

## Japan's Reparation Problem in the Post-War Period

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### Abstract

**The World War II is a famous war about fighting against fascism and the world pays much attention to the war reparation from Japan. Although the World War II has passed for a long time, we, as responsible Chinese people, should remember historical events, have the courage to face up with problems left over from the war, and, especially, understand the situation of Japan's reparation to China in a clear way. Based on this, the paper will analyze issues left over from the war after Hana Oka Incident and the process tackling these reparation problems and finally put forward some thinkings about Japan's reparation for the war.**

### Keywords

**The World War II, Hana Oka Incident, issues left over from the war, war reparation.**

### 1. Introduction

war reparation, as a kind of punitive damages, mainly refers to payments intended to cover damage or injury inflicted during the war by defeated countries. After the World War II, the Soviet Union, France, the United States, the United Kingdom and other anti-fascist countries regulated the detailed indemnity, allocation method and repayment term for Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Germany and Finland and other countries, in accordance with the economic and political principles to dispose the defeated countries put forward in the Potsdam Conference. While Hana Oka Incident is a typical event in the World War II in which Japan killed many of our compatriots and is also a significant tragedy and humiliation in our history. Chinese people should reflect in the history, bear in mind a series of war damages caused by Japanese invaders and understand Japan's reparation situation in the post-war period. And we should also clearly realize the true purpose of Japan, remember lessons of history and establish a strong sense of patriotism. Only in this way can we contribute more to the prosperity of our country.

### 2. The problem left over from the war----Hana Oka Incident

#### 2.1 The Introduction of Hana Oka Incident

In the World War II, in order to make up with the deficiency in the lack of labor, Japan arrested many people both in China and North Korea and forced them to do endless labors. At that time, more than 40,000 Chinese people were assigned to 130 building sites in Japan and nearly 7,000 people lost their valuable life due to abuses and bullying by Japanese [1].

In just one year from 1944 to 1945, Japan arrested nearly 1000 people in three times to construction sites in Hana Oka, Akita, and forced them to reconstruct the river course. The arrested people included the Eighth Route Army soldiers and Kuomintang soldiers as well as some ordinary people. In the long period of high-intensity labor, they suffered numerous abuses and unprecedented humiliation from Japanese soldiers and even witnessed the death of many compatriots one by one. They finally launched the uprising in June, 1945, under unbearable oppression and exploitation, to revenge for the dead compatriots and establish national dignity. However, the uprising ended in failure and more than 400 people sacrificed in this struggle. All of labors were caught into custody and went through tortures and cruel interrogation, with more than 100 people dead. Hana Oka Uprising is seen as anti-Japanese

struggle by Chinese people in Japanese territory. The problem left over from this typical historical event and related reparation issues are worth our research and thinking.

### **3. The Analysis about Unsettled Questions**

#### **3.1 The government and the corporation**

From the whole process of Japanese invasion into China, we can learn that, after Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Japan carried out a policy of transferring large numbers of laborers into its own territory, best exemplified by National Mobilization Act in 1938 and Acquisition Order.

Japan began to implement the policy of “Importing North Korean Workers” in 1939. After the outbreak of the World War II, Japan started to “Import Chinese laborers”, the policy decided by Tojo Cabinet.

All above description is based on Chinese Chronology. However, according to the documents in the US Archives, since 1939, some Japanese companies have already suggested the government transferring nearly 50,000 laborers into domestic market [3]. Here, we take the example of labor statistical system by “Manchukuo” to analyze issues of transferring Chinese labor into Japan.

Prior to this, Japan has already established some labor recruitment agencies, such as Mainland Chinese Labor Company in Qingdao (February 1939), Xinmin Labor Association in Peking (June 1938), New Labor Association in Tianjin (September 1938), Labor Welfare Bureau in Qingdao (September 1938) and some labor companies in Jinan (October 1938)[4]. It was not until July 1941 that North China Labor Association was established to combine all above labor organizations. While Tojo Cabinet decided to requisition Chinese labor after the establishment of North China Labor Association. Therefore, in order to meet the need of invading North China, Japanese government has adopted the policy of looting Chinese labor forces since the construction of “the South Manchuria Railway”. Thus, the war of aggression against China was supported by both Japanese enterprises and the government.

#### **3.2 Trial and Reparation**

All Chinese people in the Hana Oka Uprising were arrested and were subject to cruel trial and tortures both in mental and in physical. Geng Zhun, battalion chief of the uprising, as well as 12 other insurgents, was sentenced from 2 years to 10 years of imprisonment and even death penalty. At that time, Japan has surrendered. The US army garrisoned in Akita got the whole story about the Hana Oka Incident and sentenced the relevant personnel of Kajima Company. Leaders in charge of regional affairs and relevant personnel were sent to prison and, in 1945, Geng Zhun and other Chinese people were acquitted of the charge, and they also testified during the trial of Class BC war criminals [5].

The trial began in November 1947 and the judgment was published in March of the next year. Three people were sentenced to hang; two people received a 20-year prison sentence and one person a life imprisonment. Two of the police were sentenced to imprisonment and the rest sentenced were all Kajima Company personnel. However, we should clearly understand that all of these people got commutation and survived at last. In the World War II, it seriously violated the regulation of International Law for one country arresting and forcing the other country’s laborers to do manual work in its own country. In this case, International Military Tribunal for the Far East believed that 400 laborers at the building site in Hana Oka mainly died from improper management, tortures and hunger and cold. In this trial, the focus lay in abuses suffered by laborers, but rather brutal bondage. Later, Akita Court and Yokohama Court all believed that Kajima laborers’ deaths were caused by overwork, abuses and serious hunger.

Japan Industries Association (Kajima as a major member) decided to set up “the Labor Policy Association” directed against China and North Korea to specially study and deal with post-war issues. On the one hand, the association discussed the countermeasures against war criminal trials; on the other hand, the association aimed to get “compensation”. Finally, the general manager was immune from prosecution after being summoned to the International Procuratorate because he had hired a lawyer who had a close relationship with the US. Later, he alleged that he had suffered serious losses

during the process of hiring Chinese and North Korean laborers and applied the “compensation” from the Japanese Government. Due to hiring more than 35,000 North Korean and Chinese laborers, the Japan Industries Association got the government compensation, nearly 46 million yen, after the World War II [6]. At the same time, there existed the same situation in other industries, but the specific circumstance was unknown. We can see from above analysis that, up until now, there is no compensation record from Japan for “Chinese and North Korean laborers’ damages caused by brutal bondage”.

#### **4. The Process of Settling Japan’s Reparation Problem after World War II**

Geng Zhun, the battalion chief of the Hana Oka Uprising, contacted other survivors to participate in the memorial activities for Chinese martyrs. Later, they set up the Hana Oka Incident Preparatory Committee in charge of investigating and studying this event. In 1989, they wrote an open letter to Kajima Company and asked the company to “make public apology, provide compensation and build a memorial hall” for the Hana Oka Incident. In 1990, they hired Japanese lawyers to negotiate with Kajima Company and issued a Joint Statement. In 1995, Geng Zhun and other survivors brought a lawsuit to the Tokyo District Court for the brutal abuses of Kajima Company during the World War II, but failed [7]. After that, they filed a lawsuit to Tokyo High Court. The verdict was reached in the year 2000 and the two parties reached a Settlement Agreement. The agreement said that (1) Kajima Company, as the defendant, reconfirmed the Joint Statement in 1990, (2) reconfirming the Joint Statement did not mean that the defendant should bear legal responsibility and the plaintiff understood this condition, (3) Kajima Company took out 500 million yen, the money being under the management of Red Cross Society of China which agreed with this settlement. This fund of 500 million yen would be used in life support for more than 900 survivors and other memorial activities of martyrs’ offspring, (4) the plaintiffs admitted that problems related to Hana Oka Incident have been settled and waived the right of future claims in Japan and other countries, (5) the plaintiffs promised that Red Cross Society had the responsibility to prevent plaintiffs’ compensation claims in the future. Although the two sides reached a settlement agreement, there still exist many problems, which become the vortex center of public opinion today.

#### **5. The Analysis of Japan’s Reparation Problem after World War II**

##### **5.1 The Return of Chinese Martyrs’ Ashes**

In accordance with the spirit of "state compensation", Japan made a detailed compensation and subsidy policy for Chinese victims in the World War II. However, there was no compensation for damages suffered by North Korean and Chinese laborers in the Hana Oka Incident. Besides, the Japanese government provided pensions and consolation money for its soldiers and survivors, collected ashes and built tombstones.

As for arrested Chinese laborers, after the end of the World War II, the Chinese survivors were sent back, and ashes of dead Chinese laborers were also returned back. However, all of these efforts were made by ordinary Japanese people who were in favor of Sino-Japanese friendship, but rather the Japanese government. In 1953, with the help of Red Cross Association, Japanese who were detained in China also returned to their homeland. In order to express their gratitude, Japanese people in folk society established memorial committee for Chinese martyrs and returned Chinese martyrs’ ashes to China in 9 times from 1953 to 1964. These ashes are now in the memorial hall in Tianjin.

Japan adopted hostile policy toward China, which caused lots of difficulties to the settlement of above issues. Under this condition, in 1958, Liu Lianren was found at an Hokkaido hill, which aroused great attention nationwide. Then chief cabinet secretary, on behalf of the Japanese government, offered him compensation, 20 million Japanese yen. But he refused and returned to China. In 1972, China and Japan issued a joint statement, which marked the resumption of diplomatic relations between two countries. This problem remained unsettled.

## 5.2 Damage Compensation and War Reparation

The year 1987 marked the 50th anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in China, when a Chinese person wrote an open letter to the Chinese government in which he pointed out that China should raise a claim for the post-war reparation to Japan. Later in 1989, relevant creditor alliance was set up and claimed that Japan should compensate China for the damages and destruction during the World War II. At the same time, survivors in Hana Oka Incident also founded a preparatory committee and wrote an open letter, in the name of victims, to the Kajima Company. They required the company to make public apology, provide compensation of 5 million yen per person and build a memorial hall for the Hana Oka Incident [8]. In 1991, a newspaper reported that a teacher in Peking University submitted a proposal to the Chinese government on the “Japanese Post-war Compensation Issue”. According to his proposal, the compensation should be divided into “civil” compensation and “government” compensation, and in the China-Japan Joint Statement, the compensation that we waived belongs to the latter, and the former compensation remained unsettled. In 1992, when Jiang Zemin, the former General Secretary, met Japanese reporters in a state visit in Japan, he said that we had always advocated the principle of seeking truth from facts with a serious attitude and we should also properly settle the compensation issues and problems left over from the war through negotiation. His remarks just echoed civil society’s compensation claims and received wide attention.

## 6. Reflection on Japanese Reparation Issues of the World War II

From the above analysis, we can find that, although the World War II has passed for many years, the development of our country is still plagued by these unsettled problems. In term of the compensation for the Hana Oka incident, the attitude and behaviors of Japan deserve our serious consideration. In the post-war period, Japanese actions have already revealed that Japan does not realize their crimes and sins at all, and even becomes more arrogant. For example, Japan does not recognize its crimes, including gas warfare, Pingdingshan massacre, Comfort women, Nanjing Massacre and so on. Japan persists in its old way and visits the Yasukuni war shrine. All of these evidences show that Japan’s ambition still exists with the end of the war and Japan practices militarism in an organized way. The typical unsettled problems by the war include the Diaoyu Islands question, the Kuril Islands issues and South Korea Dokdo problem.

Taki Diaoyu Islands is an example, which always draws general attention from us Chinese people. China should unite all justice forces in the world to preserve the justice claims in the anti-fascist war and defend the fruits of victory in the World War II. China should also initiate international conference under the spirit of Cairo Declaration, re-examine the settlement of issues left over from the anti-Japanese war as well as negotiate the question of territorial ownership. Only in this way, can we propose a thorough solution to these unsettled issues. First of all, we should notice that the strategy of “shelving sovereignty controversy and developing jointly” proves ineffective and this principle was just a political expediency with an aim to create a sound environment for the policy of reform and opening up. We can see from the Diaoyu Islands dispute since 2010 that we are in a very passive position and we need change this policy and strategy in order to cater to the current development characters. Secondly, the Diaoyu Islands dispute becomes intensified and many people argue that China should take military actions, sending troops to occupy the islands and enhancing the cooperation with Taiwan Army. They believe that these actions would completely remove Japanese forces in the Diaoyu Islands. However, we’d better not take these extreme actions unless it's absolutely necessary. Then, we should negotiate with Japan on a higher strategic level and conduct cooperative development after obtaining the sovereignty in this area. Diaoyu Islands are related to China's sovereignty, strategic security, and demarcation of the East China Sea and resource development, which has a profound effect upon the settlement of the South China Sea question. Therefore, in my opinion, we should consider the post-war problems from an overall perspective. The sovereignty on the Diaoyu Islands cannot be compromised, which is served as the premise to deal with the post-war problems. At the same time, the dispute ought to be controlled within a reasonable level and we can pursue political, cultural and economic development and further find an effective

solution to the unsettled problems between our two countries. After declaring our territorial sovereignty, we could cooperate with Japan to develop the Diaoyu Islands through the form of invitation. This will not only solve the territorial dispute, but also to develop resources in this area, which is conducive to establishing sound bilateral relations.

## 7. Conclusion

The Hana Oka Incident, a typical event in the World War II, has not been highly valued during the process of tackling issues left over from the war and compensation problems. Many problems remain unsettled up till now, which caused negative impact upon the current issue of the Diaoyu Islands. Apart from that, we should seriously consider Japan's attitude toward the settlement of post-war problems and could not repeatedly ignore Japan's actions, including distorting and insulting the history. China should strive to correct Japan's error in a fundamental way and urge Japan to make public apology for its crimes in the war on a legal and state level. After that, we can enhance mutual exchanges and trust between two countries and contribute to the peace of the world.

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