

第4部 課題

第16回 毎日パソコン入力コンクール 全国大会

【課題】

第4部 英文B

Obama's Hiroshima visit a new starting point
for a world without nukes

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(文字数6,300字程度)

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Editorial: Obama's Hiroshima visit a new starting point for a world without nukes 

"It's not about hating, or demanding an apology. I lost people dear to me in the atomic bombing while I survived. I feel sorry. What should I do, then? Eliminate nuclear weapons so that such a terrible thing never happens again. So watch me. That's what I've gone through life thinking. I have no bitterness. It's a sense of duty to the people who died." So says Keiko Ogura, a 78-year-old atomic-bomb survivor from Hiroshima. 

In spite of her age, Ogura continues to speak to some 1,500 foreigners a year in English about her experiences in the bombing of Aug. 6, 1945. The views of survivors are varied, but one cannot say there is a strong prevailing demand for an apology over the bombing. 

Did the United States government for many years misread the feelings of hibakusha (atomic-bomb survivors)? Perhaps it stayed away from the A-bombed cities due to an exaggerated fear of demands for an apology. Yet the hibakusha had awaited a visit. We hope that the differences between the two sides will end at this point. 

On the evening of May 27, 2016, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park marked a historic moment. U.S. President Barack Obama, tall and grave, approached the cenotaph for A-bomb victims, laid a floral wreath there and closed his eyes. It was the first visit by a sitting U.S. president to an A-bombed city, a moment that the Japanese people, including many hibakusha, had waited 70 years for. 

Opposition to and caution over Obama's visit had surfaced in the U.S. We want to voice support for his decision to overcome various obstacles and visit Hiroshima. In a speech that followed his laying of the wreath, Obama once again underscored the need to pursue the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and finished by saying people could choose a future in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known "as the start of our moral awakening" — an understandable position. 

At one point during the ceremony in Hiroshima, a smiling Obama embraced an atomic-bomb survivor who had been moved to tears. We would have liked him to spend more time talking with hibakusha and to have presented concrete measures in his speech. Still, we now appear to be heading toward alleviating a sticking point that has remained between Japan and the U.S. for over 70 years. We want to think of this day as a new starting point in the path to a world without nuclear weapons. 

For successive U.S. administrations, the issue of a visit to an A-bombed city was taboo. Former President Harry Truman, who gave the order to drop the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, said they had been used to shorten the war and "save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans." 

In 2007, a senior member of the administration of President George W. Bush expressed the view that dropping the atomic bombs saved the lives of tens of thousands of Allied troops and several million Japanese. And this is probably why some have considered it unnecessary to apologize for the bombing or visit the A-bombed cities. 

The position seems to hold a degree of logic, but it does not

wipe away the fact that the two atomic bombs used for the first time in warfare killed tens of thousands of ordinary citizens and inflicted serious side-effects and deep emotional scars on many others. Whether or not to apologize is probably largely a U.S. issue. But if this point is made light of, then U.S. logic will probably always lack a touch of humanity. 📄

It would be better to put an end to myths surrounding the atomic bombing and the U.S.'s labored explanations. Obama has called for a world without nuclear weapons, and he previously stated that "as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act" — greatly shaking the foundations of the nuclear "myth" at that time. We'd like to view the president's Hiroshima visit as something that transcends that myth, opening a new horizon. 📄

In 1944, during World War II, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed that "Tube Alloys" (atomic bombs) would not be used against Germany but that they could be used against Japan after deep consideration. There were no doubt complicated circumstances that cannot be explained through the U.S. "myth" alone. Japan and the U.S. should frankly exchange opinions on this dark patch of history. 📄

In the meantime, there is a long way to go before we can achieve a world without nuclear weapons. 📄

Relations between the U.S. and Russia have not improved, and there are no signs of China pressing ahead with nuclear disarmament. At the same time, the nuclear expansion of India and Pakistan, who are not signatories to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is unsettling. 📄

Though we have seen a settlement to the Iranian nuclear development issue, there remain concerns about a clash with Israel, which is believed to possess nuclear weapons. Closer at hand, the fact that North Korea is proceeding with the miniaturization of nuclear warheads and has blatantly started threatening international society is a major cause for concern. 

It is believed that the Obama administration will spend some \$1 trillion to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal over the next 30 years. We cannot ignore the possibility that China and Russia will compete to expand their militaries. 

Compared with 2009, when Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize, momentum for eliminating nuclear weapons has diminished, and the world is clearly in a perilous situation. 

But we must not turn President Obama's visit to Hiroshima into a mere ceremony. Obama has eight months remaining as president. We hope that he will utilize the time he has left and leave behind a concrete political legacy providing a foothold to realize a world without nuclear weapons. 

The true value of Japan as the only country to have been attacked with nuclear weapons will likely be called into question. If U.S. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, who has suggested allowing Japan and South Korea to possess nuclear weapons, becomes president, then the concept of a world without nuclear weapons could be sent back to square one. Japan should be ready to lead the movement toward a world without nuclear weapons in the post-Obama era.
