

Keynote of ZENKO conference in Osaka, 2018

To hold ZENKO conference this year is of great significance in creating peace in the East Asia as well as in the wider world. The cataclysmic change that has been taking place in the Korean Peninsula poses a historic turning point toward achieving peace and denuclearization in the East Asia. Finally they are putting an end to the only Cold War structure that still remains today in order to establish a robust peace by terminating the Korean War and turning the armistice into a peace treaty during this year. Contrary to this trend, Abe cabinet of Japan adheres to hostile policies toward DPRK and China. It is forcefully constructing a new base in Henoko, deploying SDF to the Southwest Islands, doubling its military budget that amounts to 10 trillion yen, and revising Article 9th of the constitution. All of these policies are isolated in the international trend of détente, and have lost the rationale. Prospects for defeating the peace-destroyer Abe are here in this conference where we strengthen our international solidarity to create peace.

1. A Turning point in peace and denuclearization of the East Asia

In the Korean Peninsula, the inter-Korean summit meeting was held on April 27th and Panmunjom Declaration was announced. On June 12th, the first-ever summit meeting between the US and the DPRK was realized and Joint Statement was announced, in which both parties agreed on their commitment to 1) establishing new US-DPRK relations, 2) building a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, 3) working towards complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and 4) recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

Since the summits, concrete progress for peace has been steadily continuing. In addition to the cancellation of the US-Korea joint military exercises in August, it was announced that US-Korea joint marine exercises will be indefinitely suspended. As for the repatriation of POW/MIA remains, remains of 55 US soldiers are planned to be repatriated on July 27th, which is the 65th anniversary of the day when the armistice of Korean War was signed.

2. Abe government takes people's life for the sake of global capitalism

In the Regular Diet Session, which closed on July 22, it has become clear that Abe is managing the state for his own personal benefit and values 'money over life'. In Moritomo Scandal, Abe stated that if he or his wife should have anything to do with it, he would resign his post both as Prime Minister and as Member of Parliament. This remark triggered arbitrary alteration of official documents in the Ministry of Finance. In Kake-Gakuen scandal, a veterinary department was newly opened 'by an intention of Prime Minister.' Both cases of cronyism shake the basis of democracy, and show how Abe prioritize his personal benefit over the public interest. It can't be acceptable to put an end to the scandals. These cases grow out of Abe's neo-liberalist lines that pursue nothing but the interest of global capitalists, destroy people's livelihood, and even take their life.

In 'Workstyle Reform' related bills, the data regarding working hours produced by the

government turned out to have been intentionally manipulated. The government was forced to retract the expansion of discretionary labor system from the bills. However, they forcefully enacted a law to introduce Highly Professional System, in which the upper-limit of extra-working hours is 100 hours per month, and 80 hours on average of plural months. This renders legal the level of overwork that may lead to death. We have to demand rigid regulations in the deliberation by the Labor Policy Advisory Council, and mount pressure to repeal the law.

Abe government is also criticized for the way it responded to disasters caused by the record rainfall in West Japan. Death toll has exceeded 200 and over 7000 are forced to live in shelters, and searching for the missing is still continuing in affected areas. When the Meteorological Agency held an extraordinary press conference at 2 PM on July 5th and issued an evacuation recommendation to a hundred or so thousand residents, Abe and his colleagues were carried away in a drinking party at 'Akasaka LDP Tavern.' It was as late as 8 AM on July 8th that they set up Emergency Disaster Countermeasure Headquarters. In Korea, people accused Park Geun-hye of '7 Missing Hours' when Sewol sinking accident happened. In Abe's case, it was 88 Missing Hours, and Abe's belated response was clear.

In the wake of the disaster, tremendous damages were unfolding day by day. Abe should have focused on the relief and restoration work in the affected areas. Instead, what they were up to was the railroading of a bill through the Parliament to introduce casinos to Japan and another bill to gerrymander the House of Councilors' seats. In addition, they forcefully passed TPP related bills and water privatization bill. Innumerable issues have erupted during the Regular Diet Session, Covering up of daily reports during Iraq War, sexual harassment by a top-ranking bureaucrat in the Ministry of Finance, and abusive language by the Finance Minister are among other issues.

3. Stop militarism and constitutional change.

'Resign, Abe!' was a chanting echoed by thousands of protesters who gathered every day in front of the Diet Building in Tokyo. In other parts of Japan, also, there were demonstrations and rallies demanding that Abe be ousted! Opinion polls have shown five successive months of more disapproval than approval of Abe cabinet. Distrust of Abe is deep-rooted. However, Abe's strategy is, without squarely answering questions, to deliberately make people sick and tired, give up, and become indifferent to politics. We learn from Okinawan struggles that we won't give up till we win, and let us continue to fight stubbornly as well as flexibly!

About preventing the constitutional revision, 13 million 5 hundred thousand signatures of people refusing the revision and making the most of the constitution have so far been collected nationwide. ZENKO members also have taken to streets day after day to collect signatures. We have turned in 3752 signatures. Abe is now trying to be elected as president of the LDP for the third time, and watching a chance in the Extraordinary Diet Session in autumn to initiate amendments to the constitution by the Diet through two-thirds or more concurring vote in both Houses. Let us achieve the campaign's goal to collect 30 million signatures to prevent constitutional revision.

The situation is critical in Henoko, where a new base construction is threatened to begin. While

the government is watching a chance to start dumping earth and sand for reclamation on August 17th, Governor Onaga thoroughly resists by repealing the prefectural approval for reclamation. The number of signatures demanding Prefectural Referendum has reached 80 thousand, which is three times as many as is legally required, i.e. 23 thousand. A prefectural all-out rally will be held on August 11th. It will be the best chance to show people's will to refuse a new military base. Deployment of SDF is under way in Miyako and Ishigaki of the Southwest Islands. Islanders there, saying that no troops are necessary in peaceful islands, are protesting against the SDF deployment, for the islands will be a military target in emergency.

Establishment of peace in the East Asia depends on people's and workers' movements of ours in solidarity with people in Okinawa and Korea. People in Seongju, Korea, are struggling, just like people in Okinawa, against THAAD deployment. They say that they don't need any seeds of the Cold War.

It is seven years since the disaster of TEPCO Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant. Evacuees from Fukushima, in class actions, have won, insufficient as they are, decisions to partially hold the government accountable. On the other hand, there have been more than 200 children who are diagnosed as having childhood thyroid cancer (including suspected cases). Nevertheless, Abe government has lifted the evacuation instruction and terminated subsidies for evacuees' housing cost. Abe is also tenacious in his effort to re-start the operation of nuclear reactors, and to export nuclear plants to India and the UK. We reinforce our struggle to decommission all the reactors in Japan!

4. Strengthen International Solidarity to Oust Abe!

It is imperative to defeat Abe government, which values money over life. Life is slighted, and its consequence is Article 9th revision and militarism. Global capitalism enlarges the gap between rich 1% and poor 99%, and destroys people's livelihood. This is the time to demand cutting of military budget and allocate it to child rearing, education, nursing care, and social security in general.

We have gathered here, each bringing our own struggles to oust Abe and to stop the constitutional revision, Korean and Okinawan struggles, Filipino struggles against militarization, and Iraqi struggles against war by global capitalists. In firm solidarity among us, people of the world, let us create, not the militarist and economic iron ring, but international people's iron ring for peace! If we get united, it is possible to defeat Abe! Détente in the East Asia will open up a prospect toward worldwide peace! Let us create peace in the East Asia here in ZENKO conference in Osaka, 2018!