

**A REVIVAL OF JAPANESE MILITARISM
and
A CRISIS FOR ARTICLE-9 OF JAPAN'S
WAR-RENOUNCING CONSTITUTION**

a lecture by

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An Expression of Sympathy

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This paper was written before the terrible September 11th tragedy in America. It is so very sad that so many thousands of innocent people died in this atrocity. I extend my heartfelt condolence to the families and friends of the victims. It is true, as many say, that all people and governments throughout the world must cooperate in the fight against international terrorism. Our means for exterminating it should be non-violent.

I can emotionally understand how a majority of US citizens are in favor of striking back with the use of military force. In my opinion, however, an “eye-for-an-eye” retaliation simply forms an endless circle of violence. Your Martin Luther King Jr. said it so well when he said --

“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it ... Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate ... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Although they are in a minority, I find hope from some opinions coming from the United States on the September 11th tragedy. Let me share one with you.

Mr. David Hartsough, executive director of Peaceworkers in San Francisco, says in part in a letter to the Washington Post, “I believe that the only way we can build real security for the American People is for the United States to become a real friend of all the world’s people. Instead of hundreds of billions of dollars for weapons of destruction, we should allocate hundreds of billions for feeding the world’s hungry, housing the homeless, healing the sick and helping heal the wounds of war and the hatred around the world. This would do more to win friends and real security than star wars and all the weapons in the world combined. It is time to understand the unity and interconnectedness of all people around the world and build our security system based upon that understanding.”

As a peace activist I am encouraged by the vote of Congresswoman Barbara Lee, against the use of military force in responding to the September 11th tragedy. What a courageous person she is. She is today’s Jeannette Rankin.

I am happy to know that, even though they are in a minority, there are many people in America and around the world who hope and work for non-violent conflict resolution. Now I will make a few introductory remarks.

Introduction

On May 3, 1947 the Japanese people adopted a new constitution written with the help of World War II’s victors, the United States. Millions of us in Japan love our Article 9 which reads as follows:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

As you may know, Dr. Overby, Ohio University Emeritus Professor, founded an organization called the Article 9 Society (A9S) in March 1991 shortly after the Gulf War. Overby, a friend from his 1981 visiting professor stay at Chubu University, let me know of this organization. I announced it to Japanese people and it now has tens of thousands of supporters in Japan.

The long-term aim of this society is to have all nations adopt in their constitutions the war-renouncing principles of Article 9. Its shorter term goal is to stop its destruction and restore its integrity so that it might be a hopeful model for all nations in the future.

Article 9 is in considerable trouble due to a half a century of Japanese and US governmental efforts to destroy this heresy which implies that nations must use non-violent means to resolve their inevitable conflicts. But it has kept Japan from any active war involvement since World War II. As Douglas Lummis, an American Emeritus Professor from Tsudajuku University in Tokyo says, and as Overby repeatedly quotes him as saying -- “Because of Article 9 no person has been killed under the right of belligerency of the Japanese State for more than half a century.” Undoubtedly, even though badly eroded, Article 9 has been the leash on Japan. What a remarkable record compared to other nations. Let me now share some ideas about a revival of Japanese militarism.

A Revival of Japanese Militarism

We peace workers in Japan are much concerned with the recent growth of right-wing nationalism in our country. An increasing number of politicians and commentators are encouraging a constitutional revision that obviously aims at changing Article 9 so that Japan once again might become a so-called “normal state” -- one that can go to war. Let me share with you a few specific examples of the things that are happening in Japan that causes those of us who love Article 9 to feel anxious and concerned that there is a revival of militarism taking place in our country. First lets talk about the Yasukuni shrine issue

The Yasukuni Shrine

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi recently visited the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. This encouraged the right-wing in Japan and caused much concern by some of our Asian and East Asian neighbors. When they see the Prime Minister visit this place honoring Japan’s war dead, it frightens and angers them. They see it as a sign that Japan is swinging back towards its past militarism.

The Yasukuni Shrine, a Shinto shrine for war-dead, was founded in 1869 by the Japanese government shortly after the Meiji Restoration. Before and during World War II this shrine was a part of the emperor-military war-machine. People who honorably died in the emperor’s wars were to be enshrined there. World War II Class-A war criminals, such as Tojo are there.

We who oppose Japan’s remilitarization also see Yasukuni Shrine visits by politicians as a violation of Article 20 of the Constitution which stipulates the principle of separation of government and religion. Next let us look at the growth of nationalistic politicians and cultural opinion-makers.

Growing Popularity of Nationalistic Politicians and Cultural Figures

There seems to be a growing popularity of nationalistic and right-wing politicians, cultural opinion-makers and commentators in my country. One of the most dangerous and popular leaders is the Governor of Tokyo, Mr. Shintaro Ishihara. He has also visited the Yasukuni Shrine and has been a strong promoter of the Fusosha history textbook. More on the “textbook” matter later. Ishihara is very much in favor of changing Article 9 so that Japan can become a “normal nation” once again. By this he means that he wishes Japan to be a nation that can again legitimately use its military force as do other world powers like the USA. Ishihara has no hesitation in stating that Japan should have its own nuclear arms. He has been a strong support of the Self Defense Forces (SDF) and has promoted them as honorable heroes to be used in Japanese national disasters -- thus seeking to give them popular legitimacy among the people. He hosted a major disaster simulation day in Tokyo in Fall of 2000 with the SDF as saviors.

Another influential person who is one of the leaders of this new breed of Japanese nationalists is the cartoonist named Kobayashi. He is very popular with Japanese youth. His comic works are full of racial hatred and arrogant contempt for Westerners and non-Japanese Asians. He not only denies Japan’s war crimes, but also blatantly glorifies the war itself. Now to another issue, the Fusosha textbook.

The Fusosha Textbook

In the mid-nineties a nationalist group that calls themselves the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform was formed. This group consisting mainly of teachers, scholars, and other cultural figures began a large-scale campaign, claiming that history education in post-war Japan had been “masochistic,” and must be replaced by new history aimed at restoring Japanese national pride. This group just produced its own history book which was adopted by the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science and approved for use in junior high schools. This new textbook, published by Fusosha, white-washes Japan’s invasions and atrocities committed in World War II. It promotes narrow-minded nationalism. It is quite natural that both Korean and Chinese people get angry and strongly oppose this textbook.

The publisher of this book took a rather unusual step by selling it also in ordinary commercial bookstores in addition to its normal distribution paths for schools. They have apparently had rather significant sales of this book to the general public, whereas its use in schools has met with considerable opposition from teachers unions and peaceworkers. Thus far school use has been low, but popular sales high. I thus conclude that there is a strong interest in this kind of “revisionist” history in my country. Another indicator of “remilitarization” is the Japanese government’s involvement with “theater missile defense” (TMD).

Theater Missile Defense TMD

The US government has long been encouraging Japan to join the US and spend some of its money helping develop “national and theater missile” defense” systems (NMD & TMD). As a peaceworker these systems seem quite dangerous. Both US and Japanese governments frighten their people with images of destruction from so-called “rogue-states” like economically poor North Korea. Japanese money is presently being spent in Japanese weapons industries on missile defense systems -- another symptom of the remilitarization of Japan.

Please take a good look at the 73 words in Article 9 and then ponder the fact that Japan now has the third largest military in the world. Let us move next to the national flag and national anthem matter.

National Flag and Anthem

As a result of 1999 legislation on the national flag and anthem, compulsory use of these two national symbols in schools throughout Japan as been forcefully made. The government and local boards of education are required to have students sing the national anthem and to show the flag at official ceremonies. Many teachers have protested and resisted this new symptom of nationalism-militarism, and have been backed up by their unions, but even teacher union opposition to these symbols seems to be growing weaker. Perhaps this is due to the age changes taking place in Japan. The older teachers who know from personal experience about the violence of war are retiring and dying -- leaving younger ones who have no experience of war's brutality.

As one of the WW-II generation, I personally hate the Japanese "rising sun" national flag, because it was a symbol of Japan's military aggression just like the Nazi's swastika. Our national anthem called "Kimigayo" celebrated the Imperial Reign and sovereign Emperor in all its prosperity -- but with little regard for the welfare of ordinary people. Our new constitution names ordinary people as sovereign. Therefore, I see the national anthem is a violation of our postwar constitution. Now a look at Article 9's crisis.

Article 9's Crisis

In general, Article 9 has been a victim of the cold-war. The United States in pursuing its national interests has, during this cold war period, been the chief external architect for Article 9's erosion. Right-wing nationalistic Japanese politicians and leaders of course are receptive to the idea of doing away with this heresy. Article 9's existence is especially threatened today by the 1997 "guidelines for US-Japan defense cooperation," and the 1999 Japanese Diet legislation that enables them to implement these "guidelines. With this Diet legislation, Japan once again "reinterprets" Article 9 so as to make it easier for Japan to get involved in US wars and violence. Let me speak briefly about just two issues that illustrate this present crisis for A9 and its relationship to what seems to be a growing swing to the nationalistic-militaristic-right in my country today -- [1] the "guidelines", and [2] "changing Article 9."

Guidelines

The US initiated "1997 guidelines" consists of arrangements for the Japanese government to enlist their "Self Defense Forces" (SDF) for use by the United States in future Asian wars and/or in other "situations in areas surrounding Japan." Somewhat cynically these guidelines define "situations in areas surrounding Japan" as being of a "situational" and not "geographical" nature. Such evasive language potentially opens the door for Japanese SDF involvement in "situations" anywhere in the world --. Now on to Article 9's revision.

Article 9 and The Constitutional Research Committee

The present political climate in Japan is one in which there is growing possibility that the constitution may well be revised with Article 9's wisdom being completely destroyed. In 1997 the Diet established what they called the "Constitution Research Committee" (CRC) with its stated objective being to study and make recommendations with respect to some revisions in the post-WW-II constitution. Those of us who wish to keep Article 9 as it is, strongly feel that the "real" objective of this conservatively dominated CRC is to completely and finally destroy Article 9.

Article 96 of our constitution, prescribes that amendments to the constitution shall be initiated by the Diet through a concurring vote of two-thirds or more of the members of each house and shall thereupon be submitted to the people for a referendum.

It is my opinion, based on surveys that I have seen, that those who wish to destroy Article 9 and have Japan become a “normal nation” once again will probably soon have enough strength to make the revisions and take it to the people for a vote. As I see the trends in public attitude and note the shifting to the right of elected officials, national media, and other opinion-makers in Japan -- I am not so optimistic about keeping Article 9 intact.

Thus, we are now faced with ironical and paradoxical circumstances. The more the US Government pushes the Japanese government to strengthen the SDF for collective defense, the more right-wing nationalists in Japan will be encouraged to have independent arms, including nuclear weapons. Who doubts that they may ultimately more loudly and firmly say to the USA -- take your army and leave our country. Does the United States think that Japan will always want to live within a US harness? Might it not make sense for the US to encourage a Japan that fulfills the wise and non-violent promise inherent in Article 9?

Peace.