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The TV Broadcasting Stations and Media Cooperating with the SDF in its Publicity Campaign, Too, Have the Responsibility to “Respect and Uphold the Constitution”

by Takao Sumii

Despite a wide viewership won by the serial dramatic programming, *Sora-tobu Kōhō-shitsu* (TBS)...

Sora-tobu Kōhō-shitsu (空飛ぶ広報室: The Flying Public Relations and Press Office), a TBS television drama (aired April-June in ten installments), which starred Yui Aragaki and Gou Ayano and which, in so doing, turned out to be receiving somewhat favorable responses from the youth, was a TV program that did not even hide its political drive: to advertise the extent to which the Air Self Defense Force is actively dedicated to its mission. The drama serial features a story line involving a woman TV director in a commercial broadcasting station who gets fascinated with the ASDF's image of the ideal people and strives to make a TV program intended to give publicity in the collaborative tie-in with the ASDF's Public Relations and Press Office so that the public image of the ASDF would ameliorate. The audience rating for this serial drama turned out to be 12% on average, reaching 14% at the most. A critic observes that this outcome resulted from a relatively high popularity among young people.

That it was aired in a time slot for *Toshiba Nichiyō Gekijyō* (東芝日曜劇場: The Toshiba Sunday Drama Theater) drew my attention to this drama serial. Time-honored owing to its duration, dating back to the foundation of TBS; *Toshiba Nichiyō Gekijyō* as

assigned a time slot for spectacular drama programs each complete with a one-off, self-contained story had given birth to many renowned works such as *Manmosu Tawā* (マンモスタワー: *The Mammoth Tower*) and *Ai to Shi wo Mitsumete* (愛と死をみつめて: *Staring upon Love and Death*), though it became a slot for drama serials in 1993. When the airing of Miyoji Ieki's *Hitorikko* (ひとりっ子: *The Only Child*), a 1962 drama program produced for this time slot and intended as a work eligible for submission to the National Art Festival, was cancelled right before the scheduled airing time; it sparked much controversy. This drama program is a teen drama with a man high school student as its leading character. It revolves around the plot in which he passes the entrance exam of the National Defense Academy of Japan, though he comes to question the validity of the existence of the Self Defense Force and subsequently declines to enter the academy. After it caught the ears of the right wing activists and provoked leading political figures to take action, exerting their influence on the sponsoring company, Toshiba; the cancellation followed.

Is the SDF Public Relations and Press Office's Carpet Bombing TV Strategy Paving the Way for Instituting "the National Defense Force"?

As if to synchronize them with the unfolding of the story of *Sora-tobu Kōhō-shitsu*, the TV broadcasting stations aired program after program covering the SDF between March and April. *NHK Nyūsu Sebun* (NHK ニュース 7: The NHK News 7) and *Shinsou Houdou* (真相報道: The Truth-Broadcasting) *Bankisha!* on *Nihon Terebi* (日本テレビ: The Nippon Television Network Corporation) featured a story of the Blue Impulse's return to the Matsushima Air Base with which they are affiliated after an interval of two years with their focus on the extent to which the Blue Impulse members are dedicatedly working hard with their sense of mission. In addition, news programs and infotainment-variety shows resulting from the planning made on the initiative of the SDF were frequently broadcasted during this period. Certainly, the SDF's strategy for public relations and press release had been extremely artful. However, the TV broadcasting stations, hold I, overstepped the mark as the information media committed to journalism in uncritically and unskeptically buying into the strategy and engaging themselves in the joint program-making carried out according to the SDF's self-glorifying planning.

Since March 11, 2011, together with the SDF's publicity campaign glorifying themselves as "acknowledged by the Japanese people in our rescue and relief-providing

operations,” the Liberal Democratic Party carries its own draft of the revised constitution by which the SDF would “be converted into the National Defense Force” and be “dispatched abroad” as a staple of its party platform in the upcoming election for the House of Councilors. Though *Sora-tobu Kōhō-shitsu* is certainly a piece of entertainment, a sinister political intention, into which I cannot thoughtlessly buy lurking behind it comes into view on and off.

Meanwhile, the Abe-presided LDP and *kokubō-zoku* (国防族: the Diet members representing the military and national defense interests) turned out to be over-optimistic about the realization of their political goal. *Kenpō 96-jō no Kai* (憲法 96 条の会: The Association of the 96th Article) launched on June 14 witnessed its event venue filled beyond capacity. On the grounds that such a “means is unfair,” even some of the pro-revision scholars and of the leading political figures in the LDP publicly came out against the LDP proposal to lower the hurdle involved in the procedure for the constitutional revision which reduces the required Diet members’ votes from at least two thirds of all of the members of each of the two Houses to a simple majority of all members in each of the two Houses. With this opposition from “within,” dissenting voices against the constitutional revision on the LDP’s initiative are spreading nationally and are about to develop into a large-scale, popular movement. Such growing oppositions even led the Prime Minister Shinzō Abe himself to admittedly state that the LDP draft might be “voted down in the national referendum” in response to the Diet deliberations.

Public Opinion is Upholding the Current Constitution, and the Media Have the Responsibility to Follow Suit

The public opinion poll conducted by some media clearly demonstrates this trend against the constitutional revision. Public opinion, as these media-conducted polls show it, is standing in the way of the realization of the LDP-proposed idea of revising the 96th article (e.g. the Asahi Newspaper found in its survey 54% disagreed with the this idea while 39% agreed). Furthermore, according to the Kyoto Newspaper dated June 16, the results of its poll show that 55% are upholding the 9th Article where the renunciation of war and the non-maintaining of military power are proclaimed, while 53% are opposed to the governmental exertion of the right to collective self-defense (identifiable as overseas dispatch of the SDF). Contrary to expectation, the Abe-agenda which attempts to convert the SDF into the self-styled National Defense Force both in name and reality

and to legalize the overseas dispatch of military troops is not going unchallenged.

The 99th Article of the current Constitution reads, “The Emperor or the Regent as well as Ministers of State, members of the Diet, judges, and all other public officials have the obligation to respect and uphold this Constitution.”ⁱⁱ Since the media bear a social responsibility, the media, too, “have the obligation to respect and uphold the Constitution,” don’t they?

The Translator’s Notes

ⁱ The word *Bankisha* used in the official Japanese title for the program is written in Katakana (as follows: バンキシヤ). Though there is nothing officially released that supports this, considering that the two words share the spelling in Kana, I assume that this Katakana word is named after 番記者, a Japanese word for or referring to a reporter whose role is to keep track of particular, usually important individuals in order to get the most latest and up-to-date information.

ⁱⁱ The official English version of the full text of the current Constitution of Japan is available at Constitution of Japan, The Birth of the Constitution of Japan/National Diet Library, <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c01.html> (accessed October 17, 2013). Unless otherwise mentioned, all the English translation of the passages cited from the Constitution of Japan is transcribed from this online page.