

A Disturbing Interpretation

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Yasukuni Shrine at the end of year 2013 in order to renew the pledge that Japan shall never again wage war. Recently, an article published in the newspaper “*La Presse*” by Mrs. Zhao Jiangping, Consul General of China in Montreal on the 13th didn't reflect this truth and moreover lacked objectiveness.

For some time now, China has been conducting a global propaganda campaign against Japan, under the pressure of Beijing to isolate Japan in the international community and even from Canada. Given the situation, I feel compelled to post this article to give the readers more objective information.

Yasukuni Shrine

The Yasukuni Shrine is home to approximately 2.5 million souls (it is not a burial ground) who made the ultimate sacrifice for their nation since not just in WWII, but also during domestic turmoil and other wars since 1853, regardless of their rank, social standing or nationalities. In understanding why Prime Minister Abe visited the Yasukuni Shrine, we should focus on the statement entitled “Pledge for everlasting peace” which he issued upon his visit to the Shrine. In that statement, he underlined that the purpose of his visit was to renew the pledge that Japan shall never again wage war. It was by no means to pay homage to Class A war criminals or to praise militarism. The Yasukuni is not a militarist symbol and not considered as such by the Government of Japan or Japanese nationals. Furthermore, it is totally irrelevant to refer to the Nazis in this context.

The Past

The Government of Japan has consistently made it clear that it squarely faces history, and expresses deep remorse and heartfelt apology. This stance is firmly upheld under the Abe Government. Since the end of WWII, Japan has created a free and democratic country and has consistently walked the path of peace for the past 68 years. Japan's postwar record shows the strength of democracy, its respect for human rights, its commitment to peace (e.g. a strong contribution to UN peace-keeping operations), and its willingness to help developing countries. Japan's position remains unchanged, and will continue fulfilling its role as a responsible global power through contributing to peace and stability of the world as described in its national security strategy.

We should not put aside the fact that Japan has repeatedly apologized officially to China. Japan has also provided more than \$37 billion CAD (3.6 trillion ¥) worth of economic and technological contribution to China over 35 years since diplomatic relations were normalized.

Militarism?

Mrs Jiangping refers to Prime Minister Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine being a serious concern to the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific. It is somewhat difficult to understand how a country that has increased its military expenditures by more than 10 percent annually for more than 20 years since 1989 could make such an accusation. Also, China has intensified its use of coercion against neighboring states, most recently with the unilateral declaration of an "East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone" which infringes upon the freedom of flight in international airspace. Finally, China has also continually escalated the intrusion of government vessels into the territorial sea around the Senkaku Islands which are an inherent part of Japanese territory.

We fervently hope that China will work with us so that we can overcome our bilateral difficulties and cultivate a future-oriented relationship. Japan is always open to dialogue.

In conclusion, I would like to ask readers to refer to the annual Peace Commemorative Ceremony held in Montreal on August 5th, in the presence of Montrealers and Japanese representatives at the Japanese Botanical Garden at the Montreal Botanical Garden. This is held not to pray solely for the victims of atomic bombs, but to put an end to any kind of war and to seek peace.

Tatsuo Arai
Consul General of Japan at Montreal

Published article: <http://www.lapresse.ca/debats/votre-opinion/201401/16/01-4729527-une-interpretation-qui-derange.php>