

## Truth of History to Japanese High School Students!

**I**would like to ask those who instructed to delete the description of the 'mass suicide' during the Okinawa Battle from high school history textbooks. 'Are you saying that our grandpas and grandmas tell a lie on the account?'" Two representatives of high school students appealed to some 110,000 people who took part in a rally held in Ginowan City, Okinawa on September 29, 2007.

In the final stage of World War II, civilians in many parts of Okinawa archipelago, in particular outer islands such as Tokashiki Island, Zamami Island, etc. committed 'mass suicide'. Some of them killed their families and themselves and others blew themselves by using grenades. There are many who have testified that Japanese soldiers provided them those grenades and induced them to avoid capture by using the grenades. By those testimonies, it has come out that the 'mass suicide' were 'forced' ones. Those facts had been written in school history textbooks.

Abe administration inaugurated in September 2006 was the first administration that openly declared to change the Peace Constitution. In order to mobilize Japan to engage in war, Abe administration, before everything, changed the Fundamental Law of Education in a parallel direction. On March 30, 2007, the Ministry of Education announced the result of its screening of high school textbooks to be used from 2008. It has come out that the Ministry instructed publishers to remove references to the military involvement in forcing civilians to commit 'mass suicide' and that some publishers complied with the instruction. The original description "Civilians were forced to commit 'mass suicide' was changed to the effect that some civilians

committed suicides on their own accord.

As soon as those facts were reported, the instruction of the Ministry angered many people in Okinawa, including survivors of the battle, leading all the local assemblies in Okinawa prefecture and assemblies elsewhere in Japan

to adopt a resolution protesting the ministry's instruction and demanding it be retracted. Under such circumstances, some 110,000 people participated in the above-mentioned rally held in September.

The participants of the rally appealed to all habitants in Okinawa, "It is our duty to hand this down as a historical fact to generations to come and to make sure that such a brutal war never occurs again". The rally adopted a resolution urging central government to rescind the instruction and to take immediately appropriate measures for putting

back the original descriptions suggesting military involvement in the 'mass suicide' in Okinawa. The above-mentioned high school students made the closing address, saying, "We would like to learn the truth of history and transmit it to generations to come, even if it were shameful one".

The Ministry of Education has, however, rejected the request and instead supported the decision of the ministry's textbook screening panel.

In order to hand over the truth of history to the generations to come, ZENKYO makes its utmost efforts to demand the retraction of the decision of the panel and finally the abolition of the screening system itself in close cooperation with parents and citizens.



***We demand the retraction of  
the Education Ministry's  
instruction  
on high school  
history textbooks***

# Make the Most of the Constitution of Japan in Politics and Education!

## New Political Situation after the Upper House Election

In the Upper House election held in July 2007, Japanese people rejected policies of Abe administration that carried catch-phrases of 'Opt-out of post-war regime' and 'Revision of the Constitution of Japan'. The ruling coalition of Liberal Democratic Party and Komei Party lost a large number of seats and has become a minority in the Upper House.

Just after the formation of Fukuda administration in October following the demission of Abe, the Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law expired on November 1, 2007. Accordingly, the Maritime-Self-Defense Force unit that had refueled multinational warships in Indian Ocean withdrew from the area.

Disregarding rising oppositions against the resumption of refueling in the Indian Ocean, Fukuda administration forced the enactment of the Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law by their two-thirds majority through the Lower House by overturning the decision of the Upper House last November and dispatched again a refueling marine in the Indian Ocean.

Those forces that adhere the revision of the Constitution of Japan plot to regain their footing for the



promotion of the movements. They intend to strengthen the move to enact not tentative but ordinary law enabling the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces in cooperation with the Democratic Party by emasculating Article 9 of the Constitution.

## Expanding "School Article 9 Associations"

In 2004, 9 persons of great renown including Kenzaburo Oe, Nobel Prize winner, appealed to every citizen to come together for the protection of the Constitution of Japan. The appeal was responded in every field and every part of Japan and 6,800 "Article 9 Associations" were formed across Japan up to now. "School Article 9 Associations" were formed in nearly 350 schools.

In all of those associations, teachers and ancillary staff regardless of their affiliation to teachers unions work together with principal, vice-principal and head teachers on the common standpoint to protect the Constitution. Activities of those associations include organization of study meetings on the Constitution and on peace issues, listening to the experiences of war survivors, meetings to see films concerning war and/or the Constitution and signature collecting campaigns against the revision of the Constitution.

Those activities have contributed much to the efforts of teachers for the improvement of schools with the spirits enshrined in the Constitution together with children and parents.

# After 43 years, students again took standardized achievement tests

**O**n April 24, 2007, the Ministry of Education conducted standardized achievements tests that 2.3 millions of elementary (6th graders) and junior high schools (3rd graders) students were required to take. In the face of criticism towards declining ranking in 2006 results of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and also of criticism against the curriculum guidelines that reduced school hours with a catchphrase of 'education with latitude', Ministry was required to investigate the actualities for obtaining its ultimate goal to promote more competitive education.

ZENKYO has promoted the movements to stop the standardized achievement tests, criticizing that the tests would throw students and schools into fierce competition

with each other and accelerate the polarizing gap between winner and loser. Coupled with a newly introduced parental choice system, the Ministry intends to use the test to open the way for a 'neo-liberal educational reform' modeled after the Thatcher reform carried out in Britain since 1980s.

Number of organizations and researchers voiced concern that the Ministry commissioned a private-sector company to handle scoring and data compilation.

Results of the testing published in October by the Ministry show that although the rate of correct answers was higher for questions on simple calculation skills and kanji literacy, the percentages were down for questions on students' skills in logical thinking, regarding

comprehension and descriptive power. The Ministry expressed its intention to include certain accounts for the improvement of logical thinking in the revised curriculum guidelines to be published in February 2008.

In order to ensure state control over education, the Ministry intends to establish a new mechanism called 'PDCA (plan, do, check, and action) cycle' that was originally used for quality control in industrial process.

In order to make every child acquire basic academic standards, ZENKYO continues its efforts to prevent the ministry's policy of promoting competition together with parents and residents.

# Equal Learning Opportunity for Children! Further Increase of 'Working Poor' Households

**A**ccording to an OECD Report, the poverty rate in Japan is 15.3% and remains in the fifth rank within the OECD signatories. That is because under new-liberal structural reform policy of the government, a number of those of 'working age', in particular young and elderly, have difficulties to find employment. More than 10 millions workers have annual incomes of less than 2 million yen and the number of those households with no savings is remarkably increasing. There are more than 2 millions in multiple debts, nearly 3 millions unemployed and more than 20,000 homeless. They are all excluded from the medical insurance system

because of non-payment of insurance premiums. The number of suicide exceeds 30,000 every year during last 9 years.

The expansion of poverty hits severely number of households in which children grow and develop and violates the rights to learn of high school students and youth. Parents suffer seriously from rising educational costs. 212,000 (9.3%) full-time and 18,000 (19.6%) part-time high school students are remitted their school fees. Owing to their parents' loss of jobs due to restructuring and bankruptcy, more and more high school students have difficulties to buy

commuter passes, to participate into school excursions and to continue schooling. Their rights to learn are in crisis, although Article 26 of the Constitution of Japan guarantees the rights.

With expanding poverty and inequity, children are deprived of their dreams and the future and workers are deprived of their dignity as human beings. Together with workers under the banner of the National Confederation of Trade Unions (ZEN-ROREN), ZENKYO reinforces the movement to "Stop poverty, Stop Revision of the Peace Constitution".

# Forthcoming Visit of the ILO/UNESCO CEART Mission to Japan

**T**he Ministry of Education has promoted the personnel management system for so-called 'incompetent teachers' and a new teacher assessment system as a part of its neo-liberal educational reforms.

In June 2002, ZENKYO submitted its allegations to the ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Profession (CEART) against the non-observance of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers

adopted in 1966.

CEART recommended the Japanese government and ZENKYO to build upon the dialogue for addressing and attempting to resolve the issues concerning non-observance of the above-mentioned Recommendation. However, the government has not yet adequately dealt with the substantive issues including objectivity of assessment, disclosure of assessment results to teachers concerned, their right to appeal and negotiation with teachers unions.

Under such circumstances, CEART decided to undertake a mission to investigate the situation in Japan and to make proposals for resolution of the identified problems to all concerned.

It is noteworthy that CEART will send its fact-finding mission concerning allegations for the first time. As CEART mission is about to visit Japan April 21-28, ZENKYO now makes arrangements for receiving CEART mission, hoping that the mission will contribute to resolution of the identified problems.

## International Activities

### Participation of a KTU Representative to the '2007 Educational Forum'

'2007 Educational Forum' was convened in A-bombed City Hiroshima for 4 days from August 16, 2007 with more than 7000 participants in total. In the opening plenary session, Premier Vice President of the Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union extended an address of solidarity to the Forum participants.

### ZENKYO Delegation Visited KTU

ZENKYO delegation headed by

President Tadashi Yoneura visited KTU November 15 – 17, 2007 and exchanged views on various issues with KTU President and Executives. The delegation visited a school in Seoul.



### Peace Tour to Nanjing and Shanghai

ZENKYO Youth Department organized a peace tour to Nanjing and Shanghai from December 26 to

30, 2007. In Nanjing, the tour participants visited the Memorial Hall of the Nanjing Massacre where various materials concerning genocidal war crime committed for several weeks since December 1937 by the Japanese military are exhibited. After looking around the exhibitions, all the participants renewed their determination never to make the same mistake again and to build a society and future for peaceful co-existence.

