

A Deliberate Deception by the Japan Times

The April 28-May 4, 1997 issue of the *Japan Times Weekly* International Edition published a full page article that I had written, titled "Japan's Postwar Ambiguity: The War, Denials and the Future.

Preceding issues of the weekly newspaper, published in English, had included articles by a retired Japanese diplomat, Hisahiko Okazaki, offering standard denials of the "comfort women" issue, Korean women who had been held captive as sexual slaves for the use of Japanese troops during World War 2.¹ However, as my article noted, "... between 1986 and 1994, no fewer than four Japanese Cabinet ministers were forced to resign because they made statements that denied one kind or another of Japan's wartime activities."

I deliberately used solely Japanese sources to rebut these denials: the 56 volumes of oral testimony gathered in the late 1970s by the Soka Gakkai youth division, "Senso O Shiranai Sedai E" [To the Generations Who Do Not Know War"], and a more recent compilation of Japanese oral histories, "Japan at War: An Oral History," edited by Haruko Taga Cook and Theodore F. Cook, published in 1992. A major concern of Okazaki's denials was the issue of how to educate Japanese school children to be proud of their country. It therefore also addressed this question: How can a national educational system do that without falsifying and "rewriting" the history of the behavior of Japanese military forces in the Asian countries that they fought in and occupied during WW2. Germany succeeded in that task; why should it be a problem for Japan? The key variable is of course denial versus acknowledgement. With a conservative government now in office in Japan, these same issues are ironically once again under dispute in 2013-2014.

It had not been a simple matter to convince the editors of the *Japanese Times Weekly* to print my article. They demurred at first. It required testimonials from several Japanese colleagues – Yoshitake Sasaki, then a star reporter who covered defense and security issues for the *Asahi Shimbun*, and a senior professor who held simultaneous appointments in two universities in Tokyo and Kyoto – stating that I was an internationally published researcher. In fact, fifteen of my papers had been translated into Japanese and published in the several journals of the Japanese Asian Affairs Research Council: *Ajicho Geppo*, *The Asia Quarterly* and *Ajia Jiho* [Asian Review]. I had also published a monograph, *The Participation of Japanese Military Forces in U.N. Peacekeeping Operations*, in June 1996 in a joint publication series between the Center for International and Security Studies, my location at the University of Maryland, and the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

¹ Hisahiko Okazaki, "A Nation Caught Off Guard," *Japan Times Weekly*, December 2-8, 1996 and Hisahiko Okazaki, "Some Common Sense," *Japan Times Weekly*, December 30, 1996-January 12, 1997.

I had been particularly interested that the *Japan Times Weekly* publish one or more photographs alongside my article. I had therefore enclosed a folder of photographs, exclusively taken by Japanese combat photographers during WW2 along with my manuscript. Many of these photographs have been widely republished and are very well known, and their provenance is unquestionable. Some of the most famous ones had appeared in *Life* magazine in a special issue on Japan of September 11, 1964, others in *Life's Picture History of World War II* published in 1950, and some in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 24, 1994. Older photographs appeared in *Life* magazine on May 16, 1938 and June 20, 1938. Some even appeared and were discussed in *Japan Times Weekly*, in its issue of August 13-19, 1990 in an article on the wartime photographs of Imperial Army photographer Hachiro Bessho. All of these photographs were images that pertained directly to the behaviors of Japanese military forces that were described in my article. I enclosed copies of all of these as well as others to the editor of *Japan Times Weekly* in order to indicate that they had a wide assortment of photographs to choose from, all taken by Japanese photographers assigned to accompany Japanese military forces in the field. Additional photographs by Japanese wartime photographers clearly showing atrocities perpetrated by Japanese troops were unquestionably also available in Japanese archives.

When the issue of *Japan Times Weekly* with my article in it arrived, it surprisingly included three photographs, two of which were a full half page each on the page directly opposite the full page of text. None, however, were the photographs that I had submitted. The upper photograph of the two depicted a beheading scene taken in Korea, apparently sometime after 1910, and very probably early after that year. The lower photograph carried the caption "This photograph, owned by a Hokkaido woman, depicts a scene of what appears to be several executions in wartime Nanjing, China." The photograph was immediately suspect, however, as the numerous individuals in military and police uniforms standing around the dead bodies are, as best as can be discerned, not Japanese troops. [Insert ML article pages here.] Given the nature of the third photograph (discussed below), it was very likely not taken during "wartime," and perhaps not in Nanjing.

The third photograph appeared directly under the masthead on the front page of the *Japan Times Weekly*. The caption under that photograph read "American scholar Milton Leitenberg rebuffs moves in Japan to reconsider references in school textbooks to Japan's wartime wrong doing. Pages 10-11." There was no further identification of the photograph. However it was immediately apparent from the uniform of the individual beheading a kneeling victim, and the dress of other people standing around that the photograph had nothing whatsoever to do with Japanese military forces. However I could never find anyone who was able to identify the photograph or the scene.

I recently chanced to look at a copy of Harrison Salisbury's book, *The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng*, published in 1992. And there, on the third page of the photograph section following page 176 in Salisbury's book, was the identical photograph that the *Japan Times Weekly* had placed on its front page as a lead in to my article. The caption for the photograph in Salisbury's book reads: "Below. Police and gangsters massacre workers and communists in Shanghai, 1927." The illustration credits in the book for the photograph read: "Courtesy of [Chinese] Central Party Literature Publishing House." [Insert Salisbury pages here.]

Most particularly because the editors of the *Japan Times Weekly* decided *not* to use any of the well-known photographs taken by Japanese photographers travelling with Japanese military forces during WW2 that pertained to the article, it is hard to come to any other conclusion but that the editors *deliberately* used ones – apparently all three – that were irrelevant and misleading.

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