

Disturbing trend: Japanese protesters use Nazism to attack Chinese, Koreans

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THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Racist chants bellowed from a loudspeaker and Hinomaru flags were waved at a rally in Tokyo attended by about 40 people following a young person dressed in military uniform.

But what set this demonstration apart from the usual protests against Koreans and Chinese were the swastika flags fluttering beside Japan's national flag.

"We will recover the honor of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany," one person shouted, as the protesters marched through a busy entertainment area of the Ikebukuro district.

The rally was held on April 20, the 125th anniversary of the birth of Adolf Hitler.

Although young Japanese protesters have recently increased their use of Nazi symbols in demonstrations, the rallies are not targeted at Jews. In their minds, the demonstrators seem to believe that Hitler was justified in trying to protect the German race from a rising threat, and that Nazi-style persecution offers way to save Japan from the increasing power of China and South Korea.

Their numbers remain small, and they may simply be disgruntled youth ignorant about history. However, their praise for a man considered the most evil in the 20th century has raised fears about where their movement is heading.

"One characteristic of the latest cases is the connecting of Nazism with calls spreading through the Internet to throw out ethnic Koreans and Chinese living in Japan," said Mitsuharu Akao, an assistant professor at Osaka University specializing in Jewish cultural studies. "As China and South Korea increase their presence in the political and economic spheres, Japan is being criticized for what it did during World War II. At the root of the latest trend is a feeling that such developments are a threat."

A 23-year-old man who was one of the organizers of the demonstration in Ikebukuro indicated that the group was prepared to take the next step against Koreans and Chinese.

"Anti-Korean and anti-Chinese sentiment has spread through society because we raised our voices," the man said. "We now want to push forward Nazism."

After graduating from a senior high school in Tokyo, the man found work at a food factory and makes between 100,000 yen and 200,000 yen (\$976 and \$1,951) a month. He continues to live at his parents' home.

During high school, he quit an extracurricular club because he could not get along with other members. That gave him more time to peruse Internet bulletin boards.

He found a political group and began to join its protests. He said he thought he had finally found a place he was comfortable in.

The adults he met through the group denied the Nanking Massacre ever happened and argued that Japan's wartime actions were an attempt to liberate Asian nations that had been occupied by Western powers.

Similar arguments were found on other Internet sites.

"I realized that talk about Japan doing bad things was all false," the man said.

He also suggested that Nazi Germany was justified in killing about 6 million Jews in the Holocaust.

"I believe that was a policy to separate the Jews who had been threatening the lives of ordinary Germans and to protect the pure blood of the German race," he said. "There are also doubts over whether Anne Frank really wrote her entire diary."

Ultra-rightists groups have consistently denied that Japan did anything wrong during World War II. They have also gone online to deny the Holocaust and argue that "The Diary of Anne Frank" is a fake.

In March, a man in his 30s was arrested on suspicion of damaging property by ripping up copies of "The Diary of Anne Frank" at libraries and bookstores in the Tokyo area.

During questioning by Tokyo police, the man said, "I could not forgive the fact that the diary was not written by Anne Frank herself."

Since February 2013, about 310 copies of the classic work from the young Holocaust victim have been found damaged at 38 libraries in Tokyo.

Toward the end of last year, Nihonbungeisha Co. published a book titled "Nemurenakunaru hodo omoshiroi Hitler no shinjitsu" (Truth about Hitler that is so interesting you cannot go to sleep).

The preface explains that the book is trying to spotlight some of the good things done by Hitler and the Nazis. The word "Holocaust" is not mentioned.

The book was distributed to about 8,000 outlets of the Lawson convenience store chain. But after criticism arose that the book's contents were not based on the truth, the publishing company decided to suspend sales about a month later.

Jewish conspiracy theories often arise during periods of social unrest or economic malaise. But large anti-Semitic movements have not formed in Japan, although sporadic incidents here have offended Jews.

Japan, in fact, still praises the actions of diplomat Chiune Sugihara, who has been called "Japan's (Oskar) Schindler."

Sugihara served as acting consul to Lithuania during World War II. In direct violation of orders from the Japanese Foreign Ministry, he issued transit visas to thousands of Jews fleeing Nazi persecution.

The Chiune Sugihara memorial hall stands on a hill with a panoramic view of Yaotsu, Gifu Prefecture, where he was born.

Hanit Livermore, 45, moved to Yaotsu 18 years ago with her husband who is also originally from Israel.

"I believe the young people of today accept Nazism without serious thought because they do not feel the weight of the persecution of the Jews," she said.

Unlike in Japan, it is a crime in France and Germany to display the swastika in public.

"I felt fear when I saw T-shirts with the swastika design being sold at clothing stores in Japan," she said.

Livermore was also shocked when her 15-year-old son, who was born in Japan, said to her, "I heard that the Jews were persecuted because they were rich."

In Germany before World War II, various harassment tactics aimed at Jews, including a boycott of retail outlets, were carried out. These escalated into laws that, for example, banned marriage between Germans and Jews, and eventually the Holocaust.

"Understanding the dark side of history involves some pain," Livermore said. "Even if there may only be protests now in Japan, it could possibly escalate to persecution of Chinese and Koreans if past history is not faced squarely."



Flipped pages of an illustrated book about Anne Frank at a library in Tokyo's Shinjuku district (Asahi Shimbun file photo)

'Japanese Only' banner at soccer stadium a microcosm of discrimination in Japan

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THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A "Japanese Only" banner at a professional soccer game made international headlines and led to unprecedented penalties. But such signs are not new in Japan, and some have even appeared at tourist hotspots.

It is true that some signs like these have been put up by people who genuinely dislike citizens of other countries. But many others say they had no intention to be discriminatory, and that their "Japanese Only" displays stem from the language barrier and problems with foreign customers unaware of Japanese rules and customs.

Two apparent reasons why these signs keep showing up is a general sense of apathy among the public and a lack of understanding at how offensive the words can be for foreigners in Japan.

That behavior was evident on March 8 at Saitama Stadium, where a large "Japanese Only" banner was set up at an entrance to seats at the Urawa Reds' home opener.

A 33-year-old company employee from Tokyo asked security guards to tell the soccer team to remove the banner. It remained on display throughout the game.

"Even though it was clearly discriminatory, people did not notice, or they just ignored it because they did not want to become involved," the man said. "The stadium on that day may have been a microcosm of Japanese society today."

The man said responsibility should be shared by those who displayed the banner, as well as the team and fans who ignored the banner. He also blamed himself for lacking the courage to remove it.

The J.League penalized the Urawa Reds over the banner by requiring it to play a match at an empty Saitama Stadium.

The Urawa Boys Snake, the group that made the banner, along with other fan groups that regularly cheer the Reds behind the goal, were disbanded.

The offending banner was apparently planned well in advance.

In February, a member of the Snake fan group tweeted: "We may have to take matters into our own hands and further worsen Japan-South Korea relations."

Hours before the March 8 match, three members of the group, intoxicated, brought in a white cloth measuring 70 centimeters high and 2.5 meters wide. They put the cloth on the concrete and spray-painted "Japanese Only" in black letters. The banner was set up beside a Hinomaru national flag.

Why was the banner set up?

The small amount of information still left on the Internet led to a college student, who said he was a Snake member but denied any involvement in the creation of the banner.

At his Tokyo campus in mid-April, the student, in his 20s, said he joined the group when he was in senior high school. He said there were about 20 members, including company employees and civil servants.

The student said he gradually began disliking China and South Korea because of the jeering from their fans at soccer matches.

"Their cheers are clearly 'anti-Japanese,'" the student said. "It is obvious to anyone who attends the games."

The Reds fans considered the area behind the goal as their domain, and some wanted to keep foreigners out of that space, the student said.

Although nationalistic emotions are common at sporting events, "Japanese Only" signs have appeared in areas of Japan that are geared toward tourists from overseas.

On Christmas Day in 2013, a 25-year-old American on his third trip to Japan visited the Imperial Palace and the popular Sensoji temple in Tokyo's Asakusa with a Japanese senior high school student. The two became friends when the student was studying in the United States.

On that day, the American said he wanted to eat "tendon," tempura placed over a bowl of rice, so they waited in line for five minutes at a well-known tempura restaurant in the Asakusa area.

However, the American noticed the "Japanese Only" sign at the entrance and asked what it meant. They eventually decided not to enter.

After business one day, the owner of the restaurant explained the purpose of the sign.

"It only applies when we are busy," the owner said. "We have no intention of discriminating."

The owner explained that the sign was put up mainly because of trouble caused by groups of Chinese tourists who stepped on the tatami mats with their shoes on or who ventured up to the second floor without asking permission.

"If we have to close business because of public hygiene problems, we will be the ones facing trouble," the owner said. "Who will take responsibility when that happens?"

The owner, who received a phone call saying the sign was inappropriate, showed a new sign that will be displayed at the entrance. It says, "Japanese Language Only."

Debito Arudou, 49, who was born in the United States but became a naturalized Japanese in 2000, has carefully followed the display of such signs for more than a decade.

Arudou said he found more than 50 examples from around Japan of signs saying "Japanese Only" or "Foreigners are not allowed." They were posted at a pachinko parlor in Hokkaido, bars in Gunma, Aichi and Hiroshima prefectures, a real estate agency in Osaka and a karaoke shop in Okinawa.

Arudou, who wrote his doctoral dissertation about discrimination in Japan at the University of Hawaii, asked whether the Japanese have ever imagined how many foreigners have been hurt by such words.

His interest in discrimination in Japan began in 1999, when he was teaching at a private university in Hokkaido. He was denied entry to a hot spring in Otaru, which he visited with his family.

In 2001, he filed a lawsuit seeking compensation from the hot spring operator and the Otaru municipal government. The following year, the Sapporo District Court found the "Japanese Only" sign posted at the hot spring to be discriminatory.

Whenever he found such signs in other areas of Japan, Arudou talked to the owners to ask their reasons. Some said foreigners made other customers nervous, while others claimed foreigners did not abide by Japanese manners. Half of the owners refused his request to take down their signs.

A bar in Kobe displayed a sign that said "Japanese People Only," but removed it after receiving advice from a stranger.

"A very kind individual told me that the sign was not appropriate," said the 51-year-old owner.

Kobe is home to many foreigners because consulates and universities are located in the area.

"There were fights or rowdy customers so I decided to ban those who did not speak Japanese since I was not fluent in English," the owner said.

Two years ago, the owner received an e-mail from a Japanese he did not know, saying the sign should be changed.

"I never thought it could be taken as discriminatory," the owner said.

After removing the "Japanese Only" sign, the owner placed a new sign in English that laid out the bar rules, including the various prices charged.

"I was lazy even though I knew that something could have been done if I just spoke to the customers," the owner said. "Nationality is irrelevant when it comes to loud or rowdy customers."

Both Japanese and foreigners now frequent the bar.



Signs saying "Japanese Only" can be found in various establishments around Japan.

Anti-Korea protesters attack Kyoto court's 'discrimination' ruling

November 22, 2013

By HAJIMU TAKEDA/ Staff Writer

KYOTO--A court ruling that said an anti-Korea protest constituted racial discrimination has done little to prevent demonstrators from continuing to hurl insults and "hate speech" in this ancient capital.

In fact, the protesters have a new target for their criticism: the Kyoto District Court.

On the Nov. 4 national holiday, a citizens group held a protest rally titled "Don't forgive the biased ruling! Demonstration for double revenge" in Kyoto's Shijo-kawaramachi district, which was crowded with tourists.

The group criticized the Kyoto District Court's ruling on Oct. 7 that ordered an anti-foreigner organization and some of its members to pay 12.26 million yen (about \$122,600) in compensation to a Korean school operator.

The court also banned the group, Zainichi Tokken wo Yurusanai Shimin no Kai (Group of citizens who do not tolerate privileges for ethnic Korean residents in Japan), from holding demonstrations within 200 meters of the pro-Pyongyang Kyoto Chosen Elementary School in Fushimi Ward.

The ruling said that slogans directed at the school by the group, known as Zaitokukai, were "extremely insulting and discriminatory."

Zaitokukai has appealed to a higher court.

At the Nov. 4 rally, the 50 or so protesters shouted "We oppose to the oppression of (freedom of) speech" and "We will never forgive the court judges." Many of them waved the Japanese Hinomaru national flag.

The protest was organized by the "Gendai nadeshiko club." The word "nadeshiko" can mean "Japanese women." The "double revenge" used in the name of the demonstration is a phrase from a popular TV drama.

The nadeshiko group says it shares the same purpose as Zaitokukai.

The lawsuit against Zaitokukai started after Kyoto Chosen Daiichi Elementary School, now Kyoto Chosen Elementary School, used a public children's park for physical education classes. The school, then located in Minami Ward, did not have its own athletics ground.

Zaitokukai began to protest the school's activities in December 2009, saying, "It is illegally occupying the park."

But some Zaitokukai members, using sound trucks near the school, also shouted, "Children are being educated by criminals" and "Go back to the Korean Peninsula."

The school operator, Kyoto Chosen Gakuen, sued Zaitokukai and nine members, saying the protests made it difficult to carry out ethnic education in a quiet environment.

One of the Zaitokukai members ordered to pay compensation was Hitoshi Nishimura, 45, who joined the Nov. 4 demonstration.

The nadeshiko club posted a message on the Internet telling participants to refrain from using violence or discriminatory words in the Nov. 4 protest.

But Nishimura has not toned down his words since the ruling.

"Korean schools are raising spies," he yelled through a loudspeaker on a sound truck. "Koreans have deprived (us of our) land."

A woman in her 20s also shouted through a loudspeaker that the Korean school was at fault.

"When Japanese people expressed opposition to (the use of the park by) the school, they were ordered to pay compensation. It should have been the opposite. This is discrimination (against Japanese)," she yelled.

Another woman who is a regular at Zaitokukai's demonstrations said she wants to help build a society that is good for Japanese people by making it difficult for ethnic Korean residents to live in.

The early anti-Korea protests, often featuring signs calling for "death to Koreans," were held mainly in Tokyo and Osaka amid rising tensions between Tokyo and Seoul over disputed islands and Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean Peninsula.

Although groups have been formed to counter these "hate speech" rallies, the anti-Korea demonstrations have spread to smaller regional cities around Japan.

After the Kyoto District Court ruling, legal experts began studying if Japan should enact a law against hate speech. But their opinions are divided because such regulations could restrict freedom of expression.

According to Eiichi Kido, associate professor of political science at Osaka University, Article 130 of Germany's Criminal Code, aimed at punishing those who make hate speeches, has also been applied to punish anti-war activists.

"The regulation is a double-edged sword," Kido said. "But hate speeches are instigating crimes. The time has come to fully discuss whether to regulate hate speeches by law."



Under the watch of police, demonstrators march in Kyoto on Nov. 4 to criticize the Oct. 7 Kyoto District Court ruling. (Hajimu Takeda)

Reining in anti-foreigner tirades a nonstarter in Diet

Politicians silent on curbing hate speech

BY ERIC JOHNSTON
STAFF WRITER
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OSAKA – Calls in the Diet for legislation to curb hate speech targeting foreign residents of Japan are being made even as the issue barely registers on the campaign trail for the July 21 Upper House poll. Over the past six months, demonstrations and parades against foreign residents, especially Koreans, have grown in intensity. In Osaka's Tsuruhashi district, home to large numbers of "zainichi" resident Koreans, a 14-year-old girl in February using a microphone loudly maligned Korean residents, saying she despised them and warned them to relocate to the Korean Peninsula or be massacred.

Her comments were reported worldwide and were followed in the months afterward by anti-Korean demonstrations in Tokyo and Osaka that grew, with protestors holding signs saying "Good or Bad Koreans: Kill them All."

Yoshifu Arita, an Upper House member of the Democratic Party of Japan who is leading a Diet effort to enact legal measures curbing such speech, says things have calmed down only recently after politicians began speaking out.

"On May 7 in the Upper House, (Prime Minister Shinzo) Abe said these demonstrations were 'regrettable.' Justice Minister Taniguchi used the same word. Chief Cabinet Secretary (Yoshihide) Suga also said these were 'not good things,'" Arita told the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan on Tuesday in Tokyo, referring to terms habitually trotted out by politicians in lieu of serious condemnation.

Over the past six months or so, it has been the rightist group Zaitokukai that has been responsible for much of the hate speech. Arita said this was not a coincidence. "Zaitokukai was established during the 'right-leaning' Abe's first administration in 2006 and 2007, and started escalating their aggression after the resurgence of (Abe's) Liberal Democratic Party and the advent of his second administration last year," Arita said.

Judging from Abe's rhetoric in May, Arita doubts the prime minister in particular would be seriously inclined to sign on to any sincere legislative effort to ban such virulent talk.

"In the most recent edition of the monthly magazine Bungei Shunju, Abe was asked about hate speech. His response was 'I leave this matter to the good conscience of the average Japanese,'" Arita said. "But politicians must take responsibility for trying to resolve this issue. The fact that Abe can make such a comment fills me with doubt about how seriously he's taking it."

Nor do most Diet members seem to want to mull legal bans.

In late May, a network of 84 human rights nongovernmental organizations conducted a poll of all 717 Diet lawmakers on how they felt about hate speech, getting replies from only 46, although they represented all major parties except the Japanese Communist Party and Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), whose co-leader, Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, drew international scorn over his attempt to justify wartime Japan's use of sex slaves, in large part Korean, for the military.

Forty-three of the 46 said they thought a national response to the rise in hate speech was necessary, while 41 said they supported the idea of the Diet investigating hate speech incidents. All 46 indicated the Diet should consider an antidiscrimination law that bans certain kinds of hate speech.

Arita said hate speech not only targets foreign residents and also has the potential to escalate.

He noted incidents in which politicians, during speeches that may touch on topics certain members of the audience may disagree with, find hecklers calling them "traitors" or "people selling out our country."

"These are words you see not only on the Internet but actually thrown in politicians' faces when they're giving their speeches. We've not really seen this kind of situation in Japan in the postwar era."

Justice minister criticizes hate speech in Japan but won't punish offenders

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Justice Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki denounced the spread of hate speech being used at demonstrations across Japan but stopped short of proposing any legal action against protesters.

Tanigaki, of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, addressed the issue at an Upper House Judicial Affairs Committee on May 9.

"I am very concerned about it. It goes completely against the nation's dignity," he said in response to a question by Yoshifu Arita, an Upper House member of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan.

Tanigaki did not, however, suggest a future course of action, saying only, "It's a very troubling issue relating to the freedom of speech," and "I'd like to watch closely to see whether such demonstrations will intensify

feelings of racial discrimination."



Justice Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki (Asahi Shimbun file photo)

Protest rallies using such slogans as "Kill the Koreans" have been carried out in the "Korea towns" of Tokyo's Shin-Okubo district and Osaka's Tsuruhashi district, typically organized by Zainichi Tokken wo Yurusanai Shimin no Kai (Zaitokukai, Association of citizens who do not tolerate privileges for Korean residents in Japan) and other protest groups.

An official at the National Police Agency explained why such demonstrations are allowed: "Under the public safety regulations, demonstrations can't be blocked simply because what they are calling for is rude or intemperate."

The official added that the agency will deal with any specific illegal action if and when it is discovered.

Japan became a member of the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1995. Article 4 of the convention sets forth provisions calling for the criminalization of hate speech.

But the Japanese government has suspended the provisions, saying actions to spread or promote the idea of racial discrimination have not been taken in Japan to such an extent that legal action is necessary.

The Foreign Ministry says the assessment remains unchanged.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe criticized the rise of hate speech around Japan during an Upper House Budget Committee session on May 7.

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