

# COMMENTARY

## Vogel: We must respect Russia, engage China

The Daily Yomiuri

**P**rof. Bernhard Vogel, a veteran German politician and chairman of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation—a nongovernmental organization affiliated with the ruling Christian Democratic Union—visited Tokyo recently and discussed the upcoming Group of Eight summit meeting in Hokkaido, the Beijing Olympics and other international issues with Akira Komoto, managing editor of *The Daily Yomiuri*. The following are excerpts from their conversation.

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**Akira Komoto:** At the upcoming Group of Eight summit meeting in Toyakocho, Hokkaido, global warming will be one of the topics of discussion. We hope the summit to set a long-term goal of halving the emission of greenhouse gases by 2050. What results do you think this summit should attain if it is to be remembered as a success?

**Bernhard Vogel:** It is good to hear that Japan is keeping the German initiative on climate change [at the Heiligendamm summit last year] on the top of this summit's agenda. I believe it important that all the G-8 members, including the United States, should make firm commitments on emissions reduction. It is also clear that industrialized countries have to reduce them more than developing countries, who will only become able to have the means to make substantial reductions in the future.

**What do you think industrialized countries such as Germany, Japan and members of the European Union can do to help developing countries reduce emissions of greenhouse gas?**

They should join forces to aid developing countries. But it is important that their aid is geared not only toward hunger, but also toward developing structures that will enable them to tackle environmental issues, including global warming, in the future.

**My next question is about the Beijing Olympics. Are democratic countries around the world, such as Germany, Japan and the United States, expressing clearly enough that we are concerned with democracy and human rights in China?**

I believe boycotting the Beijing Olympics is unproductive because we will lose an opportunity to have many journalists visit and report about China, and to discuss freedom and human rights in the country. We deplore China's ways of dealing with ethnic and religious minorities, but at the same time, we welcome its openness to receive relief assistance from foreign countries to deal with aftermath of the earthquake in Sichuan Province.

**Do you think it is more important to engage with China rather than to isolate it?**

Yes. There is no need to isolate China.

**Currently, Russia has an unprecedented dual power structure—Vladimir Putin as prime minister and Dmitry Medvedev as president. Do you think democratization will begin in the near future, or will the trend toward a police state and oppression of mass media that started in Putin's period continue?**

It is difficult to say that Mr. Putin promotes full-fledged democracy, but we have to acknowledge that it is Mr. Putin who has brought Russia back to a more stabilized and better governed state than before. How the relationship between Mr. Putin and Mr. Medvedev will develop is very difficult to foresee. But if it is true that the new Russian president wants to realize more freedom of the press, more democracy and more independence of the judiciary, the other democracies should support him.

**Do you think Russia could be a regional military threat again for North Atlantic Treaty Organization member countries?**

Russia apparently has a desire to be acknowledged as a major world power once again. We should show a certain understanding for this desire. I personally believe that the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran pose greater threats to the world than Russia.

**Why do you think we have to show a certain understanding to Russia's desire for supremacy?**

We very much welcome the collapse of the communist world. But this does not mean we have to discredit Russia itself as a nation.

**The United States is planning to deploy a missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland, which Russia opposes. Washington says the deployment is intended to protect Europe from Iran's long-range missiles. Do you agree with the U.S. explanations? How serious is the nuclear threat from Iran for Europe?**

The U.S. attitude is understandable for me, but it will be very difficult for Russia to understand that. But it is deplorable that the United States did not discuss the issue beforehand with its European friends. I propose that this problem should be put on the agenda that should be discussed after the U.S. presidential election. Germany takes Iran's possible threat very seriously, particularly against Israel.



Bernhard Vogel

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