

Questions to the President of Korea from a Japanese Citizens' Group

TO: His Excellency Mr. Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea
His Excellency Mr. Kwon Chul-hyun, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea

FROM: Fujioka Nobukatsu
Chairman, Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform

SUBJECT: The Spokesman's Statement in Protest Against Japanese Government
Authorization of a Middle School History Textbook

DATE: June 22nd, 2009

We would like to express our appreciation for Your Excellencies' efforts toward strengthening the friendship between Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Our organization, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, is a group of private citizens dedicated to reforming Japan's history textbooks. Since its establishment in 1997, we have been working diligently toward achieving the goals set forth in our Charter.

In keeping with that Charter, we produced a history textbook for middle school students, which was published by Jiyusha. In April 2008, we submitted the textbook to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for screening; the Ministry granted authorization on April 9 of the current year.

As soon as the announcement that the textbook had passed the screening process appeared, the Republic of Korea issued a "Spokesman's Statement in Protest Against Japanese Government Authorization of a Middle School History Textbook," and lodged a protest with Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since the only middle school history textbook to clear the screening process this year was the one published by Jiyusha, it is patently obvious that our textbook was the target of the "Spokesman's Statement."

The subject of the "Spokesman's Statement" was broached by Representative Hase Hiroshi (Liberal Democratic Party) at a meeting of the House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Science held on June 10. Subsequently, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform made a careful examination of the statement, and arrived at the following conclusions: the charges leveled therein are absolutely unreasonable and, furthermore, constitute interference in the domestic affairs of our nation.

Accordingly, we respectfully request Your Excellencies' responses to the following questions, in writing, on or before June 30, 2009.

1. The “Spokesman’s Statement” was issued on April 9, the same day that the results of the screening process were announced. The screening process is conducted in secret, and it is impossible for anyone outside the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to obtain advance information about textbooks that have received authorization. Therefore, we must assume that the Republic of Korea issued the “Spokesman’s Statement” on the basis of advance notice of the results of the screening process, or without the benefit of any information whatsoever. Kindly advise us which of these hypotheses is accurate; we would also appreciate knowing about the course of events leading up to the statement’s issuance.
2. The “Spokesman’s Statement” refers to “a history textbook based on a misguided historical perception — one that, even today, both rationalizes and glorifies past errors.” Please acquaint us, specifically, with the portions of *A New History Textbook: Revised Edition*, published by Jiyusha, to which this description applies.
3. The statement also mentions “some distorted history textbooks.” Kindly inform us, again specifically, which portions of our textbook this language is intended to describe.
4. It is our sincere hope that Japanese-Korean relations will develop into a strong friendship. However, when one party to a friendship continues to interfere in the domestic affairs of the other, as the government of the Republic of Korea has been doing, the friendship cannot deepen. We would appreciate knowing Your Excellencies’ opinions on this subject.

<Attachment>

PRESS RELEASE

TITLE: Spokesman's Statement in Protest Against Japanese Government Authorization of a Middle School History Textbook

1. The government of the Republic of Korea objects strongly to the fact that a history textbook based on a misguided historical perception — one that, even today, both rationalizes and glorifies past errors — passed the Japanese government's textbook-screening process on April 9 (Thursday), and requests corrective action.
2. The government of the Republic of Korea is concerned that the young people of Japan, who should be striving toward a future-oriented relationship of friendship and cooperation between our two nations, may acquire an erroneous perception of history from some distorted history textbooks, such as that previously mentioned.
3. The government of the Republic of Korea, again, calls attention to the fact that textbooks must not distort history, because an accurate perception of history forms the foundation of a future-oriented partnership with the Republic of Korea.

Contact: Japan Section

Release date: April 9 (Thursday)