

Curbing Militarism in Japan and the Role of Academics

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Two months ago the NHK, a public broadcasting corporation in Japan, aired a program[1] on physicist Hideki Yukawa, the first Nobel prize winner in Japan, focusing on his anti-nuke and pro-peace activities. The program showed that he insisted on total abolition of nuclear weapons in the Yukawa-Tomonaga Manifesto (1975), renouncing the nuclear deterrence theory which had been even the idea of the majority of the Pugwash group. It ends with an impressive home movie-like film in which, walking in a park, he speaks with a Kyoto accent, "I wonder why people don't understand this simple thing. I think they become aware of it extremely slowly!."

We have established pacifist laws and many organizations have issued pro-peace manifestos after the World War II because of a strong regret for the calamity of the war and that Japan fought the war as an aggressor. They are the pacifist constitution represented by its Article 9, and the Fundamental Law of Education which ensures peace by education. (The latter has been "destroyed" only a half-month ago.) In the field of academics we have the "Manifesto of Non-Commitment to Sciences for War" of the Science Council of Japan (SCJ, 1950) and the "Resolution no.3" of the Physical Society of Japan (JPS, 1967) which prohibits the Society and its members to cooperate with any military organizations. The idea of regarding force itself as evil, although now faded deeply, cannot be official ones in the countries of the Allied side, therefore these devices should be considered as treasures for all humans, not only for the people in Japan.

However a long time has passed since stopped talking about the above manifestos for academics. We must click many times to reach this Resolution in the JPS website, and even, the SCJ website does not carry this manifesto at all. Most academics, not only young people, do not know these "archives". I am worrying that followers of Professor Yukawa as peace activist decrease year by year.

Japan's state-run universities are changed into so-called "National University

Corporations" in 2004. This new regime gave a power to the Ministry of Education to intervene in the education and research of universities. Academic freedom of the state-run universities, which has long been undermined by various implicit measures of the government, is now at obvious risk. The "amendment" of the Fundamental Law of Education, which passed the Diet only a half-month ago, is to change the law for restraining the state from intervening the education into the law to control teachers, students, and even parents. This is the first amendment for 60 years since its enactment and is the 180 degree overturn of the relationship between the government and the people. This would make Japan's public education more oppressive and could eventually undermine democracy itself. Many people warn that it is the same road which Japan passed along before the World War II. One can hardly be optimistic about the fate of the Article 9 of the Constitution.

The above changes met no strong resistance since the opposition side lacked an effective strategy, because they had no headquarters by professionals in politics, like political parties or major trade unions. The struggles were fought mainly by amateurs[2].

Though we have experienced democracy for more than a half of a century, the political power or ability of the young people, minimum condition of which is to have an interest in politics and society, seems to degrade continuously, because of the media and education. Activists who impelled and supported the democratic changes in the early days of the post war era of Japan were mostly then militarist teachers or students until August 15, 1945. One may ask a very pessimistic question: as they were changed into liberalists or leftists by the catastrophic experience of the defeat of the war, do young people today have to take the same route to get a good ability in political life? However, today we have freedom of speech and efficient communication tools like internet, and international cooperation is widely available.

How can we restore and reinforce democracy to build a peaceful society by moderate social processes, not through the catastrophe like a war? It is a task to the people in all sectors of society. As for Japan, we have a serious problem that we have no professional center to elaborate the strategy and tactics for these processes. These political parties which promise firm adherence to the Article 9 have only very small number of seats in

the Diet. Attempts to make a cooperation among these wings are very weak.

We, as academics, should contribute to this effort through our profession, mainly in classrooms. I would emphasize the followings:

- 1) Increase opportunities for students to know various facts or news about important political issues. To this end we should talk about various social issues to rouse their interest in politics, even if the topic has nothing to do with the subject of the course.
- 2) Courses on peace and disarmament issues should be included in the undergraduate curriculum, and for the graduate students, courses on social responsibility of scientists, not only on basic ethical matters like honesty in making papers, should be provided.
- 3) As one of the social responsibilities of academics, we should express our opinion to encourage the cooperation among progressive wings and people. Candid criticism, independent from any political wings, is also indispensable to create this cooperation.

Most of these are already stated in the recent declaration released by UNESCO in 1998[3] and are rather "banal". But what is important is to actually implement these measures.

I showed the above-mentioned video on Professor Yukawa to students in two classes. All students knew his achievements in physics but nothing about his pro-peace activities. The biggest problem is that they have little opportunity to come across this kind of information. The media lead the interest of young people into, for example, the topic of the amount of contract payments for famous baseball players. Teachers of universities and colleges should try to practice "remedial" talks in their classrooms. Since university students go out into the world within a few years, the effects of the "remedy" could be quick.

[1] 2nd volume of the series "The Last Message".

<http://www.nhk.or.jp/special/onair/061106.html>

[2] English website against the University Corporations Law.

<http://pegasus.phys.saga-u.ac.jp/znete.html>

[3] WORLD DECLARATION ON HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: VISION AND ACTION

http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm

Refer to the 11th paragraph of the PREAMBLE, as well as item (b) and (d) of the Article 2.