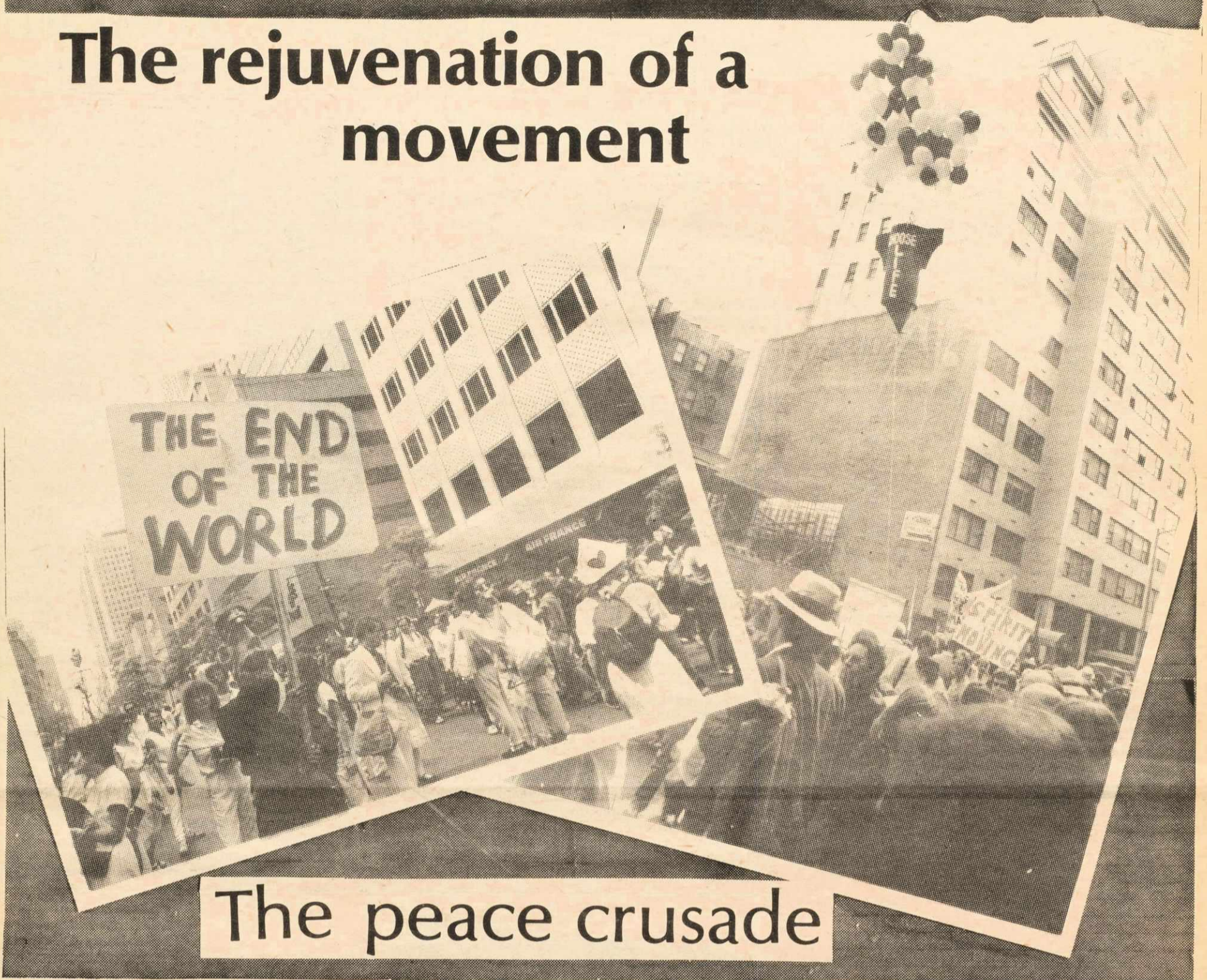


# The rejuvenation of a movement



## The peace crusade

by Cathy McDonald

**A**fter two days I dug up my mother's body. It was black and greasy." Mikiso Iwasa was sixteen, sitting in school, when the bomb dropped on his hometown of Hiroshima. Now 53, speaking to a New York City household gathering, he's told his story so many times that it lacks embellishments, and emotion is lost in the broken English.

But the group gathered in this middle-class, liberal home had darkened faces. One woman in the late stages of pregnancy kept her eyes on the floor to avoid the pictures.

"This picture shows how the burns were the worst where there was clothing, as the cloth absorbs the heat," Iwasa explained. "This picture shows the 'shadow' effect. The black outline is where a man sat before he was evaporated."

The message of the thousand Japanese in New York preceding the June 12 demonstration was simple and persistent. Enlarged pictures of blackened bodies and devastated cities were displayed inside and outside the United Nations building.

The Japanese Hibakchu (A and H-bomb survivors) spoke to union dialogues, to academics, conferences and schools. A tiny frail woman was lifted from her wheelchair onto the podium of an international women's peace conference, where she pleaded for an end to war, and the demolition of all nuclear weapons.

The American audience clapped after these uncomfortable, horrifying testimonies. What they were clapping for wasn't too clear. There was no performance to appreciate - neither the Hibakusha, nor the people who dropped the bomb, nor the person who took the pictures. There was hurt and helplessness in the people who clapped, who knew that appreciation for the Japanese who travelled half way around the globe could not be repaid with applause. Their pain would only be appeased by world peace, and what that peace might

look like is getting more and more difficult to imagine.

People had come to New York for a sober purpose, but the city was high with optimism. After all, the city was providing shelter for tens of thousands of the most optimistic people, those who believe that by demonstrating they can help bring the world closer to peace.

"Welcome peace marchers" read a message on a church sign. Homes, church floors, synagogues, and university residences were all places to house participants in the rally, at little or no cost.

The city was buzzing with plans, strategies, and analyses of the nuclear arms race from every conceivable angle. Fears and hopes were expressed through the talents of painters, authors and dramaticists. And finally, the spirit of this international gathering burst into the streets on June 12, the marching of a million people plastered on the covers of news magazines across the country.

**T**he image of nuclear war is more frequent in people's minds these days. To a large extent, Ronald Reagan has contributed to this fact.

Since his election two years ago, Reagan has been bolstering U.S. military capability at a determined rate. And his administration has used more explicit fighting words than former governments, to let the Russians know it is serious.

A policy of "forward defense", which includes the ability to fight a "limited nuclear war" (on European soil), or even a "protracted nuclear war", illustrated U.S. military preparedness. According to strategists the ability to fight and win a nuclear war is necessary in order to prevent one.

But such up-front talk has had a backlash effect. The thought of a nuclear war being possible has shocked people the way so many pictures of Hiroshima victims cannot. Reagan has removed the barrier disarmament activists always come up against, by making the danger seem real.

**T**he world should know what the worst possible reality is, according to one author.

Putting the unthinkable into words, Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* describes the impact of a nuclear war, in scientific and philosophical terms. Originally a series in the *New Yorker* magazine last fall, it quickly became must reading for the peace activist and was put into book form.

Coined the "bible" of the disarmament movement, the bestseller struck a chord where similar literary efforts had been overlooked in the past.

Drawing on current scientific and military knowledge, Schell carefully describes the probable effects of an all-out nuclear exchange. The reader begins to understand that there is more than one way in which life on earth would be extinguished.

Schell describes the size, the heat, and the distances involved. He leads the reader through a step by step nuclear explosion on New York City; the blinding flash, the thermal pulse and resulting fire storms, the whirlwind, and finally the "black rain" (fallout of radioactive particles). In combination with the thousand other targets, a nuclear war between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. would leave little more than a festering mess of death and dying in the Northern Hemisphere.

But the magnitude of the energy released is of a scale greater than that measurable by human death alone. The ecological effects, at least those that scientists can predict, would make the earth uninhabitable except by insects and grass.

This is Schell's preliminary conclusion. It makes the prospect of the U.S. military control unit, buried deep beneath the Colorado Rockies to survive a nuclear exchange, seem just a bit out of context.

Schell continues to hypothesize about the future. He

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