
A Look at Postwar Japan

From Spring 1947

[THE EDITORS](#) | ARCHIVED ARTICLE

In the October 22 **America**, Karen Sue Smith [takes a look](#) at Japan's commitment to nonviolence since World War II, and the changes that may be coming soon. Back in 1947, the editors kept a close eye on the developments in Japan, publishing regularly on the subject. Here are three short editorials from the spring of 1947:

Japan on a New Road

From May 10, 1947

The Japanese people, in the recent series of elections, have overwhelmingly repudiated the forces of communism. At the same time they divorced themselves from the extremes of the right. This "moderate course" was hailed by General MacArthur, commander of the SCAP, on April 27, 1947 in a statement on the occasion of the elections for both the Upper and Lower Houses. The communists suffered a decisive defeat in the Upper House, while the Lower House balloting gave them only four out of the chamber's 466 seats. In the recent local elections the parties of the right won a crushing majority. Yet the new parliamentary vote showed a definite trend toward the moderate left. A surprising gain of the Social Democratic Party made it actually the biggest single political group in Japan. Whether all the democratic, socialist and liberal parties will be able to form a coalition government, has yet to be seen. Though they possess an easy majority in the Diet, these parties are far from united, because of the serious split which exists between the right and left wings. None the less, the new democratic strength represents an important acquisition so far as Japan's future is concerned. While repudiating communism, Japanese democrats firmly indicated that they consider the extreme right no less detrimental to the welfare of the nation. This view is amply demonstrated in the new Japanese Constitution, which came into effect on May 3, 1947. Paragraph 9 states that "the Japanese people forever renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation." By this Japan undertakes to ban war, for a long time a traditional game of the militaristic right. True, Japanese democracy is still in the formative stage, and the enduring nature of present conviction cannot now be proved. But the signs are that the Japanese have stronger leanings toward genuine democracy than many outsiders believed heretofore. General MacArthur is firm in his conviction that the future of Japan depends in large measure upon its democratic development.

Faith in the Orient

From June 14, 1947

Through the fog and futilities of the slow dawn of peace in the West, the new rising sun in the Far East is sending us these days many a beam of encouragement and hope. General MacArthur has succeeded, beyond any expectation we could nourish at war's end, in setting Japan squarely on the road to a respectable peace treaty. Her newly-launched constitution has been hailed everywhere (except, naturally, by Communists) as a model instrument of statecraft. Missionaries and members of the Oriental hierarchy from the South Seas to North China have been flooding us with appeals for sympathetic cooperation in their educational and social-service plans, as they forecast confidently an

imminent and far-reaching "spiritual rebirth" of the East. Some go so far as to say that the Orient is waking up startled, after a long nightmare, to find itself--Christian. We were startled ourselves, so soon after our own bad dream, to hear Japan's new Christian premier, Tetsu Katayana, rally our erstwhile "hopeless enemies" on June 1 under the banner of Christian democracy:

"I believe that a democratic government must be permeated by the spirit of Christian love and humanity. Hitherto the Government in Japan has created the impression that it was motivated by falsehood and intrigues; but I believe that the Government in the future must be guided by the Christian spirit of morality. A government founded on moral ethics and based on humanism has been my long-cherished faith"

We shouldn't, of course, be startled at all by these fresh and heartening reminders that Christianity is the predestined bond of peace within and among all nations. There is neither East nor West, as Saint Paul taught, and Xavier with thousands of our Oriental missionary heroes and martyrs after him, because the twain have long since met in the Heart of Christ. Our faith in the Orient is one more measure of our faith in His living and loving Presence in our one world united.

Nagasaki Anniversary

From June 28, 1947

"While the sun warms the earth let no Christian be so bold as to venture into Japan. Let this be known to all men." Thus did the Land of the Rising Sun, in 1640, try to shut out the light of faith, its rulers little guessing that three centuries later their empire would go down under the blinding, shattering light of atomic explosion. This year, as the small but indomitable band of Japanese Christians celebrates the three-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the first Christian martyrs in Nagasaki, the power of the emperors has passed to a Christian general from America. And MacArthur is loosing upon Japan greater forces than that of the atom. Fathers Bernard Hubbard and Calvert Alexander, on their worldwide tour of Jesuit missions, interviewed the Supreme Commander in Tokyo. "Two of the world's greatest ideas," he told them, "Christianity and democracy, have been turned loose in Japan; and the effect they are producing is tremendous--the greatest bloodless revolution in centuries." Some people, said MacArthur, thought that he was losing his mind when, on the deck of the Missouri after the Japanese surrender, he said that the solution of the world's problems was a theological one. "Today," he went on, "I hold to that statement more strongly than ever. Those who criticized me for it have shown that they don't believe either in democracy or Christianity." That Christianity is essential to the preservation of democracy is something the general is very clear on; the dignity of the human person and the inviolability of his human rights rest on a Christian basis or on none. MacArthur sees the future Japan as a strong, Christian, democratic nation, spreading in the East the light it endeavored to shut out three hundred years ago. A new Sun is rising over Japan.