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On the North Korea Question

An interview with

Fuwa Tetsuzo, JCP Central Committee Chair

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*Japanese Communist Party Central Committee Chair
Fuwa Tetsuzo discussed the several aspects of the
question of North Korea in an Akahata interview.*

On the North Korea Question

An interview with JCP CC Chair Fuwa Tetsuzo

How will the question of North Korea develop in 2004? What are the criteria for judging the complicated developments? Fuwa Tetsuzo, Japanese Communist Party Central Committee chair, answers this question in an Akahata interview attended by Ogata Yasuo, JCP International Bureau Director and House of Councilors member. The following is the translation of the interview reported in the January 4-7 issues of Akahata:

I. Diplomatic Objectives

Q: North Korea was a major issue last year both in Japan and internationally, but its resolution has been carried over to the new year. The 6-party talks were not resumed by the end of last year. At this time, I would like to ask you to review the present situation and state how we should view this question in the context of Japanese diplomacy.

FUWA Tetsuzo: The question of North Korea involves various factors and has evolved with complexity. This is why the future of this issue is unpredictable. Because of this, I think it is essential to grasp the basic objective of Japan's diplomacy concerning the question of North Korea.

As regards the objective, we should not focus on one particular issue. It is necessary to view the issue from more than one angle.

I think that we should pursue the following three objectives:

Objective One: Prevent war or conflict from occurring in the Korean Peninsula

FUWA: First, we must prevent war or conflict from taking place in the Korean Peninsula. This objective is very important to Japan. If war or conflict breaks out, it will directly affect and even damage Japan as well as affect East Asia and the world.

This is why we call for resolution of the North Korea question as part of the effort to achieve peace and stability in Northeast Asia. Resolving the question of nuclear weapons through peaceful negotiations is the most urgent task for peace.

Objective Two : Resolution of the abduction issue

Second, the need to resolve the abduction issue, a crime against Japanese citizens' human rights and safety. We must not have this question settled without pinpointing the responsibility. When fragments of the abduction issue were revealed at the Japan-North Korea summit meeting in September 2002, the JCP expressed strong protest against North Korea and demanded that all facts be brought to light, that persons responsible for the abduction be strictly punished, and that North Korea apologize to and compensate the abductees. The JCP also called on North Korea to earnestly work to realize the return to Japan of the family members of the five abductees who returned to Japan soon after the Japan-North Korea summit.

The abduction issue immediately concerns Japan and North Korea, but it is important to keep in mind that the question, by its nature, should be treated as an international issue.

North Korea has internationally carried out many lawless acts, the abductions being among them. In order to achieve peace and stability in Northeast Asia it is essential for North Korea to establish stable and peaceful relations with neighboring and other countries concerned and join the international community with normalcy. The point is North Korea will be able to accomplish this objective after settling the accounts of the lawless international acts it carried out in the past, which is essential for it to become trustworthy internationally. Otherwise, North Korea cannot be accepted by the international community in a stable manner.

Resolving abduction issue can be North Korea's first step toward settling the accounts of its international lawless acts

OGATA Yasuo: That was what Mr. Fuwa proposed in China during talks with the Communist Party of China in August 2001.

FUWA: Yes, it was. In the discussion at the time, I raised the major issue of achieving peace and stability in Northeast Asia as a theme shared by Japan and China, focusing on the North Korea question. I pointed out that there are several hurdles North Korea must clear in order to achieve that goal. The biggest hurdle I pointed out there was the need for North Korea to settle the accounts of all the lawless acts it committed internationally in the past.

Immediately after our talks in Beijing, the Japanese prime minister and the North Korean leader held talks in Pyongyang. North Korea in that meeting accepted responsibility for the lawless act in abducting Japanese

nationals and offered Japan an apology. When we heard the news about this development, we found the North Korean move insufficient and called for a thorough investigation into the abduction issue. At the time, we noted the fact that the abduction is the only international lawless act which North Korea claimed responsibility for and expressed remorse and apology for. This is why the North Korean move drew international attention at the time to the effect that it might be a first step toward change.

The abduction question has international implications. Taking further steps to achieve a complete resolution of the abduction issue can be a breakthrough in North Korea's settlement of the accounts of all its past internationally lawless acts. I think Japan should fulfill its international responsibility by actively and accurately addressing the abduction issue.

Objective Three: Japan must settle the account of its 'past legacy'

FUWA: The third objective should be to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea. Over 35 years, from 1910 until its defeat in World War II, Japan colonized the Korean Peninsula. Japan is responsible for settling the accounts of that history. It is a responsibility Japan must accept along with its carrying out the war of aggression in the whole of the Asia and Pacific region and causing World War II to enter the region. It is 58 years since the war's end, and North Korea remains the only country which Japan has not made a post-war settlement with. Japan's "post-war period" will not come to an end unless it settles the accounts of what it did during the period of colonization and normalize relations with North Korea. Similarly, Northeast Asia's stability and peace cannot be established without Japan-North Korea relations normalized.

These are the three main objectives to be achieved concerning the question of North Korea. It is important for Japan to take into account all these issues in dealing with the North Korea question. If Japan tries to focus on a particular issue by putting aside the other affairs, it will surely face obstacles and fail to achieve anything.

Call for 'overthrowing the regime' goes against universally accepted norm

Q: It is disturbing that some people in televised discussions about Japan's diplomacy insist that "the question of North Korea can only be resolved by overthrowing the regime". What do you think of this view?

FUWA: I think it is a doubly fallacious argument.

To begin with, the question of a country's regime is an internal affair. No matter how outrageous it is, the question whether to allow the regime to

continue or not must be decided by the people of that country. The right of nations to self-determination is universally accepted.

A good illustration of this is the Iraq War. The U.S. Bush administration waged the war under the pretext that Iraq may attack the United States with its supposed weapons of mass destruction and that the United States was compelled to carry out a preemptive attack on Iraq in self-defense. Although the United States ostensibly won the war and has since occupied the whole of Iraq for nine months, it has unearthed no weapons of mass destruction or evidence supporting the allegations about such weapons. Then, the United States argue that the Hussein regime was a brutal dictatorship and that the war was aimed at overthrowing it. This was just another reason to justify the war.

However, this argument for the "great cause" drew strong criticism inside and outside of the United States for acting as the savior of the world in contravention of the principle of the right to national self-determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

The argument that the present regime of North Korea is a problem and that it must be removed is outrageous in that it justifies interference in the internal affairs of other countries. It is precisely the same argument as the Bush administration's view that the United States is "the Messiah".

Some of those who fled North Korea and went into exile for various reasons are advocates of "destroying the regime". However, calling for Japanese diplomacy to toe the line means allowing interventionism in Japan's foreign policy. It may be an argument calling for outbreak of a conflict, rather than just an act of interference in the internal affairs of North Korea.

The countries concerned are now making every effort to peacefully resolve the North Korea issue "without causing a war or unrest". I think it is necessary to keep this effort in mind in addressing the question of North Korea.

OGATA: It's really important to tackle this issue by understanding what this issue is about. Based on television and other reports on what's going on in North Korea, including testimony by persons who fled North Korea, some argue that the North Korean regime is an evil that must be overthrown.

Envisaging a peaceful environment for Northeast Asia

OGATA: Last September, when I visited the vice governor of Toyama Prefecture together with a JCP candidate for the House of Representatives, a map of the Sea of Japan caught my eye. It was upside-

down. I said to the vice governor, "It's a rare map, isn't it?" He said, "Putting it upside-down help us better understand the world." At a closer look I found Toyama Prefecture in the center of the map. Japan, China, South Korea, and North Korea are found to be surrounding the Sea of Japan. This clearly shows how important Northeast Asia's peace and stability is.

In his book published entitled "Thoughts on Leadership", South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun writes about looking at the world atlas "upside-down". He says this helps you understand how great the ocean is and gives you an idea of how the sea and land are connected. This idea has been applied to the concept of a Northeast Asian community.

Thus, many people have developed new ideas and are trying to think of stability for Northeast Asia. In this sense, I think it very important for Japan, as a member of the Northeast community, to seek ways to establish a peaceful environment.

II. JCP's Attitude toward North Korea Question (1)

In the 1960s

Q: Let's talk about the Japanese Communist Party's attitude toward the question of North Korea. During the last few years, the Korea issue has been much discussed in political for political purposes. We have published in Akahata our critiques of such arguments using historical background. It is more than 50 years since the end of the Pacific War, so we would like you to look back on the issue of Korea and summarize what has happend.

FUWA: I began my career at the JCP head office in 1964. To speak of my personal experience, I can explain JCP relations with North Korea by breaking up the 1st 40 years into three periods.

The first period is between 1964 and the late 1960s. Precisely speaking, 1968 marked a turning point.

In the aftermath of the 1953 armistice treaty that ended fighting in the Korean War, the period from the late 1950s to the 1960s saw no such lawless international acts by North Koreans.

Although Japan concluded a basic treaty with South Korea in 1965 to establish diplomatic relations, it had no negotiations with North Korea.

In these circumstances in Japan's postwar period, Korean residents in Japan who were from North Korea had no means of traveling back to

North Korea and had difficulty communicating with their family members there. To resolve this problem, a major movement arose in the 1950s to facilitate their returning to North Korea and allowing travel to and from North Korea. The Red Cross took action and had the Japanese government endorse the demand. This was how the program for Korean residents' return to North Korea started. The JCP cooperated in this movement which embraced non-partisan approaches with many political parties and organizations participating.

The JCP and the Workers Party of Korea established ties in the late 1950s, after the so-called "1950 Question". During the 1960s, many communist parties were divided into pro-Soviet and pro-China groups engaging in polemics with each other, but the WPK along with the JCP and the Communist Party of Vietnam, distanced itself from the two camps to maintain its sovereign independence. The WPK stood firmly against outside interference at a time when the Soviet Union led by Khrushchev began to interfere with the JCP in 1964 and when the Mao Zedong group of China concentrated its attacks on the JCP in 1966 and 1967.

Economically speaking, the North at the time was apparently developing while the South was markedly undergoing difficulties.

Q: The situation at the time was very different from the later developments, wasn't it?

FUWA: Exactly.

A sudden call in 1968 for 'southward advance'

FUWA: A turning point came in 1968. In the previous year, we realized that two major changes were taking place in North Korea. One was the personality cult that publicly began for President Kim Il Sung. The other was the imminent danger of armed attack on the South.

The personality cult was a domestic issue, but invasion of the South was not.

To be more precise, Kim Il Sung in December 1967 called on the North Korean people to "actively" embrace a "great revolutionary change in the South". A few months earlier, he had already stated that once a revolution broke out in the South, the people of the North would take part in it by waging a liberation war. So it was quite natural that the December call was seen as a preliminary announcement that the North adopted a policy of "southward advance" in case of a great change took place in South Korea.

Around the summer of 1967, North Korea began to use its media for

public relations on so-called "armed guerrilla activities" in the South. In January 1968, a small armed group of North Koreans assaulted the South Korean presidential palace, the Blue House, in Seoul and was destroyed by police forces.

A man, the only survivor of the armed group later testified that the group was sent in by the North to the South and was not of South Korean origin. After this incident, North Korea's public relations on guerrilla activities in various parts of South Korea increased.

If this had led to an implementation of the "southward advance" policy, a second Korean War would have broken out in the middle of the Vietnam War, causing a catastrophic consequence for Asia and the rest of the world.

JCP delegation warned Kim Il Sung against 'southward advance'

FUWA: Taking this situation into account, we thought we must not overlook this state of affairs. In an attempt to avert a catastrophe, we decided to send a delegation to North Korea to let them know that Japanese peace and democratic forces are firmly opposed to the North's "southward advance" policy. Miyamoto Kenji, the JCP general secretary at the time, led the delegation and I was a member.

The problem was that visitors to North Korea would only be able to go there via China or the Soviet Union, by air or road. But we were waging a struggle against the Soviet and Chinese interference and were not in a position to do so; we were obliged to use a cargo ship which voyaged from time to time between Japan and North Korea. In August 1968, crossing the seas of Genkai and Japan, we arrived in North Korea .

In the meeting with Kim Il Sung, Miyamoto made the point, saying, "If you start a war in the name of 'southward advance', it will be an unjustifiable act which can't receive support from Japanese and world democratic forces." In response, Kim Il Sung revealed that the Soviet Union and China were also concerned about it. Presumably, the JCP was the world's only political party that took the trouble to have a delegation visit North Korea to tell them that "the war you are planning is unjustifiable and wrong."

OGATA: That was great!

Kim Il Sung promised to not carry out 'southward advance'

FUWA: During the talks, Kim Il Sung denied the much publicized "southward advance" arguments, saying, "We have no intention of

launching a war. Since then, North Korean media gradually toned down reports on "guerrilla" activities in the South and finally stopped mentioning them. With this, the affair came to an end.

However, given the fact that North Korea had publicly announced a plan for a second Korean War, we could not but feel an unusual state of affairs going on in North Korea. The presentiment we had at the time was to take shape in the 1970's in a more serious way.

OGATA: Before moving on to the story of the next period, I would like to add my comment on what you have just said. The JCP delegation went all the way to North Korea to express its opposition to the North Korean "southward advance" policy. I think that it really showed the JCP's true worth and its independent position.

No other party would dare to do such a thing, right? Countries that had diplomatic ties with North Korea wouldn't. There would not be any communist party in the world that would volunteer to do so. I think what the JCP did was really great.

I think that the JCP's position has led to its present firm attitude of demanding that North Korea settle the accounts of all the illegal acts it has done. I feel keenly that this really represents the JCP's character.

During the JCP delegation's stay in Pyongyang, wasn't it revealed that someone had planted a bug in the hotel?

FUWA: Yes, it was.

1970s: The Kim Il Sung cult imposed on foreign countries

OGATA: The talks seemed friendly, but I suspect that they brought about a change in our party-to-party relations. Is this right?

FUWA: To answer that question, I should move on to the next period.

I said that I perceived something unusual. Although North Korea promised they would give up its "southward advance" policy and we concluded our visit in a friendly atmosphere, in the early 1970s our presentiment turned out to be real. The first manifestation of an unusual development was their desperate effort to force the international community to accept the Kim Il Sung cult. They touted the "Kim Il Sung thought" or the "Juche ideology" as the leading ideology of the world revolutionary movement and tried to bring in the theory that the Japanese revolution must be led by Kim Il Sung. To celebrate Kim Il Sung's 60th birthday in 1972, they began to organize a movement throughout Japan to send gifts to the North Korean leader.

Standing firmly for the independent position of the Japanese movement, the Japanese Communist Party published articles in Akahata to make clear that any attempt to deify the leader of a foreign country or praise that leader's ideology as absolute is contrary to the international movement of friendship and solidarity.

At the time, North Korea's political leadership appeared to consider changing their relationship with Japanese political parties. Many years later, a North Korean diplomat went into exile. In an interview with an Akahata correspondent, he revealed that in 1972 or 1973, a document had been circulated among North Korean diplomatic bureaucrats. It was a directive of Kim Il Sung stating that the JCP had degenerated and that North Korea now severed relations with the JCP to establish relations with the Socialist Party of Japan. Given the timing, it didn't surprise me. Not only the Japanese Socialist Party but the Komei Party began to strengthen relations with North Korea at that time. The first Komei Party delegation to Pyongyang was in 1972, led by its Chairman Takeiri Yoshikatsu. Eulogizes expressed over and over again by the delegation to Premier Kim Il Sung and the Juche ideology may have suggested the extent to which North Korea's relations with Japanese political parties had changed thus far.

1970s-1980s: North Korean lawless acts expanded throughout the world

Q: And international lawless acts were another threat you perceived concerning North Korea policy, weren't they?

FUWA: Most abductions took place in 1977 and 1978. But at the time, there was no proof that they were linked to North Korea. The first most intense form of their lawless acts occurred in 1983 in Rangoon (now renamed Yangon), the capital of Burma (now renamed Myanmar). It was a bomb explosion, which was an attempt on the lives of South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan and his party visiting the country. In 1984, a Japanese squid fishing boat in the high seas of the Sea of Japan was fired upon by a North Korean patrol boat. The captain was killed and the fishing boat was seized. North Korea, which had arbitrarily established a military demarcation line in the high sea, claimed that the Japanese fishing boat had crossed it in violation of North Korean territorial waters. North Korea clearly disregarded international law when they committed the lawless act. So they were beginning to overtly commit such lawless acts.

When we criticized these illegal acts, North Korea attacked us on the grounds that we were helping enemies. This is how the distant relations which we had maintained with North Korea were completely severed. For the last 20 years since then, we have had no relations with the Workers' Party of Korea.

Other parties' shameful records of "liaison diplomacy"

Q: What was other Japanese political parties' reaction to North Korea's lawlessness?

FUWA: Although North Korean lawlessness was obvious and had bearings on Japan, no Japanese political parties but the JCP openly criticized it.

The predominant tendency was that Japanese political parties came to terms with or tried to shut their eyes to the bombing incident in Burma and the seizure of the Japanese fishing boat.

Recently, many politicians and mass media began to report repeatedly against the North Korean regime. But for many years since North Korea's lawlessness began to spread throughout the world, no political party but the JCP dared to publicly criticize it.

In the Japanese political world, the so-called "liaison diplomacy" used to be fashionable. In the absence of government-to-government talks, political parties, such as the Liberal Democratic Party and the Socialist Party used to volunteer to contact North Korea to make sure of their intention. But this has nothing in common with diplomacy. Japanese parties involved in "liaison diplomacy" never tried to criticize North Korea's lawlessness because if they failed to gain favor with North Korea, they would not be able to perform their "liaison" role.

For example, two months after the North Korean shooting of the Japanese fishing boat, Socialist Party Chairman Ishibashi Masashi visited North Korea and met with Kim Il Sung. Later, Ishibashi touted the meeting with Kim Il Sung as a great achievement repeating what Kim Il Sung had said to him, "We would not have attacked if the boat did not run away." I was so appalled at Ishibashi's remark that I will never forget it. The point is that Mr. Ishibashi did not dispute the illegal act and that the other side advised that Japanese fishing boats should not run away. That was what the shameful "liaison diplomacy" was really all about.

The main players of "liaison diplomacy" were the Liberal Democratic and Socialist parties, joined by the Komei Party as a supporting player.

The abduction issue served as a line that separated the JCP as a party of sovereign independence and parties of opportunism

Q: At the House of Councilors Budget Committee meeting in March 1988, JCP representative Hashimoto Atsushi took up the issue of

abduction, showing the JCP's real value.

FUWA: In November 1987, a South Korean airliner was blown up. The JCP was quick to point out in January 1988 that North Korea was responsible for the incident. Noting that Kim Hyon Hui, the suspect arrested by the South Korean authority, revealed that she knew of a Japanese national kidnapped by North Korea, Hashimoto questioned the government about the issue of abduction.

The government was first reluctant to discuss the possibility of North Korea's involvement in the abduction. But, faced with Hashimoto's questions that were based on facts, Kajiyama Seiroku, chairman of the National Public Safety Commission at the time, referred to strong suspicions that "North Korea is responsible for the kidnapping of the Japanese citizen." Kajiyama was the first government official to admit the suspicions. Thus, in reply to Hashimoto's questioning, the government for the first time admitted that that was a matter of suspicion of "abduction", not just a matter of a missing person.

At that point, no other political parties had Dietmembers who took up the issue of abduction in relation to North Korea.

Q: In 1989, when South Korean President Roh Tae-woo visited Japan, some Dietmembers from several parties jointly submitted to President Roh a letter calling for the release of 19 political prisoners. But later, a problem arose when it was learned that among the prisoners was a person named Shin Gwanng Su who in a South Korean court admitted to taking part in the abduction.

FUWA: Right. These Dietmembers were composed of 115 Socialist Party members, including Doi Takako and Murayama Tomiichi; 6 Komei Party members; 2 Social Democratic Federation members, including Kan Naoto who is now Democratic Party president; and 2 Niin-Club members. They later admitted that they had been careless about signing the petition without knowing that an abductor of Japanese citizens was among the political prisoners. But the fact of the matter is that Hashimoto Atsushi, a House of Councilors member at the time used his question time in the Diet to question the government about Shin Gwang Su's criminal act. One year after this, these parties submitted the letter requesting the political prisoners' release.

It is very irresponsible for Japanese Dietmembers to request a foreign government to release political prisoners without ascertaining who these prisoners are. They may have acted on the stage set by someone else. Even if that was the case, they should have been aware that North Korean lawlessness was a major issue and refrained from acting in such an irresponsible way. What they did shows that they completely lacked independence in acting in North Korea's favor in their "liaison

diplomacy”.

The abduction issue brought to light the fundamental difference between the party of sovereign independence and the parties that make it a rule to irresponsibly come to terms with a foreign government using “liaison diplomacy”.

III. JCP’s Attitude toward North Korea Question (2)

Resolution of North Korea issue on the political agenda

Q: What was the third period like?

FUWA: How to resolve the North Korea question emerged on the political agenda.

I felt it in the wake of the Taepo Dong missile launch in the autumn of 1998.

The missile launched in the Sea of Japan without advance warning flew over the Japanese archipelago into the Pacific Ocean. It was so outrageous that the JCP voted for a resolution the Diet adopted in protest against the missile launch.

A blame game followed this and tension increased between Japan and North Korea. In Japan, concerned about what would happen if Taepo Dong missiles are fired at Japan, many politicians began to call for military action to be taken in retaliation. Media reported fragments of North Korea’s warning that Japan could receive a severe blow in the event of war. I thought that these developments could lead to a dangerous consequence and that the need now was to find a diplomatic breakthrough in the crisis.

We proposed ending the blame game and open a channel for talks

FUWA: I read all North Korean announcements and reports released through the Korean News Service (KNS) concerning the issue and realized that their warlike statements were made on the premise that Japan in alliance with the United States could attack North Korea.

You see, Japan was preoccupied with how to respond militarily to a possible preemptive Taepo Dong attack by North Korea. Similarly, North Korea was also preoccupied with military responses to a possible preemptive attack by Japan and the United States in alliance. In other words, both Japan and North Korea were warning of each other’s attack,

thus increasing tension. How disturbing the situation was!

What's more, the two countries were playing a blame game in the absence of a diplomatic channel that would bring the two countries together for talks. Many countries, which have tensions with North Korea, including South Korea and the United States, have diplomatic channels. Without a diplomatic channel, Japan and North Korea are obsessed with military responses in fear of each other's preemptive attack. I thought something must be done to break the vicious circle and in January 1999 I used my questioning on behalf of the JCP in the House of Representatives Plenary Session to make a proposal for a breakthrough.

OGATA: I remember that you proposed immediately opening a diplomatic channel for talks, emphasizing that without such a channel, it would be dangerous for the two countries to continue to blame each other for a possible preemptive attack.

I also proposed resuming talks without precondition

FUWA: However, the proposal had no reaction from the government. Internationally, an atmosphere arose toward resolving a set of various issues through diplomatic negotiations. In fact, tangible developments took place between North and South Korea and between the United States and North Korea. But Japan was not willing to move in that direction. Some comments that appeared in newspapers and magazines indicated that even U.S. diplomatic sources were concerned about Japan's passivity in diplomacy. Again in November that year, I made the proposal in my questioning on behalf of the JCP in the House of Representatives Plenary Session. Pointing out that there are several issues of concern, I said that Japan must do away with the attitude that it will not talk with North Korea until all these issues are resolved. I pointed out that the need is for Japan to open a diplomatic channel without condition and put all pending issues, including the abduction issue, on the table.

I didn't feel any significant government response to this proposal. But in late November, in an unexpected move Murayama Tomiichiro of the Social Democratic Party (former prime minister) approached us for something to be done. He was directly responding to our proposal.

OGATA: Later, I learned that the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the U.S. Department of State pressed the Japanese government to do something, citing that the Japanese Communist Party made its proposal in the Diet. As Mr. Fuwa said, South Korea and the United States were taking action in their diplomacy with North Korea. Japan's reluctance to do so irritated the two countries.

FUWA: Later, I realized that the time was ripe for the international

community to make real efforts to resolve the question of North Korea. We made our proposal precisely at a time when the international community was moving in the same direction.

We took part in a non-partisan delegation visiting North Korea

FUWA: Mr. Murayama came to see JCP Chair Shii Kazuo and said, “We have decided to send a delegation made up of all parties to North Korea. I want the JCP to participate in it.” Shii told me that Mr. Murayama said to him, “I took notice of the proposal Mr. Fuwa made in the Diet on two occasions.” Hearing this, I immediately decided that the JCP should accept Mr. Murayama’s offer. I asked two JCP members of the Diet, Kokuta Keiji (House of Representatives) and Ogata Yasuo (House of Councilors) to join the other parties in the delegation. Then, I immediately informed Mr. Murayama of our decision.

OGATA: Mr. Murayama later told me that he had not expected such a quick response from the JCP.

FUWA: Although a number of supra-partisan delegations have visited North Korea, the JCP had not been asked to take part in any of them. I easily understood that this was a change taking place in the context of a new direction in diplomacy.

OGATA: The delegation was composed of all parties and led by Mr. Murayama. Its secretary was Nonaka Hiromu of the LDP. When members of the delegation held a meeting prior to their departure, Mr. Murayama proposed that all issues should be on the table without condition or prerequisite. The delegation approved this as its policy. I now know that when Mr. Murayama told me that he had taken notice of Mr. Fuwa’s proposal, he meant that the delegation would discuss with North Korea without condition or prerequisite.

Standing firmly for the position of sovereign independence

Q: What was the delegation’s activity in North Korea?

OGATA: In Pyongyang, the delegation was asked to pay a visit to the statue of Kim Il Sung, the Tower of the Juche Idea, the tomb of Kim Il Sung, and the house where he was born. The delegation was taken to tour these four sites to pay respects and lay wreaths. This practice was familiar to all delegation members except JCP members who were first time visitors. I discussed with Kokuta what to do. We decided that we should also go to the four sites in order to maintain the delegation’s unity but that it would be unreasonable for us to pay tribute to and lay wreaths. We thought it unreasonable for the JCP, which has been attacked by North

Korea, to pay tribute or lay wreaths for North Korea's leader who was responsible for the attack. That was what we did.

At the tomb of Kim Il Sung, where his body lies in state, visitors would be asked to walk around the body and bow their head four times at four designated points. Visitors would sign their names with their homage to Kim Il Sung at each of the four points. We didn't join other members of the delegation in doing so.

Q: You must have been conspicuous.

OGATA: We were indeed because we were the only ones that kept standing upright. During the visit to the four sites, the Japanese delegation was accompanied by Kim Yong Sun, secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea who led the North Korean delegation in our talks. He was in a position to carefully watch us.

FUWA: You did a good job. I was glad to hear you report that you had behaved that way. When we had a meeting before the departure of the delegation we discussed how the JCP representatives should act, but we didn't anticipate any such thing would happen because we knew nothing about that "custom".

So what was the meeting with the North Korean delegation like?

OGATA: At the talks Kokuta on behalf of the JCP stated the party's view on how Japan-North Korea talks should proceed. When he finished speaking, North Korean delegation leader Kim Yong Sun said, "You have made a good statement."

When the delegation visited the four sites to "pay respects", we stood for reason in our behavior, but from the North Korean viewpoint, it was rude of us to behave that way. Hearing him approve our statement even though he had witnessed our behavior, I thought that they might act responsibly.

Channel opened for government-to-government talks

FUWA: So that was the first time in 20 years JCP representatives had contact with North Korea as members of a non-partisan delegation. Judging from the conversation the JCP representatives had with them, I felt that certain conditions were there for them to take reasoned attitudes. In the end the talks paved the way for government-to-government talks.

OGATA: That's true. It began with talks between Red Cross representatives on December 21, 1999 followed in January 2000 by talks between the two governments.

FUWA: Although Japan and North Korea held talks with some interruptions under complicated circumstances, this path in the end produced the "Pyongyang Declaration" in 2002. So the year 1999, which developed that path, was a very important turning point.

OGATA: Mr. Fuwa and I heard the news that Prime Minister Koizumi had announced his plan to visit North Korea when we arrived at Narita Airport from Beijing. I remember it vividly because it was soon after we held discussions in Beijing on the issue of Northeast Asia.

FUWA: I remember that we heard the news from Chairman Shii.

OGATA: I heard that there were differences concerning how to see the prime minister's plan. It was impressive to hear Mr. Fuwa immediately comment on the announcement, saying, "That's good." Our efforts following Mr. Fuwa's proposal in the Diet three years previous produced a North Korea visit by a non-partisan parliamentary delegation, which was followed by talks between the Japanese and North Korean governments, the Koizumi-Kim Jong Il talks that produced the "Pyongyang Declaration", and the return to Japan of five people who had been abducted and held in North Korea. I feel all these events formed a major current for negotiations.

Issues in the aftermath of the "Pyongyang Declaration"

OGATA: However, there are various problems arising in the aftermath of the "Pyongyang Declaration". Could you tell us your view of the emerging situation?

FUWA: This type of diplomatic negotiation is something we cannot easily comment on because of the complexity of the issue. We are not in a position to know what's going on in talks between Japan and North Korea, including negotiations behind closed doors simply because we are not a party at the talks.

If we comment on the on-going talks or try to present our opinions regarding specific questions, it could have adverse effects on the negotiations.

Of course we may have opinions about the talks at each phase, but there is no difference between the government and us regarding the objective of the bilateral talks. So we believe it appropriate to refrain from speaking up even if we have specific opinion. This is why we have exercised restraint.

In that context, a major development was made in the Six-Party Talks

which began in 2003.

IV. How Should We View 6-Party Talks on North Korea?

Multilateral consultations, new venture

OGATA: Talks between Japan and North Korea began with the aim of discussing all pending issues. In October 2002, when U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly visited North Korea for talks, it was revealed that North Korea was developing nuclear weapons, which has since become a major international issue. After various initiatives were put forward in a bid to solve this issue, China, the United States, and North Korea held 3-party talks in Beijing in April 2003. This later developed into the "6-Party Talks" in August 2003 with Japan, South Korea, and Russia participating.

Preparations are now under way for the second session of the 6-Party Talks. What do you think is important for Japan's diplomacy in the coming talks?

FUWA: I think it is important for Japan to have a clear understanding that the pursuit of a "negotiated solution of pending issues" has entered a new phase with an international character.

It is also significant that North Korea and South Korea, Japan, and China, Russia, and the United States are taking part in international consultations. It is also important to note that all the countries concerned with peace and stability in Northeast Asia are at the talks. If the 6-Party Talks can get to a reasoned solution of North Korea's nuclear issue, it will without doubt bring about an important clue to not only the resolution of the Korean question but to achieving peace and stability in this region. It will also have a potential to create a new framework of peace and stability in this region. Again, of course, I am talking about nothing more than potential.

Antagonism that appear in the pursuit of resolving the question of Korea is the sharpest between the United States and North Korea. If one of them exacerbates a confrontation at the 6-Party Talks, the other four parties can help to hammer out differences or seek a way out without intensifying the confrontation. In other words, the framework of the 6-Party Talks provides a framework of a reasoned solution to any difficult questions.

Every member has a part to play

FUWA: The developments and moves show that every participating country has a specific role to play.

Q: With the talks taking place in Beijing, China has a special part to play, doesn't it?

FUWA: It is clear that China is beginning to take a pro-activist diplomatic approach. In the first session of the 6-Party Talks in August 2003, two Chinese Vice Foreign Ministers, Dai Bingguo and Wang Yi, stood out as the main players visiting participating countries in preparation for the talks. In preparing the second session, China is playing a central role in helping the United States and North Korea reach points of agreement.

The JCP and the Communist Party of China normalized their relations in 1998. We have since used our bilateral meetings to discuss international affairs. So it is impressive to see China's foreign policy taking a major turn toward taking up a pro-activist role in the international solution of issues like the question of Korea.

OGATA: When Mr. Fuwa visited China in 2002, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, quoting an historical event of old China, said that China is not influential enough to play a major diplomatic role in the international arena.

FUWA: That's right. Four years before that, during my first visit after the normalization of JCP-CPC relations, they repeatedly explained to me that China after the confusion of the "Great Cultural Revolution" had maintained the basic position of trying to avoid standing out in international diplomacy.

When I visited China in 2002, we had many discussions leading up to summit talks, in which Jiang Zemin, the CPC general secretary at the time and I together expressed opposition to a U.S. attack on Iraq. With this, China took big strides in the effort to overcome a crisis of world peace. After this, China joined with France and Russia to publish a joint statement in the United Nations expressing opposition to the Iraq war. It was how China began to play its part in international diplomacy.

Positions of the U.S., Russia, and South Korea

OGATA: In my conversation with a French Embassy official in Tokyo shortly after the three countries published their joint statement in the United Nations, I referred to this diplomatic move. The French diplomat had not heard the news about it yet. He insisted that "China would not join in such a statement". Later in the day, he gave me a call and said, "I inquired about that information and found out that you are right. I commend your efforts to collect accurate information."

FUWA: Now, China has taken steps forward concerning the North Korea

question. Judging from discussions we have had with China, I well understand the meaning of this change. I would say that each of the countries concerned knows how important it is for China to play its part.

OGATA: It should be noted that the United States, which asserts 'unilateralism', is taking part in the 6-Party Talks with the view of solving the issue through multilateral talks. Explanation by U.S. officials show that the United States adopted the policy of promoting the 6-Party Talks after a careful and strategic examination of this issue instead of passively taking part in the talks.

FUWA: Russia's participation in the talks is also important because it has close economic relations with North Korea. The 6-Party Talks are attended by all countries that share borders with North Korea. If North Korea acts in contravention of reason to destroy the framework of the talks, it will have damaging effect on its relations with its neighbors. That is the crucial framework of the 6-Party Talks.

OGATA: South Korea is often referred to as a central player in talks on the North Korea question because it is part of the Korean nation. But the fact is that it is apparently restraining itself from standing out and that it is acting with a broad understanding of the whole situation.

Every country participating in the 6-Party Talks is conscious of their role. They are making efforts to maintain country-to-country contacts like the Japan-U.S.-South Korea discussion while ensuring that the issue is addressed multilaterally.

If the 6-Party Talks succeeds in resolving the North Korea question, no matter how time-consuming this effort is, this framework will possibly develop into one that will be effective in achieving a long-term peace and stability in Northeast Asia as Mr. Fuwa pointed out at the beginning of this interview concerning the prospects.

Nuclear weapons issue is the most burning issue for Japan

Q: Relations between the issue of nuclear weapons development and the issue of abduction of Japanese nationals are often referred to as an important part of the 6-Party Talks. What do you think of this?

FUWA: I would like to put forward several points that should be taken into account.

First, the significance of the nuclear weapons question. Japanese media tend to regard this as a secondary matter Japan is dealing with as a member of the international community, and the abduction issue as the major issue for Japan. It is incorrect to view the issues like that.

The issue of nuclear weapons development for Japan is the most serious question among all issues concerning North Korea. It was the Taepo Dong missile launch in 1998 that brought the North Korea question to light as the most urgent political issue for Japan.

This is not a temporary issue. The Koizumi Cabinet's recent decision to participate in the U.S.-led missile defense project is under fire in Japan and abroad. The government insists that the system is necessary for countering North Korea's missile threats.

In view of this position held by the government and the Defense Agency, solving North Korea's nuclear weapons issue is one of the most important prerequisites for securing Japan's peace and stability. Solving this problem means establishing an international framework that will remove North Korea's missile threats and will dramatically improve Northeast Asia's regional environment, which is essential for the peace of Japan.

Q: I see.

FUWA: For this reason, dismissing the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons as a secondary one for Japan to deal with out of the need to get along with the international community is a fallacy. Speaking of its relations with the abduction issue, a reasonable solution to the nuclear weapons issue will help establish a regional environment beneficial to a comprehensive resolution of the North Korea question.

It's important to establish the way to ask the rest of the world for understanding and support in resolving the abduction issue

FUWA: It's important to carefully examine how significant the abduction issue is in the international context. As I already mentioned at the beginning of this talk, North Korea must settle the accounts of all its lawless international acts. North Korea must not forgo that effort if it is to join the international community in a sincere manner. Such an effort is more important than anything else for North Korea's national security.

North Korea seems to believe that only a nuclear arsenal guarantees its national security. However, we believe that the most important condition for national security is to establish reliable, peaceful, and friendly ties with surrounding nations, abide by international laws, and gain the international community's trust. If the international community regards a country as a violator of international law, that country will be more likely to be attacked.

For North Korea the solution of the abduction issue responsibly with

Japan will be an important first step toward settling the accounts of all its lawless acts in the world. All this will help contribute to bring peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

In asking for international understanding and cooperation in the effort to solve the abduction issue, the most important thing I think is to request the rest of the world to know that it will help bring peace to the region. But if Japan only argues for its importance for the Japanese people, that won't be effective.

I want to emphasize that it is important for Japan to convince the international community that the resolution of the abduction issue will help achieve the main goal of establishing peace in Northeast Asia. This is how Japan should ask for the necessary and appropriate international support and cooperation.

From discussions with China

FUWA: The Communist Party of China is the only governing party the JCP has relations with among the countries of the 6-Party Talks. We have tried as much as possible to use our meetings with the CPC to discuss the international implications of the abduction issue.

OGATA: Right. In your visit to China in August 2002, you talked about the need for North Korea to settle the accounts of all its lawless international acts. Since the situation surrounding the abduction issue had made some progress when I visited China in August 2003, I discussed in depth the international significance of its resolution. I feel that our proposal was fresh to the CPC.

FUWA: How to put forward this issue in the entire context in the 6-Party Talks is a tactical matter. Having said that, I hope that the countries concerned will understand the character of this issue so as to be able to deal with it in an appropriate manner.

The resolution of the question of North Korea is a major task of Japanese diplomacy, which has an important bearing on Japan's future course. We will closely follow the 6-Party Talks and continue to make necessary efforts to achieve success.

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