

基調講演

Facing the Truth of History: Germany and Japan After the War

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The post-war period in Germany was characterized by a variety of widely supported efforts at "coping with the past" or "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*", as it was usually called. By 1985, there was a general feeling in Europe that this period was over forty years after the war and that Germany had finally found its place among the democratic nations. Accordingly, Germany's role during the war was no longer given that much attention in 1995, when the end of the war was remembered after fifty years.

In contrast to this, Japan is still criticized for its lack of efforts to cope with the past, and Germany is often seen as a "model" for what Japan ought to do. In a recent book, Ian Buruma (*The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux 1994) has attempted to compare attitudes towards the war in both countries, although only selected aspects of the problem are addressed. He sees far less consciousness of guilt in Japan than in Germany. Comparisons like this can easily give the impression that Germany's coping with the past has been, on the whole, thorough and convincing. A number of facts make this doubtful, however. For instance, not a single judge who supported the terrorism of the Nazis has been sentenced after the war. The following, therefore, does not seek to present Germany as a model for Japan. It is an attempt to describe some of the things that have been done in Germany and that could be useful as a reference for Japan's own - definitely necessary - efforts to cope with the past.

There are a number of similarities in both countries with regard to the war. Japan and Germany were allies, both led a war of aggression, committed horrible war crimes, and were misled by a nationalistic ideology. Still a number of differ-

ences should not be overlooked. The word holocaust stands for the most important of these. Moreover, Germany's geographic situation is different. In the center of Europe, having direct borders with nine neighbouring countries, Germany had to make serious attempts to establish good relations with all its neighbours. Prolonged conflicts with other nations, culminating in World War I, led to a critical reflection on the war and to various movements aimed at reconciliation and peace.

It is these movements, as well as the spirit of Christianity, that form the background of President Weizsäcker's famous speech in 1985, in which he clearly confesses Germany's guilt during the war and emphasizes the responsibility for the past. He points out the need not to forget, the need to face the truth of history, for only then can there be a new beginning, reconciliation, hope, and even salvation.

In line with this, efforts were made in Germany after the war to construct a "public memory" of history. The media, especially the newspapers and the semi-public broadcasting stations, played an important role in this. Considerable efforts were also made within the educational system. Unlike the *Mombushô* in Japan, in Germany the ministries of education of the states (*Länder*), took an active part in the development of textbooks and curricula that reflected the need for a "public memory". The semi-official Textbook Institute at Braunschweig took the lead in these efforts and mixed textbook commissions (like the Polish-German textbook commission) worked out texts for history books to be used in school that represented a common understanding of recent history in particular.

The introduction of Political Science at German universities after the war can also be seen as part of the effort to educate a new generation of teachers that would be able to "face the truth of history". In the early fifties, the Munich Research Institute for Contemporary History was established and its research centered mainly on the Nazi period. Keeping alive the memory of this period and learning from the past is also a major purpose of the Centers for Political Education that are attached to the parliaments of the Federal Republic and the states. Their generous funding allows

them a wide range of activities.

All this has been possible because of a consensus of the political elite in Germany that a clear and unequivocal condemnation of the Nazi past was a presupposition for Germany's re-admission to the international community. This was made easier in the West by the need to form an alliance of the Western nations against the threat of communism. Reconciliation with its Eastern neighbours, however, was all the more difficult for Germany. A remarkable breakthrough was finally achieved by the *Ostpolitik* (policy towards Eastern Europe) that was promoted particularly by Willy Brandt. His act of kneeling down on his first official visit to the former Warsaw ghetto has since become a symbol for a sincere attempt to cope with the past while being fully conscious of the horrors of past history.

The widespread conviction that the horrors of the past must never occur again was also the driving force behind large scale youth exchange programs between Germany and other countries. They were motivated by the hope that the young generation would make a new beginning based on mutual understanding and friendship. The most extensive youth exchange program was carried out (and still continues) with France, marking the end of a long history of wars and often bitter hostility between the two neighbouring nations.

Facing the truth of history, remembering the horrors of the past and learning from them are tasks that remain as important now as they were fifty years ago. These tasks need to be repeated by each generation. Growing hostility against foreigners and other ethnic groups, the spread of Neo-Nazism, open denial by some of even the holocaust all remind us of the fact that the memory of the horrors of the past must be kept alive, in Germany and elsewhere, in order to prevent their recurrence.

(シンポジウムは、日本語及び英語で行われました。)