

Japan Analysis La Lettre du Japon

n° 12
June 2008

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CLOSE UP ON THE NEWS

1. Japan-China relations warmer still

On May 7th, President Hu Jintao visited Japan. No other Chinese president had made such a visit since Jiang Zemin in 1998, which left Japan with mixed memories. Mr. Hu's speeches were considered very positive for relations between the two countries, because their message was that they should face the future while bearing the past in mind. The current Chinese President praised Japan's contribution to international peace. By contrast, in their previous joint declaration in 1998, the two heads of State had stated that the basis of future China-Japan relations depended on confronting the past through a full acknowledgement of the facts of history, while Mr. Obuchi had expressed Japan's "deep regret" (*fukai hanse*) for past events. In a speech at Waseda University on May 8th, Hu Jintao repeated that the past should help to cement the friendship between the two peoples, and that Japan had actively contributed to China's development¹.

There was an announcement of an agreement in principle to share the natural gas resources from Chinese wells near the demarcation line between the territorial waters of the two States, without laying down the rules for allocating the product of this joint exploitation or defining the precise boundaries of the area concerned².

After the earthquake in Sichuan on May 12th, Japan immediately offered aid to China, although the latter's delay before accepting it on May 15th was a great setback for the Japanese in charge of

¹ "Rekishì wa yûkô no tame", *Yomiuri*, May 9th 2008.

² However, on June 15th a provisional agreement included Chunxiao (Shirakaba), just west of the demarcation line, Duanqiao (Kusunoki), and Longjing (Asunaro), together with the section of the Japanese Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) which is on the Chinese side of the demarcation line. The exploitation of these zones and the wells within them will be shared jointly, and the products will be shared in proportion to the investments made by either side.

relief efforts.³ The first foreign rescue workers to reach the stricken area were a thirty-strong Japanese team, which was seen in Tokyo as a symbol of current Sino-Japanese relations.⁴ The fact is that the Japanese had not condemned the events in Tibet in such strong terms as Western governments: it simply urged the Chinese government to re-open the dialogue with the Dalai Lama. When the Olympic torch was carried through Nagano at the end of April, there were pro-Tibetan demonstrations but they were held in check by the police.

However, on May 31st Mr. Machimura, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, announced that the government would not use C-130 aircrafts to transport aid to Sichuan, although they would have been the most effective means of transport, but would use commercial aircrafts instead, in light of opinions expressed on the internet in China. Nonetheless, at a press conference on June 17th, the Defence Minister, Mr. Ishiba, announced that a Japanese destroyer would enter a Chinese port, not only to bring aid following the earthquake but also to make a return visit following one by a Chinese warship last November.

Summit meetings between Chinese and Japanese leaders since 1998

November 26th 1998: Obuchi Keizô and Jiang Zemin, in Tokyo
October 13th 2000: a summit between Mori Yoshirô and Zhu Ronji, in Tokyo
October 8th 2001: Koizumi Jun'ichirô and Jiang Zemin, in Beijing
October 8th 2006: Abe Shinzô and Hu Jintao, in Beijing
November 4th 2007: Abe Shinzô and Wen Jiabao, in Tokyo
December 28th 2007: Fukuda Yasuo and Hu Jintao & Wen Jiabao, in Tokyo

Sources: *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) website.

³ "Mô sukoshi hayaku yôsei areba" *Yomiuri*, May 16th 2008.

⁴ "Nihon jûshi messeji mo", *Yomiuri*, May 16th 2008.

2. The government manages to push through the Diet a series of tax laws, following a compromise with the opposition

On April 30th, the Lower Chamber voted to approve the package of fiscal measures which had been turned down by the Upper Chamber on March 28th. The compromise which had been brokered by the chairmen of the two chambers, through which the LDP sought to conciliate the Democratic opposition, turned out to be of no effect. The Minshutô refused to vote for the renewal of the tax laws in question.

The LDP and the Kômeitô control a two thirds majority, which allows the government to push its proposals through the Chamber of Representatives on a second reading - after a thirty days' waiting period, in financial matters, starting from the day when a bill brought before the Upper Chamber. It made use of that majority on April 30th. For one month, the price of a litre of diesel and petrol was 25 yen lower.

These measures finance motorway operations through a series of taxes on petroleum products. They had fallen into abeyance for a month and were restored. Various taxes whose term had been extended at the end of March until the end of May by a special continuity law were renewed, as well as various financial exemptions which are now extended to January 1st or April 1st 2009. Yet on March 27th, the Prime Minister took a step towards meeting opposition concerns by stating that he was minded to abolish these special taxes and, starting from the 2009 fiscal year, to bring the financing of the motorways under the general State budget.

The Prime Minister also stated his willingness to reduce the duration of the ten-year motorway works plan by half, and to carry out only the most urgent of the 59,000 billion yen's worth of works already planned. This was a demand from the opposition, who argued that the motorway planning was based on forecasts for traffic growth which had turned out to be unrealistic.

On April 11th, the two majority parties agreed on a formula which was favourably received by the reformers in the LDP (the

"Association for the assimilation of the special tax into the budget": *dôro tokutei zaigen no ippanzaigenka wo jitsugen suru kai*). It also received a quite favourable response from Mr. Ozawa and Mr. Hatoyama in the Minshutô, and aroused no opposition in the pro-BTP ranks of the LDP (like Koga Makato).⁵

However, the government cannot always circumvent the opposition's obstructive capabilities. Since March it has been trying to replace the Chairman and the vice-Chairmen of the Central Bank of Japan, but that requires the agreement of the two chambers. The Kyoto University professor, Shirakawa Masaaki, who was first put forward as a vice-Chairman, was appointed as Chairman. One of the two vice-chairmanships will remain unfilled until the coming Autumn. The Minshutô opposed the government's choice of candidates whose careers have been within the Ministry of Finance. The Office for reform, within the Jimintô (chaired by Takebe Tsutomu), is trying to draw up a bill aimed at reforming the established procedures for filling thirty posts with the approval of both Chambers; on the one hand, this would allow for the term of an incumbent to be prolonged until his successor was appointed, and on the other, it would reduce the number of posts to be filled in this manner.⁶

These clashes have had a fruitful aspect, nonetheless. Since last Winter, a large number of working parties and cross-party parliamentary groups have been set up, either in pursuit of a single issue - such as solving the crisis in health care provision, persevering towards the full implementation of the Kyoto protocols, or fighting against multiple fragmentation bombs -, or else for ideological purposes (the Association for Right Thinking and its Implementation, or the Association of Young Members of the Diet for Suitable 21st Century Defence System, etc.). There are also groups for the renewal of political life (such as the group for a new conservative policy) or of particular institutions (such as those in favour of single chamber government or of

⁵ "Jimin zôhan hôji", *Yomiuri*, April 29th 2008.

⁶ "Dôijjinjin minaoshi chakushu", *Yomiuri*, June 2nd 2008.

redrawing the penal code)⁷. All these groups are reinvigorating the Japanese political scene.

Sources: *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, the Minshutô website.

3. A reform of the civil service

On June 6th, the Upper Chamber passed a bill to reform the civil service, which was the outcome of an agreement between the LDP and the Minshutô. This reform aims at the development of a civil service whose branches will be less closely attached to their respective ministries. From now on the competitive examinations will be for general staff posts or for posts requiring specialist skills. The length of service will be gradually increased up to the age of 65 (at the request of the Minshutô) and there will no longer be automatic promotion by seniority.

The move to a "second career" in a firm or public body, which is currently handled by the ministry concerned (*amakudari*), thus giving rise to collusion between the supervisory authority and the supervised body, will now be managed by a centre for human resources and a staff office attached to the cabinet secretariat. Overall administrative control will therefore be entrusted to a body linked to the executive (another point introduced by the Minshutô).

This does not mean that the old *amakudari* arrangement is banned and administrative control over the process of replacing civil servants is not completely excluded (the Minshutô would like to have gone further in that direction).

In the end the Minshutô does not give the appearance of having weakened in its opposition to the government throughout the legislative session ending on June 15th. On June 11th, for the first time in its history the Upper Chamber passed a resolution against the Prime Minister's policy.

Press sources: *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, *Kyôdo*

⁷ "Chôtôha kappatsuka", *Yomiuri*, May 18th 2008.

POINTS OF NEWS

Hatoyama Yûkio⁸, "To appoint Mutô⁹ or someone else: behind the scenes" [*Mutô demo kamawanai ga ootta naimaku*], *Chûôkôron*, May 2008, pp. 50-60 (interview).

Hashimoto Gorô, a journalist from Yomiuri, interviews Mr. Hatoyama who explains the reasons for the Democratic Party's objections to the appointment of the government-sponsored candidates to head the Bank of Japan. The post of Chairman has been filled and one of the two vice-Chairmanships will remain vacant until the Diet reassembles in the Autumn.

Hashimoto Gorô: *In early March the Minshutô turned down the promotion of the vice-Chairman of the Bank of Japan, Mutô Toshirô, to the Chairmanship ...*

Hatoyama Yûkio: Judging by the virulent attacks from the media, I can see the extent of the Ministry of Finance's influence. It is quite obvious that they control the executive, but it is terrible to see their domination extend to the media.

H.G. *It seems that your opposition to him as a candidate was because of his links to the Ministry of Finance...*

H.Y. We are not opposed to such links in principle. But, before being administrative head of the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Mutô had been general adviser to the Minister (*dajin kanbô sômu shingikan*); and when the law was passed to establish the independence of the Bank of Japan, he was the one on the side of the Ministry who opposed that reform. If the person who played a leading role in fighting against the independence of the Bank of Japan were to be put in charge of it, that would be an absolute victory for the Ministry of Finance.

Moreover, someone like Mr. Mutô, who has been in the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, is certainly highly qualified to handle national policy but does not have the necessary experience in international finance. The world financial markets are in a parlous state while the effects of the US

⁸ General Secretary of the Minshutô.

⁹ Mutô Toshirô was one of the candidates supported by the government.

sub-prime mortgage crisis are still spreading, and Mr. Mutô does not seem to us the most able to make the right decisions.

H.G. *On the question over whether to renew the anti-terrorist legislation, or over what response should be made to China's repression of the Tibetan uprising, many differences are emerging within the party, but you are still not holding any debates to address them...*

H.Y. You are right; that is our problem. The party committees on foreign affairs and defence matters work very well together, and they certainly know how to come up with arguments which will give the government and the majority party a hard time, but the current situation is complex, and such an approach undermines the need for long term reflection on the issues of national security.

H.G. *Of course, with the elections in the United States as well as Korea and Russia, the world is moving on...*

H.Y. Absolutely, and the opposition cannot do without a real debate on foreign policy, and particularly on relations with the United States. If Obama is elected, its international posture will change radically. This means that Japan's involvement in Iraq and our relations with America could also change. There is also the matter of China's growing importance, to which Japan must react. The Minshutô needs to work out our diplomatic strategy.

Yamauchi Masayuki¹⁰, "Japanese diplomacy and the rising interest in Middle-East studies" [Chutô no aratana seijiryokugaku to nihongaikô], Chûôkôron, May 2008, pp. 86-101.

This academic urges the Japanese government to extend its co-operation with the countries of the Middle and Near East to areas beyond oil supplies.

Currently there are four kinds of anti-terrorist operations being mounted in Afghanistan: 1. the anti-terrorist fight on Afghan soil; 2. naval interdiction operations; 3. security operations (through

ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force); and 4. regional reconstruction aid (through the PRTs, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams). France, who opposed the Iraq war, participates in these operations, and so does Germany, except for the deployment of troops on the ground. About twenty countries actually have troops on the ground to fight Al-Qaida and the Taliban, while thirty-seven, NATO members and others, take part in ISAF, which was set up in accordance with Security Council resolution 1386.

In Japan, the government and most of the opposition were slow to debate the possible dispatch of a unit to link up with ISAF, or sending ground troops from the Self Defence Force to support the PRTs, but finally concluded that such troops would risk entering "combat zones". Even the possible deployment of troops on the ground in neighbouring Pakistan was rejected.

In its relations with the Near and Middle East Japan must stop being just a "well-intentioned" country and be seen to "assume its responsibilities". It must develop closer links with Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Four interrelated approaches need to be clearly defined:

- relations with these countries should be set up, quite apart from energy questions and our concern to ensure stable supplies of oil and natural gas; these relations should be based on cultural, scientific, training, and educational exchanges;
- there should be efforts at ensuring the region's stability and non-nuclear status, the reconstruction of Iraq, and the establishment of peace in the Near East;
- the exchanges must be on a stable basis, and at the same time strengthen Japan's independence with regard to energy supplies;
- inward investment from the Gulf States should be allowed to develop.

On the first point, the Forum for dialogue between Japan and the Arab states which was set up on the occasion of Koizumi Jun'ichirô's Near East visit in May 2003, under the chairmanship of Ryûtarô Hashimoto followed by Nakayama Tarô, has contributed to broadening Japan's relations with the Arab countries. One of its fruits, for example, was the birth

¹⁰ A professor at Tokyo University.

of the Japan-Egypt Science University. In November 2007, the first conference involving Japan and the Arab countries, which was dubbed the Nipponese-Arab Davos, drew together 150 people from 17 different Arab countries, and 100 from Japan.

With regard to the second point, apart from its help in the rebuilding of Iraq, Japan's efforts, like the "Way of peace and prosperity" initiative, have been welcomed. The Japan-Arab countries conference have also shown that Japan's shared interests with the region go beyond regional issues: the Arab countries are as fearful as Japan over the effects of North Korea's policies.

On the third point: in 2006, 76% of Japan's oil imports came from the Gulf States. Saudi Arabia alone provided 30% of our imports, the United Arab Emirates 25.4%, Qatar 10.2%, and Kuwait 7.2%. For her part, Iran provided 11.5% of the total amount, and Indonesia 2.8%. So for Japan, relations with the Gulf States are vitally important. In order to ensure a stable supply of these resources, relations with the countries of origin must nonetheless be firmly grounded in a wider economic context. A free trade agreement must be signed without delay, but this brings us to the last point.

Muslim [*sic*] investment channels are irrigated by petrodollars and are benefiting from the increase in the price of oil. The funds originating from the United Arab Emirates are reckoned to be the source of investments of between 4 and 7 billion in Japanese firms and property holdings. Wider diversification of these investments must be encouraged. The Muslim countries have high expectations with regard to Japan, whose relations with them are not as burdened by the past as those of Western countries, while Japan matches the latter in financial abilities.

Kajimura Taichirô, "For a real and fair historical awareness" [*Rekishî ninshiki no fusakui to seigi no jitsugen*], *Sekai*, June 2008, pp. 258-272.

This journalist takes another look at the resolutions passed by different countries and by the European Parliament on the issue of the "comfort women".

On December 13th 2007, the European Parliament adopted a resolution criticising the Japanese Diet over the comfort women issue¹¹. It was the final resolution of the year, and many of the members of the Diet were in a hurry to get home for the holiday celebrations. The attendance rapidly thinned out during the exchanges which were translated into the 27 languages of the member states of the European Union. But the important thing was the number of votes in favour of the motion, although Japanese diplomacy had been active behind the scenes.

On July 30th similar resolutions had been passed by the US House of Representatives, followed by the Dutch lower chamber on November 20th, and the Canadians on the 28th. Following the British proposer of the bill, Jean Lambert, eight members of the Diet from seven countries expressed their views. The resolution called upon the Japanese government to acknowledge the historical facts officially, by giving a reply to the women who had been waiting so long for an apology and compensation, and to adopt a resolution to that effect on behalf of the victims and their dependents. 54 members of the Diet voted in favour, three abstained, and no-one voted against.

This resolution can be read as a reminder to the Japanese government from the European institutions, sixteen years after the legal proceedings were initiated in Tokyo in December 1991 by three Korean women supported by women's organisations. In its judgment, the court in Tokyo found that the government must admit that these women had been forced into prostitution, and that it should make a public apology, acknowledge all the violence committed against them, set up a memorial, pay compensation to their dependents, and ensure that they were mentioned in the history text books. The only one of these points not to be found in the European Parliament's resolution is the demand for a memorial; all the rest are incorporated.

The resolution specifically notes that the system in question constituted "*one of the*

¹¹ Resolution B60525/2007: [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Document s/Session2/JP/JANMSSI_JPN_S2_2008anx_E URResolutionJusticeforComfortWomen.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Document%20s/Session2/JP/JANMSSI_JPN_S2_2008anx_EURResolutionJusticeforComfortWomen.pdf).

major examples of human trafficking in the 20th century"¹². It welcomes the statements from Kôno and Murayama, but regrets that "certain public figures have expressed their disagreement"¹³; it praises the establishment in 1997 of an Asian Women's Fund, which has since been dissolved [allowing for the compensation of individual victims whenever they could be found, or for social programmes where few such victims could be identified], and it calls upon the Japanese government to meet the demands still being processed in the courts¹⁴: the government must apologise for acts committed by the former imperial army and assume its political and legal responsibilities.

Why does this question produce such strong reactions in the United States and Europe? Japan has attracted hostility from the politicians and the media of all its European and American friends. On July 30th 2007, that hostile response reached its high point in the words of Tom Lantos, Chairman of the House of Representatives' foreign affairs committee: "*Post-war Germany made the right choice; by contrast, Japan has actively promoted collective amnesia. The persistent efforts of certain people in Japan to distort history and shift the blame onto the victims, is also very troubling.*" The politicians who made a concerted effort to get the resolution passed were also the ones who had pressed for a bill defending human rights in North Korea, and for whom human rights are a universal matter beyond partisan politics.

Mr. Lantos was clearly referring to the speech by Abe Shinzô in March 2007, in which he denied that the comfort women had been forced into prostitution by the army, and to the declaration by some

Japanese members of the Diet published in the *Washington Post* in June. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* fiercely criticised Abe's speech of March 1st, pointing to its wide divergence from Konô's declaration. On March 5th, Abe stated before the budget committee of the Upper Chamber that "*there is no proof of any constraint on the part of the army*", and that "*even if a resolution is adopted by the House of Representatives*" he would "*make no apologies*" for his speech. On March 6th, the *Los Angeles Times* labelled these statements as revisionist, adding that they tarnished the honour of Japan and reawakened the suffering of the victims. The only Japanese publication on that day to report the contents of Gunther Verheugen's address to the European Commission was the editorial in *Asahi*, under the headline: "*Do not create unwelcome misunderstandings*". Never before had there been such a yawning gap between the media in Japan and the West.

On March 16th, replying to Tsujimoto Kiyomi in the Lower Chamber, the government stated that the documents which it had consulted "*did not permit conclusive evidence of constraint on the part of the army*". This was reported by Associated Press and irritated the Prime Minister of Holland, where the Lower Chamber had passed its own resolution on the previous day. The Japanese ambassador to Holland was summoned to explain. The Japanese press made no mention of this, although it was a leading topic over there.

I was very disturbed by these developments, and I wrote an article at the time stating that the Japanese government's declaration amounted to giving its blessing to the revisionist path. In the face of the reaction of the international community, the only option was to step back. I then searched the records of the military authorities in Batavia dealing with enforced prostitution and, together with Muraoka Takamitsu, a Dutch-speaking honorary professor at the University of Leyden, I published a series of articles in a Japanese journal based in Berlin. Those records contained abundant proof of many cases of kidnapping and enforced prostitution directly attributable to the Japanese authorities.

¹² It is reported to have affected two hundred thousand women.

¹³ The resolution calls more specifically on the Japanese government "*to refute the statements denying that these women were subjected by force and reduced to slavery*".

¹⁴ As the European Parliament resolution indicates, the judgments by the courts recognise the State's responsibility and power to pay compensation, but without actually compelling it to pay damages and interest, since the law covering reparations to victims is covered by the international treaties signed by Japan.

The item in the *Washington Post* coincided with the middle of a series of articles which I was producing¹⁵. In Holland, the fact that a large group of Japanese members of the Diet asserted that the victims' testimony was untrustworthy caused great offence. The Chairwoman of the Lower Chamber, Gerdi Verbeet, said that she was deeply shocked, and that it caused great suffering to the victims. She sent a message of support to the Chairman of the Japanese Lower Chamber, Kôno Yôhei.

The resolution of the European Parliament affirmed that the Japanese government must publicly contradict the statements denying responsibility. The government does indeed have a responsibility to see that it is done.

Ishiyama Hisao, Hozumi Takeshi, Tawara Yoshifumi¹⁶, "Tribunals and historical revisionism" [*Hôtei to rekishishûseishugi*], *Sekai*, June 2008, pp. 274-284.

Each of the three people interviewed below was involved in the major trials involving historical accuracy, either through the intervention of their association to take the victims' legal case forward, or through acting as their advocate.

Tawara Yoshifumi: Recently, several legal decisions have been handed down in support of a distorted view of history. These decisions concerned Mr. Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine, and the demands for compensation by the victims of Japanese war crimes. The first of these decisions was the one handed down by the Supreme Court in April 1993. In that decision the Supreme Court confirmed the judgment of the Court of Appeal rejecting the plaintiffs' demands for compensation.

¹⁵ "Shiryôshû nihongun seidorei no shôgen" ["Documentary proofs of sexual slavery organised by the army"], *Shûkan Kinyôbi*, a series of six articles published between April and August 2007.

¹⁶ Taken respectively, these are: Chairman of the Association of History Teachers, a lawyer, and Chairman of the 21st bureau of the national network for Children and History Textbooks.

With regard to the school textbooks, in 1997 an association for a liberal vision of history (*jiyûshugi shikan kenkyûkai*) organised some pupils and mounted a legal action against the State, the local authorities, and the textbook publishers, attacking the obligatory use of textbooks which questioned the massacre of Nanking or the status of the comfort women. In the summer of 1996, the inspection of the textbooks provoked questions over the passages dealing with those women, thus unleashing the third "textbook war", with the creation in January 1997 of the Association for the Publication of New School Textbooks. The legal action arose out of this context, and the Supreme Court rejected their demand.

History in the courts: an overview of the case law

- The Azuma case: In April 1993, Azuma Shirô, a former soldier who had participated in the China campaign, initiated legal proceedings against his former corporal for moral injury following the publication of the latter's memoirs. His case was thrown out by the Supreme Court in April 1996.

- The Lee Shûei case [transcription from the Japanese]: In September 1999, Mr. Lee, a surviving victim of the sack of Nanking, initiated legal proceedings against the author of a book casting doubt on the truth of his testimony. Mr. Lee won his case in May 2002.

- The case of "the hundred beheadings" (*hyaku nin giri*): The dependents of an officer initiated proceedings against the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi* newspapers, which had carried reports during the war about this episode in the sack of Nanking (a competition between officers to see who could be the first to kill a hundred people with their sabres). Their case was thrown out in August 2005.

Sekai: *There had already been proceedings against the State, challenging the textbook contents and the inspection procedures or seeking damages, but a number of recent cases involve extreme rightwing associations...*

Tawara Yoshifumi: That was a movement launched in the 1980s, supported by the Nakasone government's

wish to rebuild a State "capable of waging war". In 1984, the Special Committee on Education was set up. And in 1993, the Committee for the Examination of History was created within the LDP, which affirmed that the war had been a just war for the liberation of Asia, or else an unavoidable war of national defence.

Ishiyama Hisao: The 1990s saw the beginning of the legal actions by other Asians against the Japanese government. In 1991, a former comfort woman, Kim Hak-sun [transcription from the Japanese], mounted proceedings which turned the question of the future development of the Self-Defence Forces into a widely debated topic. All the textbooks submitted for inspection mentioned the comfort women.

There was a radicalisation, initially on the left, with people like Fujioka Nobukatsu who was a founding member of the Association for a Liberal Vision of History, and who later became chairman of the Association for the Publication of New School Textbooks. During the 1990s, these questions preoccupied civil society, and the associations acted in the open whereas the Jimintô and the government pursued their agenda behind closed doors.

Sekai: *With the troubled screening of the documentary film Yasukuni, the name of Inada Tomomi became widely known as a representative of the LDP and trainee lawyer. But she had long been linked to proceedings related to historical issues...*

Hozumi Takeshi: In one of the Ienaga trials¹⁷, she was one of the government's legal representatives (in proceedings on the Anglo-Saxon model), but at that time she did not give the impression of being particularly rightwing. It was in 1999, at the time of the Lee Shûei case, that she came out as an advocate for the defence. In 2005 she was elected to represent the first constituency in Fukui. She caught the attention of Abe Shinzô when she gave a talk on the "*hundred beheadings competition*" [see insert] to a group of young Jimintô members of the Diet concerned with historical matters.

¹⁷ Ienaga Saburô (1913-2002) was a teacher who mounted three legal challenges to the Ministry of Education's system for inspecting school textbooks.

She was only elected two years ago, but she is now a mainstay of the group. She is the chairperson of the "Tradition and Creation" association set up by elected members of parliament on September 11th 2005, and she is active in the movement to demand that the national Chinese archives get rid of documents which it considers to be anti-Japanese. Its chairman is Hiranuma Takeo and its general secretary is Inada Tomomi. The same two linked names are to be found in the Association for the Creation of a True Japan.

Sekai: *The recent judgment on the collective suicides in Okinawa represented the eighth defeat of the revisionists...*

Hozumi Takeshi: Victory in such cases is determined by what appear to be the historical facts. Directly affected victims, who mount legal proceedings, often receive compensation for the moral injury which they have suffered. By contrast, the burden of proof is heavier when it is not the victims themselves but their dependents who present their case. They have to show that the feelings of affection and respect which they feel for their relatives have been violated beyond the bounds of normal social life.

Tawara Yoshifumi: Last March, Mr. Fujioka gave a speech to the group working on the history of the National Strategic Office, with direct links to the Prime Minister. In that meeting, Mr. Fujioka said that there were three anti-Japanese themes which showed a self-punishing attitude to history: the comfort women, the sack of Nanking, and the collective suicides in Okinawa. They were all used by demagogues, he said, to spread anti-militarist thinking among the population. The ultimate goal of people like him is to revive the old militarism (*sensô kokka*, "the war nation").

Ishiyama Hisao: We must arouse an awareness of these questions so as to be able to mobilise as soon as it becomes necessary. We have managed to do this on the question of the collective suicides, and we must now do the same for the sack of Nanking. In addition, the failings in the school textbook inspection system have been thoroughly exposed. Step by step, the Ministry of Education has been forced to give way.

The main problem in the inspection procedures lies in the fact that in reality they are conducted by a civil servant appointed by the Minister. He has managed to impose by decree a system which, in 1956, was rejected by the Diet when the government tried to establish it by legislation.

The other problem is that in order to avoid the contents being dictated by a conservative committee, the publishers have been left free to decide what to include in their books. That is how Yamagawa, the publisher of history textbooks for secondary schools, was able to suppress any reference to the massacres of Okinawa civilians during the war. This fact was reported by *Okinawa shimbun*, but not by the national media. Only public opinion can change this state of affairs.

Yosano Kaoru, Maehara Seiji¹⁸, "Are the LDP and the Democratic Party very different?" [*Jimin to minshu wa hontô ni chigau no ka*], interview with Tahara Sôichirô, *Chûôkôron*, July 2008, pp. 34-43.

Two influential politicians exchange views on Japanese political life with a leading Asahi TV personality.

Why policies are not debated in terms of fundamental issues.

Tahara Sôichirô: *Last summer journalists, including myself, saw the victory of the Minshutô at the polls and thought "this is getting interesting". But a year later, as we lift the lid on the pot, we only see a "divided Diet". Tell me, what has happened?*

Yosano Kaoru: If there is no real debate in the Diet, that is because the Minshutô always has its eye on the general elections.

Maehara Seiji: We too can see the drawbacks to the situation, but it also offers some advantages. Previously, the

¹⁸ The former is an LDP representative, the former Chairman of that party's political committee, and former Chief Cabinet Secretary; the latter is a Minshutô representative, and former party Chairman.

governing majority passed its proposals or bills in the same terms in which they were formulated by the Political Committee of the LDP. Since the last elections to the Upper chamber, the opposition has at last been able to contribute to the wording of a proposed bill. In the law providing for aid to the victims of natural disasters (*hizaisha seikatsu saiken shien hô*), we were able to add provision of aid for a main residence; or again, we managed to include a provision for specifically targeted aid in the law on improving the status of carers (*kaigo jûjisha shogû kaizen hô*). To give another example, organisations which took on civil servants pursuing a second career used to be able to draw on the special tax for motorways; the challenge to that arrangement was also due to the opposition.

How far can administrative reforms go?

Tahara Sôichirô: *Out of a total of 330,000 government employees, 210,000 work for the local community agencies.*

Maehara Seiji: And especially for the 4,600 local agencies which re-employ 27,000 public servants at a cost of 12,000 billion yen. Not all of this money is wasted, but the public would not understand how we could talk of increasing taxes without getting these figures under control.

Tahara Sôichirô: *But really getting them under control would arouse opposition within the Jimintô.*

Yaosano Kaoru: Not at all. In the case of the special taxes, for example, the party understood perfectly that the fifty organisations dependent upon it represented a real problem.

Beyond the neo-liberal reforms

Maehara Seiji: In 1993 Japan's per capita GDP was the second highest in the world; now it is eighteenth. What measures do you propose to remedy this?

Yosano Kaoru: This is undeniably a problem, but it cannot be resolved in a day. We must invest in new technology, which is Japan's trump card.

Tahara Sôichirô: *But at the same time, in this year's budget you are allocating 14 billion yen to advanced technologies,*

compared with 5,600 billion to the motorways.

Maehara Seiji: If the growth rate is again slowing down, that is not the fault of those enterprises which may well be dynamic in themselves, but it is because of a lack of industries which can push the growth forward. The next move is to continue with deregulation. The efficiency of our service industries is very low compared with that of other countries, and that is because of excessive regulation. [...] However, the excesses of the reforms carried out by Mr. Koizumi and Mr. Takenaka will have to be remedied. Deregulation must have its limits. The reforms are manifestly increasing social inequality.

Yosano Kaoru: That is absolutely true.

Maehara Seiji: With our ageing population and falling birth-rate, an increase in economic activity is no longer possible through population increase¹⁹. We must make it our goal to achieve the highest per capita GDP in the world. Japan must be able to lead in the environmental sector, for example, and investment must be concentrated in those sectors which take the whole economy forward.

Yosano Kaoru: Our main strength is not in natural resources but our ability to work and innovate, and this must be revived in order to preserve our prosperity.

¹⁹ Migration would be an option.