

REPORT

December 24, 2002

The Advisory Group to Consider a Memorial Facility for
Remembering the Dead and Praying for Peace

I. Introduction

This advisory group received a request from the Chief Cabinet Secretary on December 14, 2001, to hold wide-ranging discussions to consider a national facility, such as a memorial, where people can remember the war dead and others and pray for peace without reserve, including the need for such a national facility, its type, name, location, and other matters. The group has been discussing these matters for about a year to date, and this report shows the results of those discussions.

The matters discussed by this advisory group are all important issues that will of course need to be discussed on a national level, and in the end it is the responsibility of the government to decide them.

The group reached the conclusion that today, as we have entered the twenty-first century, a national, nonreligious, and permanent facility where the nation as a whole can remember the dead and pray for peace is necessary. Regarding the type of facility, name, location, and other matters, however, we believe that it is premature to compile and present our opinions, since such matters should be discussed in detail when a decision has actually been made to construct such a facility. Therefore, we went no further than indicating an outline of the facility to serve as a reference for discussions in the future should the construction of such a facility be decided.

II. The Need for a Facility to Remember the Dead and Pray for Peace

1. Why do we believe that Japan now needs a national facility to remember the dead and pray for peace?

About half a century has passed since the realization of Japan's peace and independence following the end of the war, and about 10 years have passed since the end of the Cold War. As globalization progresses, we are seeing moves toward the formation of a new international community. Also, as new challenges to world peace are emerging, as shown by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the interest of the nation in peace is now increasing. Furthermore, neighboring countries and others will be closely watching Japan's role from now on in the international community.

In this way, the domestic and international environments surrounding Japan are in the midst of a period of change. We believe, therefore, that the beginning of the twenty-first century at which we now stand presents an excellent opportunity for Japan to think even more than before about war and peace and to show the rest of the world that Japan will take positive action in pursuit of peace.

Domestically, especially now, when it is forecast that generations with no experience of the war and postwar chaos will account for the majority of the nation, it is undoubtedly a good time to make these younger generations think about war and peace and again to promote their awareness as leaders of the

“peace state” of Japan.

Today, when it is difficult for a state to go it alone in the international community, it is therefore necessary for Japan, on the natural premise of coexistence with other countries, to indicate both domestically and internationally a message of remembrance and hope as a state.

2. Why do we believe that the state needs to construct a facility in order to send out this kind of message?

Naturally, the state has various functions and exerts various effects on the nation, depending on time and case. Among them, the postwar Japanese state has clearly guaranteed fundamental human rights relating to such matters as the people's life and property, much more than the prewar Japanese state; and it was reborn as a “peace state” under the Constitution of Japan. Accordingly, it became a truism that the pursuit of peace was in Japan's national interest.

Nevertheless, postwar Japan so far has not necessarily transmitted an adequate message domestically or internationally regarding the approach of prewar Japan toward war and peace or postwar activities for international peace.

Today, therefore, when Japan is engaging in various activities for international peace and is taking positive steps toward international peace building, Japan in the twenty-first century should transmit its pledge for peace as a state both domestically and internationally.

Naturally, deep thoughts about past wars solemnly exist as a philosophical framework supporting peace-building activities for the future.

Needless to say, an extremely large number of people died in external conflicts (wars and incidents; hereafter referred to as wars) involving Japan after the Meiji Restoration. In particular, many precious lives were lost in the fierce battles of the war, and people who escaped with their lives were left with deep scars and aftereffects for the rest of their lives. Even now, there are many people who suffer enormous hardship and distress because of the war.

After the war, on the basis of the Constitution of Japan, Japan expressed its determination that the horrors of war shall never again be repeated through the action of government and its aspiration for the permanent peace of Japan and the world. Since then, however, some people, albeit a few, have died in activities to protect Japan's peace and independence and maintain its security and in activities for international peace involving Japan.

We certainly must not forget these facts. We must always remember that many precious lives lie behind Japan's peace, and for the realization of the peace of Japan and the world, we must pass on these facts to future generations.

Having suffered a disastrous experience in the war, what Japan must actively do now in pursuit of peace, on the basis of learning from the lessons of history, is first of all to remember all those who died, to think deeply about the horrors of war, and to pray for peace after pledging its renunciation of war anew.

We believe that remembering the dead and praying for peace are indivisible, and thus think that it would be meaningful for the state to officially construct a symbolic facility for this purpose.

3. At the same time, it is important for Japan as a state not to stipulate any single interpretation of history and the past. This is only natural for a democratic state. Indeed, the state has a duty to guarantee the possibility of various interpretations by the people. Accordingly, by visiting a symbolic facility provided by the state for remembering the dead and praying for peace, the people will have an opportunity to renew their personal thoughts about war and peace, which are carried in the minds of each and every individual.

In sum, individuals in the nation will be able to mourn the dead, think about the horrors of war, and renew their feelings about the building of peace in their own way at this facility.

4. Thus, we believe that it would be possible, as a quite natural national sentiment, for people to visit such a facility, remember the dead, and pray for peace without reserve.

III. Fundamental Character of the Facility for Remembering the Dead and Praying for Peace

1. This facility will be a national, nonreligious facility for remembering those who lost their lives in wars involving Japan after the Meiji Restoration, when Japan established a modern state, and those who have died since the war in activities to protect the peace and independence of Japan and maintain its security and in activities involving Japan for the building of international peace; for thinking about the horrors of war and renewing the pledge to renounce war; and for praying for the peace of Japan and the world.

2. Above we explain the reason for believing that the wishes of the Japanese people for the realization of the peace of Japan and the world should now be made clear, both domestically and internationally, in the name of the state. However, just praying for peace would amount to nothing more than a simple hope.

The prayer for peace naturally must include the intention to make efforts for the realization of peace in the future. For this purpose, Japan must clearly demonstrate its determination as a state to make the utmost efforts to eliminate those factors that can become the causes of military action through a balanced security policy and various international peace-building activities.

Naturally, for Japanese, such a prayer for peace should start from thoughts about the horrors of wars that have involved Japan in the past. Even people who did not directly experience wars can imagine the cruelty and horror if they think deeply about them. The most important thing, however, is to

consider the extremely large number of people who lost their precious lives because of war. The seriousness of the meaning of death is not limited only to the dead. We cannot understand the real meaning unless we also think of the families that lost beloved members or were plunged into poverty because of the loss of the breadwinner. In the midst of peace today, we may not understand the real meaning of peace unless we look these facts in the face and think about the sorrow of death—in other words, remember the dead. It is only by taking this approach that the pledge to renounce war and prayers for peace will have depth to them.

3. The subjects to remember are not limited to soldiers who died in war for the country. Many civilians also lost their lives because of air raids and other hardships caused by war. Among them, there are many people who are not the subjects of memorial services in existing memorial facilities.

Furthermore, when we think about the horrors of war, there is no reason to distinguish between Japanese and the foreign soldiers and civilians who lost their lives as a result of wars started by Japan in the past for whatever reason. In the postwar period, Japan under its Constitution has pledged to renounce war, so it is theoretically impossible for Japan to go to war. For this postwar Japan, therefore, needless to say, any persons who die committing acts that violate Japan's peace and independence or infringe the principle of international peace will not be remembered at this facility.

4. Remembering the dead at this facility itself will be extremely solemn, but it is inseparable from the prayer for peace. Remembering the dead alone will not be an independent objective. The facility will have the character of a place for mourning and thinking about the dead, unlike religious facilities, which are for the enshrinement, comfort, and repose of the souls. Accordingly, the subjects of the facility will be the dead in general, as mentioned above, and there will be no question of whether this includes the remembering of any specific individuals. We imagine the facility as a place where people can think about the horrors of war, renew the pledge to renounce war, and pray for peace by mourning dead relatives and friends, for instance.

5. Since this facility should be established by the state, it must eliminate any religious character so as not to violate Article 20 (3) and Article 89 of the Constitution of Japan, which stipulate the principle of the separation of religion and state. This character is also demanded from the perspective of enabling all people to remember the dead and pray for peace without reserve at this facility.

However, the elimination of the religious character of this facility needless to say does not mean that the state denies the religious feelings of individuals who visit the facility. There must be a guarantee that individuals visiting this facility can remember the dead and pray for peace freely and in whatever manner they wish.

IV. Relationship Between the Facility for Remembering the Dead and Praying for Peace and Existing Facilities

Our country has two important facilities for remembering the war dead: Yasukuni Shrine and Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery. For the following reasons, we believe that the new national facility could be made consistent with these existing facilities and would be able to fulfill a necessary and independent purpose without in any way undermining the significance of the existing facilities.

1. According to the preamble of the Yasukuni Shrine charter, the shrine was founded “to enshrine the people who lost their lives due to affairs of state, perpetually perform rites for this purpose, comfort their souls, and honor their names in eternity.” By contrast, the new national facility will have as its subjects the dead in general, as stated above, and will be a place to pray for the peace of Japan and the world on the basis of remembrance of the dead and reflection on the horrors of war, not a place to comfort the souls and honor the names of specific individuals. Thus, the new and existing facilities will differ entirely in purpose and intent.

Furthermore, Yasukuni Shrine is a religious facility of a religious institution, whereas the new facility will be a national, nonreligious facility. This

difference in character ensures a distinction between the social significance of the two facilities.

2. Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery was established by the state to entomb the remains of war dead that cannot be turned over to their families. Therefore, as with Yasukuni Shrine, it differs entirely in purpose and intent from the new facility proposed in this report.

V. The Type of Facility and Other Considerations If a Facility for Remembering the Dead and Praying for Peace Is to Be Constructed

1. It would be desirable for the facility to be not a large building but a pleasant, park-like space in which people can stroll freely, having a plaza where gatherings and ceremonies of considerable scale can be held, and featuring in one section a facility of some sort that is suitable for remembering the dead and praying for peace.

2. It would be desirable, if possible, for the facility to be in or near the center of Tokyo.

3. It would be desirable for the facility to be located in a place that has not been associated with war or religion.

4. We suggest publicly soliciting names for the facility, making clear the facility's purpose.

5. It is desirable for the government to decide whether or not it will hold government-sponsored ceremonies at this facility and, if such events are to be held, when they will take place and what their nature will be.

Reference

Takao Sakamoto, who was a member of the advisory group, passed away on October 29, 2002, in the midst of discussions by the group, and was not present to take part in compiling the opinions of the members. However, we would like to note that the other members participated in the discussions with a full awareness of Dr. Sakamoto's views.

Below are the views that Dr. Sakamoto expressed in discussions by the advisory group.

First of all, Dr. Sakamoto consistently voiced opinions against the need for a new national facility. The draft philosophy written by Dr. Sakamoto, in which he clarifies his position, is as follows.

Philosophy (draft)

It is the universal virtue and will of the citizens of every country to pay tribute to and honor those who died in the face of a national crisis. That is why each government sponsors commemorative events in the appropriate facilities in keeping with the traditional and historical style of that country, representing the national virtue and will. In Japan, although Yasukuni Shrine is defined by the

Religious Corporation Law as a private religious institution, most Japanese think of it as a public facility for the very purpose of such commemoration, and that is its actual character. The Japanese government should fulfill its public obligation of mourning the dead through prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine and in other forms. (Therefore, from the Chief Cabinet Secretary's standpoint of a domestically oriented facility, I believe there is no need to construct a new facility.)

Below are summarized the main points of the comments that Dr. Sakamoto made with regard to the nature of the new facility in the context of internationalization and on the relationship between paying respects and praying for peace.

Third meeting, February 26, 2002

It is a fact that the nationalism that was the norm in the nineteenth century is today viewed in a different light, and clearly, as exemplified in the integration of the European Union, nationalism alone will not get us through in today's international society. If there were a general worldwide movement, including among developed countries, in the light of this age of internationalization to reexamine the very form in which existing facilities and cenotaphs pay homage to the war dead, we would have to believe that the wave of internationalization has come this far, but I do not think this is the case. This can be said particularly of Japan's neighbors: There are no moves in South Korea or in China to memorialize the war dead from an international perspective that transcends nationalism.

I well understand the shift from the age of nationalism to the age of internationalism as a general concept, but the precise manner of paying respects to the war dead tends to be specific to each nation. It is in this context that we must ask whether a new global trend is actually emerging with regard to the formats or facilities for paying respects to the war dead. What would the grounds be if Japan alone were to create a new means of mourning the war dead? This would indeed be a question of principles. Therefore, I do not think that general ideas regarding internationalization and the question of the nature

of facilities for paying respects to the dead are necessarily directly relevant to one another.

Fourth meeting, April 11, 2002

There are various paths by which to bring about peace, and some countries have been able to maintain peace because the high level of interest toward national defense among their people as a whole has kept other countries from attacking them. Peace cannot always be achieved just by passively praying for peace and pitying the victims of war. It is not wrong for peace and mourning to be placed side by side, but in the present context the message would appear to be, "These are poor people who lost their lives to war, and we should pray for peace in order not to create more victims like them." It is very likely that the construction of a new national facility will be interpreted in this way, and in that respect I do not agree very much with the idea.