

A GENUINE APOLOGY

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To apologize when you had hurt someone in some ways, is a common sense. You will be considered very immature if you are unable to do so. And this is exactly what Japan has been demanded to do by the Republic of Korea, especially regarding the problem concerning comfort women. The Japanese mass media has been very hot about this problem, so I'm sure you really don't want to hear my explanation about this topic, but let me make one thing clear with all of you. Japan is apologizing. Remember when Mr. Hosokawa visited Korea last month? In fact, it is still on the move to apologize more, if necessary. Some members of the cabinet are even insisting that compensation is necessary.

It all seems as if it is a positive movement. After all, Japan is "apologizing" and this is what all of us have been taught as a morally right thing to do. However, I believe that Japan should stop apologizing. Compensation is out of question. The reason is very simple. Because apologizing is not a right thing to do. Because there is no need to compensate. Of course, I do feel that what had happened during the war was a tragedy. And I do believe that the Japanese former army was the assailant, Korean people being the sufferer. However still, I am not willing to change my assertion. Let me explain.

Japan's apology, is not genuine. In fact it is only a mere evasion. I think all of you still remember how they first used to insist that they had nothing to do with comfort women, claiming that there are no materials to authorize the fact. And afterwards, every time the Governmental documents were found by the media which proves the connection between the comfort women and the former army, they kept on bowing their heads. It is obvious that the only reason why they apologize is to smooth over, and to avoid frictions. This is obviously very rude to Korean people, and very irritating for the Japanese. At least, I feel irritated. It is clear, that much of what is demanded by the Korean people is one-sided for Japanese. The demand for compensation is a typical example. Japan has already compensated to Korea in 1965, when the treaty to solve all the problems concerning 36-year-rule of Japan over the Korean soil was signed. Some people do claim that this treaty was advantageous for Japan, and that it was unfair, but then, I would like to ask a question. Isn't a treaty a treaty? If it is not valid, then what was the \$500,000,000 for? Where did it disappear? Yes, the money did not reach the individual victims. But that was because the Korean Government then, decided to use the money for the development of its economy, rather than to give it to the people. This is purely my personal question, but why aren't they suing their own government? To me, it seems as if it is purely a domestic problem. It's their own government that decided the usage of the compensation. Needless to say, this is

not yet a nation-wide movement. But I can clearly state that this problem concerning the comfort women did nothing good to the relationship of the two countries. If anyone of you the audience, including the judges believe that this problem helped the Japanese and Korean people to build a friendly relationship, then I'll leave this stage right now.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying that we should forget about this problem. Rather, I want Japan to better the situation. Of course I have much to say to the Korean Government as well, but putting aside for a moment I want my mother country to take initiatives to solve the problem. And it does certainly not mean bowing the head. Apologizing without knowing what they are apologizing for is ridiculous! Japanese Government should form a committee to make a thorough investigation of its actions overseas, especially in Asia during the war. The government should use its own money and people to grasp and understand what they had done in the past. It should not be other countries, organizations or mass media. And then, after grasping the whole vision, if they believe that there is a need to apologize, then that is the time when they should apologize for the first time.

On the contrary, if after the investigation, they feel that they have been demanded to do something that they feel of no necessity, then they should politely, but firmly refuse and reject it. If Japan takes such an action, the mood between the two countries will probably get tense. And I guess this is the situation that the present politicians are fearing. However, I believe that this will only be temporary. If the Governments of Korea and Japan truly aspire to maintain the positive relationship and to cherish it, then the relationship between the two countries will never be frozen, nor destroyed. Or, shall I say, it should never, be destroyed or ruined by such a thing. And I believe that it is much better than to maintain the situation as it is.

A diplomatic relationship is like a friendship - If I say this, I suppose, many of you will laugh at me, thinking that I am an unbelievable optimist. Of course, I do know that the relationships between countries are so much more complicated than the relationships between the individuals. However, a relationship is a relationship. The basics should be the same. Friends, don't mean the people who share the same vision and concerns. Their interests may cause a conflict. Friends don't mean the people who are agreeing all the time. Their difference in values may cause a conflict. However, friends are the people who have the willingness to overcome those conflicts. And the same thing should apply to the relationship between Korea and Japan. Willingness and sincerity; these are what make friendship and apology, a very genuine one.