

**Questions Regarding “Open Questions for PRC Prime Minister
Wen Jiabao” asked by Representative MATSUBARA Jin
of the Democratic Party of Japan**

**(Transcript from the May 25, 2007 meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign
Affairs, the House of Representatives)**

Representative MATSUBARA: Next, I would like to discuss issues concerning the relations between Japan and China. Recently, PRC Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited Japan. At around the same time, some scholars and well-informed persons submitted the “Open Questions to His Excellency Prime Minister Wen Jiabao of the People’s Republic of China.” It was just before the Chinese prime minister’s visit to Japan.

I’ll detail this a little bit. Prior to the submission of the Questions, some 30 members of the Diet both from the leading and opposing parties had met three times to study the issue. Though I am not sure how many of you present here today took part in those meetings, what we learned through those three study meetings is that a massacre in Nanking claimed to be true by the Chinese is not true. In fact, such a massacre never took place. We have come to this conclusion after verifying various views, documents and photographs.

If possible, I would like to have taken an effective action some time prior to Prime Minister Wen Jiabao’s visit to Japan. The Chinese Prime Minister’s visit would be a welcome opportunity and a friendly relationship between Japan and China should be duly estimable. And yet, on the other hand, China in prospect of the coming Beijing Olympic Games has been making aggressive moves such as scaling up the anti-Japanese memorial museum and spending for more pages in school textbooks for propaganda describing the so-called Nanking massacre, which is not true in our opinion. Against such Chinese actions, heated arguments are being conducted in Japan, and as I mentioned before, 30 Diet members from both leading and opposing parties met to examine the matter. It was our wish to do something about it on the basis of the facts we had learned during those meetings. Unfortunately time was pressing and we could not put our idea into action.

In the meantime, although we Diet members could not and did not take part in the action, the scholars finally submitted the “Open Questions for Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.” With regards to the contents of the Questions, all thirty of us Diet members did neither closely examine nor totally agree on the open questions. But it is true that

during the process of drafting these questions, the thirty Diet members eagerly participated in the heated discussions on the subject. With such a background, the open questions were asked.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, did you know of the submission of such open questions?

Government Witness SADOSHIMA (Senior official, Foreign Minister's Secretariat):

Allow me to answer. We recognized that the open questions dated April 10 were submitted.

Representative MATSUBARA: Minister ASO, were you informed of the submission of the open questions?

Foreign Minister ASO: I'm well acquainted with some of the thirty members.

Representative MATSUBARA: I see you are well acquainted with them. Does that mean you are also familiar with the process concerning how those questions came to be submitted? O.K.

Well, there are six items written in the Open Questions. As the questions were meant for Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, I fully understand you are not the right person to ask. But still, let me pose some questions to you. First, the Open Questions mention that Mao Zedong only once referred to the incident in Nanking in his book titled, *On Protracted War*, a summation of his lectures given at Yanan, China six months after the battle occurred in December. Mao stated "the Japanese forces had many surrounded, but not many killed." Judging from the context, though I cannot read Chinese, from what I've heard, Mao's intention seems to have been something like "Why didn't the Japanese forces totally kill them? If we had been in their place, we would have killed them to the last person," when he said "the Japanese forces had many surrounded, but not many killed." The statement that not many were killed implies also that the Japanese forces did not commit a massacre or other atrocities.

Therefore, it is my guess that considering the situation at the time when Mao Zedong addressed Yanan, since the Chinese communists were in the midst of a fierce battle against the Nationalist forces, he expected to benefit from the outcome if the Japanese forces were to totally kill the Nationalists. This is my speculation.

"How do you account for this fact?" was the question for Prime Minister Wen Jiabao submitted by Mr. FUJIOKA and other scholars. You are not Wen Jiabao, but what do

you think of this, Minister ASO?

Senior Vice-Minister IWAYA: Your honorable representative just mentioned Mao Zedong's book titled *On Protracted War* published in May 1938. I understand in the book Mao referred to mistakes made by the Japanese forces, one of which was that "the Japanese forces had many surrounded, but not many killed." But I am not quite certain what kind of observations of the circumstance at that time made Mao state "the Japanese forces had many surrounded, but not many killed."

I think he may have referred to the Nanking incident. In either case, there are a multitude of discussions over what actually happened during the Nanking incident. I don't think it appropriate for the Japanese government to comment on the matter in general.

Representative MATSUBARA: It may depend on how well Mao Zedong had grasped the situation in Nanking, but if there had indeed been a massacre claiming hundreds of thousands of lives, I imagine it would have been impossible for Mao to fail to speak out about it.

Secondly, and this is the most important part. The Nationalist Party under the United Front with the Chinese communists established the International Propaganda Office within the Central Propaganda Department in November 1937. According to the International Propaganda Office's top-secret documents entitled "Outline of Operations: International Propaganda Office, Central Propaganda Department," Harold Timperley produced a book titled *What War Means: The Japanese Terror in China*, which triggered the myth of the Nanking massacre. It is most intentional that Timperley published *What War Means* not in the vicinity of Nanking, but far away in the United States. To be brief, if the book condemning a massacre was published in the vicinity of the "crime scene," everyone would immediately know that it was a lie. If the book was published across the ocean, prospective readers would have no easy means to verify what was written in the book. This is a natural strategy for propaganda war and I suppose Timperley wisely followed suit. This is again my speculation.

What I would like to quote here is that 300 press conferences were held almost daily between December 1, 1937 and October 20, 1938, the period during which the Battle of Nanking occurred. An average of 35 members of the foreign press and embassy personnel attended those conferences. What the Chinese constantly emphasized was that the Japanese forces were totally to blame. This was done not accordingly to Mao Zedong, but from the Nationalist standpoint. The Japanese were inexcusable. The

Japanese committed this and that ignominy. It was the Nationalists' usual practice to make a mountain out of a molehill by condemning the Japanese forces to the bone in a strong appeal to the international community. They urged the foreign correspondents to globally spread the news of the Japanese atrocities and to form international opinion in their favor. They equally informed foreign embassy personnel of alleged Japanese cruelties. It was December in Nanking and from then on up until October 24 in the next year (1938), 300 press conferences were conducted to reveal trivia in minute details.

Nevertheless, they never mentioned that there was a massacre in Nanking. This is utterly mysterious. To put it simply, they did not mention it because there never was a massacre. If they had dared to breathe a word of a massacre in the press conferences, being held near Nanking, the allegation would have immediately turned out to be false. If the press conferences had been held in New York or some other remote places, the Chinese might have done well. But they never mentioned the atrocities committed by Japanese army in the press conferences held near Nanking simply because the lie would be immediately revealed. This is quite a natural conclusion.

The Open Questions point out that "not one of those 300 press conferences held over the 10-month period that straddled the Battle of Nanking was devoted to, entirely or in part, descriptions of Japanese troops murdering civilians or unlawfully killing prisoners of war." The second question for Prime Minister Wen Jiabao asks: What do you think of this fact? If massacres were committed, is it not a mystery as to why they were not mentioned?

Since Vice-Minister IWAYA answered the previous question, now let me have Minister ASO answer this one. Minister, please. It is of utmost importance.

Foreign Minister ASO: Well, I am clearly older than Representative MATSUBARA. As such, I am familiar with almost all kinds of war stories conjured up during long battles. It is quite true that propaganda strategy plays a major role in carrying out a war. The Chinese propaganda offensive produced another watchword: Poor China. The image of poor China was overwhelmingly spread throughout the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations in the United States. The Japanese were ignoble and the poor Chinese were pitiable. "Poor China" made it all across America, which was one of the most powerful and successful products of the Chinese propaganda machine.

In this sense, there is no denying propaganda war took place. But it was a most natural practice to resort to propaganda during war. On the contrary, it was rather unusual not to attempt any propaganda campaign. We should bear this in mind as a basic fact of war.

Next, the topic of Nanking has just been brought up. When Nanking surrendered, it was done without shedding blood. But the Chinese soldiers surrendered without submitting weapons to the Japanese. As a result, there were many “plain clothes” soldiers left. Well, this terminology is now obsolete, I think. That is, guerrilla as we call them today. There were a large number of guerrillas left in the city. Those guerrillas wore the plain clothes identical to what ordinary citizens wore. When some of the guerrillas occasionally got shot, at first glance they might have easily passed as innocent civilians, not being in uniform. In some cases, the victims may have actually been real citizens. As I was not there to witness, I can only imagine the situation then.

However, in reality, 300,000 is a huge number. Nanking at that time was said to be roughly of the same size as Setagaya Ward. If 300,000 were murdered in Setagaya Ward, almost everyone would be included in the toll. So the total of 300,000 victims of the massacre sounds extremely strange. A lot has been said about the Nanking massacre over the past 60 years, and of course, I am far from ignorant of them.

Through constant devoted efforts by many, like Representative MATSUBARA, Beijing has ceased to officially quote the number of 300,000 at least for the year that I've been in the office of foreign minister. That seems to be the recent trend. Anyway, it is very important for us to object to the misinformation as it is. I also feel that continuation breeds great power.

Representative MATSUBARA: The purport of the Open Questions is as follows. China succeeded in conjuring up the image of a poor China through a propaganda campaign including the 300 press conferences. If there ever had been a massacre of any scale, China, in the midst of such a propaganda drive, would have been most eager to mention it. They would have surely made a mountain of criticisms out of it. But in reality, not a line mentioned that civilians were killed in Nanking. Not to mention the scale of 300,000. Not a word was said about a massacre during the 300 press conferences held for invited foreign journalists and embassy personnel. That includes the very time when the Nanking massacre allegedly happened. They didn't report even five persons were murdered or ten civilians were massacred, let alone 300,000.

I wonder what sense we can make out of this. It seems natural to interpret it as the following. They could not talk about it because such a fact never existed. Not on the order of 300,000. Not even 30,000. Not 3,000. No, there never was a massacre.

I suppose if I pose this question again to you, Minister, you may simply say, “Is that so? Is there a question like that?” But I think it necessary to press the point. We cannot say it is finally all right now that the Chinese cease to insist on the number of

300,000. If there was a massacre, why didn't they say so then? Because they couldn't. The Nanking massacre was first mentioned in New York or some overseas publication, written in English. This was extremely strategic as well as totally unnatural. Do you perceive this is unnatural? All I want to hear from you is whether you find it unnatural or not. That's all I ask.

Foreign Minister ASO: As to the situations of those 300 press conferences, hearsay information is not very reliable. In later years people will say this or that happened then. While such hearsay information tends to be less valid, documents of what was actually reported then in 1937 and 1938 as facts are far more convincing. I understand what you have just pointed out is highly important information.

Representative MATSUBARA: I want you to understand the whole situation was quite unnatural.

The press conferences were held mainly for members of the foreign press and diplomatic experts. If the records of all those press conferences show that there was no mention of a massacre, what follows? Those press conferences were for professional eyes and ears, not for ordinary citizens'.

The third point is about the Nanking Safety Zone. As you may well know, the Nanking Safety Zone was created. It was done mainly by devoted efforts of the then missionaries. I have often asked questions on this subject in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. Regarding this subject, *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* was published in 1939 in Shanghai under the supervision of the Council of International Affairs of the Nationalist Chinese government. According to the data, the population of Nanking immediately before the Japanese occupation was 200,000, and it remained 200,000 afterward. It became 250,000 a month after the occupation. These numbers are recorded in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* issued by the Nationalist government's Council of International Affairs.

Let's look at the data. The population of 200,000 was recorded just before the Japanese occupation. I repeat, immediately before the occupation. It was 200,000 before the occupation and 200,000 after it. A month after the occupation, it was 250,000. If there ever had been a large-scale massacre, those numbers would have been totally unaccountable. Even a case of a small-scale massacre would almost be impossible, I think. What do you think of these data?

[The Committee Chairman left the chair and Deputy-Chairman ONODERA took the

chair.]

Senior Vice-Minister IWAYA: We at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs understand that there are various arguments over what really happened in Nanking, including the analysis of *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, which your honorable representative has just mentioned.

However, as our Minister has just replied, we hold the view that it is no denying there might have been some incidents of killing and ravaging under the chaotic circumstances at that time.

Representative MATSUBARA: I feel what you have just said is extremely risky. You sounded as if you wanted to admit there was a massacre.

In actuality, as I just said, there was no mention of any massacre at the 300 press conferences and there was no evidence of a population decrease. We are talking not about the data produced after many years, but the genuine data of 1939. Is there clear evidence to show, say, the population diminished to 100,000? There is no such proof. *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* is all we have for sure. The work was done by the administrative experts. It was the professional organization in Nanking.

There is no evidence to prove population decrease, while the only available data clearly show that the population did not decrease. We should stick to the facts. Considering all those points, it is nothing but right for China to refrain from mentioning 300,000. Even 10,000, 1,000 or 100 would sound equally unfeasible. Speaking to the extreme, if five Nanking citizens had been killed, the Chinese would never have missed the chance of using it for their propaganda. But there was no reference to an incident of five murders, which leads me to logically believe the situation then in Nanking was quite different from what had been loudly described as the Nanking massacre. In the light of our national interests, I believe we should continue to strongly assert the facts.

I would like to ask Minister or Vice-Minister, but since Mr. SADOSHIMA is standing by, I'll ask him instead. You've been working in a clerical capacity. Have you clearly presented this fact to the Chinese? At the clerical level, I mean.

Government Witness SADOSHIMA: Let me reply. As to the argument on the numbers you've just mentioned, I am not well versed in it. We've been paying close attention to what's going on in China. For example, we hear the memorial museum in Nanking is now under remodeling and repairs and is closed to the public. Every time something -- unusual or unreasonable comes up, we promptly examine and discuss the

matter.

Representative MATSUBARA: To be specific, for example, have you pointed out the data provided by the Council of International Affairs of the Nationalist government, namely, 200,000 before the Japanese occupation and a constant 200,000 afterwards and then 250,000 after the one month of occupation?

Government Witness SADOSHIMA: I'm awfully sorry, but as far as I perceive from what I have here right now, I cannot conclusively say either we have or we haven't.

Representative MATSUBARA: The Open Questions for Prime Minister Wen Jiabao is strictly based on facts. Particularly, Item One through Item Four. I personally feel Items One, Two, and Three would suffice.

You might feel these are quite tough questions for Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to answer. But what do we think of them? In Japan at present, as Minister ASO just said, 30 members of the Diet got together three times to examine the issue. We came to have reasonable doubts about what had been said about Nanking. There are even some Diet members who objectively believe that there never was a massacre, let alone 300,000 massacre victims. I'm not sure about what the most appropriate way to do so will be, but it is nonetheless urgent for Japan to confirm with China about the contents of the Open Questions.

What do you think about this in your clerical capacity?

Government Witness SADOSHIMA: In our clerical capacity, we are now in the process of verifying historical issues on both sides (Japan and China) through discussions and examinations among experts on the basis of objective facts. We think the argument over the Open Questions should first be made as part of this verifying process.

Our government perception as a whole is exactly what you have supposed. The position of the Japanese government, as far as I can say for now, is to go back to the perception.

Representative MATSUBARA: I think time may come when it is necessary for us Diet members to examine how to make the Chinese government effectively accountable for matters like the Open Questions.