

Post-war Experiences of a Military Cadet

by Dr. O. Namba

I was born in May, 1926. It was the 15th and last year of the reign of Taishō Tennō. On Dec. 25th he died and the Crown Prince Hirohito immediately succeeded the father as the 124th Tennō. The new reign was named Shōwa, meaning 'Bright peace.' Hirohito's reign covered about 62 years, so that I lived for a long time in the Shōwa era, although I came to Holland in 1960, the 35th year of Shōwa and live in this country till today.

In my youth, I was a boy typical of the militarism Japan. At an age of nearly 14, I entered the Cadet School at Hiroshima and there I studied and received training as an army officer-to-be for three years. I proceeded to the Military Academy and then to the Military Airforce Academy. It was the time of absolute loyalty to Tennō, the living God. Most Japanese believed in the final victory of our Divine Land, even when the situation became unfavorable to us. We cadets were all eager to die for Tennō Heika and for the Country. Therefore, it was a great shock for us to hear the voices of Tennō Heika at the noon of August 15, 1945, declaring the end of the War. Alas, the Great Nippon Empire has surrendered for the first time in the history! What a shame! Battered by the unbelievable event, I stood for a while on a large airfield of the First Fighter Regiment where we cadets had engineering practice.

Soon we walked back to our school. Two weeks later our Military Academy was dissolved and we were sent home. That was a couple of months before our expected commission to second lieutenant. But now I lost my object and my youth. The hard study and training of 5 years and 5 months were in vain. I have never shot a single bullet at the enemy. What an empty life it was to me! What should I do now? For several months that followed I felt as if I lost the way in a dark, deep grotto. Even now I feel my first life has finished at 19 in the summer of 1945, the 20th year of Shōwa.

Fortunately, the military and navy cadets till our ages and elder commissioned officers were allowed to do the entrance examination for state universities. So, from 1946 to 1950 I could study at the Kyoto University. My major was astrophysics.

In the mean time, Japan was occupied by the Allied Forces and totally controlled by the General Headquarters (GHQ) of General MacArthur. Japan was forced to turn from the militarism to American democracy. The end of the war was the liberation for ordinary people, even though it was a very hard time to support own life. But drastic changes in political and social systems and, particularly, in thought brought the people into confusion. One could observe how propagandists of the Tennôism yesterday turned to democrats today. More and more 'truth' of the war time was revealed, and even the responsibility of Emperor Hirohito had been discussed openly. After all I became convinced that the Emperor was responsible for the War and the war sufferers as the ruler of the Japanese Empire and as the highest commander of the Imperial Army and Navy. In him I saw a coward ruler who had sacrificed his subject for the sake of the Tennô system. So, after the war I have never sung 'Kimigayo' ('Long live the Emperor') which became three years ago the official national hymn of Japan.

The most important change in Japan after the war was the adoption of the new constitution in 1946, I believe. As you all know, it contains the famous

Article 9 Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, 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.

The security of Japan without arms had been assured by a pact with the U.S.A. But this article was soon violated when the Korean War broke out in 1950. On the demand of the GHQ the Police Reserve Force was formed, which has grown into the Self-Defence Forces of today, with more than 200,000 personnel and the second largest expenses in the world. The Japanese government, dominated by the Liberal Democratic Party, has followed the American policy closely and undermined Article 9. As for as I know, Japan has never made serious efforts to become an independent, neutral and peaceful country as we wished in the preamble of the Constitution.

For decades (ultra-) nationalists have advocated to revise or replace the constitution, because - they meant - it was forced by the GHQ, ignoring Japanese culture and tradition. It is true that the draft of the constitution was made by the GHQ, but the new constitution was adopted freely and enthusiastically by the great majority of the representatives of our Parliament. One could oppose the bill. Indeed, there were 8 opponents in the Lower House and 3 opponents in the Upper House, if I remember correctly. The nationalists have ignored this observational fact. And they want to change Japan to an 'ordinary' state with own armed forces.

Two years ago, a month after the visit of the Emperor and Empress to the Netherlands, the prime minister Mori said: "Japan is the country of gods with the Tennô at its centre." I wrote immediately an article criticizing him for the Asahi Shimbun.

The present prime minister Koizumi has not done what he promised to do, for example, the reform of the government and political systems and the recovery of Japan's economy. Instead, he has been doing what he should not do. Especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, last year, he has been eager to legalize the deployment of the Self-Defense Forces. The conservative parties which occupy the majority in the Parliament have supported Koizumi without sufficient considerations.

An urgent matter at this moment is the bill of Emergency laws. If these laws pass the Parliament, they open the way for the Japanese to commit war acts. Suppose, if the Americans attack Iraq, Japan has to cooperate with them, whereby private life and properties of the people may be damaged without pardon. If you refuse to work with soldiers, you will be punished. When the government declares an emergency, the Self-Defence Force may be deployed at once. The theatre is not limited to the territory of Japan. A minister even spoke of nuclear weapons for Japan. I understand that Mr. Shida, the expected speaker here today, could not come over because he has been very busy with protest actions against this bill.

As you are aware, Japan has been following a dangerous course again. Not only in the politics. Last year I bought a new history book for the junior high schools and found faulty descriptions in it. I mention here only an example. It concerns with diplomatic relations between Japan and China in the seventh Century. The first official chronicle of Japan, "Nihonshoki," was made in AD 720. In China, the big neighbour of Japan, the history was written continually from the ancient Han dynasty to the modern Chin dynasty. The history of a dynasty was usually compiled by the next dynasty so that the information was fairly contemporary. In this long Chinese records we can find valuable news about the ancient Japan and the Japanese which were not written in the Japanese chronicles.

The schoolbook describes: In AD 607 Crown prince Shôtoku, the Regent to Empress Suiko in Yamato, today's Nara Prefecture, sent an official letter to the Emperor of Sui, Yaodi, saying "*The Emperor of the Land of Rising Sun sends this letter to the Emperor of the Land of Setting Sun. Are you well?...*" This was quoted from the Sui Chronicle (AD581-618) to demonstrate the equal status of Japan against China. Curiously enough, Nihonshoki makes no mention of this proud letter. And, the Sui Chronicle tells a quite different story. Namely, the ruler who sent this letter was a king whose family name was Ama and the own name Tarishihoko. He had a wife and a prince. In his country ' there is Mount Aso which spews fire high into in the sky.' As you know, the active volcano Aso is situated at the centre of the island Kyûshû. Thus he must be the ruler of a kingdom in Kyûshû. Indeed, what the Chinese wrote of Japan from about AD zero till the end of the 7th Century refers not to the Tennô dynasty in the Yamato area but to the Kyûshû dynasty, according to Prof. Takehiko Furuta (1973). Here we see a pure lie in this book, and in other history books too.

Because every schoolbook is checked by controllers of the Ministry of Education & Culture, I must conclude that the lie was brought in intentionally. In this case, every historian knows of the quotation from the Sui Chronicle. Why the historians, teachers, and massmedia do not pretest to the Ministry against such lies? Here too, you see the tip of an iceberg of strange matters in the Japan of today. I worry about the future of Japan very much.