founded perceptions of danger among its Asian neighbors than the real danger of Japan going militarist and nuclear.

Unfulfilled Tasks

This leads us to the question of the unfulfilled tasks of Japan 50 years after the end of the 15 years of war that began with the invasion of China in 1931, and 50 years after the end of the 36 years of colonial domination of the Korean people that began in 1910.

Will the Japanese people, who entered their postwar history with profound indignation against the massive deception committed by the imperialist state, squarely face their wartime and postwar history without committing self-deception?

Today, voices are raised by Asian people in protest of Japan's postwar equivocation of responsibility for wartime crimes. More specifically, the Japanese government has recently been faced with the claim to compensation directly laid by the individual victims of Japan's war of aggression. These claimants include the Korean and other sex slaves called "comfort women," the enslaved workers forcibly transported to Japan from Korea and China, and a number of other categories of victims. It is essential for the Japanese to deal with these claims in good faith, with full appreciation of the historic, global implications of the issues involved. Although the question of accountability put to the Japanese concerns the acts committed in the past, the way the question has been formulated concerns the present and future of humankind.

Conventional international law takes the view that claims of the individual to compensation for wartime damage can be covered by state-to-state reparations and that no direct payment to the individual is required. The former West Germany set a new precedent of historic importance when it decided specifically to ear mark 90 billion German marks for compensation to those individual citizens of 16 states who had been victimized by the Nazis. In contrast, the Japanese government paid reparations that included a sort of "grant," of which the amount was as little as one-tenth of the German counterpart; and no direct compensation has been made to individual victims[2] [6,7].

The principle that underlies the claim to direct compensation to individual victims is that a state bears direct responsibility for the protection of human rights not only of its own citizens but also of the citizens of other

2. As a perceptive comparison of German and Japanese reactions to the issue of war guilt, see [6]. On the extraordinary self-reflections on Japan's war guilt expressed by the Mayor of Nagasaki, who was assaulted by an extreme rightist on account of his public remark that the Emperor could not be exonerated from war responsibility, see [7].

states. A state is accountable for its human rights violations regardless of the nationality of individual victims. The refusal of the Japanese government to pay compensation of this kind testifies to its conventional statism which, in the final analysis, fails to appreciate the universality of human rights in its deepest sense.

Transnational Democratic Accountability

Given the lack of sensibility of the Japanese government in this respect, the other Japan should come forth, because the new principle stated above is a legal manifestation of the more fundamental idea that civil society, consisting of citizens of equal rights, exists transcending national boundaries. Thus, Germany and Japan, if they have been transformed from authoritarian states into democracies, should prove that they themselves are accountable to a civil society that is transnational. The emergence of this new thinking is a reflection of the reality of our time -- that a global structural transformation of the state system is underway and that, in this context, the democratic accountability of a state is addressed no longer to its own citizens alone but to the citizens of a society that is in existence transnationally.

It may be noted that this new philosophy has even more universal, practical implications. Japan and Germany have been the perpetrators of crimes -- the crime against peace, against humanity, and other war crimes -- for which they must be accountable[3] [8]. But there are other cases of no less importance. If a state is a perpetrator of a crime against humanity in violation of the human rights of its own citizens and ceases to be accountable to the civil society within its borders, are other states and other civil societies accountable to the victimized citizens of a "foreign" country?

Herein lies the issue of "humanitarian intervention" that has been debated in the international community and put into effect in Iraq (the Kurds), Somalia, and Haiti in accordance with the resolutions of the UN Security Council. As for the legitimacy of "humanitarian intervention," a consensus has yet to emerge at the inter-governmental level, even though there is a general agreement that this issue will increasingly become difficult to evade or ignore. A consensus has already emerged, however, at the level of non-governmental organizations, such as Medecins Sans Frontieres, that civil society has the right and duty to intervene transnationally -- a fact that indicates the transformation taking place at the roots of world order [9].

It is in this context that whether or not the Japanese people -- the other Japan -- will adequately respond to the legitimate claims of non-Japanese victims of war has universal implications that transcend the specific issues related to Japan's war of aggression and the specific bilateral relations between Japan and any of its neighboring Asian nations.

New Signs of Hope?

So far the official Japan has failed to grasp the meaning of contemporary global transformation. Similarly, on the agenda of the Japanese Parliament is the issue of whether a non-war resolution expressing apologies for Japan's wartime wrongdoing should be passed on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. Due to the obstruction of rightists who argue that the war was not for aggression and that there is no need for apology as all reparations have been paid, a consensus between the two Japans will not readily emerge. If it does, it is likely to be diluted. Does this mean that after 50 years there are still no signs of real change?

There are signs of hope, again on the non-governmental level. In the Kobe region after the earthquake, while the bureaucratic official Japan failed to meet the needs of the victims, an enormous number of individual volunteers (doctors, nurses, technicians, students with various skills, and so forth) came from all over Japan to engage in disaster relief activities. They did a good job, independent of the incompetent bureaucratic apparatus and irrespective of the ethno-national difference of the people involved. The scale and quality of the spontaneous service and the dedication of the volunteers have far exceeded the level anticipated by any Japanese. The Japanese people themselves came to realize that civil society had gained strength in Japan, although latently. Apparently, a significant change into a post-economic phase is taking place in the other Japan, itself located at the roots of Japanese social order (4). The question remains whether the other Japan will prevail over the statist Japan and play a more active role, through the transnational cooperation of citizens, in creating from below a more humane world order.   ❧

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3. A most well-balanced, independent view of a participant observer, B.V.A. Roling, the Dutch judge at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, is included in [8].

4. This post-economic phase of Japanese society has also manifested in an anomic form, illustrated by the recent incidents related to the use of nerve gas against Japanese cities, allegedly by a pseudo-religious cult.

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