

BLACK STAR OVER JAPAN

Rising Forces of Militarism

Albert Axelbank

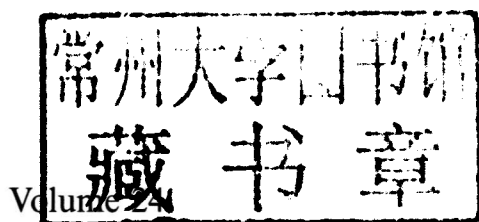
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RISING FORCES OF MILITARISM

Albert Axelbank

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TO KOJI NAKAMURA

Writer, editor, and friend, who proposed the title *Black Star Over Japan* to suggest the threat of militarism in his country.

Preface

Much of this book has grown out of personal experience and research stemming from a dozen years as a writer, journalist, and teacher in Japan. I have interviewed or put questions to many persons, including Socialist Party Chairman Inejiro Asanuma (he was assassinated); author Yukio Mishima (he committed suicide); elder statesman Kenzo Matsumura (he died a natural death); Communist Party Chairman Kenji Miyamoto; Nippon Steel president Yoshitaro Inayama; Tokyo Governor Ryokichi Minobe; Soka Gakkai president Daisaku Ikeda; Professor Yoshikazu Sakamoto; industrialist and China specialist Kaheita Okazaki; and such diverse personalities within the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party as Aiichiro Fujiyama, Yasuhiro Nakasone, and Tokuma Utsunomiya. Often an interpreter was provided or Japanese friends kindly assisted me. Some of the gentlemen I interviewed were fluent in English. Wherever possible, I checked on the accuracy of controversial statements, sometimes going back to the original source for confirmation. For some of the quotations about the Self-Defense Forces in Chapter 3 I am indebted to the *Mainichi* Newspapers. For a few translated passages on Bushido in Chapter 4 I am grateful to *The East* magazine, and for some textbook material in Chapter 7 I wish to thank *The Japan Times*.

Various friends, professional and personal, have helped me in writing this book. They include Kenkichi Konishi, Yuichiro Kominami, Tom Lewis, Yoko Nagano, Koji Nakamura, John G. Roberts, and Toshiko Suzuki. To these and others, my warmest thanks.

A.A.

Kojimachi, Tokyo
July 1972

Introduction

Many experts on Asia are strongly urging the West, especially the United States, to take a good hard look at what is happening in Japan, the new economic superpower. Some are beginning to worry about a new emerging nationalism in Japan and the possibility of a military comeback.

The dimensions of the problem are huge: the sheer economic might of Japan will enable it to challenge American supremacy in this field, perhaps as early as the 1980's. Much of the problem has to do with Japan's abnormally quick economic growth for over a decade, which has broken all economic speed laws. The history of modern Japan teaches that militarism was cultivated together with economic expansion.

Because of this economic power, it is clear that whichever way Japan goes will have an important impact on much of the world.

One of the West's foremost experts on Japan, Professor Edwin O. Reischauer of Harvard University, said in February, 1972, that the future of the world greatly depends on the future of Japan and on the good relations between Washington and Tokyo. Dr. Reischauer added, in a television interview, that Japan may start a "momentum to a

nuclear stance" by the late 1970's. This, he said, would be "most unfortunate." It would be "bad for everybody."

Despite the admonitions, not much is said about the domestic pressures that are building up inside Japan.

In the following pages, I attempt to show that

1. There is a definite resurgence of military strength in Japan.

2. There are strong signs that the ruling elite feels military power is necessary to maintain economic power in the long run.

3. There is very clearly a Japanese military-industrial complex in the making.

4. China and the Soviet Union feel threatened by growing Japanese economic and military power which is viewed favorably, on balance, by Washington.

5. There is a powerful right wing in Japan that has strong appeal to traditional Japanese political and social values, and there is a "value alliance" between the right wing, the political and economic ruling elite, and the military.

6. The left is strong but is at odds both with dominant trends in Japan and, curiously, with many Soviet and Chinese party objectives.

7. The balance of power in Asia is shifting and both the Japanese government and the United States see Japan as a bulwark against Communism.

8. The trend toward the eventual acquisition of self-controlled nuclear weapons by Japan is gaining strength, due to all the above.

9. The movement toward changing the pacifist "MacArthur Constitution" is, therefore, making headway, and a revision may be inevitable.

Chapter 6 deals with the Communist Party and its chances of coming to power through the formation of a

left-wing coalition regime. But it ought to be clear at the outset that Japan in the 1970's is neither left nor liberal but archconservative.

It is a country where pacifism is on the decline and police power on the rise. Frequently, one hears Japanese and foreigners as well say that the Japanese probably enjoy too much freedom and democracy and that some abridgment is needed, that morals have become lax and discipline has collapsed. Of course, this may be an exaggeration.

At any rate, the deterioration is not unique to Japan. Other nations suffer similarly. (I sometimes wonder if President Nixon, during his historic trip to Peking, was perhaps filled with envy on observing that city's disciplined citizens, particularly when they all pitched in to shovel snow in the early morning.)

On the whole, Japan's contemporary leadership consists of cautious and prudent men. But behind the scenes are the unreconstructed ultranationalists and militarists, some of whom have not abandoned the belief that Japan has a divine mission in the world. Though the beards of these men are gray, there seems to be a big reservoir of eager young recruits for the ultranationalist camp.

So the question may be asked: Will the more moderate conservative leadership prevail? Or can the zealots make enough noise and create enough disturbances to summon a national emergency?

Then there is the radicalism of the left. Among Japan's left-wing extremists there is a "retrogression theory" to the effect that if enough bombs are thrown, a police state will be revived. This, according to the theory, is when conditions for a revolution will become ripe. But such methods play right into the hands of the ultranationalists, whose power is probably underestimated.

The men in uniform who led Japan during the war ap-

peared ready to commit national suicide. Consider that as late as June 1945 final plans were being readied for a last decisive battle on the Japanese home islands, even if it took the life of every man, woman, and child. Two months later, in a frantic step to prolong the war, some officers tried unsuccessfully to steal the Emperor's recorded message calling on the nation to stop fighting. The atomic bombs had already fallen on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

That was 1945. In 1970, a popular young member of the National Diet, or Parliament, could make the following statement: "Even if Japan were reduced to ashes it would be able to deal a retaliatory blow to the enemy if it had several MIRV's [multi-warhead missiles] mounted on submarines."

Of course I do not suggest that such an outlook prevails in Japan or is found only in Japan. I merely note its existence in minds that are otherwise presumed to be sober.

A word on the meaning of militarism.

When a state is obviously militaristic, as Japan was under Premier-General Hideki Tojo, it is of course easy to identify. But there may also be degrees of militarism. A country may be partly militaristic; that is, it may lack most of the common elements of militarism but contain one or two of these elements. "Partial militarism" is cited in the authoritative *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1964).

Two trademarks of militarism are a rapidly growing army and an industry that churns out munitions in increasing quantities. Putting the soldier on a pedestal is a component of militarism. Probably so is anti-Communism, although the issue is debatable. In any case, anti-Communism is a thread that runs through all patriotic groups in Japan and is found among all prewar and postwar ultranationalistic societies.

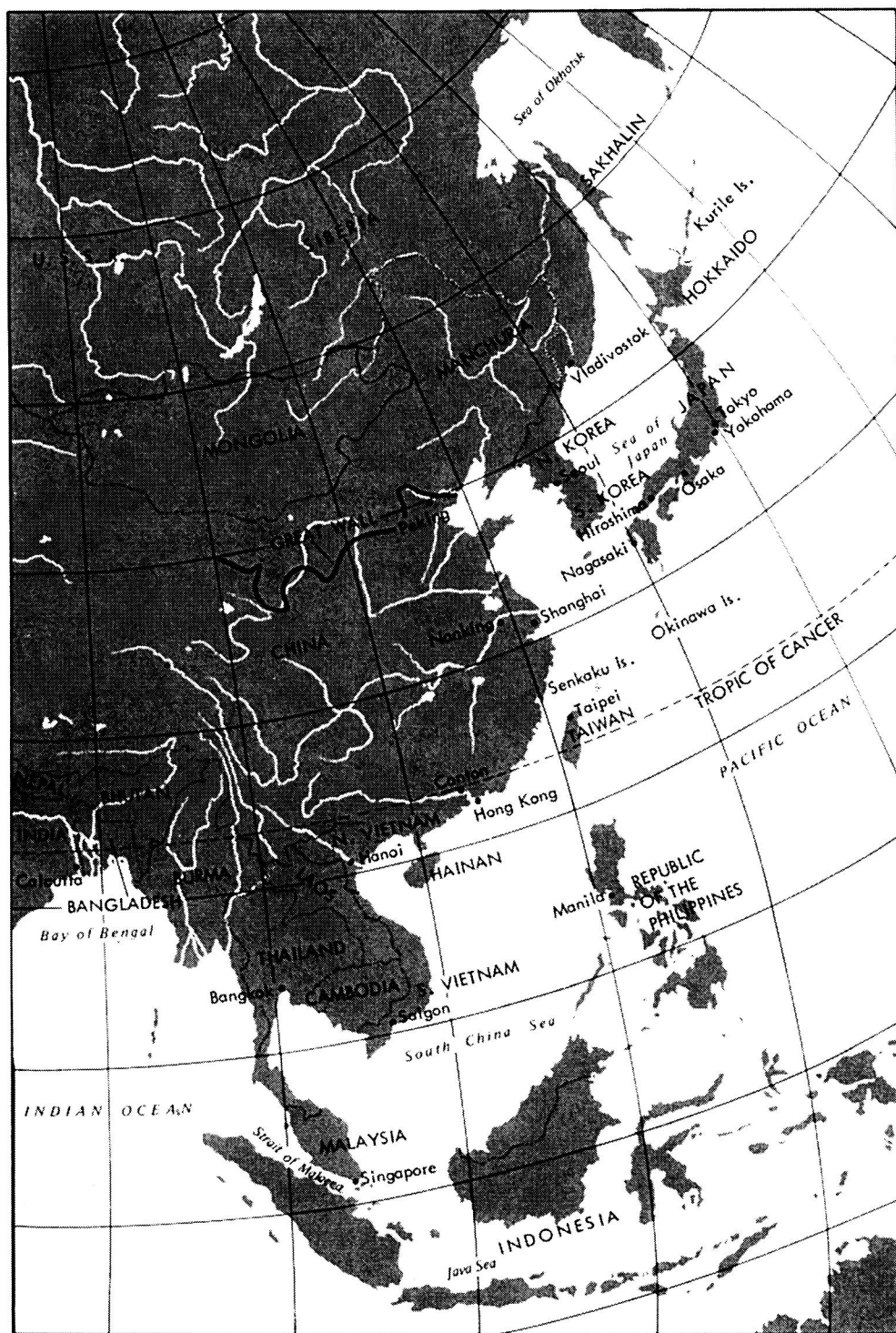
The clamor for more territory and a bigger population are factors common to militarism, and some would go so far as to apply the militaristic label to a nation that shows a swift and abnormally large expansion in its overseas markets and investments.

On the left, the Japanese Communist Party has been making inroads into national and local assemblies, and its progress is striking, although it is relative. In terms of seats in the National Diet, for instance, the party remains weak, despite gains in the ten-year period from 1960 to 1970. In 1960, the Communists held six seats in the Diet: three in the lower house and three in the upper house. In 1970, the total Communist seats had increased fourfold, to twenty-four, out of a total number of seats in both houses of the Diet of 741.

Curiously, the extreme left in Japan appears to be counterbalanced by an expanding and militant right wing, which even has its assassination squads. Some members of these squads have already carried out executions. For example, a leading contemporary ultranationalist shot the Prime Minister of Japan at Tokyo Station in 1930. He died a few months later. A teen-aged ultrarightist stabbed to death the chairman of the Japan Socialist Party in 1960 and then took his own life.

The Communists, however, need not entirely despair of ever coming to power. Even such a prominent right-wing theorist as Yoshio Kodama concedes the possibility of a communized Japan—but not before the year 2050.

Finally I wish to make it quite clear that a good deal more could be said about Japan. But the problems raised in the following pages are nonetheless real ones and—given the important position of Japan—deserve the attention of everyone who is interested in the future of Asia and the world.



Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	<i>ix</i>
	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xi</i>
1	<i>Requiem for Pacifism</i>	<i>1</i>
2	<i>The New Zaibatsu</i>	<i>27</i>
3	<i>The New Military</i>	<i>47</i>
4	<i>Yukio Mishima: Culture and Fanaticism</i>	<i>69</i>
5	<i>The Superpatriots</i>	<i>85</i>
6	<i>Japan's Communists</i>	<i>109</i>
7	<i>Reinterpreting the Past</i>	<i>123</i>
8	<i>The Endangered Constitution</i>	<i>141</i>
9	<i>Japan, China, and Taiwan</i>	<i>151</i>
10	<i>America: Ally or Watchdog?</i>	<i>171</i>
11	<i>Moscow and Tokyo</i>	<i>191</i>
12	<i>Politics, Racism, and Nuclear Arms</i>	<i>207</i>
	<i>Appendix</i>	<i>229</i>
	<i>A List of Further Readings</i>	<i>233</i>
	<i>Index</i>	<i>235</i>

I

Requiem for Pacifism

Before the people become aware of what is happening, Japan might become a militaristic state. . . . Militarism is the greatest danger for Japan.

—Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai, a large Buddhist laymen's organization, interview with author, 1971

Militarism may not be a state of armament alone. It may be just as much a problem of mentality, a state of mind. I strongly feel China's charges of militarism are largely directed against the social climate of Japan, which is susceptible to totalitarianism.

—Aiichiro Fujiyama, former Foreign Minister of Japan, interview with Koji Nakamura and author, 1971