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Face up to historical facts to build true
friendship with other Asian countries

SHII Kazuo

Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chair

Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chair SHII Kazuo used the question periods in the House of Representatives Plenary Session (October 3) and Budget Committee meeting (October 6) to call on the government to face up to the facts of history to build true friendship with all Asian countries.

JCP Chair Shii questions prime minister's policy

Japanese Communist Party Chair Shii Kazuo took the rostrum in the House of Representatives Plenary Session on October 3 to question the prime minister's policy speech. The following is the gist of his remarks.

Questioning prime minister's historical view in particular

I will question Prime Minister Abe on behalf of the Japanese Communist Party.

Let me begin with your attitude toward historical questions. Former Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro drove Japan's Asia diplomacy into a stalemate by continuing his visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which represents his lack of remorse for the past Japanese war. Many Japanese people and most Asian peoples want to see Prime Minister Abe Shinzo fundamentally break away from this arrogant behavior. Mr. Prime Minister, I want to point out that your view of history raises the following three questions.

First, concerning your attitude toward the Yasukuni Shrine interpretation of history. As the exhibits in its military museum show, Yasukuni Shrine maintains a view of history and wars that regards all past Japanese wars - the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese war of aggression against China, and the Pacific War - as "just and noble wars for the liberation of Asia and for Japan's survival and self-defense." Mr. Prime Minister, do you accept this view or reject it? If you accept the Yasukuni Shrine's view of history, you are not qualified to be prime minister because that means you reject the foundations of the postwar world order. Conversely, if you reject the Yasukuni view of history and say that your position is different from Yasukuni Shrine's position, you should state clearly that you will stop visiting Yasukuni Shrine.

In July last year, in a one-on-one discussion with Mr. Abe on a commercial TV program, I asked your view on this question and your answer was: "It should be left to the judgment of history." But you should know that the judgment of history was already passed 61 years ago to the effect that the past Japanese war was a war of aggression for territorial expansion and dominance over other countries. As the Prime Minister of Japan, you are not allowed to continue to deceive the public by stating, "It should be left to the judgment of history." I ask you to make a clear statement of your position on this question.

Secondly, Mr. Prime Minister, what is your attitude toward the Japanese

government's stated view of history? In 1995, the Japanese government issued Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi's statement on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. It said: "During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations," thus expressing his "feelings of deep remorse" and "heartfelt apology."

This statement is not completely sufficient from our point of view, but it marked a milestone in the Japanese government view of history. But, Prime Minister Abe, you just refer to this as a "historical statement" instead of promising to follow the position of the "Murayama statement." I ask you, Mr. Prime Minister, will you succeed to the "Murayama statement" as your own view of history? In particular, please state clearly whether or not you share the Murayama statement's view that Japan followed a "mistaken national policy and advanced along the road to war"?

Thirdly, Mr. Prime Minister, what is your attitude toward the Japanese government's official view on the question of the so-called "military comfort women" who were used as sex slaves. The Japanese government in the 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei, officially admitting that "[T]he then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women," and that "[T]hey lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere." The statement expressed "sincere apology and remorse" to the victims and resolved to prevent the recurrence of similar crimes through history education and on other occasions. But, Mr. Prime Minister, in your questioning in the Diet in 1997, you insisted that the "Kono statement" has lost any justification and went as far as to call for it to be amended. Mr. Prime Minister, please state clearly whether you still believe that "the Kono statement has lost its justification."

The Japanese government has conducted a study on the issue of wartime "comfort women" and concluded that they were called up against their will from the Korean Peninsula in a crime against humanity committed by the former Japanese Army. It is unconscionable to overturn this conclusion.

In early September, I visited South Korea for the first time in my life and discussed many issues with the ROK National Assembly Speaker, ruling and opposition party leaders, and other political leaders. I acutely felt that a deep-seated sense of humiliation as well as anger persists among the people of South Korea, which for 35 years was colonized by Japan. At the same time, I also strongly felt that many South Korean people earnestly want to establish a true friendship with Japan, and that they are requesting

that the Japanese government stop distorting history.

Even though it is a history that Japan does not want to face up to squarely, it must face up to its past and sincerely admit to committing wrongdoings. That's the way for Japan to have friends in heart-to-heart relations. Mr. Prime Minister, you are strongly called upon to take this position of reconciliation.

Constitutional revision for turning Japan into a war-fighting nation

Next, I will ask questions about the issue of constitutional revision.

Mr. Prime Minister, in your policy speech you stated that you will “study individual, specific cases” to make it possible for Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense under the present Constitution. Could you expand on this? In your speech in August you referred to the Self-Defense Force activities in Iraq and said, “Do we have to be onlookers when other foreign forces in Iraq are attacked? This is a question we need to consider seriously.” In your recent book, you stated, “A military alliance is an alliance ‘bound by blood’. But according to the interpretation of the present Constitution, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces at least will not be asked to give blood when the United States is attacked.” Does the “study of individual and specific cases” mean changing the Constitution to turn Japan into a country that will give blood together with the United States when the latter is attacked in, for example?

In the first place, exercising the right of collective self-defense means obliging Japan to take part in wars started by the United States, even though Japan has not been attacked. Mr. Prime Minister, you have said that you want to get the Constitution revised within five years. Isn't the purpose of the constitutional revision you want to realize to turn Japan into a country that fights wars abroad alongside the United States?

The Japanese Communist Party firmly opposes any move to remake Japan into a “war fighting country” and will make every effort to defend Article 9 of the Constitution, which we treasure as a pride of Japan in the world.

Revision of the Fundamental Law of Education raises question about PM's view of education

Let me move on to the issue of the Fundamental Law of Education.

The government bill will force the public to display “patriotism” in violation of the Constitution that guarantees the freedom of conscience,

allow the state to interfere with education without limits in violation of the constitutional guarantee of freedom and autonomy of education. Today, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to take this opportunity to ask questions about your fundamental view of education.

On September 21, the Tokyo District Court ruled that it is unconstitutional and illegal to force schools to hoist the Hinomaru flag and sing Kimigayo, which is practiced in Tokyo. In Tokyo, “Hinomaru” and “Kimigayo” are forced on graduation ceremonies and entrance ceremonies at schools. Teachers who refuse to comply with the order have been punished, which is extraordinary. The Tokyo District Court ruling said that whereas it is natural to respect the national flag and the national anthem, it pointed out that opposition to the “Hinomaru” and “Kimigayo” is expressed by many people due to their historical baggage. The ruling pointed out that the Constitution calls for mutual understanding between opposing world outlooks, ideologies, and opinions. It also pointed out that forcing a particular outlook on every citizen is in violation of Article 19 of the Constitution that guarantees the freedom of thought, conscientiousness, and conscience and is in violation of Article 10 of the Fundamental Law of Education that precludes power’s “improper control” of education. I believe this is a conscionable ruling.

The government has defended the Tokyo Metropolitan Government’s ongoing practice of forcing schools to hoist “Hinomaru” and sing “Kimigayo” as based on an “appropriate judgment.” Don’t you think the government should change its attitude on this question?

Another issue I want take up in this connection is your call for “rebuilding education”. Mr. Prime Minister, you have proposed holding a national academic proficiency test and making its result public. You call for freedom to choose the school to attend to be extended nationwide. You have said that supervisors should be stationed throughout the country for the oversight and assessment of schools and teachers, and that schools with high ratings should receive more tax money but that schools with poor ratings should be closed down. The principle that runs through these measures is that children should be driven into a fiercer competition so that they will be classified into “good performance students” and “poor performance students” and that the state will interfere in education without limits, thus placing education under state control.

We must remember that this is precisely the concept that contributed to the devastation of Japan’s education in the past. Finland, which again came out top in the recent international study of learning skills, has removed competition oriented education and made it a principle to respect the freedom and autonomy of schools and teachers. In Finland, the government fulfills its responsibility in all the necessary areas such as reducing the class size as much as possible. Shouldn’t we learn these lessons from Finland? Please state your view on education.

How should the government respond to the widening social gap and increasing poverty?

Finally, I want to question you concerning how the government should respond to the issue of the widening social gap and the increasing poverty rate. Mr. Prime Minister, in your policy speech you called for “building a society open to everyone and giving each individual a chance to take on challenges.” But you did not offer any concrete examples.

Recently, the “NHK Special” TV program featured the problem of Japan’s “working poor.” Today, the number of working poor is estimated at 14 million. They account for about 10 percent of the nation’s households. They are forced to live with living standards that are even lower than the level that qualifies for public assistance even though they are working full time. In the case of urban young people, they may be able to find only part-time jobs if they are in their early 20s. But even in their 30s, they have difficulty finding a job. Without income, they become homeless. The reporter concluded the program by stating, “There are some people who complain about the lack of efforts on the part of these people (classified as working poor), but none of the people who I interviewed showed a lack of effort or willingness to work.”

Mr. Prime Minister, who do you think is responsible for this state of the working poor? Don’t you think that Liberal Democratic Party government policies must be held accountable for the destruction of workplace rules through, for example, promoting the liberalization of the use of temporary workers? You propose “Challenge Again Assistance Measures” Isn’t this a cowardly way of shifting the responsibility for the wrong policy onto the people?

The need is to carry out a major change in economic policy instead of taking such a devious path. The task is to establish rules for humane working conditions and adequate social services that ensure every citizen a right to a life without fear, to stop forcing people to pay more in taxes, including the consumption tax, and force large corporations which are making record profits to share in the tax burden according to their ability to pay.

-- Akahata, October 4, 2006

Face up to historical facts to build true friendship with other Asian countries

The following is the gist of the questioning by SHII Kazuo, Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee chair, and Prime Minister ABE Shinzo's responses in the House of Representatives Budget Committee meeting on Friday, October 6.

JCP Chair SHII Kazuo: On behalf of the Japanese Communist Party, I rise to put questions to Prime Minister ABE Shinzo.

Japan's attitude toward its past war of aggression and colonial rule is such an important question that Japan cannot evade if it is to build true friendship in the 21st century with Asian countries. The present world order after World War II based on the condemnation of the wars waged by Japan, Germany, and Italy as wars of aggression and on the pledge never to repeat the mistake of these wars. If we deny this foundation of the postwar world order, Japan's position as a responsible member of Asia and the world in the 21st century will be called into question.

I used my question time at the House of Representatives Plenary Session from this starting point and raised several questions about Mr. Prime Minister's understanding of historical questions.

The question is whether the PM accepts or rejects the Yasukuni Shrine view of history

Shii: In the House of Representatives Plenary Session, I asked you, Mr. Prime Minister, if you accept Yasukuni Shrine's view of history that regards all past Japanese wars – the Sino-Japanese war, the Russo-Japanese war, the war of aggression against China, and the Pacific War. But I did not get your response. Could you please answer this question now?

Prime Minister ABE Shinzo: You may know I have so far stated that if a politician discusses his understanding of historical issues, it in a sense will have political and diplomatic implications, and I believe that politicians must refrain from discussing such things.

I do not know what the Yasukuni Shrine view of history is. It may be Yasukuni Shrine's a demonstration of the way of thinking of Yasukuni Shrine, which is a religious entity. However, I think it is not appropriate

for me to comment on it on behalf of the government.

Shii: Now that you are in charge of Japan's national government, I think it will be irresponsible of you to refuse to divulge your view of historical issues. If you keep on responding that way to my questions, I must put it this way: What do you think of the fact that you, as a politician, have talked a lot about a specific view of history and a view of war, and acted accordingly.

Parliamentary group commemorating the 50th anniversary of the war's end

Shii: I have brought here the document entitled "Purpose of the Founding of the Diet Members League for Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the War's End" dated December 1, 1994. Here is the list of its members of the parliamentary league, which includes ABE Shinzo. Your name appears with the title of "acting secretary general". Will you confirm this fact. Is this description correct?

Abe: It was a long time ago. "Acting secretary general" is not a very high position. However, if the document says so, then it must be true.

Shii: The post of acting secretary general, which is one of the four top leadership positions, is a very high position.

This founding statement says that it is the responsibility of those who work for national government to make clear their "fair understanding of history." It also states clearly that Japan's past war was a war for "Japan's survival and self-defense, and for peace in Asia." This is its view of history and its view of the past war.

Mr. Prime Minister, you said earlier that politicians should be careful in discussing their view of history. This can be taken to mean that silence is an expression of modesty. But this founding statement, which you agreed with, contradicts the principle you have just claimed, that avoiding discussing it is a demonstration of modesty. How can you explain this discrepancy?

Abe: The thing is not whether to discuss or not. In my mind, we (politicians) cannot preach a particular view of history. At any rate, I, as a person who represent the government, I hold that I should be modest in discussing my understanding of historical issues or in thinking about them.

What has this parliamentary group done?

Shii: In your answer you have explained nothing about the fact that you acted precisely against the modesty you have just mentioned.

You are saying that the founding statement of the parliamentary group is not about a specific view of historical issues. But in characterizing the past Japanese wars, the founding statement uses the same wording as that used by the war leaders who pushed ahead with the war of aggression. It is nothing less than a specific view of history.

The question here is: What has the Diet Members' League for Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the War's End done? Asserting that the "Japanese war was a just war," it in many ways opposed the Diet Resolution of Remorse and Apology when it was drafted on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war.

The Dietmembers' League published its action plan on April 13, 1995. It states as follows:

"In the light of the founding purpose of the League, we cannot approve of the no-war resolution. We also oppose a unilateral decision to hold our country accountable in the name of remorse.

"On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the War's end, we will review the self-torturing view of history, which is a result of the post-war distortion of history by U.S. occupation policy and leftist forces. It is strongly desired that this be used as a chance to recover our history on the fair basis of historical facts and that Japanese people's honor and pride be restored."

Here is a statement of the "Diet Members League" announced on June 8, 1995. It commented on the draft Diet resolution put forward by the three ruling parties at the time - the Liberal Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, and Sakigake (Harbinger). It states as follows:

"The draft resolution agreed upon by the three governing party secretaries-general at their meeting distorts the Japanese view of history by acknowledging our country's 'acts of aggression' and 'colonial rule,' and for this reason we disagree with it."

The JCP opposed this Diet resolution because it maintained that the United States and Great Britain were to blame as well as Japan.

Even this resolution, with such a weakness from our point of view, was disapproved by the "Diet Members' League" and Mr. Abe. The action plan and the above quoted statement of the "Diet Members' League" articulates its opposition to any "apology" or "remorse" for the past war, and to the recognizing the fact of Japan's "war of aggression" and "colonial rule", which they say amount to distorting the "view of history."

Many of the "Diet Members' League" members stayed away from the

House of Representatives Plenary Session when it took the vote on the resolution. Mr. Abe was absent from the plenary session.

Mr. Prime Minister, your belief was thus, and you acted accordingly at that time. Will you confirm it? It's a matter of fact.

Abe: The Diet members' league was formed at the time the resolution was discussed, but its activities discontinued after the vote on the resolution. I do not remember it very well, but I assume that the main argument was that it would be inappropriate for the Diet to adopt a resolution on such an issue. As the prime minister, I maintain the same position as the one that I have stated in the (House of Representative) Budget Committee meetings as well as at the plenary sessions.

Shii: You did not answer my question, Mr. Prime Minister. The "Diet Members' League" in its "action plan" and "statement" argued that accepting the view that Japan carried out a "war of aggression" and imposed "colonial rule" amounts to a "distortion of history" or "self-torturing view of history." My question to you is whether you shared this view at that tie.

Abe: My understanding has been that the last war left the whole of Asia with enormous scars and forced Japanese people into conditions of unspeakable suffering. However, in my mind I harbored a feeling that the international definition of this war as a war of aggression had not been established.

You are unable to explain yourself because it concerns a view of history that you claim cannot discuss as prime minister

Shii: You did not dispute the definition of war of aggression. You were demanding that such expressions as "acts of aggression" and "instances of colonial rule" be removed from the resolution.

As the prime minister, you now say that politicians should not discuss their view of history in order to maintain restraint. But before becoming the prime minister, you acted on the view that referring to "colonial rule" and "acts of aggression" represents a "self-torturing view of history" that distorts history. Isn't this a contradiction? How can you explain this?

Abe: I don't know how to answer your question regarding the document you unexpectedly brought up unexpectedly that was published long time ago by the "Diet Members' League." I have already stated whenever necessary my ideas and position as the Prime Minister. I want you to accept it as such.

Shii: It wasn't such a long time ago. It was just 10 years ago. And it is also a fact that you are on record as absenting yourself from the plenary

session when it took the vote on the resolution.

I think that the prime minister's inability to answer my question derives from the fact that the view of history and the war, which you have consistently held, is something that you are not willing to discuss candidly as the prime minister.

The question is whether you recognize the mistake as referred to in 'Murayama Statement'

Shii: My next question is about your view of then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's statement of 1995.

The "Murayama Statement" admits: *During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations.* It expressed the Prime Minister's "feelings of deep remorse" and stated his "heartfelt apology."

In the House of Representatives Plenary Session, I asked whether you as the prime minister affirm the "Murayama Statement" as your view of history, and specifically whether you share the understanding that "Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war." But you only stated, "The government understanding has been expressed in the 'Murayama Statement' and on other occasions," and stopped short of answering question regarding the "mistaken national policy."

I think that the crux of the "Murayama Statement" is in the fact that the government officially admitted that Japan's "colonial rule and aggression" was a "mistaken national policy."

I would like to ask you once again, Mr. Prime Minister. Is it your understanding that Japan followed a "mistaken national policy"?

Abe: I have often stated that the government's understanding of the last World War was made clear in the prime minister's statements of August 15, 1995 and of August 15, 2005.

The statement which you have just cited was adopted by the Cabinet on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end. My cabinet accepts it.

Shii: I wanted to ask not only about the government understanding but also about your personal understanding. You have just said that the government understanding was presented in its two statements, including

the passage I quoted. I want you to say so in your own words, instead of in a roundabout way of expressing it, if you really recognize that Japan followed a “mistaken national policy.”

Abe: I am present at this committee in the capacity of the prime minister. I am answering questions as the prime minister. I’m saying that the government is following the idea as expressed in the prime minister’s statement of August 15, 1995 and of August 15, 2005, including the paragraph you have just cited, namely that Japan followed a mistaken national policy along the road to war.

Shii: You are saying that you share the understanding that Japan followed a “mistaken policy” aren’t you?

Abe: I repeat. I am speaking as the prime minister.

Japan’s all-out war against China had the aim of establishing Japan’s dominance over Chinese territory

Shii: I would like now to ask you about concrete cases of “mistaken policy” regarding Japan’s past war.

In the light of historical facts, the aim of the past Japanese wars, including the Sino-Japanese war, the Russo-Japanese war, the war of aggression against China, and the Pacific War, was to implement the national policy of expanding Japan’s territory and establishing its dominance over other countries. I think this is an undeniable fact.

Here is a collection of historical documents entitled "*Nippon Gaiko Nenpyo narabini Shuyo Bunsho*" (Chronological Table and Main Documents on Japan’s Diplomacy) compiled in 1955 by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I read through these documents and found among them numerous government decisions that support the claim that the war was aimed at expanding Japanese territory and establishing dominance over other countries.

I want to ask questions specifically concerning three important decisions the government took during the period between the start of the war of aggression against China and the Pacific War.

Related documents are available to the prime minister and to all the Budget Committee members. They are the ones that I informed you about yesterday.

The first document is the government decision on January 11, 1938, one year after Japan started an all-out war of aggression in China. It’s entitled “*Shina-jihen’ Shori Konponhoshin*” (The Basic Policy for Disposition of

the 'China Incident). This was the first decision of the Imperial Conference, the highest leadership body meeting attended by government and military leaders along with the emperor. The document outlines the national policy concerning the prosecution of the war.

This decision includes a number of demands that Japan put forward to China as terms for peace talks with Japan

The main demand was the establishment of demilitarized zones in northern China and Inner Mongolia, and in the occupied areas of Central China, and the stationing of Japanese troops in northern China and Inner Mongolia.

This means that Japan sought to establish demilitarized zones in Northern China that includes Beijing, Inner Mongolian and the occupied region of Central China in the lower reaches of the Yangze River that includes Shanghai.

"Demilitarized zones" were where Chinese military was no allowed to enter. The document makes clear that Japan was demanding the creation of regions for the stationing of Japanese forces.

It warns that "Imperial Japan will destroy China by force" if it refuses to accept the Japanese demands. This is the first Imperial Conference decision.

This clearly shows that the all-out war with China was in effect a war launched with the aim of forcing China to agree to give Japan a right to station its forces in Chinese territory and of bringing China under Japan's control. Do you recognize that Japan's adoption of this national policy for the all-out war against China?

Abe: The question was if I acknowledge that fact. I think that the fact is that the document exists.

Shii: The existence of the document is indisputable. My question is: Do you acknowledge that Japan went to war with the aim of asserting a right to station its troops and establishing Japan's control over China? That was what the Japanese cabinet and military leaders decided to do at the Imperial Conference.

Abe: I believe that analysis of individual historical events is not a government task. I think that historians will collect and analyze materials and testimonies.

Shii: Oh, you are using the need for historians as the pretext for evading this question. But this is not a document written by some historians. It is a document from the Imperial Conference, the highest war cabinet attended

by the emperor. That's why it is natural that the prime minister express his opinion.

Pacific War's aim was for Japan to control vast regions as sphere critical for Japan's survival

Shii: Let me move on to the second document. It's on page three. It is entitled, "Nichi-Doku-I Sujiku Kyouka ni Kansuru Ken" (On Strengthening Axis of Japan, Germany, and Italy" which was adopted on September 16, 1940 by the Imperial Headquarters Cabinet Liaison Conference, the leadership body comprised of military and government leaders.

With the signing of a military alliance between Japan, Germany, and Italy set for September 27 of the same year, this document defined the "sphere of survival for building a new order of an Imperial Great East Asia." This decision makes clear the extent to which Japan intended to expand its territory and dominance.

Please look at the bottom half of page 5 of the reference material. It is also reproduced on this panel I am pointing to.

It says that areas to be considered in the negotiation with the Germans and Italians as areas to be preserved for a sphere of Japan's survival will include Manchuria - which will be the key area, islands under Germany's mandate, French Indo-China and Pacific islands, Thailand, Malaysia, British Borneo, Burma, Australia, New Zealand, and India.

Japan sought a very vast area as a sphere critical for Japan's survival, and the Imperial Headquarters Cabinet Liaison Conference decided on this the year before the outbreak of the Pacific War.

This means that the document testifies clearly that the main feature of the Pacific War is in its aim to expand Japan's territory and establish dominance of other countries. Could you state your view of the aim of the Pacific War.

Abe: Decisions and events of those days will have to be seen within the context of the situation relating to Japan and the international situation. They may require an analysis of the features of that era. It will be important to look at all these things in historical context. That's why I am saying that I am not in a position to be able to state on behalf of the government what it was really like.

In other words, I decline to give my judgment on history from a certain view point on behalf of the government. The Communist party can decide all kinds of problems from a Marxist outlook on history, but I repeat that

historians will give appropriate analyses of this kind of question.

Shii: You are saying even an acknowledgement of the aim of the Pacific War should be left to historians.

You said what I mentioned is the “Marxist outlook of history”, but it is not our peculiar outlook. The historical fact that the last Japanese war was a war of aggression served as the foundation of the postwar world order in all aspects as stated in the U.N. Charter as well as in the Potsdam Declaration.

The panel I showed earlier illustrates the process that testifies that the Pacific War was a war started by Japan in the name of creating a sphere supposedly for Japan's survival.

Flagrant declaration of the objective of the war as territorial expansion

Shii: Now, the third document. This contains the most flagrant declaration of the objective of the war.

Please look at page 8 of the material. This shows a decision adopted by the Imperial Conference on May 31, 1943, entitled, "*Daito-a Seiryakushido Taikoh*" (Outline of Strategy to Lead East Asia). Japan made this decision after it started the Pacific War.

Look at the upper column on page 9. It reads: "Malay, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and the Celebes are Japanese territory and a priority effort will be made to develop them as supply areas for major natural resources."

It is an Imperial Conference decision.

It states that "supply areas for major natural resources" because these areas produced oil, gum, tin, and other resources, and Japan wanted to control them. In order to grab these resources, Japan at the Imperial Conference decided to make these areas Japanese territory. This is an established fact.

I think that this decision is an unequivocal testimony to the fact that the Pacific War was a war launched by Japan for its territorial expansion. Do you accept this view?

Abe: *Following* the result of the last war, Japan as a nation accepted responsibility for the consequences. Although Japan was poverty-stricken at that time, we paid war reparations and signed the treaty of peace. In that context, we restored our status in the international community. But, as I have repeatedly said, I am not in a position to comment on behalf of the government on each of the historical affairs you cited.

If you leave it to historians, you are not reflecting on the war

Shii: As you stated that you acknowledge the "Murayama Statement" that admitted that Japan had committed errors in national policies, I have raised three examples of such errors. All three examples indicate clearly what Japan adopted as its national policies.

It is crystal clear that the past Japanese war was aimed at territorial expansion and dominance over foreign countries. There is no question about it. I believe that these three points I brought up constitute the most important aspect of the errors committed by Japan.

But you have refused to accept all these facts of Japan's pursuit of territorial expansion and domination of other countries, saying that judgment should be left to historians when it comes to specific issues. I must say that you are not really reflecting on the past Japanese war.

In 1993, the Japanese government published a statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary KONO Yohei admitting that the "Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women, and that they lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere." It also expressed the firm determination "never to repeat the same mistake again, engraving such issues in our memories through the study and teaching of history."

When I asked you about this issue during my question period in the Plenary Session, you answered that you are following this basic government position as expressed in the "Kono Statement" concerning the military comfort women issue.

If you say you will follow the position of the "Kono Statement," what you stated and did in the past must be called into question.

PM has insisted: 'Kono Statement no longer has relevance,' and 'Description of comfort women issue should be deleted'

I have here the minutes of the discussion at the second workshop of the House of Representatives Committee on Audit and Oversight of Administration on May 27, 1997 that includes Mr. Abe's remarks.

The minutes show that you stated that all seven textbooks submitted for screening contain descriptions of the so-called military comfort women and that this was problematic. You said that if military comfort women were there not as a result of coercion, there is no need for the textbooks to take up the theme, adding that there are no official documents that verify whether there was such coercion. In this statement, you meant to demand

that the description of the “military comfort women” be deleted.

What is more, you blame the "Kono Statement" for the inclusion of the military comfort women issue in the textbooks and said that the "Kono Statement" has become groundless.

If you intend to “follow the 'Kono Statement',” why don’t you admit that you were wrong in making remarks attacking it.

Abe: My understanding at that time was that the Kono statement was intended to admit that the Japanese government was involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the recruitment of comfort women, express apologies and remorse for that, and promise to study in what way the government should express its apology and remorse.

At the time, I questioned whether a junior high school textbook should include descriptions of military comfort women. For example, I thought it was necessary to first take into account the state of children’s development. I also thought it important to ascertain whether there was coercion in the narrow sense of the word. I said that if there are differences of opinion regarding the facts, we may have to reconsider including the material in the textbook.

I said that nothing substantiates the fact of coercion in the narrow sense of the word.

When I discussed this issue, I pointed out that the name of YOSHIDA Seiji cited in textbooks as a person in charge of the recruitment of comfort women was later found to be a mistake. That was a question I raised in my statement.

PM denied that there had been coercion, both in the narrow sense and the broad sense of the term

Shii: You have just said that the allegations about “coerciveness” in the narrow sense of the word are groundless. The “coerciveness in the narrow sense of the word,” I think, implies the coercion that was present in relation to the transfer of comfort women. However, the "Kono Statement" pointed out that there are many cases of women being recruited against their will. This is part of the government findings. Do you still deny everything including what you call cases of coercion in the narrow sense of the word?

Isn’t it coercion if women were recruited against their will? Do you deny this fact cited in the "Kono Statement"?

Abe: I meant that there could be coercion in the narrow sense of the word and coercion in the broad sense of the word. The question should be whether the women were taken out of their houses forcibly, or they wanted to choose to not go but they were in an environment that compelled them to go in the end. The latter can be regarded as a case of coercion in the broad sense of the word.

Shii: You tried to argue about the narrow sense of the word and the broad sense of the word. But the minutes show that you did not argue about the difference. You flatly denied the fact of the use of coercive recruitment of women in general. That is why you called for change in the practice because the prerequisite of the argument has collapsed.

I am saying that if you accept the "Kono Statement," you need to look back on what you did and correct the mistake. What do you think? Again, the minutes contain no such phrases as "narrow sense of the word," or "broader sense of the word." It is an argument you have just begun come up with.

Abe: What I said was whether it is appropriate to contain the issue in the junior high school textbook. As I have repeatedly said, my position as the prime minister is one of following the "Kono Statement."

Shii: Mr. Prime Minister, you're very insincere by answering in that manner. You not only called into question the appropriateness of including descriptions of the comfort women issue in the textbooks, you also denied the fact that there was coercion involved. What I am saying is that you should reflect on your past remarks. But you refuse to do so.

Regarding the question of coercion, the heart of the matter is, as I said earlier, what comfort women's lives were like in the comfort stations. The "Kono Statement" recognized that comfort women "lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere." This is a fact endorsed by a number of documents from the Japanese military at the time.

Halmoni's call

Shii: Years ago, then Prime Minister HASHIMOTO Ryutaro received a letter from a Halmoni (Korean for grandmother) who was a victim in the Japanese war of aggression. Let me read it:

"My name is Kim Haksun. Five years have passed since we gave testimony for the first time on August 14, 1991 on the historical issue of 'comfort women', which the Japanese government had kept hidden. At that time I dared to come forward to reveal my past that includes nothing I can be proud of. I did so not because I wanted to make some money. I said that I wanted the Japanese government to apologize to us

and admit state responsibility. In addition to the 36 years of suffering under colonial rule, we were forced to endure a dehumanizing life as comfort women. How can we get rid of all these agonies? My heart aches so much. Please do not turn away from Koreans. Shouldn't you ask Korean Halmoni and Halaboji to forgive what the Japanese government did to them at the time?"

Mr. Prime Minister, you stated that the basic government position is one of following the statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary KONO Yohei on August 4, 1993. If that is what you believe, you should reflect on your past remarks and acts that called for the descriptions of comfort women issue to be deleted from the history textbooks on the grounds that the claims about comfort women were groundless.

I believe that Japan should extend apologies to all Asian people who fell victim to the Japanese crimes against humanity, in particular to victims of direct abuse and injury. Mr. Prime Minister, please respond to my question again.

Abe: I have repeatedly told you that my understanding is that the "Kono Statement" expressed apologies and remorse over the suffering of those who had hardships as military comfort women. My cabinet will follow this position.

Shii: While stating that you will follow the position of the "Kono Statement," you are refusing to give self-searching statement about your own error. This means that you are not actually following the "Kono statement".

Last month I visited South Korea for the first time. I had meetings with the National Assembly Speaker and leaders of governing and opposition parties. In these talks, I acutely felt that the 36 years of the colonialism of Japanese imperialism have left very deep wounds.

I visited the historic site of Seodaemun Prison in Seoul, the former prison built by Japan in 1908. It was a place where many Korean patriots were tortured and killed. The director of the museum told me that 40,000 Koreans were imprisoned and the number of people who died there by 1945 is estimated at between 400-4,000. I shuddered with the realization of the enormous cost under Japanese repression.

In prewar days, the Japanese Communist Party fought in solidarity with the Korean people who were struggling to achieve national independence in opposition to Japanese colonial rule over Korea. I laid a wreath in name of the JCP for the victims who died in this prison to pay our respects for the Korean patriots.

In my meetings and discussions with South Korean people, I keenly felt

that they earnestly want to strengthen their friendship with Japanese people. This in turn urges me to ask the Japanese government to stop all acts that will erase history. Even if the historical facts are such that make you sick, Japan must face up to the wartime past and admit the fact that it made major mistakes.

Mr. Prime Minister, you will soon visit China and South Korea. I would like you to keep in mind the following: For to be humble does not mean feigning innocence in the face of the errors committed by the Japanese government and State; it is their duty to face up to the truth of history of the war of aggression and colonial rule that inflicted enormous damage and suffering on Asians as well as on the Japanese people themselves. It is particularly important for politicians to know how deep the wounds Japan caused to other countries are. I want you to share this position.

-- Akahata, October 8, 2006