

“Our Statement on the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the War’s End”

This year, 2015 is the 70th anniversary of the Asia-Pacific War’s end. We were born in 1998, about half a century after the war. Today, we would like to express our thoughts about the war as Japanese who haven’t experienced the war at all.

When we hear the word “Asia-Pacific War”, a picture taken after the large-scale air raids as known as “the Bombing of Tokyo” comes into our mind. In the picture, Tokyo is totally devastated. It is completely different from Tokyo that we know of today. It is hard to imagine that there were massive bombings during the war in Tokyo. Prosperity of modern Japan is overshadowing the bitterness of the war, perhaps to the extent that we may have forgotten it ever occurred. And we are sure most Japanese also feel that way.

However, we, Japanese, should never forget the historical fact that Japan had invaded Asian countries such as China, Korea. It is true that Japan is not only the country who sought for colonies at that time. Indeed, Western imperialist countries ruled many countries and regions as their colonies. Nonetheless, that does not justify Japan’s invasion. Invading one's territory, taking one's precious lives, are acts that should not be done.

Unfortunately, Japan has not fully reconciled on the past colonization, or has established good relationships with neighboring countries, particularly with China and South Korea. We think one of the major reasons is that the Japanese tend to think that Japan’s invasion to such countries is something that happened a long time ago, thus don’t try to reflect upon the past mistakes. As a fact, some Japanese are acting in such a manner that lacks empathy and consideration to our neighboring countries and people.

What can the Japanese, as individuals, do to accelerate progression toward reconciliation? We believe there are two specific actions to take.

First is to establish personal relationships with Chinese and Korean people. I have Chinese friends whom I met in school exchange program. We talk frankly about cartoons, love, studies and our future. If the citizens of both countries could establish friendship with each other, we could even change the relationships between the countries.

Second is to use our imagination. Maybe it is difficult to have opportunity to directly have a relationship with Chinese and Korean people. However, we can imagine who they are as real people and individuals who live every day, have emotions. As long as we use our imagination and be considerate of others, it will be difficult to make big mistakes, even though languages and cultures may be different.

The hard feelings over Asia-Pacific War are still casting a pall over Japan and other neighboring countries. However, it is true that Asia-Pacific War ended 70 years ago. We have the advantage of not having hard feelings over the war that cannot be overcome. Of course, we must clearly and proudly say “NO” to extreme behaviors which prevent us from reconciling. We believe it is Japanese youth’s mission to inherit reflection on the past invasion, generate relationships with friendship, cooperation, and peace between neighboring and Asian countries.

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