

2013 Citizens' Peace Declaration

August 6, 2013

"If the state harms and kills its people, it will destroy the nation itself. A true civilization will not damage mountains and rivers, will not destroy communities and will not kill people." These are the words of Tanaka Shozo, a grass-roots environmental protection activist and philosopher, who tenaciously fought against copper pollution at Ashio Mine in Tochigi prefecture more than a century ago.

Almost two and a half years have passed since the catastrophic nuclear accident at the Fukushima No.1 Nuclear Power Plant triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Although large sums of money have been spent on decontamination work in the vicinity, radiation levels in the area have never declined. On the contrary, a large quantity of highly radioactive water is still leaking from the power plant, and TEPCO is incapable of controlling it. More than 150,000 people from Fukushima are still unable to return home and so far 1,500 people have died as a result of the stress caused by dislocation. There is evidence that the rate of thyroid cancer among children is rising, and the fear of radioactive contamination is deeply undermining both the physical and psychological health of men and women of all ages. There is no doubt that radiation is damaging mountains and rivers, destroying communities and killing all types of living creatures. Knowing that if a major accident happened, such irreversible, fatal damage would occur, makes the construction of a nuclear power plant a crime against humanity as well as against all living creatures. In this sense there is no difference between the use of nuclear energy and that of nuclear weapons.

Yet, Prime Minister Abe continues to promote a strongly pro-nuclear advocacy. Not only is he endeavoring to restart all Japan's nuclear reactors as soon as possible, but he also aims to export Japanese nuclear reactors to overseas countries, as if no nuclear accident had ever occurred in Japan. Inevitably, by reinforcing these nuclear policies more people will be affected by radiation. Clearly, this is undesirable and potentially criminal conduct.

The problems associated with the current government's policies do not stop here however. Abe's domestic policies, which he refers to under the heading of "Remaking Japan Robust," are no better. He is simply promoting an old fashioned policy of stimulating the economy by funding large construction projects and other policies including TPP that favor big industries. In this way, he completely ignores environmental issues. Simultaneously, the population is suffering from inflation, tax increases, as well as a sharp decrease in public health funds and other social welfare funds. Currently, 40% of the Japanese labor force, or over 20 million workers, are part-time or casual workers, whose labor rights are not fully protected. Meanwhile, 4.8 trillion yen of tax payers' money is being spent on the defense budget this year, a 40 billion yen increase from last year. This budget includes an increase of the number of Aegis ships, on the pretext of "missile defense." In short, the so-called Abenomics, is nothing but a series of policies that contribute to social destruction, which may ultimately bring about our demise. As citizens of Japan, we need to recognize that we are now standing at a critical crossroad that may lead to the destruction of our lives.

There are many other issues at stake, too. The current government's policy regarding the so-called "Senkaku Island" issue is totally dysfunctional, as it ignores the historical background, makes one-sided claims and fails to engage in dialogue with the Chinese government. Similarly, the government's handling of the "comfort women" issue has been equally incompetent. Abe has repeated an ignorant claim that there is no evidence to prove the enforcement of sexual slavery. Unashamedly, he publicly denounced the 1993 statement by Kono Yohei, then Chief Cabinet Secretary, acknowledging the Japanese government's direct responsibility for this matter. The issue of Japan's "war of aggression" between 1931 and '45 is also problematic. Abe has stated that there is currently no clear definition of "war of aggression," implying that Japan did not invade China and other Asian nations. In contrast to his statement, however, Japan's "war of aggression" was clearly acknowledged as a crime against peace at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, and since then the legal concept of "war of aggression" has been well developed and defined by many international law specialists. Such assertions, which clearly indicate an ignorance of historical facts are causing friction, not only with China and Korea, but also with the U.S. and other Western nations. It is of great concern that this lack of information is causing Japan to lose international credibility as a nation.

In addition, the Japanese government, always subservient to U.S. military power, continues to eagerly agree to U.S. demands. It has accepted the requests to relocate the U.S. base from Futenma to Henoko and to deploy the accident-prone aircraft, Osprey, in Okinawa and Iwakuni. More alarmingly, Abe is determined to change Japan's peace constitution in order to make the emperor the head of state, to build up military forces, and to deny basic civil rights. Indeed, he appears to be setting the nation on a path headed towards self-destruction, by changing it to a megalomaniac and anachronistic state.

It would seem that the policies Abe is now promoting are exactly what Tanaka Shozo warned of more than one hundred years ago, *"If the state harms and kills its people, it will destroy the nation itself."* In order to confront such destructive government policies, it is necessary for us to put Tanaka's philosophy into practice in everyday life. We must conduct our lives so as not to damage mountains and rivers, not to destroy communities, and not to kill living creatures. In order to demonstrate our strong will to counteract Japan's nuclear policy, let us plan to hold the World Radiation Victims Conference here in Hiroshima in 2015, the year of the 70th anniversary of the Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.