

Is the Iraq War without “Just Cause”?

By ITO, Kenichi

The editorial of the Yomiuri newspaper dated 16 March 2008 argued against the criticism that the Iraq war was “the war without just cause.” The Yomiuri pointed out that the essence of the Iraqi problem would be misled without first understanding the long steps taken preceding the Iraq war. The editorial concluded that the decisions made at that time by the coalition forces led by US, UK and others to launch out into military operation and by the Japanese government to support it were unavoidable. Upon reading this editorial, I was struck by it as true and sincere. It was evident that such an argument would be unsparingly refuted by today’s “popular” opinions both at home and abroad. It must have not been easy for the editorial board of the Yomiuri to come to this conclusion. I knew this because this problem was not somebody else’s business but my own.

In my new book “The Advent of No-War Era” (Shin Senso-ron)” that was published last September, I stated that the Iraq war was not a “war” per se and that arguing whether weapons of mass destruction existed at the time in Iraq or not was a second-guessing. I reminded everybody of the fact that at the time not a single country or an individual including those who now criticized the US even imagined that there had been no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Under such circumstances what it would have meant for the international community if Iraq was left free of punishment. It was before the security situation in Iraq started to improve last summer that I was writing this book. All the public opinions I read both at home and abroad were unanimous in criticizing against the US. My friends who read my manuscripts kindly advised me, “If you include this view in your new book, it is certain that the book wouldn’t sell.” The Yomiuri article reminded me of this personal experience of mine.

In its editorial of 19 March 2003, on the eve of the Iraq War, the Asahi newspaper declared, “The problem of weapons of mass destruction is tied to Saddam Hussein. He should know that there is no support for him in the international community.” Despite that, the editorial of the same Asahi dated 18 March 2008, five years later, argues, “There still exist people who are trying to justify this huge historical

mistake,” and adds, “Even though the Iraq war is changing for the better, it is illogical to argue that launching military operation against Iraq led by the US was not a mistake.” Though it certainly is an easy way to win popularity among common people, it cannot be a way to serve as a responsible media. All the more, it is a great relief for the Japanese media to have the editorial of the Yomiuri.

(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. ITO Kenichi, Professor Emeritus of Aoyama Gakuin University, which originally appeared on the BBS "Hyakka-Seiho" of JFIR on March 20, 2008.)