

## POSTWAR JAPAN AND THE U.S.A.

Toshio Nishi

America bombed Japan to debris. It is now threatened by the miracle of Japanese recovery and prosperity. Not only America but the entire world appears to be fascinated by Japan's phenomenal rise in the world economy. How did Japan pull it off?

It is thought that there must be some "top secrets" hidden deeply in the labyrinth which is Japanese society. Many foreign scholars and industrialists eagerly pry at Japanese business management as the source of Japan's success. But they are looking in the wrong places. The Japanese "miracle" is sold openly in Japan. The "miracle" is that country's educational systems—public and private—which breeds Japanese talent.

Japan's greatest resource is the resilient intelligence of its people. It was this intelligence that was responsible for the remarkable postwar reconstruction and democratization. The Japanese have an insatiable appetite for learning; indeed, school or education is viewed as essential to the life of Japanese society. One does not "quit" school unless prepared to live with social ostracism, the most painful punishment in Japan's tightly-knit society. Japanese pupils, from the first grade in elementary school, clearly understand this ethos of learning. Also, it is in the school where group loyalty, hard work, drive for excellence, perseverance and self-discipline—ingredients precious to winning—are taught as vigorously as mathematics. That is why the Japanese are obsessive and

protective about their educational system; a system which perpetuates Japan's most serious sickness since the end of World War II.

The grim aspects of this illness, which is in essence the price we have paid for our single-minded pursuit for material affluence, has been exposed by the recent condemnation of Japanese textbooks by the Chinese (Beijing) and South Korean governments.

It is unprecedented in the history of the East and West that a nation's textbook designed for its own domestic consumption becomes a star in an international controversy. The origin of this unique drama lies in the ordinary Japanese language and the Education Ministry's changing of the word "invasion" to "advance." In the 1930s, Imperial Japan "advanced" into mainland China, not "invaded."

Granted, it was a questionable semantic alchemy. However, the Chinese (Beijing) and South Korean governments continued in their self-righteous denunciation, insisting that the wealthy Japan of the 1980s was trying to justify its shameful imperialistic expansion in Asia of the 1930s.

Granted, the Education Ministry changed the word through its pre-publication "screening" of every textbook manuscript. ("Screening" is a softer word for "censorship" some critics insist, and a constitutional fight over the Ministry's authority has been going on for more than a decade.)

Granted, this change pained the combative Japan's Teachers Union. (The Teachers Union—which borders on radical left or friendly Marxist—accused the Japanese government of brainwashing the students for militarism and war.)

The Japanese government, a potent coalition of conservatives, could afford to ignore the domestic cries and screams. What, however, has it done to deal with the Chinese and Korean interference with Japan's internal affairs? With *kamikaze* speed, and an equally dedicated recklessness, the Japanese apologized to both governments and restored the original word, "invasion." The Japanese apology confirmed to the Chinese and Korean governments their initial suspicion that Japan was, indeed, trying to erase its past atrocities.

To illustrate the absurdity of this affair, imagine if the British government condemned the American War for Independence in American school textbooks. The British might say that George Washington was a "terrorist" and not a "patriot." I am sure the Americans would not apologize for taking the Thirteen Colonies away from the British Empire.

Japanese amenability to external pressure is our most pathetic and debilitating sickness. No backbone, no principle, and no guts is the foreign policy of postwar Japan. Still worse, for the past twenty years the Japanese has elevated its spineless behavior to the art of surrealism—



calling it the "separation of politics and economics." This does not mean we practice politics. We have concocted this original policy to make money without being bothered by nonprofitable politics abroad. Put more bluntly, we are scared stiff of world politics. Fortunately for us, our big-brother America loves politics, especially of global dimension. Indeed, big-brother America armed with ICBMs has been insisting, until very recently, that little-brother Japan armed with bamboo spears stay out of the Pacific Ocean. We swallowed our huge pride (we have it!), put on an inscrutable face to hide the numbing pain, and followed right behind big-brother America. After America pacified the messy field of *realpolitik* (that is, fighting Communists and terrorists), we moved in, with a bow, to practice *realeconomics* with a vengeance.

But that is not a very honorable way to make a living for the nation which proudly calls itself the Land of the Rising Sun. Yet it is not easy to get out of the habit, the mutually beneficial habit that America and Japan have cultivated together since August 1945. Why mutual? Right after World War II the American people enjoyed a glowing sense of righteousness, the awesome responsibility of colossal power, a warm feeling of immense wealth, and an enormous pride in their accomplishment. And, the thoroughly emaciated Japanese were mesmerized by the brilliant halo of American omnipotence, and behaved like a bunch of conniving but, mind you, able slaves. True, the Americans were incomparably generous and the Japanese have been sincerely grateful and indebted for that. The Americans probably did not intend to subjugate the Japanese by this sort of moral obligation.

Now the Americans suffer from the pervasive sense of self-doubt, frightening encroachment of impotence, and cold draft of fading affluence. Still intact, though, is an enormous pride. Such pride is good when it is used to pull out of the present dismal state of affairs; bad when it is used, out of envy, as punishment to a successful partner.

"American punishment" is, again, nothing new to us, either. Ever since our unconditional surrender in 1945 we have repeatedly endured a series of humiliations. And, to our dismay, the Americans do not realize their insensitivity to us. Because we do not complain, we are kicked around for fun and to vent their increasing frustration about their own failures. We understand the origin of American arrogance toward us. We say—and keep saying—to ourselves, "We lost the war."

The root of this subservient Japanese behavior began with the US occupation of defeated Japan, which lasted from August 1945 to April 1952. The US government called the occupation the "political reorientation of Japan" and wanted to teach the warmongering Japanese race the virtue of peace and democracy. President Harry S. Truman appointed General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers and gave him vast, unprecedented discretionary power to rule Japan. MacArthur took all this power for granted, and demonstrated his supreme authority when he told the US Senate, in May 1951, that his orders to the Japanese people "were not subject to the controls of any higher authority." His words were the law of the land.

Believing as he did that the Japanese mind was thoroughly addicted to an autocratic order of authority, MacArthur stood majestically on the pinnacle of the Japanese society, which, he said, was four hundred years behind the West.

The Japanese people and their government willingly acquiesced in MacArthur's supremacy. This the occupying Americans did not expect. MacArthur's devoted staff, nonetheless, explained the Japanese obedience as the natural result of MacArthur's "brilliant appraisal of the oriental mind."

As a precondition for the growth of democracy, MacArthur ordered the Japanese government to search out all militarists and fanatic nationalists, those who were once called true patriots. The Japanese political, economic, and intellectual establishments were scrutinized one level after another. All conspicuous imperial promoters of the war who had not yet committed honorable suicide were immediately caught and, after the Tokyo Military Tribunal, hanged or imprisoned. The less obvious ones were eventually discovered and then purged from the public and private sectors. Millions of ordinary Japanese were screened, and those purged numbered between two and three hundred thousand. The people's disillusionment with their militaristic leaders (because they *lost*, not started, the war)—disillusionment fanned by MacArthur—sustained the intensity of the nationwide purge. MacArthur's term of this massive hounding of the undesirable Japanese militarists were "moral disarmament." "Armament" became "immoral."

To MacArthur, who dictated the hearts and minds of the Japanese people, Japan's unconditional surrender signified something more than a mere military defeat. It symbolized "the collapse of a faith," a collapse that "left a complete vacuum morally, mentally, and physically." The moral vacuum that MacArthur perceived in the Japanese soul was to be filled by a specific theological doctrine. Christianity, he believed,





Classroom Scene, Tsukaba Grade School, Tsukaba, Japan

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was imbued with "a spiritual repugnance of war." He, therefore, tried to create in defeated Japan "a complete spiritual reformation," effective not only now but for generations to come, that would liberate the Japanese people "from feudalistic slavery to human freedom, from the immaturity that comes from mythical teachings and legendary ritualism to the maturity of enlightened knowledge and truth, from the blind fatalism of war to the considered realism of peace." He proudly explained that his policy for the occupation of Japan was based squarely on the Sermon on the Mount. Hence, Japan was "the world's great laboratory for an experiment" in which "a race, long stunted by an ancient concept of mythological teaching" could be uplifted by "practical demonstrations of Christian ideals."

Christianity, to MacArthur, had "a spiritual quality which truly reflected the highest training of the American home." "Whenever possible," he recalled, "I told visiting Christian

ministers of the need for their work in Japan. 'The more missionaries we can bring out here, the more occupation troops we can send home, the better.' The Pocket Testament League, at my request, distributed 10 million Bibles translated into Japanese. Gradually, a spiritual regeneration in Japan began to grow."

No, it did not even begin! Many Japanese eagerly accepted those Bibles because the paper served as a cheap substitute for the high-priced cigarette paper on the black market. As of December 31, 1948, Japanese Christians numbered 342,607. This was only 0.6 percent of the Japanese population, about the same as before MacArthur arrived in Japan.

Although the Japanese did not understand Christianity well, terrestrial "peace" and "democracy" they learned extraordinarily well. But, then, to MacArthur, teaching the Japanese was not difficult at all. His evaluation of the Japanese mental ability, after living in Japan for six years, was this: "If the Anglo-Saxon was, say, forty-five years of

age in his development in the sciences, the arts, divinity, culture, the Germans were quite as mature. The Japanese, however, in spite of their antiquity measured by time, were in a very tuitionary condition. Measured by the standards of modern civilization, they would be like a boy of twelve as compared with our development of forty-five years."

To teach those juvenile Japanese the right stuff, MacArthur invited the US Education Mission in March 1946. The mission, composed of 27 prominent American educators, stayed in Japan one month and issued its report. The mission's most revolutionary, if not bizarre, recommendation was the Japanese language reform. Why this reform? Because the difficult Japanese language stunted the Japanese people's intellectual growth. Too difficult, the mission said, for the Japanese to learn it and, hence, mass illiteracy resulted. (We did not know that!) And, that ignorant mass waged an immoral war and, justly, lost it.



So, to become smart, democratic, and peaceful, the mission urged the Japanese to abolish the written Japanese language and adopt a phonetic writing system—the English alphabet. Was there any historical evidence for an intimate relationship between phonetic written language and democracy? Both Germany and Italy, the two of our best allies in the war, had had such language for some time. Fortunately, MacArthur wisely ignored the mission's zealous nonsense.

In MacArthur's mind there was a far more important objective for his Japan: Japan would never again become a threat to the United States. To ensure future Japan was physically incapable of fighting, as MacArthur put it, "even for preserving its own security," he formulated the now infamous Article 9 of the new Japanese Constitution, which his proteges wrote in one week. "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order," MacArthur declared in the Japanese Constitution, "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international dispute." To accomplish this lofty aim, "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized."

MacArthur expounded this flaming idealism upon every Japanese pupil. His alert staff censored all textbook manuscripts and deleted such undesirable words as "patriotism." MacArthur preached to the Japanese that one's "patriotism" implied his propensity to fight for his country and thus contradicted Japan's new "pacifism." His preaching worked wonders. Even now the word "patriotism" is taboo in Japan. The Japanese people are either hallucinating in a floating world or dangerously hooked on the purest grade of pacifism.

I am afraid that during the United States' occupation the Japanese race was reduced—in the name of peace and democracy—to become eunuchs who have kept serving faithfully the great empire across the Pacific. As long as Japan continues in this servitude, there is no future of any consequence for Japan. No doubt postwar Japan's gutless behavior stems from one vivid physical fact that Japan has no usable weapons to defend itself. And, all other nations know it and treat Japan accordingly.

The Japanese government, perhaps, has recognized life is not worth living without self-respect. Hence, by changing the word from "invasion" to "advance" the Education Ministry hoped the students might cultivate a new and more positive appreciation for the nation's glorious past. It was the official attempt to breed patriotism. It was a stupid move. It was, too, none of China's or South Korea's business.

I am neither arguing that Japanese history, particularly that of Imperial Japan, is correct as it is presented in Japanese textbooks, nor am I defending the Education Ministry. But I do say that, since the end of World War II, there has been a collective effort on the part of Japanese scholars (who tend to be liberal, if not outright Marxist) to discredit everything about Imperial Japan, as if denouncing the past might ease the pain of guilt by association. I am sure that nobody in the Japanese scholarly community wants to lie, but historical objectivity, like a feeling of happiness, is profoundly subjective. This phenomenon of writing and rewriting history is universal, and in totalitarian countries it becomes grotesque and frequent.

Although still slumbering in an isolated beaker of pristine pacifism, the Japanese people have begun to sense a powerful tremor of their national defense need. To intensify the Japanese awareness is the insistent demand from America for Japanese rearmament. It is truly ironic, of course, that the Americans, who gave us the dream of eternal peace, now tell us to wake up and fight. It is again the Americans telling us what to do with our own fate. Though it is exasperating, this time the Americans are doing us a great favor. We must break out of our silky cocoon of self-deception that the world around us is safe. It is dangerous and downright childish to believe that just because we have no territorial ambition, other neighboring nations, some of which are openly predatory, would not invade our defenseless archipelago. If some nation did attack us, would the Americans come to our rescue? They might. They might not. But we, as Japanese, should not rely upon American protection for our own survival. The price for it far exceeds the benefit. Besides, there is such a thing as our due responsibility in defending the community of democracy—of which we are an important member.

It is the right time for rearming. And, when we do, we ought to arm to the teeth with the best weapons and soldiers we can produce.

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