

Memories of Prof. Satoru Konishi by German friends and Dr. Joseph Gerson

compiled by Guido Grünewald



Satoru Konishi at the 2000 World Conference Against A- and H-Bombs

Oldenburg: 500 students wer deeply moved

I feel sad learning the Prof. Konishi is no longer with us. I got the chance to get to know him and two other members of the hibakusha organisation during a speaking tour in Germany in 2005. I was very impressed by Prof. Konishi's joyful way of being. By chance I learned that there was a possibility to have an event with all three of them in Oldenburg where I live. Our local group of DFG-VK (German Peace Society-United War Resisters) was the main organiser and various other organisations supported us, among them the German-Japanese Society and the Herbart secondary school. Our three guests signed the city's guestbook. In my view the highlight was an event of over two hours in the auditorium of the Herbart secondary school with all the high school students. The auditorium was filled to capacity, about 500 students who were deeply moved. Even at the end of the event it was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

Elisa Kauffeldt, a wise woman who protested at Mutlangen (where it was planned to deploy Pershing II missiles) told us an amusing story afterwards about a blockade in front of the nuclear weapons base Büchel. When the event was finished she told me that the students in her view had needed something relaxing since they had been so deeply affected. Several years later I met a young man who was active in the General Student Committee at the university of Oldenburg. He told me that witnessing the three hibakusha had motivated him to become active.

Whilst our three guests were very sincere during their speaking events, they were quite joyful at the encounters and meeting with their private hosts and us. I mourn the death of Prof. Konishi and the loss of yet another witness. Prof. Konishi will stay in my heart, he is irreplaceable for mankind.

Gerold Korbus

German Peace Society-United War Resisters (DFG-VK), local group of Oldenburg

Nottuln - An important visit for our small town

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has demonstrated to the world how terrible a nuclear war would be. Only few witnesses can give testimony of that catastrophe.

On Tuesday 21 November 2000 three witnesses from Hiroshima and Nagasaki came to the town of Nottuln, Yoshinori Yokokawa, Sumiteru Taniguchi and Prof. Satoru Konishi. In an impressive way they told students of the junior high school of their experiences. They were also received by Heinz Fliß, at that time mayor, who was deeply moved by the meeting. In the evening our guests gave testimony of their experience as hibakusha both at the day of the bombing and of their life afterwards in a public meeting. Many people from Nottuln listened and came to the conclusion: nuclear weapons must never be used again.

The visit of our three friends is important even today for our small town Nottuln. We continue to work for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. Every year we remember the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a commemoration ceremony.

Learning that Prof. Konishi died has saddened us very much. We wish him eternal rest and wish all the best for his family.

Robert Hülsbusch for the peace initiative Nottuln

„Das darf nie wieder passieren“

Überlebende des Atombombenangriffs auf Hiroshima und Nagasaki zu Gast

-fv- Nottuln. Im Augenblick der Explosion wurde ich mit- samt meinem Fahrrad auf die Erde geschleudert. Todes- angst überkam mich. Ich sagte zu mir: „Nein, sterben tu ich nicht, will ich nicht!“ Nach einer Weile stand ich auf und merkte, dass die ganze Haut am linken Arm abge- schält war und wie ein zerris- sener Scheuerlappen herun- terhing. Der ganze Rücken war mit etwas schleimigem Dunk- len bedeckt, das Fahrrad war völlig zerkniet.

Erinnerungen eines Überle- benden von Nagasaki, der am 9. August 1945, als 16-jähri- ger Postbeamter nichts ahnend mit seinem Fahrrad zur Arbeit fuhr, als die Atombom- be die Stadt in ein Inferno stürzte und Leid über Hun- derttausende brachte. Gestern waren drei Japaner aus Naga- saki und Hiroshima zu Gast in Nottuln. Eingeladen von der Friedensinitiative erzählten sie in der Geschwis- ter-Scholl-Hauptschule von ihrem Schicksal.

Sumiteru Taniguchi, der ehemalige Postbeamte, ist heute 2. Vorsitzender der Selbsthilfeorganisation der Opfer (Hidankyo) aus Nagasa- ki. Die Alpträume, so gestand er den Schülern, verfolgten ihn noch heute. Mehr als ein- einhalb Stunden am Stück, so sein Übersetzer, Prof. Satoru Konishi, der stellvertretende Generalsekretär des Dachver- bandes aller 47 regionalen Hidankyo in Japan, könne Tani- guchi auch heute noch nicht schlafen. Zu sehr schmerzt ihn sein Rücken, dessen Haut durch die Explosion herunter- gerissen worden war. Drei Jah- re und sieben Monate dauer-



Die Gäste aus Japan erzählten in der Hauptschule von ihren schrecklichen Erlebnissen und forderten die Abschaffung aller Kernwaffen.

Fotos: -fv-

te es, bis sich der junge Mann wieder soweit erholt hatte, dass er das Krankenhaus ver- lassen konnte.

Betroffene Stille in der Au- la der Geschwister-Scholl- Schule, als Schulleiterin Urs- ula Röttger und Geschichts- lehrer Helmut Brandes schweigend mit Bildern des entstellten Körpers des jungen Sumiteru Taniguchi durch die Reihen der Schüler gehen. Zwei neunte und eine zehnte Klasse erfuhren gestern aus er- ster Hand, was es heißt, Op- fer eines Atomkrieges zu wer- den. Zwar waren sie im Ge- schichtsunterricht auf den Be- such der Männer vorbereitet worden, die drastischen Er- lebnisberichte aus dem Mund der Japaner aber selber zu hö-

ren, war doch etwas qualita- tiv Anderes.

Seit Sonntag sind Sumiteru Taniguchi, 2. Vorsitzender der Hidankyo aus Nagasaki, Yos- hinori Yokokawa, 2. Vorsit- zender der Hidankyo in To- kyo, der als Lehrer in Hiroshi- ma den Atombombenabwurf miterleben musste, und Prof. Satoru Konishi in Deuts- chland. Sie besuchen die Städ- te, die sich zum weltweiten „Solidaritätsbündnis der Städte Hiroshima und Naga- saki mit dem Ziel der Abschaf- fung aller Atomwaffen“ zu- sammengeschlossen haben und dem die Gemeinde Not- tuln seit 1989 angehört, wie auch Bürgermeister Heinz Fliß bei seinem Empfang am Nachmittag erwähnte. Und

dieses Ziel der Abschaffung der Atomwaffen betonten die drei 71-Jährigen in Nottuln immer wieder: „Die Ausrot- tung der Menschheit durch die Kernwaffen ist eine stän- dige Gefahr.“

„Wie schaffen Sie es, immer wieder über Ihre schreckli- chen Erlebnisse zu sprechen“, wollte Ursula Röttger wissen. „Es macht uns keine Freude. Aber das, was geschehen ist, darf nie wieder passieren. Dies- es Ziel gibt uns die Energie weiterzumachen.“ Und ob sie die Amerikaner hassen, woll- te ein Schüler wissen. „Nein, die Amerikaner im allge- meinen nicht, aber die, die das ge- tan haben. Sie müssen sich endlich entschuldigen und uns entschädigen.“



Bürgermeister Heinz Fliß empfing die Japaner und Mitglie- der der Friedensinitiative im Rathaus. Am Abend beendete

ZUM THEMA

Hidankyo ist die japani- sche Vereinigung der Organisationen der Atom- und Wasserstoff-Bomben- Opfer. Sie wurde 1956 als landesweite Dachorganisa- tion gegründet und verbind- et die Einzelorganisa- tionen aus allen 47 Präfektu- ren Japans. Die Zahl der Be- troffenen (japanisch: Hibakusha), die heute noch in Ja- pan leben, liegt bei rund 300 000 Menschen. Tausen- de weitere leben in Korea und anderen Teilen der Welt außerhalb Japans.

Die wichtigsten Ziele des Dachverbandes und seiner Einzelorganisationen sind die Verhinderung eines Atomkrieges und die Ab-

schaffung aller nuklearen Waffen. Außerdem kämp- fen die Mitglieder für eine gesetzlich verankerte staat- liche Entschädigung der Opfer und ihrer Familien. Schließlich versuchen sie, die Situation der Hibakus- ha zu verbessern.

Zu diesem Zweck organi- sieren die Betroffenen nicht nur Demonstrationen, Un- terschriftenaktionen oder Sit-ins, sondern erzählen auch in aller Welt von ih- ren Erlebnissen und ihrem Leid, das auch Jahrzehnte nach den Atombombenab- würfen nicht zu Ende ist.

▷ www.ne.jp/asahi/hin- ankyo/rihon/

Bonn – meeting with trade unions

Guido Grünewald asked me in May 1995 if I could organize a journey on the traces of Goethe for Prof. Konishi. At that time I had a travel agency specialized on group travels. I organized the journey for September 1995.

Usually I gave all travel documents to the respective group leader. This time I gave them to the bus driver and accompanied him to Leipzig – the starting point of the journey – since Prof. Konishi had written in his messages to me that he would look forward to meet me personally. I stayed overnight in Leipzig and returned by train the next day.

I remember that Prof. Konishi told me that he had brought a real Japanese kimono for me. The kimono was too large. Prof. Konishi ostensibly had had tall German women in mind. I had the kimono - which I still have – shortened by 20 cm. Each time I wear it I remember Prof. Konishi.

Two years later the woman who had taken over my travel agency organized another journey across Germany for Prof. Konishi. In November 2000 he came to Bonn again with a delegation of hibakusha at the last stop of a speaking tour in Germany. I provided accommodation as well as receptions by the mayor and the trade unions. The delegation brought along a remarkable exhibition on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which aroused much attention among members of the trade unions.

Prof. Konishi wanted to show to his friends the location (Hofgarten) where the huge demonstrations with up to 300.000 participants against new nuclear missiles of NATO had taken place in 1981 and 1983. If I remember correctly he delivered a speech at the rally in 1983. I took the group to the memorial place for the victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There we remember them every year on August 6. When we visited the place there was a tree and a small plate in front of it. In the meantime our local group of the German Peace Society together with the Peace Initiative Beuel (a district of Bonn) collected money for a representative memorial stone. We asked a stonemason who happened to be a conscientious objector. At the inauguration of the memorial stone he announced that he would give the stone for free as his contribution to peace. Many times Prof. Konishi later sent solidarity messages for our memorial ceremonies which I read out. The mayor of the city of Bonn often participated in the ceremony.

Later, as a pensioner, I organized a journey for retired members of the trade unions once a year. Our bus driver was usually Mr. Peters, the same man who had driven Prof. Konishi and his group on the journey on the traces of Goethe. Mr. Peters and I spoke often about Prof. Konishi at these journeys.

I was really very concerned learning about Prof. Konishi's death and his long coma. Prof. Konishi was the only hibakusha whom I met personally. I will certainly remember him often.

Christa Pfeiffer, honorary chairwoman of the German Peace Society-United War Resisters (DFG-VK), local group of Bonn



Basisforum

Rhein Sieg: Veranstaltung der DFG-VK zusammen mit den DGB-Senioren: Überlebende des Atombombenabwurfs berichten:



Herr Taniguchi, ehemaliger Postangestellter und Überlebender des Atombombenabwurfes auf Nagasaki zeigt ein Foto seines verbrannten Rückens. Dieses Foto wurde von den Amerikanern aufgenommen. Erst nach Jahren konnte Herr Taniguchi dieses Foto zurückkaufen.

Rechts und Unten: Professor Konishi (emeritierter Germanistikprofessor) und Christa Pfeiffer von der DFG-VK Gruppe Rhein Sieg. Auf dem Bild rechts mit einem gefalteten Papierkranich, dem Symbol der Hibakusha



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Cologne – human words expressed with high emotion

With deep regret and great sorrow I learned about the death of Prof. Satoru Konishi. He was a man appreciated and honoured not only by me since he spoke to us from the heart: nuclear weapons must be outlawed, they must never be used again. I met Prof. Konishi when he came to Cologne during a speaking tour across Germany. Our local group of the German Peace Society had invited him to speak about the reprehensible nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their effect. Many citizens of Cologne came to listen. Prof. Konishi was a very special person, looking deeply into our souls, human words expressed with high emotion. I see his image in front of my eyes when his name is mentioned. At the evening of his lecture we invited him into my flat. We ate, talked and laughed. Prof. Konishi showed us how to fold a paper crane, the crane as a symbol for peace. The cranes we folded at that evening are still hanging in my room. Meeting Prof. Konishi had a lasting impression not only on me but also on other citizens of Cologne. I remember him with great affection.

Elfi Thurow, former chairwoman of the German Peace Society-United War Resisters (DFG-VK), local group of Cologne

Düsseldorf - A very pleasant and compassionate man

I met Satoru Konishi at a conference organized by the Special NGO Committee on Disarmament in Geneva from 27 February to 2 March 1978. The conference served to prepare NGO activities during the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to Disarmament which was scheduled for 23 May to 30 June 1978 in New York. Konishi-san participated with a larger Japanese delegation.

In May 1979 he came to Germany with a small Japanese delegation (3 men if I remember correctly). At that time I lived in Düsseldorf. We had lunch in the brewery Schlüssel at the invitation by Klaus Mannhardt (chairman of the German Peace Society-United War Resisters = DFV-VK) and Gerd Greune (international speaker of DFG-VK).

I had a cigarette making machine which pushed the tobacco into the filter tube. Konishi-san and one of his companions watched with amusement and produced a few cigarettes. At their departure Klaus Mannhardt and I gave a cigarette making machine with tobacco and filter tubes to Konishi-san. In the summer of 1979 I got a letter from him containing a cheque from the Bank of Tokyo. He asked me to buy filter tubes for the money and send them to him which I did. I don't know if the filter tubes were meant for him or one of his companions from May 1979.

Konishi-san presented to me (in March 1978 in Geneva if I remember correctly) a calligraphy saying in Japanese and German words „The joy of meeting kind people is tempered by the nearby farewell“. It's still displayed in my home.

I have experienced Satoru Konishi as a very pleasant and compassionate man who approached people very much despite his health problems and who was interested in the matters of his fellow human beings. Speaking German very well he told us much about himself and the antinuclear movement in Japan. He asked many questions and was very interested in how things were going in Germany.

Maria Gerding, member of the German Peace Society-United War Resisters (DFG-VK), Bonn, previously Cologne and Düsseldorf

Yoku hito ni

Meguri aitaru

Yorokobi no

Chikakai wakare ni

Kumori yukunari.

Satoru

Die Freude der

Begegnung

mit den lieben Menschen

wird durch die nahe

Trennung gedämpft.

Satoru Konishi

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Frankfurt – friendship, mutual support and cherry trees from Hiroshima

Frankfurt with its international airport was starting point and last stop for Prof. Satoru Konishi during his speaking tours in Germany. At least four times he stayed at my home, each time after landing and before his departure. In this way a tiny friendship can develop – and it did develop.

We were looking forward to meet again. We participated in our respective lives, told what had happened and had intensive discussions about the history of our countries and the fate of our families. Perhaps most close we came to each other when Satoru treated me with acupuncture needles at a time when I was very exhausted. We spent wonderful evenings together with friends of the German Peace Society. When some hours were left I showed him something of the city.

I remember especially one incident also because I'm still sorry. We had a free afternoon filled with sunshine and strolled down the river Main. Suddenly Satoru had an idea: he wanted to see „old things“. I knew that there were antique shops around the coronation basilica which was not very far from where we walked. We went to visit the shops, noble shops and I felt increasingly uncomfortable. I realized that Satoru looked delightedly at the precious furniture, porcelain, paintings, silver etc. displayed there but was searching something else. I also had an uneasy feeling regarding the salespersons who probably hoped to make a good deal with the rich Japanese who visited their shop purposefully accompanied by a German...And suddenly I realized that Satoru wanted to look for a jumble, for a particular handy or typical German product at a reasonable price as a souvenir. When I finally had comprehended it was too late to visit a rag shop in Sachsenhausen (a district of Frankfurt). The plane was waiting. Why didn't I understand sooner?

At the heart and as a strong belief we had our „common third cause“ as Bert Brecht says who was appreciated very much by Satoru: our commitment to peace and disarmament and for total nuclear abolition. We discussed intensively the development in our respective countries, the perspectives of the German Peace Society and of Nihon Hidankyo, common and differing developments. And we talked about the experiences Satoru made during his meetings and lectures.

In Germany and Europe these were the years of the large peace movement against the deployment of new nuclear medium range missiles Pershing II in the West and SS20 in the East. The movement activated millions of people.

Satoru always had a packed agenda travelling between cities and partially several meetings/lectures at the same day: meeting the mayor, speaking at an event, at a conference or at a rally. Right in the middle there was Satoru with his testimony, his wisdom

and greetings from the hibakusha. And with small gifts: I still have a string of paper cranes which Japanese pupils had made for peace friends far away in Germany. Many thanks to Satoru, to the dear children and to Japan.

Satoru gave a notable lecture in Frankfurt at the Palmengarten, the place where the family of Johann Wolfgang Goethe once had a garden. Satoru was very much pleased imagining that perhaps the small Goethe had played tag with his sister under parental supervision at this place. At the Palmengarten there stand three cherry trees which had grown from cherry pits from Hiroshima which a delegation in 1958 had brought along and given to the city of Frankfurt. At the end of the 1950s our movement succeeded in preventing the nuclear arming of Germany. Together with Satoru we intended to remember these events and we succeeded in recollecting the cherry trees and their message to the citizen of Frankfurt. A plate describing the story of the trees was placed there which strengthened the desire for peace of many people.

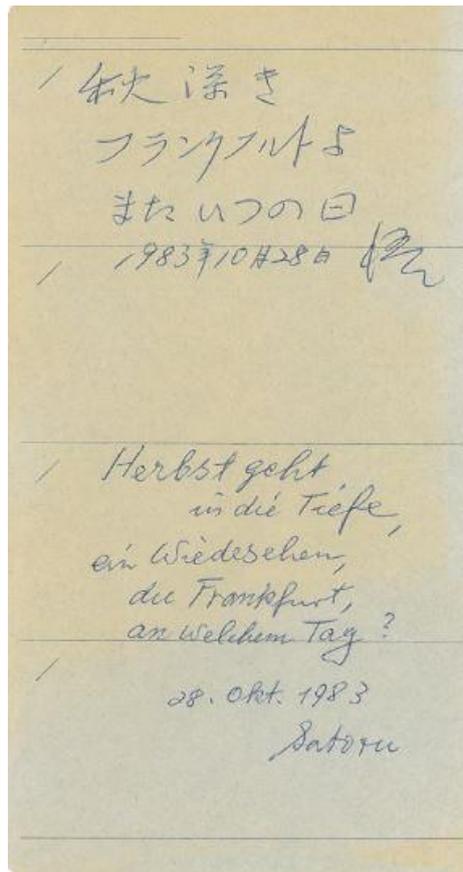
It's not possible to overestimate the contribution Satoru made for the peace movement in Germany. He succeeded in placing in many people the seed for a commitment to peace or in strengthening and deepening a commitment already in place as it was the case with me. Many thanks for this, my dear friend. I will continue my activities.

Last fall we had our national congress in Mannheim. We planned activities for the successive two years:

- against the deployment of US nuclear weapons. 20 nuclear bombs are still deployed in the small village of Büchel. There are plans under way to modernize them though the German parliament called for their withdrawal in 2010.
- against military propaganda in schools and universities. We have some success in this field while increasingly more universities reject military research.
- for negotiated settlements in the many wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Ukraine. Our government goes the opposite way of military build-up and intervention; by this way it becomes part of the problems

Satoru and we always agreed that both our peoples had learned from the wars of the past and that they wish a peaceful development. In contrast are the aims of both governments which make their way in a different direction but still hampered by the pacifist wish of the people.

We can continue to strengthen and support each other. We mutually need each other. That is the legacy of Satoru Konishi.



A gift by Satoru, given to me on my 33rd birthday before his departure

Gerd Bauz, longtime activist in the German Peace Society-United War Resisters (DFG-VK),
local group of Frankfurt

Remembering Konishi-san



Sumiteru Taniguchi, Satoru Konishi and Yoshinori Yokokawa in Darmstadt 23 November 2000

In November 2000, my local peace group, the Darmstädter Friedensforum, co-organized an event that was unique for Darmstadt: we hosted a public evening and a school visit with three hibakusha: Yoshinori Yokokawa, a Hiroshima survivor; Sumiteru Taniguchi, a Nagasaki survivor; and Prof. Satoru Konishi. We had previously been informed that Konishi-san was Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo, would lead the delegation, and spoke German fluently, being the translator, i.a., of Goethe's »Faust« to Japanese.

On that evening, the room was packed. I had read about the effects of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but just as the others in the audience I kept my breath when I heard the account of the survivors. Their tale was heart-breaking and confirmed my conviction that we must work hard towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

On the next morning, Prof. Konishi and I set out to visit Mathildenhöhe, a hill in Darmstadt with many Jugendstil (art nouveau) houses in a generous park area. He loved the place and we strolled around for a while. When we passed Glückert House, I walked to the gate, aware that the building is not open to the public. Someone answered the bell. I explained that I have the Japanese »Faust« translator as a guest and could we please come in. After some hesitation, the gate opened and we walked into the hall of that perfectly kept and furnished Jugendstil villa. Showing him around the building, however, was only a nice side effect: Glückert House is the seat of Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung (German Academy for Language and Literature) that awards the Georg-Büchner-Preis, the most prestigious German literature price, each year in autumn. I remember Konishi-san breathing deeply as if to fully take in the atmosphere of the place.

Before our three guests continued their journey to the next speaking commitment, we went to a meeting at a local high school where they talked to a few classes of 16-17 year old students. The young people sat perfectly still for the full ninety minutes. Some had tears dropping down their cheeks. Afterwards, the hibakusha answered questions in the school lobby where they had set up an exhibition about the bombings. To my utter amazement did not only many of the students stay, but more and more young people and even teachers came to see the exhibition. It turned out that after the talk, our audience sent text messages to their peers and urged them to come and learn about

Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So many students explained to their teachers why they needed to leave – and simply walked out of their classrooms to see the posters.

In the following years, I had the opportunity to meet Konishi-san again at conferences of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Once, he gave me an acupuncture to relieve a heavy cold that troubled me - in the corridors of the United Nations. He explained that he often has such pain and suffers so much as a result of the Hiroshima bombings that he had learned to acupuncture himself, and others.

The last time I saw him was on my return from the 4th Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly in February 2010. I contacted him and he suggested to meet in Tokyo. He booked – and paid! – my hotel room close to the airport and met me for dinner. He asked me to send him new German novels and explained that he not been feeling well in recent months but would love to go back to translating. The books I sent, but he was no longer able to translate any.

When passing Glückert House at my regular walks in that part of town, I always remember Konishi-san. I am grateful to have met him!

Regina Hagen, Darmstadt, a longtime antinuclear activist and specialist for disarmament, working for instance with IANUS (Interdisciplinary Working Group Natural Sciences, Technology and Security) at the Technical University of Darmstadt, spokeswoman of the campaign “Atomwaffenfrei jetzt!” (Nuclear Abolition now!), managing editor of the quarterly journal “Wissenschaft und Friede” (Science and Peace)



Regina Hagen, Yoshinori Yokokawa, Satoru Konishi and Sumiteru Taniguchi in Darmstadt 23 November 2000



Veranstalter:
Darmstädter Friedensforum
Ev. Dekanat Darmstadt-Stadt
Ev. Erwachsenenbildung
IANUS/TU Darmstadt
Kath. Bildungszentrum

Wissenschaftsstadt
Darmstadt



Zeitzeugen berichten:

ATOMBOMBENOPFER aus **HIROSHIMA** und **NAGASAKI**

mit
Yoshinori Yokokawa, Hiroshima
Sumiteru Taniguchi, Nagasaki
von Prof. Satoru Konishi

Grußworte:
Prof. Wörner, TUD
Pfarrer Mander, Ev. Dekanat

JUSTUS-LIEBIG-HAUS
GROSSE BACHGASSE 2
23. NOV. 2000, 20 Uhr

Unsere Gäste:

Herr **Yoshinori Yokokawa** wurde 1929 in Hiroshima geboren und hat dort den Atombombenabwurf vom 6.8.1945 überlebt. Der ehemalige Grundschullehrer ist heute Mitglied des Exekutivausschusses des Nihon (Japan) Hidankyo und Bize-Vorsteher des Tokyo-Hidankyo.

Herr **Sumiteru Taniguchi** wurde 1929 in Nagasaki geboren, wo er den Abwurf vom 9.8.1945 überlebte. Der ehemalige Postbeamte ist heute Vice-Vorsitzender der Nagasaki-Hidankyo.

Die Deutschlandreise der kleinen Delegation wurde von japanischer Seite von Prof. **Satoru Konishi** organisiert. Er ist ebenfalls Überlebender des Atombombenabwurfs auf Hiroshima und heute im Vorstand des Japan Council Against A & H Bombs (Japan Gensuikyo) sowie als Leiter der Internationalen Abteilung der Hibakusha-Organisation (Nihon Hidankyo) tätig. Herr Konishi, geboren 1929, ist emeritierter Professor für Germanistik an der Universität in Tokio, spezialisiert auf Brecht und Goethe und u.a. Übersetzer von Goethes „Faust“. (Kontakt: kon-satoru@mtd.biglobe.ne.jp)

Von deutscher Seite koordiniert die Reise Kathrin Vogler von der DFG/VK Nordrhein-Westfalen. (Kontakt: vogler@dfg-vk.de).

Organisatoren des Darmstädter Aufenthalts sind die Stadt Darmstadt und das Darmstädter Friedensforum. (Kontakt für Stadt: wagner@stad.darmstadt.de, Tel. 06151/13 29 54; Kontakt für Friedensforum: regina.hagen@jugendstil.da.shuttle.de, Tel. 06151/47 11 4)

Reciting Toge Sankichi's poem "Give back the Human" in a kind of painful ecstasy

I met Satoru Konishi in March 1978 for the first time if my memory is correct. At that time he reported in a public meeting organized by peace groups of Cologne how he survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as a 16-year-old youth, on the annihilation of many people and the destruction of the city and on the ongoing suffering of the surviving hibakusha. The sober expression to report doesn't reflect, however, what Satoru did. He literally bore testimony in a highly emotional way but precise regarding facts to the devastating destructive power of the nuclear bombs and the severe aftereffects on the one hand and the absolute desire for peace and the total abolition of all nuclear weapons as a prerequisite on the other hand. A highlight of his testimony was the performance of the poem „Give back the Human“ by Toge Sankichi who had survived the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 and died from the aftereffects in 1953. Experiencing Satoru reciting that poem in German language (in English in other countries) in a kind of painful ecstasy made the suffering and the longing for peace of the hibakusha almost sensually noticeable.

Satoru spoke also in later years in Cologne but I don't remember the exact year dates. What I do remember is that we – members of the local group of Cologne of the German Peace Society and other listeners – made a spontaneous mini demonstration after his lecture accompanying Satoru to his hotel since we were so impressed by his testimony.

In the 1980s Satoru and Dr. Hida (who too spoke several times in Germany about his experience and the ongoing suffering of the hibakusha and especially the bura-bura-disease) as well as some staff members of Gensuikyo (Japanese Council Against A- and H-Bombs) became my most important reference persons in Japan. I was elected international speaker of DFG-VK in 1979 which I'm still today. Invited by Gensuikyo I participated in the World Conference Against A- and H-Bombs in 1984 for the first time. As tensions increased in the following year between Gensuikyo (the organization is close to the Japanese Communist Party) and Gensuikin (Japanese Congress Against A- and H-Bombs; was close to the former Socialist Party of Japan and the trade union confederation Sohyo) I as a foreigner was not able to understand the background and the causes.* Since I didn't want to get taken in by either side I asked Satoru if I could participate in the World Conference 1985 as a guest of Nihon Hidankyo (federation of local and regional associations of hibakusha). Also in 1986 I was guest of Nihon Hidankyo accepting the invitation of Gensuikyo in the following years.

Accompanying Satoru during those two years I met several leading and well-known hibakusha for example Sumiteru Taniguchi, Senjii Yamaguchi, Heiichi Fujii, Sakae Ito and Chieko Watanabe. Satoru also helped me to do numerous interviews with less prominent hibakusha. German radio stations were interested to get reports in view of the 40th anniversary of the nuclear bombing. Satoru selected the persons with whom I had the interviews and made appointments, in some cases he also translated himself (the interviewees didn't speak English) or provided a person who translated. I remember that some of the interviewees 40 years later spoke about their experience and their suffering for the first time – to a foreigner. In two cases I stopped the interview realizing that the pain became too much for the interviewees.

Satoru not only made it possible for me to do numerous interviews in 1985 but was also a perfect host. Being responsible in his capacity as deputy secretary general for the preparation of the activities of Nihon Hidankyo in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the commemorative days in August and playing an important role at the World Conference he together with other activists of Hidankyo took touchingly care that I – the guest – didn't miss anything. Highlight was a common trip to Hakone accompanied by Dr. Hida, the lawyer Masanori Ikeda and Naoko Ito (present name Naoko Nishimura) who worked in the office of Nihon Hidankyo. The shared evening and the accomodation in a ryokan, the ofuro and a walk along the streets of this special place wearing a yukata was an impressive experience. At that time I was keen to get to know and to understand to some extent the Japanese culture which was completely different to me as German. Satoru and other friends from Nihon Hidankyo, but also people from the anti-nuclear movement in whose houses and flats I stayed in later years helped me a lot to meet my goal.

Satoru suffering heavily from the aftereffects of nuclear radiation had done an enormous amount of work. Sometimes he indicated that he felt overburdened permanently and was suffering from states of exhaustion. At the same time he considered it his duty to express the suffering and message of hibakusha that nuclear weapons must be totally abolished. In this spirit he accepted his fate and did all he could do often to the point of physical and mental exhaustion.

As a scholar for German studies Satoru loved both the German language as well as visiting Germany whose poets and philosophers he appreciated especially. The German peace movement was lucky in having not only Dr. Hida who remembered some German words from the time of his medical studies in Heidelberg but also the professor of German studies Satoru Konishi who communicated the message of the hibakusha in German language in a lively and credible way. We will miss Satoru Konishi and remember him for a long time.

*The memories by Senji Yamaguchi (Burnt Yet Undaunted, Tokyo 2002, pg. 99-100) demonstrate that also Japanese insiders had difficulties to figure out the major causes of the rift.

Dr. Guido Grünewald, German Peace Society-United War Resisters (DFG-VK), international speaker
Bonn, previously Cologne

Konishi-san in Germany in autumn 1983

The vote of the German Parliament on the deployment of new US nuclear weapons (Pershing II missiles and cruise missiles) in Germany was scheduled for November 1983. From 15 to 22 October the German peace movement organized a “week of resistance”. Konishi-san participated at some of those activities.



Satoru Konishi with two companions in Nürnberg on 18 October participating in the activities on the “day of antimilitarism and international solidarity”. The inscription on the banner says: “Say no! Refuse any kind of war preparation!”

Some days later Konishi-san came to Cologne where the local group of DFG-VK welcomed him with a banner saying “Never again Hiroshima!”



In the evening Konishi-san and two companions spoke at an event moderated by Guido Grünewald in a packed room of the adult education center of Cologne.



Saturday 22 October 1983 was the day of the big "people's assembly" in Bonn with about 300.000 participants. Konishi-san recited Sankichi Toge's poem "Give back the Human" at the opening of the gathering.

Remembering Konishi-sensei

Dear Guido, here are three quick memories about Konishi-sensei:

1) In my family it was common knowledge that I would be the last amongst us to appreciate Eastern medicine. Then, some years ago when I was invited to speak at Bikini Day commemorations, I found myself racing to get to the march in Yaizu City, in which I was to march in front behind the banner. As I hurriedly prepared to cross the street, I very briefly saw what seemed like the who line of march looking at me with a sense of horror. In the next split second I found myself on the hood of a woman's car, and she was shocked to see this huge gaijin on her hood and looking at her through the windshield. Fortunately, she was not going too fast. I pulled myself off, signaled to her that I was all right, and sensing that no bones were broken, I joined the march, knowing that later in the day my muscles would become as tight as the steel cables of a bridge.

That evening, as my muscles were becoming steel cables, there was a knock on my hotel room door. It was Konishi-sensei, and he said he wanted to do acupressure on me, that it was one of the few ways that he and his wife dealt with their pain. For 20 minutes to a half an hour he pressed on pressure points on my hands and ankles, and when he was finished, my muscles and body were a loose as rubber. No more pain, as I was the recipient of a great gift. And I became a believer in acupressure and other forms of Eastern medicine.

2) Just after the Social Forum in Mumbai, I was invited to join a Gensuikyo boat ride out to and a tour of Elephant Island. It was a major Hindu religious site where, unfortunately, early Portuguese explorers/conquistadors who were religious fanatics had decapitated the heads of many of the ancient statues. As the boat sailed out of Mumbai's horribly polluted air, we could all breathe again, and Konishi began doing an extended recital of Goethe to the pleasure and amusement of the many Japanese on board.

3) I lose track of the years, but it may have been in 2005, when it was arranged for Konishi-sensei to speak at the national conference of Veterans for Peace. I arranged for a Japanese intern/student who was working for me to travel to Texas to serve as his interpreter. She loved engaging and working with Konishi-sensei, and even more the occasion served as the occasion for her meeting the radical popular singer David Rovics. They are now married.

Dr. Joseph Gerson, Boston, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), disarmament coordinator, director of programs in New England and director of the Peace and Economic Security Program.



Satoru Konishi on 1 May 2005 in Central Park, New York City, after the NGO rally on occasion of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference



Satoru Konishi presenting the hibakusha view on 11 May 2005 at the NPT review conference in New York City



Satoru Konishi in May 2005 at the farewell party after the closing of the NPT review conference

Toge Sankichi

Give Back the Human

Give back my father, give back my mother,

Give grandpa back, grandma back.

Give my sons and daughters back.

Give me back myself.

Give back the human race.

As long as this life lasts, this life,

Give back peace

That will never end.

From „Poems of the Atomic Bomb“