Postwar Reconciliation between Japan and Britain (1994-1998)

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Today I would like to talk about postwar reconciliation not with any academic pretensions, but on the basis of my experience as a practicing diplomat. There are many aspects to the issue of postwar reconciliation, to which I had the most direct exposure when I served as No.2 of our embassy in London in 1994-1998. Let me try to look back on that experience.

That was my second tour in Britain. I joined the Foreign Ministry in 1966, and was sent to Oxford University to study for two years. After earning my degree there, I served for two years at the Japanese Embassy in London. In the late 1960s when I did my first tour there, there were lingering memories of the war (WWII), but the issue of prisoners of war (POW) was not a subject of much salience. However, during my second tour there, 1995 happened to be the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII, and the whole question of postwar reconciliation came to the fore, occupying a great deal of my time and attention.

Three Aspects of Postwar Settlement

There are three aspects to postwar settlement. The first is legal settlement. The second is apology. The third is reconciliation. The first aspect, legal settlement, involves the conclusion of a peace treaty, adjudication of war crimes, and compensation. The second aspect, apology, entails the question of how it should be expressed in the form of statements by the leaders of the Japanese government as well as how apologies can be made to the people of the country that Japan fought, especially those who were victimised in the war, such as POWs and comfort women.

The third aspect, reconciliation, is what I am focusing on today. This involves reconciliation at a number of levels: between governments, between officers, soldiers and other military personnel who once fought across the war fronts, between ordinary citizens and former enemy soldiers (in some cases including POWs), or between the Japanese government and the former British POWs, or between the Japanese government and the former comfort women from Korea.

As for legal settlement, as far as the United Kingdom or the former Allied Powers are concerned, peace was achieved under the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and Japan accepted the judgments of the Tokyo Tribunal (International Military Tribunal for the Far East) and other Allied War Crimes Courts both within and outside Japan. In the Tokyo Tribunal, 25 Class A war criminals were found guilty, of which 7 were sentenced to death. In the tribunals for the Class B and C war criminals held in various parts of Asia, about 5,700 were tried and 934 were sentenced to death. Japan accepted all these judgments.

On compensation, the legal position taken by the Japanese and Allied governments under the San Francisco Peace Treaty was that the Allied Powers and Japan each waived "all claims of their/its nationals against the other and its/their nationals." Despite this legal position, there have arisen a number of problems.

Article 16 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty provided for an indemnity through "the transfer of the assets of Japan and its nationals in countries which were neutral

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during the war, or which were at war with any of the Allied Powers, or the equivalent of such assets." In the case of the United Kingdom, out of the sum of these assets, plus the £3,005,000 arising from the seizure of Japan's assets overseas and the £175,000 indemnity for the forced labour for the construction of the Thailand-Burma Railway, payment was made to the former British POWs and civilian internees, amounting to £76.5 per person and £48.5 per person respectively to the POWs and the civilian internees. Those who had been in Japanese captivity found this totally insufficient, and they would live with their pent-up grievance for decades to come.

LEFT: Mr. Arthur Titherington

In 1994, shortly after I arrived at the embassy in London, Arthur Titherington, Leader of the JLCSA (Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association, a group of former POWs held by Japan) and 6 others, including non-British former POWs and civilian internees, filed a suit for £13,000 compensation per person at the Tokyo District Court. The plaintiffs lost the case when the Tokyo District Court ruled in November 1998 that "international law does not provide for individuals' right to claim compensation." In response to the appeal by the plaintiffs, the same judgment was made by the Tokyo High Court in March 2000 and by the Supreme Court in March 2004.

The British government held the same legal position as the Japanese government. However, as we will see later, controversy erupted on the issue around the time of the 50th anniversary of VJ (Victory over Japan) Day. Subsequent debates within Britain prompted a campaign, organised primarily by the Royal British Legion, calling on the British government to provide some kind of redress to the POWs. In response, the British government decided to make an ex gratia payment of £10,000 each to the former POWs or their bereaved spouses. Thus the matter was brought to a resolution as an internal problem in the United Kingdom.

Next comes the question of apology. This came to the fore in Japan in the 1990s in the context of its relationships with its Asian neighbours. Successive prime ministers made a variety of statements in trying to address this issue. As we will see later, on August 15, 1995, the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII, the then Prime Minister Murayama issued his statement, which can be seen as a landmark in Japan's approach to the question of apology.

Then comes the final aspect, reconciliation. Professor Nobuko Kosuge of Yamanashi Gakuin University, with whom I worked closely in Britain on postwar reconciliation, defines reconciliation as "the resolution of emotional frictions or conflicts that continue to fester between former enemy states even after the conclusion of a peace treaty or the restoration of peace" in her book "Sengo Wakai (Postwar Reconciliation)" (Chuko Shinsho). In essence, this is about what is in people's mind. As such, it is the toughest issue to resolve.

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Reconciliation was the challenge that I was actually up against in London. What was difficult was how to manage the relationship with former POWs held captive by the old Japanese military. Those former POWs had no inclination to accept any overture for reconciliation by someone from the Japanese Embassy like me. In the eyes of those who had suffered in captivity at the hands of the old Japanese military, the Embassy, as an official arm of the Japanese government, appeared to be little different from the old Japanese military. Given this visceral rejection on their part, attempts for direct reconciliation between the Japanese government and those POWs were fraught with difficulties.

What then became important was the presence of non-governmental actors. Their activities served as a catalyst in moving the process of reconciliation forward.

Another important factor was public opinion. The public opinion of the country in question tends to be greatly affected by issues of this kind, and there arises the challenge of managing their impact on the public opinion. Thus media relations were a very important part of my experience in Britain.

Before Posting to Great Britain

Allow me now to recount my personal experience. I was Deputy Spokesman of the Japanese Foreign Ministry from 1991 to 1994, before being assigned to Britain. That was when I became involved in the question of postwar apology. I came back to Tokyo from Australia to become the Deputy Spokesman in March 1991, and, in May of that year, I accompanied Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu on his visit to the Southeast Asian countries. My role at that time was to act as the Prime Minister's spokesman vis-à-vis the local media and the third-country media where he travelled.

Prime Minister Kaifu gave a speech in Singapore, in which he said, looking back on the past, "I express our sincere contrition at Japanese past actions which inflicted unbearable sufferings and sorrows upon a great many people of the Asia-Pacific region." The Japanese word for "sincere contrition" was "kibishiku hansei." The word "hansei" is difficult to translate. One translation is "reflection," but there can be other alternatives. When I was consulted on the English translation, I chose to use "sincere contrition." One of my senior colleagues at the Foreign Ministry actually asked me later why I chose this somewhat esoteric word. When I briefed the media in Singapore about the content of the speech, the representatives of the third-country media such as BBC focused their attention on this word "contrition," for it implied repentance or penitence for past sins.

The next issue in which I became involved in terms of media relations was that of comfort women. I accompanied Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa when he visited the Republic of Korea in January 1992. By then, the comfort women issue had flared up in Japan-Korea relations. Prime Minister Miyazawa expressed his "sincere remorse and apology" to President Roh Tae-woo. In July of that year, Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato issued his statement giving interim findings of the Japanese government's inquiry into the issue of the war-time comfort women, which had been prompted in

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part by Prime Minister Miyazawa's visit to Korea. Admitting that the inquiry revealed the government's wartime involvement in the matter, he expressed the Japanese government's sincere remorse and apology.

The inquiry continued, and a year later, in August 1993, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono acknowledged the involvement of the Japanese old military in the matter, and once again extended the government's sincere apologies and remorse for this act that had severely injured the honour and dignity of many women. As it happened, on the two occasions of the Chief Cabinet Secretary's statements, one by Koichi Kato and the other by Yohei Kono, the task of briefing the foreign correspondents in Tokyo in English fell on me. Those were very tough sessions, each lasting for about 90 minutes, in which I was grilled with very sharp questions. That was my initiation into this whole question of postwar settlement.

In August 1993, the one-party rule by the Liberal Democratic Party collapsed, and Morihiro Hosokawa of Nihon Shinto (Japan New Party) became Prime Minister. In his inaugural policy speech, he expressed anew "our profound remorse and apologies for the fact that past Japanese actions, including aggression and colonial rule, caused unbearable suffering and sorrow for so many people." This went further than any statement by his predecessors in postwar years.

While listening to all this, you may start wondering why it was only in the 1990s, nearly 50 years after the end of the war, that such statements began to be made. The process was unfolding, in a trial and error fashion, to probe for ways to come to terms with the past, but why had it taken so long for it to start? To be honest, I was asking myself the same question then.

This is a point for some debate. Let me state what I feel personally about it.
The war ended in 1945. Then, Japan came under Allied occupation. I cannot but feel that, during the occupation period, there was little soul-searching debate within Japan as to what the "Pacific War" had been fought for, and what those who had perished in the war had sacrificed their lives for. As the debate remained insufficient and incomplete, the Cold War began.

Once the East-West Cold War began, that bipolar structure was reflected in the domestic politics of Japan. I remember the expression "the internal Berlin War," once used by the well-known playwright Masakazu Yamazaki. Under those circumstances, the issue of coming to terms with the past became highly charged in the confrontation between the left and the right within Japan. Once it became captive to the left-right confrontation, few were inclined to thrash out the issue objectively and dispassionately with a view to reaching a consensus. It was under this condition of default in debate that we came into the 1990s.

In retrospect, the focus with respect to Japan's past actions was on our relations with Asian countries, including China, Korea and Southeast Asia. We were preoccupied with our neighbours, and the issue as it related to such countries as the United States, Great Britain, or the Netherlands with its many former civilian internees, did not figure prominently in people's consciousness.

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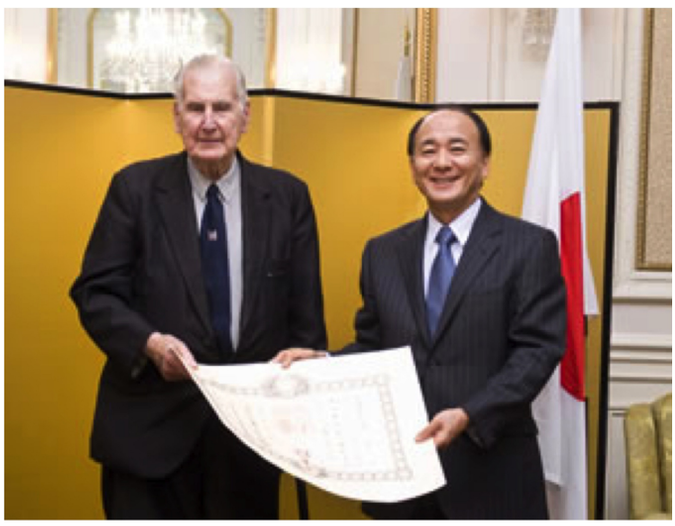

LEFT: Mr. Philip Malins at the Decoration Award Ceremony

British POWs and the 50th Anniversary of VJ Day

I arrived in London as No.2 of the embassy in March 1994, and stayed there for nearly four years until January 1998. Before telling you how I grappled with the question of postwar reconciliation during that period, let me explain to you the problem of British POWs.

This is the photograph of Philip Malins, who served on the Burma front as an officer during WWII and who devoted himself to postwar reconciliation with Japan. In recognition of his contributions, he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun with Gold and Silver Rays by the Japanese government. He passed away at the age of 92 in April this year (2012). While he was still alive, he sent me a copy of his acceptance speech of the decoration.

In his speech, he made the following points.

- 60% of the Japanese fighting in Burma died. This was because the Senjinkun battle code issued to Japanese troops required them to fight to the death and not live as a captive to be subjected to humiliating treatment.

- 7%of Allied forces fighting in Burma died. Some 50,000 British troops were held as POWs by Japanese troops, the highest captivity rate among the Allied forces, of which 25% died. The death rate of British troops in German captivity was 5%.

- Almost all the Allied forces in Burma believe that the dropping of the atom bombs ended the war and saved countless Allied and Japanese lives. Many Japanese believe that it was a crime against humanity.

- Against this background, reconciliation with Japan has been much more difficult than with Germany.

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At the end of his speech, he noted that there had been no reconciliation after WWI, only to be followed 21 years later by WWII, and concluded by saying, "Reconciliation is the final victory for both sides.

It was at the beginning of 1995 that this issue of postwar settlement surfaced as a very thorny challenge in our relationship with Great Britain. For the British, August 15, 1995, was the 50th Anniversary of VJ Day (Victory over Japan).

What kind of images did the British people have of Japan in those days? As I said earlier, I was in Britain from 1966 and 1970, and returned there after a 24 years' hiatus. Compared to the 1960's, the British interest in Japan had heightened appreciably. When I left London in 1970, 2800 Japanese lived in London. The second Japanese restaurant in London had just opened. When I went back in 1994, there were somewhere between 150 and 160 Japanese restaurants there, and I could not possibly check them all. More than 20,000 Japanese were living in London. More than 50,000 Japanese were living in Britain as a whole.

Why did the number of Japanese residents increase so dramatically? That was because Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher actively invited inward investment by a number of Japanese enterprises like Nissan to Britain, with a view to revitalising the British economy. Thanks to this, positive images spread widely in Britain about the Japanese economy and industries.

On the other hand, there were negative images nurtured through media reports on Japanese atrocities against British POWs. As we went into 1995, the 50th anniversary year of the end of WWII, there was a steady dose of former POWs' horror stories of their experiences in captivity, starting right from the beginning of the year and continuing, I felt, almost daily.

As a background to all this, there were the following factors.

The Allied Powers achieved victory in May 1945 on the European front. The British troops returning home were welcomed as heroes. At that time, the British troops were still fighting on the Burma front, on a losing streak battle after battle. On August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered and the war came to an end. At long last, these British troops on the Burma front could come home. These soldiers were called "The Forgotten Army." They had been forgotten, and, when they came home, they were given a cool reception by the British people who seemed to scoff at them saying, "Why have you taken so long to come home?" The resentment and grudges at this treatment were pent up in the soldiers' mind for 50 years. With the 50th anniversary, the British public at last seemed inclined to listen to such resentment and grudges.

Under those circumstances, Prime Minister John Major of the Conservative government decided to deal with the 50th anniversaries of the end of war in Europe and in Asia as follows.

- May 18, VE Day (Victory in Europe Day), was made an international commemoration, to which the leaders of Germany and Italy, former enemies, were also invited.
- August 15, VJ Day (Victory over Japan Day), was made an internal commemoration primarily for Britain and the British Commonwealth, without inviting Japanese VIPs.

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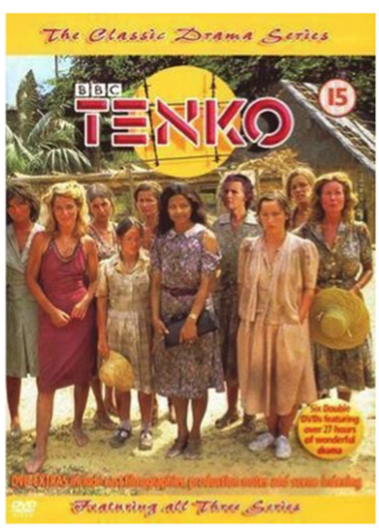
Professor Hugo Dobson of Sheffield University analyses the British media treatment of VE Day and VJ Day at the time in the book "Japan and Britain at War and Peace" (Sheffield Centre for Japanese Studies/Routledge Series), which he co-edited with Professor Nobuko Kosuge. He finds that the British reportage on VE Day consisted of four elements, namely, reflection, reconciliation, nostalgia and celebration. Such elements were noticeable by their absence in the reporting of VJ Day. It seemed that the past had been dragged to the present, and there were no distinctions being drawn between today and the past.

Japan's 50th Anniversary of the End of War and the Murayama Statement

In the meantime, there was a debate going on in Japan as to how to express to the outside world its attitude regarding the 50th anniversary of the end of war. In June, the House of Representatives adopted a resolution which stated "…recognizing that Japan carried out those acts in the past, inflicting pain and suffering upon the peoples of other countries, especially in Asia, the Members of this House express a sense of deep remorse." However, the British media reported this "deep remorse" as falling short of an apology. Noting that only 230 out of the 509 members of the lower house had supported the resolution, the British media also reported that opinions were still divided in Japan.



BBC TV Drama Series "Tenko"

As the dates of the atom bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August approached, there were two kinds of opinions and commentaries in the British press. One was in approval of the atom bombing, arguing that it was necessary to bring the war to an end. The other argued that it was overkill, given that Japan had been already on the verge of surrender. An example of the harsh atmosphere in these weeks was the BBC television drama series "Tenko." Tenko here means roll calls every morning. This drama about the vicious treatment suffered by English, Australian and Dutch women in Japanese prison camps, originally aired in the 1980's, was being aired again.

We at the Japanese Embassy in London were recommending to Tokyo that the Prime Minister should make a clear-cut statement at this important juncture of August 15. I am sure that similar recommendations were being made by other Japanese embassies in Asian countries.

All this led to the Murayama Statement on August 15. But, prior to that, around August 12, Prime Minister Murayama sent a letter to Prime Minister John Major congratulating him on his re-election as Leader of the Conservative Party in July, and, in

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that letter, he referred to the POW question and expressed his deep remorse and sincere apology. This was reported by the Japanese media, and when a Japanese reporter door-stepped Prime Minister Murayama, who was on his summer vacation, with the question "Have you sent a letter of apology to Prime Minister Major?" Prime Minister Murayama said something like "I don't think it was exactly a letter of apology." That was how it was reported in Britain, with big headlines, and I had to run around putting out the fire. I appeared on BBC and other radio and television channels three time in the course of the two days, the 13th and 14th of August, to explain that Prime Minister had clearly expressed his apology to Prime Minister Major.

Then came the Murayama statement on August 15th. The key words in this statement are "its (Japan's) colonial rule and aggression," "tremendous suffering to the people of many countries, particularly those of Asian Nations," and "express my (Prime Minister Murayama's) feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology."

Since the beginning of 1995, former POWs had appeared on British radio and television on a number of occasions to talk in some way or other about the harsh treatments they had suffered in prison camps. In the four years that I was in London, I did a total of 126 interviews on BBC and other British radio and television channels. However, on this particular issue of POWs, I consciously restrained myself from doing interviews. Had I accepted the interview requests, there would have been a high probability of my finding myself in one-on-one confrontation with the POWs. I refrained because I felt that that would be counter-productive. In anticipation of the clear statement to be made by Prime Minister Murayama on August 15, my strategy was to focus our efforts on that statement and to try to disseminate its message as quickly and widely as possible. The Prime Minister made his statement on the morning of August 15, Japan time, which was late into the night of August 14th London time.

I had arranged Ambassador Hiroaki Fujii to appear the next morning at 7 o'clock on the BBC Radio 4 current affairs programme "Today," which has many listeners including the bulk of British Members of Parliament. Ambassador Fujii made it clear that the Murayama Statement was an official apology by the Japanese government, based on a decision by the Cabinet. He further added that, in his press conference following his statement, Prime Minister Murayama himself stated that the statement was addressed, among others, to former British POWs. This apology to the British POWs had been contained in his letter to Prime Minister Major, which I mentioned earlier. Prime Minister Murayama reiterated it apparently to clear the little confusion that had arisen about the letter. On this day, August 15th, Ambassador Fujii spoke on the "Today" programme in the morning, then on the prime time BBC television news at one o'clock and on another BBC television programme at 10:30 in the evening. I, for my part, spoke on 3 or 4 programmes on other channels delivering the same message.

On that day, August 15th, the VJ Day ceremony was held in London. The Burma veterans marched past the Buckingham Palace as the Queen looked on. This was how Her Majesty's government responded to the pen-up resentment and grudges of the troops on the Burma front. From the next day on, the British media became very quiet. We at the Embassy discussed among ourselves how to interpret this sudden change of mood. We felt that it might have been a kind of catharsis. As I said earlier, when these people

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came home from the war, they felt let down by the British people, who called them "The Forgotten Army."

They finally had the opportunity to vent their pent-up resentment and grudges, and that cathartic process came to an end. As a result, I felt that it punctuated a significant chapter in dealing with the POW and other related issues at least as far as the British public sentiment was concerned.

Grass-roots Exchange

I have so far talked about legal settlement and apology. Then we entered the most difficult phase of reconciliation.

From around the summer of 1995, we at the embassy in London had in mind the fact that the visit of His Majesty the Emperor might be looming close. The Showa Emperor visited Britain in 1971. We had to start thinking about how to foster an environment appropriate for the current Emperor's visit and lay the groundwork.

We had to think about what could be done in a situation where an overture for reconciliation made by someone from the Japanese government would most certainly be rebuffed by those who had suffered as POWS.

The first avenue was the reconciliation that was taking place between the officers on the Japanese and British sides who had fought on the Burma front. The man who played an important role in this was Masao Hirakubo. He was engaged in the Imphal operation, and lived in postwar years in London as a representative of Marubeni, the trading company. He took the initiative to take two former British soldiers, his former enemies, to Japan in 1988.

That led to the founding of Burma Campaign Fellowship Group (BCFG) in Britain in 1990, chaired by Maj-Gen. Ian Lyall Grant. Incidentally, the current British Permanent Representative to the United Nations is his son. BCFG and its Japanese counterpart, All Burma Veterans Association of Japan (Zen Biruma Sakusen Sen-yu Dantai Renraku Kaigi) started making reciprocal visits. In February 1997, 36 of those former Japanese and British officers made a joint pilgrimage to Burma. What was it that had bought them together? It was the deep remorse and remembrance that they, as survivors, felt for their fallen comrades.

Another avenue was the voluntary activities centering on exchange programmes for youths and volunteers. Under the Japan-U.K. Peace Exchange Programme, which our embassy facilitated, a total of 784 Britons, including the family members of former POWs and civilian internees, visited Japan. 178 Japanese who were involved in these exchanges visited Britain, and four joint pilgrimages were made.

One such programme was Pacific Venture, led by Mrs. Mary Grace Browning who taught

Mrs, Mary Grace Browning

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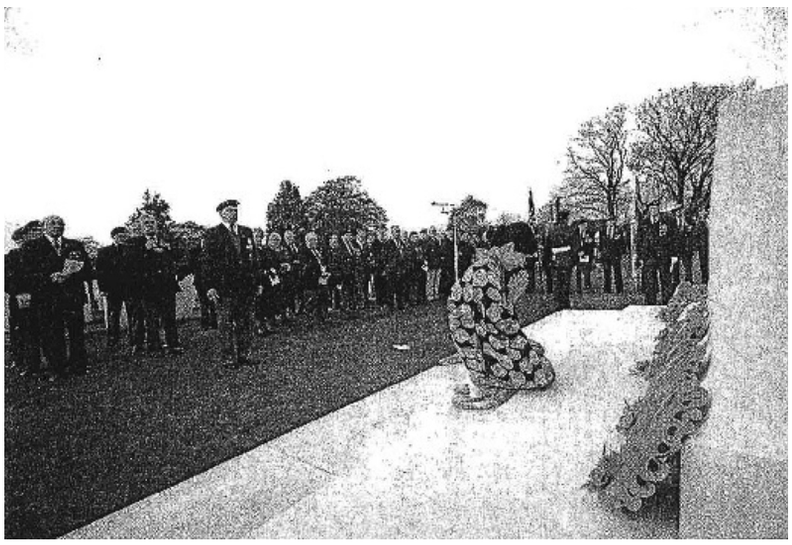

Professor Nobuko Kosuge laying a wreath at a Remembrance Commemoration (Cambridge Evening News)

Japanese to secondary school students in Suffolk, a region which was home to many POWs. At her own initiative, she started a project to take the grandchildren of former British POWs and civilian internees to Japan. We at the Embassy gave facilitative support to her project, and a cumulative total of 380 family members visited Japan.

The second such programme was the Agape project run by Mrs. Keiko Holmes. Keiko Holmes was born and grew up in the town of Kiwa (which was then called Iruka) in Mie Prefecture. During the war, there was in the town a camp for POWs who worked for the Kishu Copper Mine. The town and the mining company built a cemetery for the 16 British POWs who had died there, and the members of the local old people's club took care of the cleaning and upkeep of the cemetery throughout the postwar years. Keiko Holmes had married a Briton and was widowed at a relatively young age. Upon learning the town's connection with British POWs, she went by herself to a gathering of former British POWs in 1989 and told the story of her hometown. Thus began the project to take the former POWs to Japan, bringing the total number of such visitors to 450.

The third was the activities of Professor Nobuko Kosuge. She is a historian and was living in Cambridge at the time with her husband, who is a professor of English literature. She was associated with the Centre of International Studies at Cambridge. One day in November 1996, I suddenly came across an article in the Cambridge Evening News, carrying the photograph of a Japanese lady in Kimono kneeling and laying a wreath at a Remembrance Sunday commemoration in Cambridge. I immediately got in touch with the lady. That was Nobuko Kosuge.

Cambridge was home to many POWs held captive by Japan, and there were hard feelings against Japan. As Professor Kosuge learned this, she started organizing an activity of volunteers to build a link between the former POWs and the Japanese people called the "Poppy and Cherry Blossom Club." In August 1997, the Japanese Ambassador Hiroaki Fujii and Mrs. Fujii attended a social function of the Club. She was also instrumental in organising the Japan-U.K. Conference on Prisoners of War, which looked

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U.K.-U.S.-Japan Reconciliation Ceremony at Coventry Cathedral Ruins

Wreath-Laying by Ambassador Sadayuki Hayashi at Coventry Cathedral

into the POW issue from an academic point of view. The embassy provided facilitative assistance to the conference as well. All these episodes are chronicled in her book "Popii To Sakura (Poppy and Cherry Blossoms)" (Iwanami Shoten). In fact, you will find a number of references to me in the book.

Symbolic sites are called for to stage events for reconciliation. The prime site for this in Britain is Westminster Abbey. You may all know about the Abbey as the place for Princess Diana's funeral or for the enthronement of the Queen. According to Professor Kosuge, it can be called the grand head temple for British remembrances and mourning for the war-dead. In August 1997, Burma Campaign Fellowship Group held the Japan-U.K. joint remembrance ceremony in the Abbey, where Nobuko Kosuge dedicated a thousand origami cranes to the tomb of the unknown soldiers.

Another famous British symbol of reconciliation is Coventry Cathedral. The Cathedral was burned to ruins by Luftwaffe bombing in 1940. But, following the destruction, Richard Howard, then Provost of the Cathedral made a commitment in a BBC radio broadcast not to revenge, but to forgiveness and reconciliation with those responsible. This led to the development of the Cathedral as a World Centre for Reconciliation. The Statue of Reconciliation was erected in the Cathedral ruins on the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII in August 1995, and its replica was donated to the international conference hall of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park by Richard Branson, President of Virgin Atlantic Airways.

In autumn 1997, Provost John Petty of Coventry Cathedral contacted me with an invitation to attend a Britain-U.S.-Japan reconciliation ceremony at the Cathedral on the occasion of the visit by Edmond Browning, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America. I went and spoke in front of the Statue of Reconciliation.

This led to our new ambassador to Britain, Sadayuki Hayashi, going to Coventry Cathedral to lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday that year. He was the first Japa-

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nese ambassador to Britain to have done so. BBC Radio, The Times and other media extensively reported his wreath-laying and his shaking hands with three former British POWs. Japan-U.K. reconciliation ceremonies came to be held at the Cathedral in subsequent years.

My Departure from Britain

The end of my tenure in Britain was approaching, but I felt that I had one unfinished business. The circle of reconciliation was gradually widening, from the former Japanese and British officers on the Burma front, to the former POWs and their family members who had come into contact with Keiko Holmes and Mary Grace Browning. I really wanted this circle to expand further to the whole group of British veterans.

Thus, towards the end of 1997, I paid a visit to the Royal British Legion headquarters and told its Chairman, Graham Downing, how this circle of reconciliation was widening. Chairman Downing took a keen interest in this, and brought 12 members of the Legion to Japan in March 1998.

This was a prelude to the initiative that he took later to launch a campaign to press the British government to take compensatory measures for former POWs and civilian internees. As a result, the British government made an ex gratia payment of £10,000 each to those people.

On January 9, 1998, four or five days before my departure from London, I gave a farewell reception at the Embassy, inviting those with whom I had come into contact, including Arthur Titherington who led the lawsuit against the Japanese government and other POWs and volunteers. As I saw all these guests milling around and sharing their experiences about reconciliation here and there, I felt gratified that what I had tried to do for the past four years meant something.

Just at that time, Prime Minister Tony Blair was visiting Japan. As I was busily preparing for my departure from London in a few days' time, the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo phoned me. They told me that Alastair Campbell, Press Secretary to Prime Minister Blair and a veteran tabloid journalist, made the suggestion that Prime Minister Hashimoto should write to "The Sun," a leading British tabloid, and asked me what I thought of the idea.

I have been talking about the importance of media relations. The most difficult part of media relations in Britain is dealing with tabloids, which are prone to highly sensational reporting. At the time of the media onslaught against Japan in 1995, it was the tabloids that led the charge. We were at pains to figure out how to handle them.

My immediate response to Tokyo was to go along by all means with Alastair Campbell's suggestion. I felt that it would be the most effective way to appeal directly to the British people. As a result, The Sun carried on January 14 Prime Minister Hashimoto's message with the banner headline "Britain and Japan must go forward together ". Another caption said, in typical tabloid fashion, "JAPAN SAYS SORRY TO THE Sun."

Contained in Prime Minister Hashimoto's message were the reiteration of the feelings of "deep remorse and sincere apology" as in the Murayama Statement, the holding

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"The Sun," January 14, 1998

of Japan-U.K. joint pilgrimages in Southeast Asia, and the doubling of the number of former POWs and their grandchildren visiting Japan from 40-50 per year to 80-100 per year. The Sun accepted all this as a "heartfelt apology."

Upon my return to Tokyo, I became Foreign Ministry Spokesman, and was no longer directly involved in the issue. His Majesty the Emperor visited Britain in May 1998. As Their Majesties paraded through London, 25,000 people thronged the streets to welcome them. Among them, there were some 500 former POWs, civilian internees and their associates protesting, including a few who turned their back on Their Majesties. Some British newspapers at the time carried letters to the editor criticising such demonstration as unbecoming behaviour in welcoming guests. I felt that the British public's attitude had become much more balanced than in 1995.

In view of the strong media interest in the visit, we asked Ambassador Kazuo Chiba, former ambassador to the United Kingdom, to act as the official spokesman for His Majesty. Ambassador Chiba and the senior embassy officials gave scores of interviews per day. Their key messages were:

- Their Majesties were making this visit to reaffirm the unprecedented good relations between Japan and the United Kingdom.
- Japan and the U.K. share the position that the issue of compensation for former POWs was resolved under the San Francisco Peace Treaty.
- On the question of apology, the official position of the government has been expressed by the leader of the Japanese government (in the form of the Murayama Statement).

They further underlined the Japanese government's intention to continue to work seriously towards reconciliation.

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Conclusion

As we reflect on all this, can we say that the Japan-U.K. postwar reconciliation has been successful? I personally was involved with this in the period 1994-1998. The process has continued since then, and still continues. It has not come to an end. However, as far as I think back on the period in which I was involved, I would say that there was a certain measure of success.

Firstly, the 50th anniversary of VJ Day in 1995 was a crucially challenging period. I feel that we did manage to tide over it. What was important was that we kept in close contact with the British government. Affirming that we shared the same position on compensation and other legal issues, we worked in close tandem, especially on how to manage the public opinion. Specifically, our policy was to concentrate on the statement which we expected Prime Minister Murayama to make on August 15, 1995. The lesson that I draw from that experience is that, in dealing with such issues of reconciliation, it is important to communicate closely at the government-to-government level and minimise the chances for discrepancies in our positions, and to concentrate our energy and attention on priority areas.

Secondly, an important role was played by civil society actors and volunteers in taking the initiative for reconciliation. By encouraging and supporting such initiatives, we were able to widen the positive circle of reconciliation, and, by disseminating the story about this widening circle of reconciliation, we were able to neutralise the negative narratives. In doing so, staging events at such sites as Westminster Abbey and Coventry Cathedral had high symbolic value.

It is not enough for the leaders to say "Let's reconcile." Nor would it be enough for the citizens to say "Let's reconcile." Parallel efforts have to be made at all levels.

When I arrived in London in 1994, the British public's feeling about Japan was a mixture of positive and negative elements. As the circle of reconciliation widened, the negative impact of the POW issue on the perception about Japan gradually lessened.

For the four years that I served in Britain, my second tour there, I tried, as an embassy official, to think about this issue in the context of the Japan-U.K. relations which were basically good and sound. Instead of being myopically obsessed with this issue, I tried to see how the issue could be placed in a broader context, and to think about what could be done.

You may ask what hints we might draw from the Japan-Britain reconciliation experience to the problems we now have with China and Korea. I have no immediate answers to that, because I feel that we are faced with much more complex issues. Despite all that, I hope that what I have told you today may be of some use to you. (Applause)

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Q&A

Moderator: Thank you very much. Now the floor is open for questions.

Kataoka: I would like to ask you about the difference between the German and Japanese approaches to the issue. From the British viewpoint, Germany belongs to the same European milieu, whereas Japan is a part of Asia. Is there any element of racial discrimination arising from this, or are there differences due to their respective postwar circumstances? What do you feel about this?

Numata: It is difficult to say whether there have been elements of racial discrimination. Perhaps we cannot entirely rule it out. However, I do feel that there are differences in how Japan and Germany have managed their postwar relations with other countries. Firstly, in the case of Germany, there was, at its own initiative, a total break with its Nazi past. This, I think, is a very important factor. In the case of Japan, has there been a comparable complete break with the past? There were certain things in the Occupation period and also during the Cold War, which do not make me feel entirely sure about it. This can be a highly debatable and delicate point, which, had I still been the Foreign Ministry Spokesman, I might hesitate to mention.

Secondly, European countries have fought wars, and have won or lost them countless times over the centuries, or even longer. This may sound strange, but they have become used to winning wars and to losing them. I feel that, through that experience, they have somehow learned the modus vivendi about postwar settlements.

Thirdly, there are differences in postwar settlement. As I said earlier, Coventry Cathedral has been the symbol of Anglo-German reconciliation. This was because, at about the time that the Luftwaffe bombing destroyed the Cathedral, the British Royal

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Air Force bombed Dresden. The memories of these two bombings served as a pair to promote reconciliation. In addition, there have been intensive postwar contacts including non-governmental exchanges. All these factors cumulatively contributed to the process of reconciliation.

These are the things I think of in terms of the difference from Germany.

Sim Choon Kiat: I am very glad that I came here today. I have learned a lot. I have one comment and one question. I learned for the first time today that there has been this long process with Britain. It took more than 50 years to achieve all that with Britain, which is so far away from Japan. Now there are problems with China and Korea. When it comes to problems with these neighbours of Japan, my impression is that there remains a lot of work ahead.

You talked a bit about Singapore, my home country. Strangely enough, as I look back on it, I have not really felt a strong anti-Japanese feeling around me, and I recall Prime Minister Murayama laying a wreath at the War Memorial in Singapore. Is this because Japan's contribution to Singapore's economic development played a significant role?

Numata: I said that the word "contrition" was used in Singapore. Let me go into some detail on that. On the evening before Prime Minister Kaifu's speech, I invited the BBC and other foreign correspondents there to give an advance briefing of the speech. On that occasion, the Singapore correspondent of BBC told me that when he interviewed Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew about a week earlier, Prime Minister Lee said that Japan must express its contrition regarding its past actions. Quite coincidentally, that was precisely the English word that I had chosen for translation. Prime Minister Lee had often made sharply critical comments about Japan's past deeds, and we were conscious of that.

In the case of Singapore, there was the blood debt issue, and Japan paid reparation for that. Japan's economic cooperation did make substantial contribution to Singapore's economic development. That positive factor helped neutralise the negative issues, in the sense of making them less salient.

You commented that, given that it took so long to achieve all this with Britain, it would be even more difficult with our neighbours. I think that you are right at least in some sense. As I said earlier, in trying to resolve issues of this kind, it is important to minimise the chances for discrepancies at the government-to-government level and work together, we are having difficulties at that initial stage with China and Korea. Why there are such difficulties may be subject to considerable debate. In a way, with respect to China, the shift in relative power of our respective countries may have something to do with it. That said, we can not afford to give up. We will have to keep making further efforts.

You said that you did not know about this episode between Japan and Britain. In fact, I really have not had the opportunity to talk much exclusively on this issue. This is in fact only the second time. Last May, I gave a similar lecture to the Military History Society of Japan. I will be happy to talk on other occasions if it is of some use to those interested.

Moderator: Let me ask you a question. The House of Representatives resolution in June 1995 was supported by only 230 out of the 500-odd members, falling short of a majority. Later, the Murayama Statement was made, and you concentrated on disseminating the Statement

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to the media. There are those in Japan who, even today, try to negate the Murayama Statement. Did you not feel any pressure from those circles at the time?

Numata: I can speak from my own experience. Yes, there are those who talk about revising the Murayama Statement, or even the Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono on the comfort women. I do not agree with them at all. I feel, partly because of my own involvement, that we need to take a building-block approach in tacking these issues. We keep building block by block with a view to approaching a solution. It would be highly undesirable to tear down an edifice that is only half built.

On the House of Representatives resolution in June 1995, I felt at the time that it went only half-way to what was required. In retrospect, it was highly significant that we had a Prime Minister who was from the Japan Socialist Party. Both Ambassador Fujii and I said a number of times on British television that the Murayama Statement had been approved by the Cabinet, and was not a personal statement by Prime Minister Murayama. I do not recall hearing voices disputing that particular point in Japan. August 15 was a truly important juncture, and I think that it was recognised in Japan that what the Japanese government would express on that occasion would be highly important.

Moderator: Could it be, then, that things have changed a lot on the domestic political scene in Japan?

Numata: What is it that has changed? The Murayama Statement has continued to be upheld. The LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) governments consistently upheld it, and so did the DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan) government. It is not easy to see exactly what has changed. However, I venture to say that the emergence of a number of tough issues with China and Korea have affected the situation. The territorial issues have surfaced, and it appears as if the territorial and historical issues had become linked, though we in Japan are not making such a linkage. That has created reactions. I personally feel that we should be wary about succumbing to nationalistic impulses on these issues.

Moderator: I wonder what the power relationship may be like between the Foreign Ministry and the politicians. In other words, if there is a change of characters among the politicians, does everything change? I would have thought it is the Foreign Ministry that tries most to stay the course. How do you feel about it?

Numata: I retired 5 years ago, and did not have to be put through the wringer as roughly as might be the case these days. My former colleagues, who are still active, must be having a really tough time. I am not quite sure if I have answered your question. If you could use your imagination and read between the lines … (Laughter)

Yan Hainian: One simple question. Prime Minister Murayama expressed his apology to the media. That, as you all know, was very courageous. Before he made that decision, did he ask for His Majesty the Emperor's opinion or permission? That is something way beyond my imagination. Could you tell me about it?

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Numata: I do not think that there was anything like that. He may have reported to the Emperor after he made the statement, though.

This has to do with the question of what it means for the Emperor to be the symbol and not to be involved in politics. Let me try to answer it from a somewhat different angle. I accompanied the Emperor as his official spokesman throughout his visit to Canada for two weeks in July 2009, and spoke on his behalf to the Canadian media. Let me speak from that experience. Firstly, His Majesty gave a press conference in April 2009 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his wedding. In that press conference, he said, with reference to the stipulation under the Constitution of Japan about the Emperor being the symbol, "How that symbol should be is a question that is never far from my mind, and to this day, I am seeking an appropriate answer." The Constitution stipulates that the Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people and that he shall have no power related to government, but does not say anything further. The Emperor has always been thinking in his own mind just how he should translate this into his own actions.

I feel that the answer that the Emperor and Empress found was to dedicate themselves selflessly to the well-being of the nation and the people. That is why, when there is a major earthquake, for example, they immediately visit those who have fallen victim and talk to and console them, kneeling on the floor of the gymnasium where they are temporarily sheltered. That is what they consider to be their role. There is a complete separation between that and what happens in the political sphere. That is how it is in today's Japan.

Let me tell you what I said when I was travelling with Their Majesties in Canada. On the question of Japan's past actions including the war, there is a clear separation between the Emperor and the government. At the same time, there are four days in the year that are of particular importance to the Emperor. The first is June 23. Do you know what it is? That was the day when the Battle of Okinawa ended in 1945. Somewhere around a quarter to one-third of the people of Okinawa Prefecture perished in that battle. The second is August 6, the day of atom bombing in Hiroshima, followed by August 9, Nagasaki. And the fourth is August 15. On these four days, he meditates and mourns the dead, and renews his pledge for a peaceful world. I believe that this is an appropriate way for the Emperor to be engaged in these issues.

If I dare imagine, the Emperor might have found it very difficult if the government had consulted him, for example, prior to issuing the Murayama Statement.

Akiyama: I was born in 1941. I have benefited from postwar education, and have personally felt Japan's postwar prosperity under conditions of peace. I did not know that all these things had taken place between Japan and Britain. I appreciate the very interesting narrative that you have given. Today, some talk about taking another look at Japan's history in the Showa period (1925-1988). The point was made that the soul-searching or debate about the Pacific War remained incomplete for 50 years after the war. I do not mean to suggest that we should try to undo what has been done with the issues in our relationship with Britain. That is not my intention at all. But I feel that if we were to leave the debate incomplete and unsettled, it would not be good for the younger Japa-

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nese who will shoulder our future. It may be that we should take another serious look at our history in the Showa period. There is a big difference between the victor and the vanquished, and that may be a point worth taking another look. What do you think?

Numata: It may certainly be worth taking another look, in the kind of sense that you suggested. At the same time, at the risk of indiscretion, let me say this. If we were to start on the assumption that there should be a total reassessment of postwar politics or that the whole slate should be wiped clean, I wonder if we might not tilt in a certain direction.

Well-known commentators on contemporary history like Kazuki Kasuya and Kazutoshi Hando have written extensively on postwar history. As I read them, I feel that there are important questions that should be addressed. For example, so many students were called for military service and perished on the battlefields. What did they die for? Did they die for the Emperor? Or did they sacrifice their lives for the building of a New Japan? There should be a soul-searching starting with such questions, and it would indeed be inappropriate for these questions to remain unanswered far into the future.

I am also a bit concerned that if those voices were to prevail that call for starting from total negation of what we have so far built up, that could make our relations with our neighbours very difficult.

Moderator: There are also those people who have been trying, despite considerable difficulties, to produce joint history textbooks for Japan, China and Korea.

Numata: Yes, for example, Professor Shinichi Kitaoka, whom I happen to know well. It is quite a challenge, but is certainly necessary.

Chen Jing-Young: I am a student from Taiwan. The issue of Senkaku has something to do with Taiwan, but my feeling is that it is not such a big point. My first question is about the many wars that Britain had fought and won or lost over centuries. Did Britain repeatedly make demands to various countries for compensations for its POWs in all these years? Another question is why did the claims for compensations from Japan arise in the 1990s? Why at such a timing?

Numata: I do not really know how compensations for POWs were made over the centuries. You have to go back many years. As to the latter part of your question, why these claims surfaced in the 1990s, I think that there were domestic circumstances in Britain in the background.

For one thing, as I said earlier, there was the resentment and grudge about the fact that when these soldiers came home at last from the war, they were "The Forgotten Army" and were given a cold shoulder by their compatriots who seemed to scoff at them saying "Why have you taken so long to come home?" This was in sharp contrast to the warm reception given to the troops who came home from the European front. Once home, the really had to struggle in the postwar society. They took what odd jobs they could find, and did their best to provide for their families. The former POWs that I was meeting in London must have been about 20 years old when the war ended. As

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they reached their 70s, they had retired from work, and as they looked back on their past, they felt this long-standing resentment acutely and came to feel strongly that their grievance had to be redressed.

There is another point, which is a bit delicate. Many of those who were detained as POWs and later made strident demands were ordinary soldiers. It may not be quite appropriate to say this, but this was also a reflection of the class society in Britain. A part of the officers' ethos of may have been to accept that all is fair in war. Those in the ranks only remembered misery, and nothing positive at all. The combination of all these complex factors came up to the surface in the 1990s.

Oh Jung Keun: It is not a question, but I would like to make a little comment. I read in a Korean newspaper that, on the very day the closing of the London Olympics, Some 20 British veterans and their families took part in a reconciliation ceremony on the war between Japan and Britain arising in India.

I do not know the details, but I feel that it important that Britain and Japan have been engaged in these efforts for reconciliation. As Dr. Sim suggested, there are a number of difficulties in Japan's relations with China and Korea. Each has its own unique perspective on history, and it is not easy to resolve the problems arising from these differences. We should try as much as we can to arrive at common perceptions of history, and teach that history to the next generations. It is important to work towards reconciliation, as Britain and Japan have done, based on a correct perception of history.

Numata: This is something people often talk about. I am only two years younger than Mr. Akiyama. We did not learn much history about this period at school. It is a problem if people grow up without knowing about this history. That is my first point.

My second point is our relationship with the United States. I have spent quite a bit of time dealing with the United States, and I sometimes wonder why this issue of reconciliation, which was such a difficult aspect of our relationship with Britain, was less of a challenge with the United States. Why is it so? Firstly, Britain had a greater number of POWs. Secondly, there have been far more intensive ties between Japan and the United states in a wide range of fields. The positive images arising from such ties served to make the negative issues less salient. In the case of Britain, as the economic ties became much closer, positive images emerged. At the same time, the problems that had long festered came up to the surface.

Do you know the book "Unbroken"? This is about an American Olympian long-distance runner who joined the U.S. Air Force, was shot down by the Japanese, was moved around one prisoners' camp after another, and landed in the camp on what is today Heiwa Jima in Tokyo. He had such a hard time there that he harboured a strong resentment against Japan in postwar years. But, one day, he came across Billy Graham, the evangelist, and became a believer. Then, through religion, he gradually learned to forgive and reconcile with the former enemy. It is a book about this thick. Thus, it is not that there was no problem with the United States. I chose to talk about Britain today, because, as I said at the beginning, I was in London for four years, and I spent half my energy on this issue during those four years.

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Moderator: Thank you very much indeed. Professor Nobuko Kosuge, who was mentioned earlier, once spoke at SGRA. She tells me that she has come to know a number of people from the Japanese Embassy in London and the Foreign Ministry, and has found Mr. Numata to be the most understanding and empathetic toward NPO and civil society activities. Professor Kosuge wishes to conduct interviews on these issues. I do hope that such activities will be put into record. (Applause)

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