

This opinion piece by PCI Board Member Fumio Matsuo appeared in the July 2015 issue of Seien magazine.

---

"Jihyo," from Seien magazine, issue of July 2015  
(published by the Eiji Shibusawa Memorial Foundation)

© Put a halt to historical problems by retaining 100  
percent of the "Murayama Statement"

-- We should not incite continued criticism by China  
and South Korea --

By Fumio Matsuo, Journalist

This past March and May, proposals that I had made previously in the Japanese and U.S. media for a mutual gesture by which the leaders of those two countries offer floral tributes at Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima, were quoted in columns in the Asahi Shimbun and Nihon Keizai Shimbun. In the former, the head of the Asahi's U.S. bureau, Takashi Yamawaki, wrote in the "Kaze" (Winds) column that appeared in the morning edition of March 15, under a headline, "The new postwar 70 years. Floral tributes at Hiroshima, and floral tributes at Pearl Harbor as well."

In the Nihon Keizai Shimbun's "Kazamidori" (Weathervane) column, appearing in the morning edition of May 17, the headline read, "The day Mr. Obama comes to Hiroshima." Its writer was Mr. Itaru Oishi, the former Washington bureau chief. The column appeared with a photo of the cover of my 2009 book, "The Day President Obama Offers Flowers at Hiroshima: Opening the Way to Historical Reconciliation through the Diplomacy of Mutual Floral Tributes" (Shogakukan 101 Shinsho, 2009 ).

I was born in 1933 in Tokyo, but during the war I was evacuated to Fukui, the land of my Samurai ancestors burial place. On July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1945, about one month before Japan's defeat, I survived an air raid by 127 B-29s, what was called " night-time indiscriminate incendiary carpet bombing." From this, as one of the last remaining generations to know war, I have written and continue to propose that "Unless Japan and the U.S. emulate Germany in ceremonies that pay homage to the war dead, the matter will never end." It is an activity I am thankful to pursue.

● Strong objections against visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki

However, my feelings of elation over the coverage quickly deflated. When Mr. Abe visited the U.S. at the end of April, his schedule did not include a visit to Pearl Harbor, nor was the proposal by Mr. Oishi to "Hold next year's G7 summit at Hiroshima" adopted. On May 13, at the review of the NPT (nuclear nonproliferation treaty) meeting convened at the U.N. headquarters. In response to an address by Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, Fu Song, China's ambassador for disarmament affairs at Geneva, voiced his direct opposition, remarking that "Judging from the posture of the Japanese government toward historical issues, I don't think inviting the people of the world to the A-bombed cities will aid in bestowing a broader awareness toward war. It's undesirable for specific countries to engage in making their own interpretations of history, as they risk becoming tools to distort history."

South Korea's ambassador, Ahn Yong-jo also gave a negative statement, remarking, "We believe that visiting to the nuclear bombed site is unrelated to the direct aims of the conference," thereby clearly demonstrating it is aligned with China on the issue.

Despite efforts on the Japanese side, such as the dispatching of Shinsuke Sugiyama, deputy minister for foreign affairs, Japan failed to obtain the support of

numerous countries, and in the draft of the final joint statement, no mention was made of Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Instead only one line of text was retained, which read, "Exchanges will be made with people or locals who underwent nuclear attacks, and their experiences will be shared." On the final day of the conference, however, in an entry reviewing the creation of a non-nuclear vision for the Middle East, the U.S., which did not want to provoke Israel, raised strong opposition along with the U.K. and Canada, so the conference ended without the adoption of a final joint statement. In the end, the record only remains of Japan's diplomatic trump card, "visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki," having been blocked at the U.N. by its two neighboring countries, leaving Japan with a bad aftertaste.

● Learn from Nixon's "handshake with Mao Zedong"

With regard to making floral tributes at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I became aware, while preparing the book in 2009, that Chinese-Americans and Korean-Americans who reside on the U.S. west coast took a dim view of the idea.

A Korean-American scholar whose works I had cited made these heated comments: "The Asian victims of the war initiated by Japan outnumber the victims of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki by many tenfolds. We won't stand for the U.S. president to offer flowers at Hiroshima or Nagasaki unless the Japanese people first apologize directly to their (Asian) victims. The tragic devastation by the atomic bombs is a separate issue from that. If Obama announces his intention beforehand to make a floral offering at Hiroshima, people on the west coast might demonstrate against it."

Actually when U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos first made a floral offering at Hiroshima in 2010, accusations immediately surfaced in the U.S. that he had "made an apology for the dropping of the atomic bomb."

So I felt then, upon hearing Chinese Ambassador Fu Song's remarks, has it finally come to this? Politicians' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine since the beginning of the second Abe cabinet, along with remarks to the effect of "finally casting off the 'postwar' regime" have led to the perception in the U.S. that Japan is on the path of "revisionism," and I've come away with the strong sense that these sentiments are shared even more acutely in China and South Korea. During Mr. Abe's visit to the U.S. in April, he achieved an historical first in U.S.-Japan relations by addressing a joint session of both houses of Congress. But while flaunting this "award," as indicated by the official comment from

South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that "no apology was made," a mountain of unresolved issues concerning the "problems of historical awareness" remain between Japan and its two neighbors.

When, and how, can these historical issues of Japan that are so deeply entrenched in China and South Korea, be expunged? For now, in the upcoming "70th Anniversary Abe Statement" to be delivered in August, it is expected that Mr. Abe will avoid invoking such terms as "invasion" and "apology." I believe he should change from this position and weave in a continuance of 100 percent of the points made by Prime Minister Murayama in his 1995 statement, as is strongly desired by China and South Korea. Things have already come to the stage of thinking national interests of the nation.

For PM Abe it is now necessary to rise beyond the stage of politician, and learn from the example of Richard Nixon, a former "red baiter," who after realizing the solid support of conservatives at home, took the bold action of "shaking hands with Mao Zedong." By so doing, Nixon changed the course of world history.

(Diary entry for June 10, 2015)