

Thoughts on the Shooting of Mr. Abe

Koide Hiroaki

The young Koide Hiroaki chose the field of nuclear engineering because he wanted to contribute to the future of energy-poor Japan. Once he grasped that nuclear power was a technology so risky that it required disposable places and people in every aspect of its operation, he decided to dedicate himself to its abolition. During 40-odd years at the Kyoto University Reactor Research Institute, he and like-minded colleagues dedicated themselves to this cause, offering their expertise to citizen movements and legal struggles, making specialist knowledge accessible to many. The Fukushima nuclear disaster, which began on March 11, 2011, was a crushing blow to their efforts. In the days, months, and decade following the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Koide became the preeminent scientific critic of nuclear power.

In 2015, upon retirement from Kyoto University, Koide relocated to Matsumoto City. Surrounded by the Japan Alps, hiking and cultivating his garden, he has continued to exercise his sense of social responsibility through lecturing and writing. On the 3rd day of each month, he has stood at Matsumoto Station with a placard bearing the words, “‘No’ to Abe’s politics.” Rain or shine, for one hour, 30 to 40 citizens join him in silent standing. When Mr. Abe resigned in 2020, Koide rued that he was free to plead ill health and abandon the scene of his misdeeds with utter impunity. Nor did he believe that Mr. Abe’s departure meant the end of his politics—the promotion of nuclear power, the exacerbation of inequality, willful passage of legislation facilitating military engagement and further erosion of Article 9 of the Constitution that renounced “war as a sovereign right,” all freighted with unaddressed acts of corruption. His fellow citizens agreed, and they have continued to stand on the 3rd of each month.

In response to multiple requests for his reaction to the July 8th shooting death, Koide, on July 9th, wrote the essay that follows during a flight to Sapporo to deliver a lecture. Upon learning that at least one recipient who posted it on Facebook had it promptly taken down, Koide decided to post it on his own [site](#). The following translation, made with his permission, is based on that text, with preface added. That version will appear as the lead essay in the fall issue of the quarterly Kiseitsu (formerly NO NUKES voice), to appear on September 11.ⁱ

Norma Field

A Country Descending into War

On July 8th, two days before the House of Councilors election, Mr. Abe was gunned down and died. I wrote the words that follow shortly thereafter. The fears I had initially have unfortunately been born out: the mass media have only busied themselves lauding Mr. Abe’s achievements. I do not know how much this may have impacted the results of the election. What

is clear is that the Liberal Democratic Party has won by a landslide, and the forces favoring Constitutional revision have more than the two-thirds majority necessary for such action.

In war, human beings kill each other. In modern wars, the heaviest damage is inflicted on ordinary people who are non-combatants. War must not be waged, whatever the justification. But Mr. Abe has been awarded the highest decoration of the country, the Collar of the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum, and it is said that a state funeral will be held in the fall.ⁱⁱ Threatening trouble “if the bad guys attack us,” Mr. Abe and the Liberal Democratic Party have steadfastly strengthened the military; they are preparing to revise the Constitution so as to make Japan capable of waging war. And now, many Japanese are supportive of this position. We have fallen on perilous times. My heart sinks.

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Mr. Abe has been gunned down. He is dead. I am not saddened. If I were to name those whom I detest most on the fingers of one hand, Mr. Abe would be included. He oversaw enactment of the [Act on Protection of Specially Designated Secrets](#); the [Legislation for Peace and Security](#), including the right of [collective self-defense](#) (“war law”); and the establishment of a [criminal conspiracy law](#). He launched a bid to host the Olympics in Tokyo to divert attention from the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Finally, he worked toward Constitutional revision. Everything he did, everything he was attempting to do, had to do with making money and preparing the path for Japan to become a country capable of waging war.

Mr. Abe was the despicable sort of person who was overbearing toward countries and people deemed weak, and obsequious before the powerful. A thoroughgoing basher of the DPRK (North Korea) who groveled before Mr. Trump, Mr. Abe purchased vast amounts of weaponry as the latter directed. Lying came to him as naturally as breathing. The [Moritomo Gakuen elementary school scandal](#); the [Kake Gakuen veterinary school scandal](#); the “[cherry-blossom party](#)” [scandal](#); the two-per household distribution of manifestly substandard “[Abe masks](#)” as Covid-19 relief measure—Mr. Abe and the special-interest groups that were his hangers-on spent tax-payer money as freely as if it were their own. When threatened with exposure, he drew on bureaucratic offices at his beck and call to conceal, alter, and destroy evidence and managed to avoid incrimination. In the course of this, an official was even [driven to suicide](#), but Mr. Abe took no responsibility and got off scot-free. I would like to have exposed each one of his misdeeds and seen to his punishment.

It has been my publicly stated position that every human being is irreplaceable, that it is wrong for any of us to kill or be killed. It is true that I wished Mr. Abe might die before he could commit further misdeeds, but I did not think it permissible to kill him. Rather, I find it regrettable that he was killed before he could be charged for the acts he had already committed.

Many people have called the shooting a “barbarous act not permissible in a democratic society,” but I do not subscribe to such a view. All acts, all events, take place within the great flow of history. To attempt an evaluation of individual acts in isolation from history is erroneous. In any case, it stretches credulity to think that there might still be people who believe Japan to be a democratic nation.

Mr. Abe’s policies drove citizens, especially young people, into a life of poverty and robbed them of the capacity to think about politics. While proclaiming that elections were the

heart of democracy, he exploited single-seat constituencies to suit his agenda, and however low the turnout, so long as he won, he proceeded to do as he pleased. He took hard-earned tax money and spent it freely on himself and his family members. It would be absurd to even contemplate the amount of taxpayer money poured into nuclear power and wasted. All 57 nuclear power plants in Japan were deemed to be safe and licensed when the Liberal Democratic Party held power. Of course, the Fukushima Daiichi plant was also deemed safe and licensed. It is the accident at this plant that created immense harm and innumerable victims such that even now, 11 years later, a “declaration of nuclear emergency” continues to be in effect, and people continue to suffer. Nevertheless, not a single member of the Liberal Democratic Party, Mr. Abe included, nor a single member of the bureaucracy that has supported this party and operated nuclear power plants has taken responsibility. Even the courts are but an agency of the state that has permitted the operation of nuclear power plants. They refuse to acknowledge state responsibility; nor will they hold the chair, president, and other executives of TEPCO accountable.ⁱⁱⁱ Having learned from Fukushima that however tragic an accident may occur, no one will be held to account, they have already announced their continued support of nuclear power generation. Going forward, they talk of doubling the defense budget and turning Japan into a country that can wage war.

A foolish government for a foolish citizenry. If that defines democracy, perhaps so. But if such is the case, the sorrow of the downtrodden and the oppressed will one day explode. I cannot know what was in the mind of the person who shot Mr. Abe. But, to repeat, I will not subscribe to the view denouncing the act from the outset as “unforgivable barbarism.”

What concerns me, with election day for the House of Councilors just around the corner, is people feeling sorry for Mr. Abe and letting that drive their voting. I am, moreover, apprehensive that this incident could be used as justification for bolstering the Peace and Security and conspiracy laws, making this an even more undemocratic, unseemly nation.

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ⁱ For more background on Koide Hiroaki, see Field, “Introduction,” [The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster and the Tokyo Olympics](#), APJ-Japan Focus (March 1, 2019). All hyperlinked references and notes are by Field.

ⁱⁱ Now set for September 27, 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the sole criminal proceeding issuing from the Fukushima disaster, three TEPCO executives were declared “not guilty” of criminal negligence in Tokyo District Court on September 19, 2019. See Johnson, Fukurai and Hirayama, “[Reflections on the TEPCO trial: prosecution and acquittal after Japan’s nuclear meltdown](#),” APJ -Japan Focus (January 15, 2020). The case is now in the Tokyo High Court, with a decision expected next January. In civil proceedings, on June 17, 2022, the [Supreme Court denied state responsibility](#) in the case of four lawsuits filed by evacuees although on March 2, 2022, it had [sided with plaintiffs](#) in ordering higher compensation from TEPCO. On July 13, 2022, in a “derivative” lawsuit brought by activist TEPCO shareholders, four executives were ordered to pay [\\$97 billion](#) for the damages, including human suffering, caused by their failure to take tsunami protection measures. This is a record amount ordered by a Japanese court; a lengthy appeals process most certainly lies ahead.