

Letter From NEW YORKERS

New York Film Festival

Stacy Smith



In my previous column I talked about July's New York Asian Film Festival at the Film Society of Lincoln Center, and this time I'd like to discuss the New York Film Festival currently taking place at the same venue. The 56th year of this festival began on September 28 and runs through October 14, so you can still catch the tail end.

Three Japanese films were screened, including the eagerly awaited Cannes Palme d'Or winning "Shoplifters" from director Hirokazu Kore-eda. His newest film has a stellar cast of regulars such as Lily Franky and Kirin Kiki, the latter of whom passed away just last month. The Japanese title can literally be translated as "Shoplifting Family," and the family is a group connected by committing crimes to survive.

The latest from director Ryusuke Hamaguchi, "Asako I & II," was another anticipated selection. His previous film "Happy Hour" was five hours long, but this one clocks in at the standard two hours. Reminiscent of



"Vertigo," it tells the story of Asako who falls in love with a man who is physically identical to her previous lover who has disappeared. The festival also showcased Nagisa Oshima's "The Ceremony," a film from 1971 that depicts a family's unraveling over a quarter century.

(Stacy Smith is a Japanese interpreter, translator and writer.)

Website: www.stacysmith.webs.com Blog: jetwit.com/wordpress/category/wit-life

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



"Trade and North Korea were among the issues discussed with President Trump," said Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

ABE SAVES JAPANESE CARS FROM ADDITIONAL TARIFFS BY TRUMP; NOW IT'S TIME TO FACE NORTH KOREA BY HIMSELF

"Trade and North Korea were among the issues discussed with President Trump at a summit meeting held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly," said Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at a press conference in New York on September 26. The following are excerpts from Mr. Abe's statement:

"President Trump and I reaffirmed the Japan-United States alliance and its strong bond. While 1.74 million cars are exported from Japan to the United States each year, Japanese automakers such as Toyota and Honda manufacture 3.77 million cars on United States soil, creating 1.5 million American jobs. Investments worth \$20 billion and 37,000 new jobs are also created thanks to the bilateral ties. The president and I agreed that we should not reverse such a positive trend of matured free trade between our two countries. The president firmly confirmed his respect for Japan's position

on agricultural products, and he also made it clear that there will be no additional tariffs on Japanese automobiles.

At last year's United Nations General Assembly, President Trump mentioned Megumi Yokota (who was abducted by North Korea as a teenager). While new developments are unfolding, triggered by the United States-North Korea summit and other factors, I have been stressing the importance of resolving the issue of North Korea's abduction of Japanese nationals as early as possible. I am now determined to meet face-to-face with the leader of North Korea to solve the abduction and missile issues as well as issues arising from our unfortunate past. I will lead a strategic peace diplomacy in the next three years of my term. I would like to use the formation of my new cabinet on October 2 to mark a strong start in this regard." (Photo and Article by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kenji Nakano)

Joint Statement From the United States and Japan

1. On the occasion of our summit meeting in New York on September 26, 2018, we, President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, affirmed the importance of a strong, stable and mutually beneficial trade and economic relationship between the United States and Japan, recognizing that our economies together represent approximately 30 percent of global Gross Domestic Product. The president reiterated the importance of reciprocal trade, as well as reducing the trade deficit with Japan and other countries. The prime minister emphasized the importance of free, fair and rules-based trade. 2. Against this backdrop, we reaffirmed our determination to further expand trade and investment between the United States and Japan in a mutually beneficial manner, includ-

ing through further concrete steps, as well as to realize free, fair and open development of the global economy.

3. The United States and Japan will enter into negotiations, following the completion of necessary domestic procedures, for a United States-Japan Trade Agreement on goods, as well as on other key areas including services that can produce early achievements.

4. The United States and Japan also intend to have negotiations on other trade and investment items following the completion of the discussions of the agreement mentioned above.

5. The agreement mentioned above is designed to be mutually beneficial, and, in conducting those negotiations, the United States and Japan will respect the positions of the other government:

For the United States, market access outcomes in the motor vehicle sector will be designed to increase production and jobs in the United States in the motor vehicle industries; for Japan, with regard to agricultural, forestry and fishery products, outcomes related to market access as reflected in Japan's previous economic partnership agreements constitute the maximum level.

6. The United States and Japan will also strengthen cooperation to better protect American and Japanese companies and workers from non-market oriented policies and practices by third countries. We will therefore work closely together, through United States-Japan as well as United States-Japan-European Union cooperation, to promote discussions on World Trade Organization reform and e-commerce and to address unfair trading practices including intellectual property theft, forced technology transfer, trade-distorting industrial subsidies, distortions created by state-owned enterprises and overcapacity.

7. The United States and Japan will conduct these discussions based on mutual trust and refrain from taking measures against the spirit of this joint statement during the process of these consultations. In addition, we will make efforts for the early resolution of other tariff-related issues.

THE JAPAN VOICE is the English Edition of SHUKAN NY SEIKATSU NEW YORK SEIKATSU PRESS, INC., 71 W 47 St, Suite 307, New York, NY 10036 USA Editor in Chief: Ryoichi Miura, Associate Editor: Ashley Matarama, Editor: Kaoru Komi Advertise Here! Contact 212-213-6069 info@nyseikatsu.com

Advertisement

Focusing historical issue from the overseas point of view chapter 19

The Handling of the Comfort Women Issue by the U.N. and the Responses from the Government of Japan

The left-wing activists in Japan have lost many places for action around and after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 as the belief in Communism was shaken drastically by that event. Then, they found a place for action with the United Nations. They succeeded in selling the "comfort women issue." Attorney Etsuro Totsuka, who had long been insisting the Government of Japan should pay compensations to the ex-comfort women, was having difficulty in persuading the U.N. to take up this issue. But, once he started using the phrase "sex slaves" in explaining comfort women, the U.N. adopted the issue as a prominent one. He attracted considerable attention in February 1992 when he presented his comfort women being sex-slaves thesis at the U.N. Human Rights Commission. Also, he presented this thesis at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 and at the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 with considerable success.

Due to the growing concern on this issue, the U.N. Human Rights Commission appointed in July 1993 Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka as the Special Rapporteur to report on "the Problem of Wartime Slavery." She submitted in 1996 her report entitled "Special Report on Violence against Women" which had an appendix discussing the issues of comfort women. In this appendix, she used the phrase "sexual slavery" and

demanding that the Government of Japan had responsibility for providing compensation to the victims. However, this report is heavily reliant upon the statements from the ex-comfort women communally housed in a house managed by an organization heavily influenced by the North Korean regime. In addition, this report relies on George Hick's "Comfort Women" which depended on Seiji Yoshida's "My War Crimes" which was already known at that time as fiction rather than fact. Thus, the conclusions reached by Coomaraswamy were not based on solid foundations. Nonetheless, the U.N. Human Rights Commission voted to welcome the report and urged the people concerned to pay attention to the report. After this event, the notion that comfort women were sex slaves has become common knowledge in the world.

In the meantime in Japan, the "Kono Statement" was issued in 1993 and "The Asian Women's Fund" was established in 1995. In response to the actions by the U.N., Japan had decided to take the course of apologies and compensation. However, by considering the oppositions within the country, the Government of Japan decided to use mainly private contributions rather than budgetary allocation for funding the Fund. This was the way in which national planners thought they could overcome this national crisis. Nonetheless, the issue of comfort women has not

gone away from the U.N. Under the U.N. Human Rights Council which succeeded the Human Rights Commission in 2006, every time its committees met on Japan, the issue of comfort women was picked up, and the Government of Japan was demanded to make official apologies and provide compensation to the victims. In response, the Government of Japan expressed their willingness to take appropriate actions. This cycle was broken in July 2014 at the meeting of the Human Rights Committee. One Committee member accused Japan of not accepting legal responsibility and not providing compensation to the victims, calling them "sex slaves," the representative of the Japanese government team replied that it was not appropriate to call comfort women "sex slaves" and said that they were not "slaves" in light of the definition in the 1926 Slavery Convention. This was the first time the Government of Japan challenged the claims from the United Nations on this issue.

This revised policy of the Government was strengthened at the time of U.N. meetings of the Committee for Elimination of Discrimination against Women in February 2016. The Government representative Vice Minister Sugiyama declared in response to a question about the comfort women that (1) the Government of Japan undertook large-scale research on comfort women without finding any document which proved they were forcibly recruited, (2) it is inappropriate to call them "sex slaves" (3) there is no evidence that there were as many as 200,000 com-

fort women, and (4) the issue of the comfort women had been resolved with the Republic of Korea with the agreement reached in December 2015.

However, this issue has not been solved yet. At the time of the U.N. Universal Periodic Review of Japan in November 2017 and also the meetings of the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination in August 2018, the Government of Japan had made two moves: the Government team initially expressed sincere apologies with regard to the comfort women issue and consolation money already provided, and then later in the session the team stated they were not forcibly recruited, nor were they "sex slaves." As a matter of fact, the committee members were dismayed. As the team stated the Government made apologies and paid money, the committee members took them as proof of Japan admitting guilt. But, as the team later stated they were not forcibly recruited, nor were they "sex slaves," they took these words as excuses for lessening the degree of guilt. Thus, in the final opinion of the Committee, they accused the Government of Japan of trying to diminish the degree of guilt. Japan could not achieve what they wanted. For those committee members, the presentations by Japan's team were beyond comprehension. The first necessary condition for successful presentations at the United Nations meetings is to present a consistent set of statements. They have not yet made such a performance.

Koichi Mera, Ph. D. President, GAHT-US Corporation