

*Expose*

THE U.S. AND  
JAPANESE  
REACTIONARIES'  
PLOT  
TO RESURRECT  
THE DEAD PAST

THREE REACTIONARY  
JAPANESE FILMS IN REVIEW

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*Three Reactionary Japanese  
Films in Review*

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## **Shatter the Fond Dream of the U.S.-Japanese Reactionaries**

### **On the Reactionary Japanese Films *Admiral Yamamoto, Battle of the Japan Sea and Gateway to Glory***

In the late '60s and early '70s something happened on the motion picture screen of Japan that drew attention: reactionary films were released one after another praising the old Japanese imperialist wars of aggression and presenting the war criminals as fine men. *Admiral Yamamoto, Battle of the Japan Sea* and *Gateway to Glory* are three examples.

The Japanese monopoly-capitalists and the reactionary Sato government spared no expense to produce these ultra-reactionary pictures, while the U.S. troops stationed in Japan and the Japanese "Self-Defence Forces" went out of their way to help. The films were rated high by the U.S.-Japanese reactionaries; some were extolled as the Ministry of Education's "film selections". Before releasing them the reactionary Japanese authorities did a lot of advertising to draw the attention of

film-goers and "make them literally known to every household". They lauded these films as "portraying never-falling stars of the navy", "shining albums of hero stories", "noteworthy contributions to the cinema", etc., etc.

So, it looks as though the Japanese reactionaries have completely deluded themselves and are exulting in the rose-coloured spectacles of their own making. Let us take a look at these films and see what they are. Very little explanation is needed for one to see clearly that these films are criminal evidence of the revival of Japanese militarism, good material for the Japanese and other Asian peoples to learn by negative example.

## GHOST OF THE "GREAT JAPANESE EMPIRE"

With approval as their keynote, these three films highlight the Japanese militarist wars of aggression and arch war criminals and openly beat the drums for reviving Japanese fascism, eulogizing and defending it in every way.

In telling the stories of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and the war in the Pacific during World War II, these films make a great show of the Japanese navy's "glory" and "prowess" and advertise the "golden era" of old Japanese imperialism. Emphasis is given to praising the two Japanese combined fleet commanders-in-chief, Heihachiro Togo and Isoroku Yamamoto as "gods of the armed forces", resourceful and far-sighted "heroes . . . marked by their loyalty to the emperor and patriotic love of the country", and who, with many "astounding exploits", were ready to "lay down their lives to preserve



their integrity". Now the ghost of the "Great Japanese Empire" which was thrown onto the scrap heap of history long ago is roaming about again.

These films which flagrantly distort history are a wild challenge to the people of Asia.

The history of Japanese militarism, from its war of aggression against China in 1894 to its surrender in 1945, is a criminal and bloody record of aggressive wars, of which the ones it unleashed since 1931 stand out particularly as incalculable debts of blood to the people of Asia. Japanese aggressor troops committed no end of evils — burning, killing, raping and looting — wherever they went. With their policy of "burn all, kill all and loot all" they created numerous inhuman "mass graves" and "areas of no habitation". Taking human beings as targets for bayonet and sabre practice, Japanese gangsters indulged in brutal killing competitions, and millions of innocent people died under their butcher knives. These predatory wars brought untold suffering to the Japanese working people as well. But in these films the Japanese militarists' crimes of aggression are praised by the U.S.-Japanese reactionaries as "the glory of the empire"; their unjust wars, which bereaved countless families, are presented as "just wars enjoying nationwide support". If this can be tolerated, what cannot?

Why did the reactionary Sato government at the turn of this decade flagrantly let loose the ghost of the "Great Japanese Empire", sounding the trumpet to revive its spirit? This is a compelling question worth pondering.

Our great leader Chairman Mao points out: **"In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines."**<sup>1</sup>

In the twenty-odd years since the end of World War II, Japanese militarism has been revived under the wing of U.S. imperialism. Japanese monopoly capital has raked in huge profits from U.S. imperialist wars of aggression against Korea, as well as against Viet Nam. This has brought vicious inflation and distorted development to the Japanese economy, increasingly sharpening the contradiction between production capacity on the one hand and the supply of raw materials and markets on the other, and greatly accelerating its expansion abroad. Under the cover of "developing Asia", it has stretched out evil claws of economic aggression to south Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and other areas of Southeast Asia. The reactionary Japanese government has been intensifying arms expansion and war preparations, acting as U.S. imperialist police dog in the East. It has put in official, commanding positions a batch of militarists and fascist military inheritors of Isoroku Yamamoto's mentality. It lets such infamous arch war criminals as Nobusuke Kishi and Okinori Kaya come out into the open, hatching diabolic schemes and making trouble. It has been clamouring about Japan's entering "the new Pacific era" of dominating Asia and indulging again in its fantasy of a "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere".

It is with the aim of creating counter-revolutionary public opinion for the revival of Japanese militarism and veiling its expansion and aggression in "legality" that the reactionary Japanese government seizes this mass medium of motion pictures and utilizes it to reverse the verdict on the history of Japanese militarist aggression and glorify these crime-steeped war criminals. As the great revolutionary teacher Marx said, **"They anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service"**<sup>2</sup> and legalize "the



baseness of today by the baseness of yesterday".<sup>3</sup> In intensifying its counter-revolutionary activities to revive Japanese militarism, the Sato government has to beg the ghosts of militarist ancestors for help and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to commit new evils. The "sphere of colonial influence" during the period of the Japanese empire's aggression and expansion keeps appearing on the screen, and this is precisely the "grand goal" for the '70s which the Sato government has long dreamed of.

### PIRATES' LOGIC, THEORIES OF FLAGRANT AGGRESSION

In one of his essays the great writer Lu Hsun compared to mosquitoes those reactionary literary men who regard exploitation as justified for the ruling classes. He wrote that the blood-sucking of fleas was intolerable but that they made no sound, while mosquitoes were most irritating for, before biting, they would hum a lot, as if to justify their taking of men's blood to satisfy their hunger.

Lu Hsun's words nicely describe the gangster features of Eisaku Sato and those of his stripe.

In its economic aggression against the extensive areas of Southeast Asia and in its role of shock brigade for U.S. imperialist aggression in Asia, Japanese militarism has been shrieking about "justified aggression", making wild assertions such as that Japan's "automatic extension" of the aggressive Japan-U.S. "security treaty" is for Japan's "security" and "self-defence", that China's Taiwan Province is "a very important factor for Japan's security", that Korea is "indispensable to Japan's security", that

Japan wants to "play a role" in Indochina, that it wants to dispatch warships to "defend the Strait of Malacca" to "safeguard" Japan's "economic interests", etc., etc. This is nothing but the sophistry of aggression and expansion.

The makers of these reactionary films have blown all their trumpets about "justified aggression" by the Sato government, to peddle the old militarist logic of pirates and theories of aggression.

Riding roughshod over other countries and massacring their innocent civilian population, the fascist Japanese aggressors shout that they are "punishing the enemy to uphold justice in the world". This is a scene that keeps recurring on the screen. It is under the same pretext of "upholding justice" that Japanese imperialism unleashed its war against Russia, seized the right to the lease of China's South Manchuria Railway, Lushun and Talien and clamped its rule on Korea. Again under this pretext fascist Japanese aggressors invaded large areas of Southeast Asia and brought unprecedented disaster to the Asian people. Wherever they stretch their evil claws of aggression, there they say they are extending "justice". This is nothing but pirate logic.

To divert Japanese youth's attention from domestic politics and in order to impress on their minds the aggressive mentality of "upholding justice in the world", *Gateway to Glory* features the educational talks the divisional officer Okano of the naval academy has with Ichiro Hirata.

Okano: What bothers me is your great interest in politics, especially in domestic politics.

Okano: You should focus your attention on other lands.

Hirata: Other lands?

Okano: The theatre of our navy's action is the Pacific Ocean.

This brief conversation fully exposes Japanese militarism's mad ambition to dominate the Pacific by relying on its gunboat policy. The Japanese aggressors repeatedly advocate giving priority to expanding the naval and air forces — their main tools for aggression. They rave that Japan must have command of the sea and air both on the high seas and on the territorial waters of other countries. Togo's "warships first" doctrine, Yamamoto's "attack with aircraft carriers as base" and the present "defence system" with the main emphasis on naval and air forces, which the Sato government attempts to establish in the Asian and Pacific regions — all these harp on the same robber's tune.

The films brazenly claim that northeast China is the "life-line" for the build-up of Japan, that Japan must "gain control of the Far East" and that, should Japan fail to occupy Korea and northeast China its independence would be threatened. It is then quite clear that in the dictionary of Japanese militarism, "self-defence" means aggression and "life-line" means expansion-line. When it wants to invade other countries, it will say they "threaten" its "security". For such "security" these films openly say that Japan must "make a pre-emptive attack by surprise", at the same time spreading various peace smokescreens to deceive the people.

The wars shown in these three films are sufficient to define what the Japanese militarists mean by "security" and "self-defence".

Just look at the scenes of large or small battles on land, sea and in the air. There is not one on Japanese soil. It's always Japanese aggressor troops occupying China's territory and putting down the anti-imperialist Yi Ho Tuan Movement of 1900, Japanese planes flying

like crows to Southeast Asia, Japanese warships sweeping into Korea's and China's harbours and territorial waters or recklessly sailing the Pacific Ocean. The Japanese reactionaries also include the southwest Pacific in their sphere of influence.

The Japanese aggressors' gangster acts expose the falsehood of their so-called self-defence!

### "SPIRITUAL PILLAR" OF MILITARISM

These three films are from beginning to end filled with war hysteria: sword-swinging fascist chieftains scream madly and drive Japanese soldiers to faraway lands to "kill to their hearts' content". *Battle of the Japan Sea* gives special prominence to that murderous-looking arch criminal of war Maresuke Nogi, commander of the land force, by a scene in which, before sending large contingents of soldiers to the Fortress of Lushun to become cannon-fodder, he orders them to salute in the direction of the Imperial Palace to show their "determination" to die for the tenno (the emperor). That is how Japanese youth, poisoned by the opiate of "bushido" spirit ("way of the warrior"), become victims of the predatory wars. These are towering crimes committed by Japanese militarism against the Japanese people. Such scenes are shown on the screen by the Sato government to try to restore "bushido" spirit spurned by the Japanese people, as well as try by every means to get cannon-fodder for Japanese militarism's wars of aggression.

After the militarism of the tenno brand collapsed at the end of World War II, that No. 1 war criminal the tenno had to make a declaration on January 1, 1946, re-

nouncing the deification of the tenno, giving up for the time being the sanctity that had for a long time deceived the Japanese people. The "imperial decree for army-men" and the "imperial decree on education", as the soul of militarist education, and the whole corresponding system of militarist education had to be abandoned. Thus, "bushido", the spiritual pillar of the tenno-brand militarism that had for many years sustained Japan's "imperial edifice", also collapsed.

Today, Japanese militarism has hastily replaced the ill-famed political mummy of the tenno in the limelight as spiritual mobilization for its aggression and expansion, going all out to spread the reactionary "bushido" spirit and rave that the ragged banner of "soul of the Yamato race" will wave once more. Under the Sato government's reactionary policy of "renovating and consolidating education from kindergarten to university" in an all-round way, culture and education in Japan are ever more quickly taking the shape of militarism. The Japanese reactionaries have authorized the reprinting and republishing of primary school textbooks issued during World War II and restored the art of sword play with the purpose of cultivating "bushido" spirit. They shriek that the "Self-Defence Forces" should regard "killing as their vocation", and ask its members to "lay down their lives" for their wars of aggression. That is how the Japanese reactionaries, through the press, motion pictures, dramas, fine arts, music and even advertisements, poison the minds of the people with militarism under the cover of "national defence consciousness" to condition the broad masses of Japanese youth to become the kind of men the militarists "expect them to be".

It is the intention of the Japanese reactionaries that these three films openly preach such reactionary ethical values of "bushido" as "loyalty" (worship of the tenno and loyalty to the empire), "valour" (to kill, conquer and adhere to militarism), and "docility" (to negate self and obey orders). The numerous "soldiers of the empire", big and small, who appear on the screen are all cast as faithful "bushido" followers and loyal subjects of the "empire without equal among ten thousand states".

Heihachiro Togo, commander-in-chief of the Japanese combined fleet and arch criminal in the wars of aggression against China and Korea, is eulogized as a "god of the armed forces" who dedicated his life to the "destiny of the empire". He appears again and again on the screen personally supervising the training of sailors and leading the fleet in naval operations for the tenno. To show Togo as a warrior "loyal to the imperial house", the film purposely presents this scene: In the naval battle at the Tsushima Strait, Togo, sword in hand, stands on the bridge of a warship looking straight ahead. A staff officer of the combined fleet explains that the sword was bestowed by His Imperial Highness the Heir-Apparent, and the commander-in-chief treasures it as a talisman.

While Heihachiro Togo is presented as a man in sworn allegiance to the emperor, Isoroku Yamamoto is purposely pictured as one troubled by conflict between his mind and his action, a model serviceman who sometimes has to "act against his own will because of his loyalty to the emperor and patriotic love of country". The film makes it very clear that in spite of certain differences of opinion between him and many military and political bigwigs, once the tenno has made his decision, he will absolutely obey and perform the "imperial service-



men's duties" to the extent of laying down his life as a willing slave.

To counter the Japanese people's growing opposition to the revival of Japanese militarism and aggression abroad, the film *Gateway to Glory* takes great pains to design a model for today's Japanese youth to follow, the "pattern of growth" of the fascist officer Ichiro Hirata. It tries hard to make it clear that although Hirata is at first interested in politics, in changing the situation in the country and is opposed to military training for secondary school students and to going to the army, once he enters the naval academy and is indoctrinated with the enslaving, barbarous fascist education and haunted by the ghost of "bushido", he changes into another person. His head crammed with the "servicemen's duties" of fighting to "uphold the imperial prestige", he forgets everything and becomes a bloodthirsty member of the Japanese aggressor forces. The film also presents two young men who wanted to learn painting and English but are finally both changed into "imperial servicemen".

The Japanese reactionaries give prominence on the screen to the three generations of militarists, Heihachiro Togo, Isoroku Yamamoto and Ichiro Hirata, and through their mouths spread the high-sounding ethical code of "loyalty to the emperor and patriotic love of country". By "emperor", they mean the representatives of Japanese monopoly capital who live in the lap of luxury by bleeding the people white. By "country", they mean the "Great Japanese Empire" built on piles of corpses, through enslaving the Japanese and plundering other Asian people. It is precisely this kind of "emperor" and this kind of "country" that the Sato government wants the Japanese people to serve.

25 In an attempt to deceive people, the films also present such venomous snakes as Togo and Yamamoto in the pretty masks of "kindness and benevolence" and "compassion for the soldiers". They make Heihachiro Togo, who has driven thousands of Japanese soldiers to their deaths for the emperor, go into a blind old woman's home and hypocritically burn incense for her son, killed in action in aggressive war. They make Isoroku Yamamoto, who directed the Pacific War and brought untold suffering to the Japanese people, "look over a casualty list with a heavy heart" and go to the hospital "to comfort the wounded". They make Nogi, who has driven the sons of so many Japanese women into "suicide squads", promise a soldier to send his savings to his mother. This is sheer hypocrisy, crocodile tears, a scheme conceived by the present Japanese reactionaries to promote "bushido" spirit.

The Japanese reactionaries also concocted a vicious ending for *Gateway to Glory*. On the eve of the Japanese imperialists' surrender, trying to put up a last-ditch struggle, the naval cadets, who are appraised as "valuable talents" of post-war Japan, continue to drill in formation and yell, "The emperor's prestige extends over the four seas", "we want to be like falling cherry blossoms and die for the country without hesitation". It is in this frenzied atmosphere that Hirata, sword in hand and with "Japan's future" on his shoulders, walks out of the naval academy and into a new theatre of war. This deliberate hint in the film coincides with the emperor's tacit orders for revanchism, sent when Japan surrendered in 1945, of "lying on thorns and eating gall to nurse vengeance in ten years of building up strength and educating the peo-

ple". Japanese militarism's mad ambition to stage a come-back is fully revealed.

## "ASIAN GENDARME" UNDER U.S. INSIGNIA

In the film *Admiral Yamamoto* there are some scenes for deep thought. While blowing about the Japanese navy's "resplendent results" in the war against the United States and its "quasi-irresistibility", the film at the same time repeatedly praises the U.S., describing it as "powerful", "terrible", "invincible". This contradiction in the film only serves to show the dirty collusion between the U.S. and Japanese reactionaries. Japanese militarism is today different from in the pre-war days in that it is now under the U.S. insignia.

After World War II, Japan was reduced to a U.S. appendage, its state power in the hands of U.S. imperialism and pro-U.S. monopoly capital. Through the Japan-U.S. "Security Treaty", U.S. imperialism has made Japan its biggest military and nuclear base in Asia, and gendarme serving its aggression in Asia. U.S. imperialism is also doing everything to help the Sato government step up its enslavement of the Japanese people's minds. In 1969 it began returning to the reactionary Japanese government the 1,385 Japanese films it confiscated after World War II, films which sing praises to the "Great East Asia War". It advocates "U.S.-Japan co-operation" through "movie co-production" and other channels. In short, it is tightening its control over Japan in all fields to mould the revived Japanese militarism according to its will.