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We Need A Dictionary 辞典が必要

Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

Saito Minako（斎藤美奈子, 1956-) - Saito is an award-winning literary critic, feminist writer, prolific author. The translation below by **Yayoi Koizumi** is from her weekly column "Column of *Hon'ne* (True Inner Feelings)"

Tokyo Shinbun, October 9, 2013



Languages of politicians have always been treasure troves of lies and deception. But watching a number of new Japanese phrases the Abe Administration spews out one after another, I started to think that perhaps we even need a special new dictionary for this administration alone.

For example: With respect to the radioactive waste water from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, the administration used the phrase "being under control（コントロールされている kontororu sarete iru)." But the situation is such that it is actually more fitting to say it is "impossible to control（制御不可能 seigyo

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fukano）." Another example: the administration's proposal to make Japan "the world's most business-friendly environment（世界一ビジネスのしやすい環境　sekaiichi bijinesu no shiyasui kankyo）" seems to be rather more appropriately named "the best environment to prey on workers and consumers（労働者と消費者を世界一食い物にしやすい環境 rodosha to shohisha o sekaiichi kuimono ni shiyasui kankyo）." Here's another: the program called "The future where women shine（女性が輝く未来 josei ga kagayaku mirai）" - touted as part of an economic growth strategy - can be more readily understood as "the future where women are used till they drop (女性を使い倒す未来 josei o tsukaitaosu mirai）."

The administration's new proposal for "Special Districts（特区 tokku）" also reeks of fishiness. Aren't they actually talking about areas where the rules of law do not apply? Critics call the administration's term "Employment Special Districts （雇用特区koyo tokku)" "Unemployment Districts (解雇特区 kaiko tokku)." Professor Yamaguchi Jiro proposed calling the areas "Locations without Address（番外地 bangaichi）." Following his line of logic, what about calling it a "Firing Locations without Address (クビ切り番外地 kubikiri bangaichi)."?

The forerunner of this type of dictionary is *The Devils' Dictionary* (1911) by Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce. Although the book was written almost a century ago, when I read it today, it strangely burns inside me. The first entry in the Japanese language version (Iwanami Bunko, Japanese translation by Nishikawa Masami) is the word "patriot (愛国者 aikokusha)." It is defined as: "One to whom the interests of a part seem superior to those of the whole. The dupe of statesmen and the tool of conquerors." In turn, the definition for "peace (平和 heiwa)" in the book is given as: "In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting."

This makes me wonder, what "Proactive Contribution to Peace (積極的平和主義 sekkyokuteki heiwa shugi)" really means. Isn't it actually a principle to proactively abandon peace? Or perhaps a foreign policy to blindly submit to the U.S. hegemony?

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Notes

Profile of the author Saito Minako is available on a website managed by her publishing agent. Information about her is also available on Japanese Wikipedia.

The reference is to the lie Abe told in his successful bid to convince the International Olympic Committee to host the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

"The world's most business-friendly environment (世界一ビジネスのしやすい環境)" is a catch phrase the Abe administration

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invented to sell a series of deregulation proposals called "State Strategic Special Districts 国家戦略特区関連法案." Critics see these proposals as the administration's attempt to create "receptacles" for the acceptance of the controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement presently under negotiation. For example, on August 24th, 2013, the Tokyo Shinbun ran a critical special report titled "Unemployment Special District called "Employment Special District": Receptacle for TPP? The Dubiousness of the State Strategic Special District (「雇用特区」という解雇特区 TPPの受け皿？国家戦略特区の怪しさ)".

Abe used this phrase in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly on September 26, 2013 as part of a "Womenomics" policy that his administration is purportedly promoting.

[] By invoking lawlessness about the "Special District," Saito echoes the critics who charge these districts may become a virtual no-man's land when it comes to labor regulations. Critics are concerned with three areas about the proposed law in particular, summarized succinctly in an article called "Can You Work in Employment Special District? (雇用特区で働けますか)" in NHK's News Commentators Bureau's Commentary Archive (NHK解説委員室解説アーカイブス) posted online on September 26, 2013.

i. So-called "clarification" of rule of dismissal or firing – the new proposal requires the company to have written documentation as part of the hiring contract specifying under what circumstances an employer can fire a worker. In the event of a dispute over a dismissal, the initial contract is to be referred to, instead of the existing labor law. Critics are concerned that desperate job seekers in the current economic climate may accept unfair conditions set out by hiring companies. They also points out that this law allows companies to set minor infractions such as being tardy once as a reason for dismissal of a worker - thus the nickname "Unemployment District" in place of "Employment Special District."

ii. No mandate for companies within the Special District to award a full-time contract to workers – this proposed Special District law allows companies within the district to continue hiring workers without obligations to award a full-time contract to long-time part-time or temporary workers. With the Revised Labor Contract Act (改正労働契約法) in force since April this year, companies are obliged to award a full-time contract to workers who express their desire to become regular full-time employees after at least 5 years of continuous work either as a part-time worker or a temporary worker.

iii. Exemption from work hour regulations – in 2007, a similar bill was prepared for submission to the Diet by the earlier Abe administration applicable to all labor relations in Japan. But the attempt failed due to strong opposition from labor organizations. This time, the administration is reviving the law by repackaging it so that the exemptions will be applied only within the proposed special districts. Under this "white-collar exemption" law, similar to the one in the U.S., workers who earn more than Y8,000,000 a year will be exempted from the working hour regulations under the current labor law, and they will no longer receive overtime pay. Critics such as Morioka Koji, a professor of Economics at Kansai University, contend that this proposed exemption ignores issues specific to the current work environment exemplified in *karoshi* (death from overwork) and that these laws may rather aggravate the existing conditions.

These proposed laws for the Special District are purportedly to be applied only to certain companies such as a new business less than 5

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years old and those companies who hire foreign workers as more than 30% of their work force. The details of the law are still being worked out by State Strategic Special District Working Group (国家戦略特区ワーキンググループ), established in May, 2013 under the Abe cabinet.

The literal translation of "Kokka Senryaku Tokku Working Group (国家戦略特区ワーキンググループ)" is "State Strategic Special District Working Group." However, the Abe Administration translates this as "National Strategic Economic Growth Areas Working Group" on its website. The two give very different nuances. The official English translation emphasizes the administration's legitimacy in pursuing the policy by using positive-sounding phrase such as "strategic economic growth." But the Japanese original actually has no mention to "economy" nor "growth." In fact, the phrase may even emanate ominous tone to some as the word such as "kokka" (state, or nation) or "senryaku" (strategic) are somewhat reminiscent of verbatim used during Japan's total war mobilization effort during the WWII. But to some conservative elements in Japan even this may reflect refreshingly as affirmative for its certain aggressiveness, an attribute perceived by them to have been more or less annulled under the current postwar Peace Constitution. In this translation, the translator uses the more literal translation of "Special District" rather than Abe's "Economic Growth Areas."

Critics also point out that the working group is operating without consulting with the Labor Policy Counsel (労働政策審議会への諮問) under the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, (MHLW, 厚生労働省), and includes no representatives from the labor organizations but are run by a few select experts. According to the Abe administration's official website, the working group held five meetings between May and August, 2013.

It is also pointed out that the push for "Special Districts" is not unfamiliar to Japan's political scene. The previous DPJ Kan administration also used the term, as did the Koizumi administration prior to Kan. However, in both cases, "Special Districts" involved proposals for revitalizing rural economies. In Abe's case, however, the focus of "Special Districts" is on urban centers such as Tokyo, Osaka and Aichi; and the initiatives will be led by the central government in Tokyo and designed to promote interests of large multinational corporations, rather than to inspire local initiatives. See criticisms by Tachibana Toshiaki, a professor of Economics at Doshisha University, in the aforementioned special report of the Tokyo Shinbun (August 24) (in footnote 3). He points out that the plan will only benefit cities and large corporations while rural areas and small businesses will continue to suffer.

The "Special District" proposal is one of many controversial laws that the administration is pushing for at this moment during the special Diet session (臨時国会), which began on October 15 and will last for 53 days until December 6, 2013.

For more information about the "Special District" proposals by the administration, see:
http://www.huffingtonpost.jp/2013/10/14/rinji-kokkai_n_4098890.html,
http://www.huffingtonpost.jp/2013/09/20/abenomics_n_3965063.html
http://www.nhk.or.jp/kaisetsu-blog/100/168796.html
http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/politics/news/CK2013101202000116.html
http://www.jcp.or.jp/akahata/aik13/2013-09-20/2013092001_05_1.html
http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/tokuho/list/CK2013082402000134.html

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Other than Special District proposals, the administration is also pushing for controversial proposal of the Specified Secret Protection Law (特定秘密保護法案 Tokutei Himitsu Hogo Hoan), which would allow the Japanese government to arbitrarily identify matters it feels deserving to be classified as "national secrets," then to punish heavily those who seek or publish any information pertaining to them. Journalists, whistle blowers, regular workers, anybody involved with the "secrets" will be at risk. Also see Laurence Repeta's "A New State Secrecy Law in Japan?"on *the Asia-Pacific Journal* (October 21, 2013) and Jeff Kingston's report on freedominfo.org "Abe Promotes Secrecy, Sidelining Transparency and OGP" (October 7, 2013). See the footnote 5 for more about the proposed "Special Districts."

The Japan Federation of Bar Associations (日本弁護士連合会、日弁連) issued a statement on October 3, 2013, to oppose this law. The statement is available on the Federation's website. The Federation also published a 22-page Q&A brochure breaking down the critical aspects of the proposed law.

Yamaguchi Jiro (1958-) is a political scientist and public intellectual at Hokkaido University. He is a vocal critic of the rightwing Osaka mayor of Hashimoto Toru and formerly served as one of the main advisors to the DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan).

The Devils' Dictionary by Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce (1842-1913?) is available for free viewing at Gutenberg Project.

Abe Shinzo used the term "積極的平和 (sekkyokuteki heiwa)" a few times recently - once in the aforementioned speech in footnote 4 at the United Nations General Assembly on September 26th, 2013 and also on the day before, in a speech at an award ceremony at which he received the Herman Kahn Award on September 25, 2013. On both occasions, he used the English term "proactive peace," which was translated in Japanese-language media reports as well as on the Abe administration's official website as: "積極的平和 (sekkyokuteki heiwa)." Tanigawa Masayuki, a political scientist and Nepal specialist formerly at Nagasaki University, points out in his blog that the administration's verbiage is deceptive to the public, since the same translation word of "sekkyokuteki heiwa" has been used to indicate a radically different concept of "positive peace" proposed by Norwegian sociologist, mathematician and "the father of Peace Studies," Johan Galtung (1930-). Galtung's concept of "positive peace" does not advocate the use of force.

The Herman Kahn Award Abe received is bestowed annually by the Hudson Institute, a conservative think-tank based in Washington, DC. With the receipt of this award, Abe joined the ranks of Henry Kissinger, Ronald Reagan and Dick Cheney, becoming the first non-American recipient of the award. See the report on Wall Street Journal on this.

The official Japanese translation of the speech at the Hudson Institute is available at the administration website, along with a video with English subtitles. The original English transcript is also available on the same website.

The phrase "Proactive contribution of peace," is also often used by U.S. delegates to encourage Japan to support U.S. military activities abroad. For example, U.S. delegates are reported to have praised Japan's "proactive contribution to peace" in the recent APEC summit in Indonesia (October 5-7, 2013), for agreeing to revise the 1997 Guideline for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation. This diplomatic rhetoric along with the U.S. foreign policies in the region has the domestic consequence within Japan of giving a tool for rightwing politicians to promote their agendas such as Japan's more explicit rearmament prohibited

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under the current Constitution and therefore the constitutional change necessary for it.

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