

# Fighting for Peace After War: Japanese War Veterans recall the war and their peace activism after repatriation

Kaneko Kotaro, Tokuro Inokuma, Kosuke Takahashi

**Fighting for Peace After War: Japanese War Veterans recall the war and their peace activism after repatriation**

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Takahashi Tetsuro

Born 1921. 59<sup>th</sup> Division Headquarters Staff Office, Imperial Japanese Army. Former secretary general of the *Chugoku Kikansha Renrakukai* (Conference of Persons Returned from China).

Kaneko Kotaro

Born 1927. 61<sup>st</sup> Class of the Imperial Japanese Army Academy. Secretary general of Veterans for Japan-China Friendship.

Inokuma Tokuro

Born 1928. Former Army Special Leader Candidate. Representative director of the Pacifist Soldiers and Civilians.

Summary

*Three aging veterans of Japan's Imperial Army discuss their postwar commitment to peace activism in Japan and their current efforts to find young people willing to carry on their work as they confront their gradual decline and inevitable deaths. One veteran was incarcerated in a Chinese "re-education" camp for his war crimes against Chinese civilians, much like the veterans featured in the documentary film, Japanese Devils. Although neither of the other two veterans committed war crimes, each put himself through a soul-searching reevaluation of his loyalty to the Emperor and conviction that he had fought for a righteous cause. The three veterans share a deep commitment to speaking about the actual horrors of war and to preserving the testimony of other veterans who are slowly dying.*

*—Many veterans helped to establish the peace movement after World War II as an act of contrition for their participation in a wrongful war. Please tell us about your activities, which hold a unique place among post-war peace movements in Japan.*

**Takahashi**

I'm Takahashi Tetsuro. I was the secretary general of the *Chugoku Kikansha Renrakukai*

(*Chukiren*) until it was dissolved in 2002.



**Takahashi introduces Chukiren's War Memorial Museum in Saitama to Chinese embassy staff**

I was born in Miyazaki in February, 1921. I majored in Chinese at the Osaka University of Foreign Studies, graduating in '41 and went to work at a trading company. I was sent to an office in China, and lived in Jinan in Shandong province until I was drafted there. I was assigned to the 59<sup>th</sup> Division that was stationed in Shandong. Defeat was already in the air, and we were barely defending our supply lines by that time. I joined the Infantry Rifle Unit of the 109<sup>th</sup> Battalion, was in boot camp for 6 months and was transferred to the Staff Office of the Division Headquarters at the end of '44. Since I knew Chinese, I joined the press unit and worked on pacification operations.

Right before we lost the war, the 59<sup>th</sup> Division was put under the control of the Kwantung Army of "Manchuria" to prepare for battle with the Soviet Union, and we moved to what is now North Korea. Looking back, it was as if we moved just to be captured and imprisoned in Siberia. After 5 years in Siberia, in 1950, I was transferred to New China as a war criminal and interned at the war criminals camp in Fushun, famous for its mines in Liaoning province in the

northeast. I spent 6 more years there, and 11 years after losing the war—in July 1956—I returned to Japan after charges against me were dropped in a military trial.

So, I returned from the Soviet Union via revolutionary China to a Japan that was entering its period of rapid economic growth. I returned with the painful awareness that I had participated in a war of aggression, becoming a perpetrator in my youth. However, at the time, Japan was suspicious that we were thoroughly indoctrinated by 11 years of training in communist countries. Adding to such social prejudice, we were under police surveillance, and many of us encountered great difficulty even to marry. Thankfully, in my case, my employer from before the war was waiting for my return, so I didn't have to worry about finding a job.

We founded *Chukiren* in 1957, the year after we returned. We worked for 45 years until we dissolved it in 2002. Reflecting upon the suffering we inflicted on the Chinese people as participants in that war of aggression, we dedicated the remainder of our lives to the cause of pacifism and friendship between Japan and China, however small our influence. Former members of *Chukiren*, including myself are now cooperating with *Fushun no Kiseki wo Uketsugu Kai* (The Committee to Pass On the Miracle of Fushun), the successor organization founded by a younger generation.

## Kaneko

My name is Kaneko Kotaro. I was born in 1927—turned 80 last year. I entered the Army Academy—a school for training career military men—in November 1944, after finishing 5 years in the old-system middle school. For 10 months, until August 15, 1945, I experienced what it was like to live in a military academy—what it was like to receive training to be a career

military man. I was 17 at the time and had both an affinity and doubt toward the Army, as I had an insider's view of its strengths and weaknesses. I was discharged in September after we lost the war, and took the old-system high school transfer exam to enter the Tokyo Metropolitan University, and entered the Department of Japanese History. There, I cleansed myself of the imperialistic view of history that had a nebulous hold on me. I joined the workforce, and worked until retirement without contributing to a political movement, though I was consciously critical of our society.

In 1980, fatefully, I started attending the activities of the Veterans for Japan-China Friendship and now work exclusively for the movement. 28 years have passed since I became a member.

## From Enlistee to Pacifist Soldier

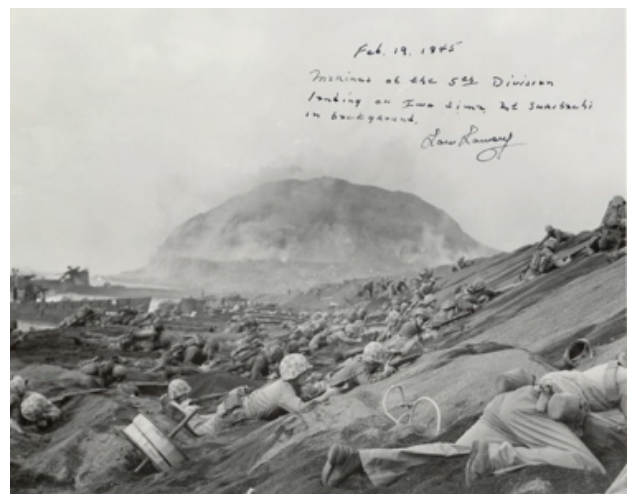
### Inokuma

My name is Inokuma. I was born in September of 1928. I'm 79. I am the youngest of the veterans. I serve as the representative director of the Pacifist Soldiers. I also serve on the board of *Senjo Taiken Hoei Hozon no Kai* (War-Experience Preservation Society), which records and preserves the stories of former soldier. When I was in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of middle school, I became a part of the inaugural class of the army's Special Leader Candidates. It was called *Tokkan* and was a system of accelerated officer training for cadets with technical skills. I joined *Tokkan* despite vigorous opposition by my father, as did many of my classmates who, like me, snuck out their parent's family stamp, in order to apply.

Initially, I asked to work on ships, but later

switched to aircraft—and that saved my life. There were 1,900 members of the inaugural class, 1,700 of whom went on to form the Naval Volunteer Corps called the *Tokkotai*—1,200 of whom died. Many actually died in ground battles. "You are survivors of the *Tokkotai*, so lead the front." Under these orders, they fought on the front line or starved on Luzon in the Philippines.

I experienced my first battle when I was 16. On February 19, 1945, the U.S. forces had landed on Iwo Jima, and several thousand U.S. aircraft attacked the Kanto area as part of that operation. My unit in Hitachi was hit heavily as well, and I lost 11 of my brothers in arms. I felt strongly that "War is a murderer. Nothing but a ruthless murderer."



## The Battle of Iwo Jima

I was transferred in April and moved to Hsinking—what is now Changchun in China's northeast. Thirty-five of us were transferred from Japan, and once again, I was lucky to join the anti-aircraft radio unit. About half of us were assigned to the information radio unit, investigating Soviet movements along the border, and most never returned.

After we lost the war, I was a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union, but was able to return to Japan in December of 1947. I was born in Hama-cho in Nihonbashi and raised in Tomihisa-cho in Shinjuku, but both houses were burned to the ground. My father, to whom I owed so much as a son, had died. My brother, who was two years older than me, died at the age of 18, hit by a torpedo from an American submarine on his way to Okinawa on a suicide mission with his *kaiten* manned-torpedo unit.

Since I had no skills or experience as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader who had shipped out to war, I wanted to go to school when I returned to Japan. So, I went back to the school I had left, and the principal who sent me out with fervent cheers of “Banzai!” looked at me in dismay and said, “I’ll give you a graduation diploma, but please go somewhere else.” Then he added, “Don’t tell them you’re returning from Siberia.” I asked him what happened to the others who went to the naval academy, and his reply was, “we don’t know where any of them are”—this from the principal who sent us all out, cheering “Banzai! Banzai!”

With few skills, I worked as a plumber. I did anything I could do just to survive. No matter where I went, I was called “Pinko Commie” because I had returned from Siberia. If I complained about unreasonable job conditions, I was fired for being a “Pinko.” I now receive a special pension, but I had to change jobs 13 times and was fired 8 times. Facing such injustice, I have increasingly felt this world must change.

As I grew older, I began to think, “What can I do that only I can do?” The answer, I realized, is to tell the story of what I experienced in war. Thus, I became a member of the Pacifist Soldiers and Civilians 12 years ago.

## Telling the Story of the Perpetrator

—*The founding date for Chukiren is 1957, 1961 for Veterans and 1988 for Pacifist Soldiers. Please describe the background of the founding of each group as well as its activities.*

### Takahashi

*Chukiren* is a group of former war criminals who, having invaded China, returned to Japan after being interned in the war criminals camps of Fushun and Taiyuan in New China. Our activities are rooted in our reflection on being participants in a war of aggression. We are made up of 969 members who were interned at the Fushun war criminals camp and 140 Taiyuan members who fought with the Chinese Nationalist Army against the Eighth Route Army in the Chinese Civil War, lost, were taken captive, and became war criminals. The charges against the majority of us were dropped in 1956, and we returned home. Even those who were sentenced to prison for heavier crimes eventually all returned by '64. Some died of sickness, so, in the end, those who returned to Japan totaled 1,062. Our main activities are testifying to the facts of our aggression and conveying the reality of the battlefield in a war of aggression through various publications, telling the Japanese people that we must never repeat the same mistake. These activities continue, even after the dissolution of our organization, by our members who are still physically capable.

The movement for friendship between Japan and China, which is another pillar of our activities, included, in the 50's and 60's, the movement to return the remains of the Chinese victims of compulsory transfer and forced labor and the movement for Japan-China normalization. Our first director was Fujita Shigeru, who was the division commander of the Imperial Army's 59<sup>th</sup> Division. He was



sentenced, but was released early because of his repentant attitude, and returned in 1958, when he became the director.

At the time, there were no diplomatic relations with China. There was strong resistance to New China, so it was a time of great struggle. To complicate matters, the Cultural Revolution began in 1966. The staff at the camps who treated us humanely now were blamed for their kind treatment of us Japanese, and were severely persecuted. This chaos spread to Japan, and the Chinese Communist Party and the Japanese Communist Party clashed mightily. As a result, many Japan-China friendship groups were torn apart. *Chukiren* was no exception, and as the Japan-China Friendship Association split, so did *Chukiren*. The group that felt strongly about preserving the relationship with China called itself “orthodox”—I belonged to this group. Looking back now, the chaos of the Japan-China friendship movement at the time was great. It even turned violent at times.

Eventually, the errors of the Cultural Revolution were officially recognized in China, and our countries’ diplomatic relations were normalized. But, the scars left after the movement were not easily healed. It was not until 20 years after it split that *Chukiren* became unified again in 1986—and this is a rare example of reunification. I think the reason we were able to reunify was because the foundation of the group was our experience of living 6 years in the Fushun war criminals camp. Even though we were split, we shared a regret for the past and a desire to establish friendship with China.

After reunification, we were able to accomplish things that we were unable to do before. I believe we did what we could—considering our old age—testifying around the country, supporting lawsuits brought by Chinese war

victims, publishing our periodical, *Chukiren*, fighting against the revisionist historians who call *Chukiren* “A source of masochistic historical perspective.” We also have publishing activities and exchanges with China.

Unfortunately, as we entered the year 2000, our average age surpassed 80, and many of those who worked tirelessly began to pass away.



**Chukiren celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in September 2000**

Our regional organizations were deteriorating. We debated time and again how to create a successor organization that could continue the Japan-China friendship while we were still able to think clearly. As we were stuck trying to find a good solution, some young people emerged who wanted to spread the work of *Chukiren* through the internet. The *Uketsugu Kai* was formed with these young people at its core. Branches have been successfully created across the country, with another branch opening in the Tohoku region this year. I believe they are not merely carrying on the work of *Chukiren*, but they also understand our journey that started with the generous policy of the Chinese government. We have the deepest gratitude for these young people.

## Peace Movement by Former Career Soldiers

### Kaneko

Veterans for Japan-China Friendship was created in 1961, the year after the *Anpo* (Japan-U.S. Security Treaty) protests. Actually, Fujita Shigeru of *Chukiren* was an advisor to our group. There was an Army general named Endo Saburo who was three classes behind Mr. Fujita in the Army Academy. Mr. Endo was invited to China and visited in 1956, bringing along with him former Japanese generals and field officers. He met with Mr. Fujita then, too, who was interned as a war criminal at the Fushun war criminals camp. Mr. Endo was struck by the Chinese policy at the time and founded Veterans for Japan-China Friendship, believing that, as former military men, they must encourage friendship between Japan and China.

Endo Saburo was an elite soldier who graduated at the top of his class in Army Cadet School, Army Military Academy and Army University. One of the reasons such a brilliant mind remained a three-star general, and never became a four-star, is because he was an extraordinarily rational thinker. I think he must have been a nuisance in the military at a time when irrationality dominated.

Mr. Endo gave up his weapons and became a farmer after the war, and when the *Kenpo Yogo Kokumin Rengo* (Society of the Citizens' Union for the Protection of the Peace Constitution) was formed, he joined the movement because of his belief that we must never again take up arms. I believe the Chinese side recognized such actions by Mr. Endo. They invited him, and he brought a group of former high-ranking officers to visit China. However, many of them were still stuck in a war mentality and would even use words like "Chink" while they were in

China. Realizing things must change, Mr. Endo gathered former career military men in 1961 and created the Veterans for Japan-China Friendship.

Initially, 30 people became members. Almost all were career military men. It was an organization of former soldiers—all officers that were not drafted. Even when I joined, for example, the bylines of the journal articles would say, "Endo Saburo, 26<sup>th</sup> Class of the Army Academy." When I thought they'd stopped listing names like that, I noticed they would put a parenthetical at the end such as "(26<sup>th</sup> Class, Army Academy)." I joined in 1980 and began editing the publications in '85 or '86, so I suggested we do away with the practice, arguing that Navy or Army is irrelevant in this day and age, and we finally stopped.

Mr. Endo's leadership was the main reason why our group did not splinter during the Cultural Revolution. Mr. Endo visited China in '66 when the Cultural Revolution began, and witnessed the insanity on the ground. He would say, "Don't get caught up in all this. Just wait and see. This will definitely pass," and he quietly waited.

Mr. Endo passed away in 1984, and then the Tiananmen Square incident happened. The People's Liberation Army pointed its guns at the people. The debate raged on whether they were worthy of the name, "People's Liberation Army." Some insisted, in the spirit of Mr. Endo, that we should "wait and see," but some still left the group.

The biggest challenge for our group—what could be called a "directional challenge"—was that of acknowledging history. Japan-China relations had already been normalized, and a friendship had been established as well. Voices

began to emerge in the group saying, “Maybe we shouldn’t dig up the past and apologize.” In other words, to shelve the issue of acknowledging history and “look ahead to the future.” But, I really think this is a mistake. The victims may say, “It’s OK, let’s move on,” but that is not for the perpetrators to say. So, these were some of the controversies we had.

We now have about 120 members and about 40 of them are veterans. Of those veterans, even the youngest of those who were at the Army Cadet School is 78 years old.

We will have our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011. We hope to pass the torch to our successors at that general convention, and we veterans will stay on as special members to continue telling our stories. At that time, we will change our name to “Japan-China Friendship Society of August 15th.” August 15, 1945 is the most significant moment in Japanese history. It is the day that we began to reflect on losing a war of aggression and the creation of our peace constitution. We want to take this to heart and pass it on to our children and our grandchildren. On that day, we would also like Mr. Takahashi and the members of *Uketsugu Kai* to come and talk about the importance of passing down these stories.

## Developing Successors

### Inokuma

We started as Pacifist Soldiers, but now civilians who have not experienced war can become members, so we’ve since changed our name to Pacifist Soldiers and Civilians. We were founded in January 1988. Veterans who were writing letters to *Asahi Shimbun* got together to start the group. Mr. Shiro Oishi was at the center. Mr. Oishi was in the mountains of the Philippines when we lost the war, and he

still has shrapnel in his body. He is a Christian who attended seminary after the war and became a minister. There were 8 members at first, but at our peak we had about 300 members. Now there are about 140, half of whom are veterans. But they are quickly passing away.

The main purpose for founding Pacifist Veterans is to tell of the horrors of war. As the very few surviving witnesses who together experienced a living hell, our role is to tell the following generations how that war began, how inhumane war is, and how countless citizens became victims of a surrender delayed by the personal egos of the state leadership—to be living witnesses of history.

We also established our philosophy. First is to resolve international disputes peacefully through discussion. Second is to seek world peace in the spirit of Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan. Third is to oppose all policies and ideologies that oppose a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Since we were founded in 1988, our statement is flawed in the sense that it does not touch on the issue of responsibility for the war, but since it is a historical document, we have chosen not to modify it. Instead, we work on that issue through guidelines for our movements.

Initially, our membership kept growing. We invited experts to speak at our monthly meetings and learned about the issue of war responsibility and why the war began. Now, it has evolved into a “pacifist university” that meets four times a year. In the Tokai branch, we have a pacifist assembly three times a year in Nagoya. Additionally, we issue statements from time to time with respect to social issues. Recently, we petitioned against the Iraq Special Measures Law. When our members were young and energetic, we did a lot with the four

veterans' organizations. When the war in Iraq started, we demonstrated in Shibuya, Tokyo.

However, even our organization cannot avoid aging. The biggest challenge we face is how to grow civilian membership and continue our movement without lowering the banner of pacifism. As for soldiers who experienced fighting, I—a former boy draftee—am the only one left. There is a soldier one year younger than me, but he never fought on the battlefield. Every day, I think about how to develop successors who will continue to talk about the true face of war.

## Stories to Pass Down

### Kaneko

Veterans' groups are also dissolving all over Japan. In the short term, we must consider how to engage those veterans. They have no place to tell their stories from the war. They can't talk with their family members who don't know war. For a veteran who only had his veteran group, there are probably no places for him to talk about his experiences in the war.

### Inokuma

Many former enlisted men especially want to talk about their war experience. But there is no place for that. When the *Senjo Taiken Hoei Hozon no Kai* reaches out to them, a great number of veterans assemble. Overall, there are too few opportunities for telling our stories. The challenge is how to increase such opportunities. We are sorry for participating in a war of aggression and clearly stand for pacifism, but how do we talk about that in a way that reaches people?

### Takahashi

When you say there are fewer opportunities, do you mean that the number of requests for speaking have diminished, as opposed to the number of story-tellers diminishing?

### Inokuma

Yes. There is a loss of interest. There are many who still want to tell their stories, but there are fewer and fewer places to tell them.

### Takahashi

In terms of having a passion for preserving accounts of that war and knowing a certain amount of history, younger people might actually be easier to reach with our stories. *Chukiren* has the image of a group of witnesses, but some members have never told their war stories after returning to Japan. It's truly difficult to talk about the brutal reality of war. It's not like reminiscing. We murdered people. Brutality was particularly rampant on the China front where we fought. When we tell that to the youth of today, what kind of reaction will they have? It's not just *Chukiren*. There are many who hesitate in the face of social prejudices and pressures, never able to talk about the reality of war.

Some young members of *Uketsugu Kai* sent out heart-felt letters saying they wanted to interview the *Chukiren* members who had never told their stories. After being visited by these youths, one such member has now started to actively tell his story. At the time, he was concerned that the Peace Constitution might be amended because someone glorifying the war became prime minister. These young people approached him when he was wondering what he could do, and that is why he was able to climb past the wall that had confined him in the past.

Still, telling young people that you were a



perpetrator is very difficult. But, if we don't talk about it, we cannot speak of the reality of war—of the horror of war which turns ordinary people into perpetrators of crime.

### Kaneko

Here's a recent example. I talked about killing a Chinese person with my bayonet—I had not previously talked about it, but I felt it was important. But, they said, "stop the camera" just for that section. Still, ordinary soldiers are beginning to tell their stories. I think more are feeling how limited the time left in their lives is and want to tell their stories rather than carry them to their graves.

### Inokuma

Some young people from the *Senjo Taiken Hoei Hozon no Kai* are going around recording war stories on a video camera. By war stories, I mean the battlefield experiences of soldiers who were sent out to war as weapons of murder by order of the state. War stories are about to disappear. The powers-that-be are waiting for that to happen. Now, above all, we must preserve these war stories. If many war stories are compiled, I think we will have that much more material for objectively learning about war. Telling one's war story is also a catalyst for an individual to reflect on war himself.

## Exchanges with China

### Kaneko

Other than telling our stories, our group, Veterans, also publishes a monthly magazine, *August 15*. We also give lectures and have continued to invite Chinese students over the years. When we were all still working, we had money, so we would invite one to three students a year, and they would stay at

members' homes. They would attend Waseda University to study, and we would pay their tuition. When we were working, we were able to raise funds through donations, but that has become difficult, as we have grown older.

Now, we invite a young member of the China Association for International Friendly Contact who is studying Japanese for a stay of about three weeks. If we had the financial resources, we would do more...

### Takahashi

Veterans has invited a lot of talented people from China to study here. Some of them have become top diplomats at the Chinese Embassy in Japan. How many students have you invited so far?

### Kaneko

About 40. We also send a delegation every year to visit China. About 10 members visit each time for roughly two weeks. The longest stay was about a month. They travel from Beijing to Inner Mongolia to Dunhuang. The Chinese have very warmly welcomed us.

### Takahashi

That indicates how much the Chinese recognize the accomplishments of the Veterans group. Veterans really cherishes the friendship and exchange between Japan and China. We, too, have continued various efforts to better understand the feelings of the Chinese, who are the victims. Now, former staff of the re-education camp and many other Chinese welcome us as "old friends." I am very grateful for that.

### Kaneko

Based on our founding declaration, I believe we must learn not only about China, but also about the various countries on the Malay Peninsula as well as the Philippines—all of which were invaded by Japan.

## To Recognize History

*—Veterans groups gather every year on July 7 to commemorate the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. In Japan, August 15<sup>th</sup> is the major date for commemorating the war, along with August 6 and August 9. On the other hand, July 7 and September 18 (the Liutiaogou or Manchurian Incident) are hardly remembered.*

### Inokuma

Everyone knows about August 15. But many have no idea how the Second Sino-Japanese war began. Our wars all began with the war with China.

### Takahashi

Since Japan started the Liutiaogou Incident, created “Manchuria” and carried out a 15 year-long war of aggression in China, September 18, 1931 is a very important date to the Chinese. July 7, 1937 is also an important date as it was the date when all-out war started between Japan and China. We should also recognize these dates which are anniversaries of our starting that war, along with August 15, when the war ended.

*—How did you come to acknowledge this history?*

### Inokuma

It took me a good 10 years to develop a clear understanding that the war in which I had participated was a war of aggression. It’s a

very difficult thing to admit I was in a war of aggression. Unlike the students deployed to war, I enlisted—of my own will—to join the war believing it was a just war. A man wants his youth to be a beautiful one. To admit you were complicit in a war of aggression is to reject your own youth.

A person doesn’t just wake up one day and start thinking that way. For me, one catalyst was, as I mentioned before, being sent away by my former school when I returned to Japan. I started wondering, “What was that war they so fervently sent me out on?” I did not do any so-called bad thing at the front. I never killed anybody, and I never visited the “comfort stations.” Yet, why was being a boy enlistee such negative baggage for finding a job upon my return? Then, I started wondering why the government hadn’t investigated into the death of my brother who died in the *Tokkotai*—that was another catalyst.

It’s true, I hadn’t done anything wrong. However, I did participate in a war of aggression as a member of the Japanese military. That military invaded another country and inflicted suffering on the people there—it took me 10 years to admit that I was a part of that very military.

### Kaneko

Since I studied at the Army Academy, I had very strong militaristic ideas. When I came home in the beginning of September, 1945 black markets were everywhere and I saw homeless children. I had no idea what I should do. I figured I should go to school. Since my father in Tokyo was a public official, he was barely eking out a living himself because of the purge of former government staff by the occupying forces. He said “I’ll help you go to school, but I can’t help you with private schools—they’re too expensive.” Hence, I went

to what is now called an old-system high school. There, a classmate told me about the *Communist Manifesto*. I was 18 at the time. It wouldn't have been possible to even see such a book during the war. I knew if I got caught, people would call me "pinko," but I started studying Marx and Lenin from that time on. When I returned from the war, the existence of the Emperor was not even in my consciousness—I could only think of what was right in front of me. My criticism of the Imperial monarchy began about a year after I started school.

### Takahashi

I had assimilated into the framework of a wartime society, however reluctantly—because of the fundamental ideology centered on the Emperor. However, in our six years of re-education at Fushun we began thinking for ourselves, and became able to recognize the war from an ideologically objective point of view.

Unlike us, you were never forcibly put in prison. You struggled on your own in a free society, transcending the pain of rejecting your past and aspiring to peace and pacifism.

### Inokuma

Whenever you bump up against something, you have to think for yourself, or you won't get anywhere. Take my brother who died in the *Tokkotai*—there is a school of thought that Japan's defeat was delayed because of the *Tokkotai*. That is a very painful thought for a family member. But, there again, one must start thinking.

### Kaneko

I went to college after taking the transfer exam in November of 1945. At the time we were

pejoratively called *solten*. *Sol* from the German *soldat* for soldier, and *ten* from the Japanese *tenko* for converted. Since there were only three or four veterans in a class of 30, we got together to figure out what to do. I said we should study hard and beat them academically or start a student movement to get back at them. It took about a year for them to stop using that slur against us.

### Inokuma

As I read books, I could understand the war of aggression in my mind, but I couldn't accept the thought that I was complicit in it. Then, I read books by Watanabe Kiyoshi such as *The End of Battleship Musashi*. A boy soldier himself, he became the foremost critic of the Imperial monarchy in Japan. That was the biggest and most decisive influence for me.

### Takahashi

So, you, too, had a specific catalyst. For me, reading the writings of Mao Zedong in the camps, learning how to look at society and history, and becoming free from the bondage of the Imperial cult was a big starting point. But, I continued to read a lot of books even after I returned to Japan.

The camp experience greatly varied from person to person. I think there are a variety of reasons for rejecting one's past. There is something different between a person who has committed serious crimes in war and someone, like myself, who has no such experience. Whatever the case, the war criminals camp treated us war criminals as human beings and educated us to become decent human beings again. I think this was due to Zhou Enlai's wisdom and foresight, as well as a political example towards the international community. Whatever the reasons, the fact is that we were able to face the feelings of the victims through

our humane treatment in camp, and we were able to recover a human heart which had been lost in that war. We have worked towards peace and friendship for the last half-century, cherishing that heart—this too, is a fact.

### Reason Immovable by the Times

*Sixty years have passed since the end of the war. In the struggle between war and peace all over the world, Japan has somehow managed to stay away from war. However, such a position is becoming increasingly tenuous with developments such as the deployment of the Self Defense Force to Iraq. In closing, please give us your thoughts on the issue of peace and war.*

### Inokuma

These days, I am beginning to feel that circumstances similar to those preceding that war are being created without people being aware of it. Things that would not have been permissible are brazenly being pushed forward in the Diet. At the root of this is the problem of the disappearance of war stories—losing the memory of war. Our constitution today was founded on the horror of war. Article 9 of our constitution is the product of the grief, hatred and suffering of countless citizens in that war. I would like people to think of such suffering and grief as they support the movement to protect Article 9.

In the 15 year war, over 420,000 boy soldiers were sent out to fight. I pray that young people today will have a youth not of war, but of peace, rich and full.

### Kaneko

Veterans has worked toward disarmament since our founding—to never take up weapons

again. Protecting Article 9 is vital. Citizens must create movements to unseat incumbents in the Diet who would change Article 9. The force to protect Article 9 must become stronger as well. Although Veterans mostly conducts study groups, I would like to create a movement, widely recruiting citizens as *Uketsugu Kai* is doing.

### Takahashi

Article 9 is the most pressing concern, but I think the problem is the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, placed above Article 9. I think we must widely discuss the issue of the subjugation of Article 9 to the Security Treaty.

I would like to encourage young people to study. In particular, to have a solid historical understanding of modern and contemporary history—at the heart of which is that war. Please have a clear awareness of the reality of war. Study widely, without preconceptions, learn the facts, and become a human being that will not be easily swayed. Develop the ability to scientifically analyze social conditions. Even amidst Emperor-centered nationalism and militarism, there once were a handful of such people of reason. I hope the youth of the future will have such reason. In this confused society, acquire the ability to discern facts and debate each other so you may develop your own person.

### Note on the Translator

*Linda Hoaglund recently produced a documentary film about Kamikaze pilots who survived the war, [Wings of Defeat](#).*

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