

THE ROAD TO THE GREATER EAST ASIAN WAR

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(English Translation: Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact)

PART 1: PREFACE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

How should we define the Greater East Asian War?

The belief that it was a war of aggression waged by Japan has come to dominate world public opinion, but this question continues to fester in the minds of innumerable Japanese who are searching for honest answers. This book, in which I offer some explanations and new perspectives, is my attempt to shed some light on that conflict.

There is no shortage of academics and commentators who, immersed in the relentless masochistic direction that postwar historical perception has taken, continue to blindly embrace the judgments handed down by the IMTFE. To make matters worse, these same individuals delight in triumphantly and smugly enumerating, to anyone who will listen, the blunders and errors made by their native land: Japan bears sole responsibility for the Greater East Asian War. They boast of being “progressives” because they write books, even history textbooks, that portray Japanese history in the worst light possible.

This writer believes that the great majority of wars stem from complex historical circumstances and causes. For that reason, I refuse to accept any historical perception that unilaterally denounces Japan. Wars erupt for a plethora of trivial, cumulative, and various reasons. Everywhere in the annals of history we find seeds of problems that developed into wars. We also find some that found a peaceful resolution. For the Greater East Asian War, where do we draw the fine, dividing line between war and peace? It is my intention to use a macroscopic approach to explore this quandary and to contemplate the meaning of that conflict. What distinguishes my book from others on this subject is my effort to give Japan due credit for its good-faith, sincere attempts to achieve peace, even if they came to naught, washed away like writing in sand when the tide comes in. In the end, a writer’s objective in reexamining history is validation of his own convictions. At the same time, any reader with an open mind should realize that I have not glorified the war beyond its reality.

Headlines like “Nanjing Massacre Claims 300,000 Victims,” a criminal charge *and* an absurd fantasy, continue to appear in our newspapers in mammoth typefaces that practically scream at the reader, even today. Trumped-up war-crimes accusations also continue to accrete. Today no one has the backbone to come to speak out in support of our country. Instead, Japan’s unprincipled academics, writers, and journalists trip over each other in their rush to broadcast their approval of accusations from abroad, thus

slandering and betraying their homeland. Millions may oppose me, but I shall raise my voice in defense of my native land when the truth is on my side.

It was this wretched state of affairs that compelled me to take up my pen and produce my first booklet. Nothing could please me more than the knowledge that students (Japan's future leaders) might read it as they would a textbook, and that it might nurture an accurate understanding of history, and inspire love and respect for Japan.

This writer's love for his country is boundless. I respect not only the notion of a peaceful Japan, but also the memory of the heroes of the past who fought with all their might and gave their lives for that Japan. A peaceful Japan is very dear to me, but equally dear are the deeds of those men who fought brilliantly and gave their lives for their country and the Japanese people.

Generations upon generations of heroes have sacrificed their precious, irreplaceable lives defending these islands

—Mitsui Koshi (1883-1953)

My heart is with those many brave souls who gave their lives for their country over the years, certainly not with those who revile and slander their native land because it was defeated in war. I firmly believe that it behooves those who have the good fortune to be born, live out their lives, and die here to repay their debt by striving to eradicate false charges against Japan. And though countless works on this topic have already been published, I have taken the liberty to bring my book into the world as well.

A brief mention of terminology: my personal and professional preference for accurate historical terminology compels me to use terms like Greater East Asian War. I have eschewed postwar neologisms like Pacific War and Fifteen Years' War. For the same reason, my choice of names like China and Republic of China has been dictated by context and my desire for historical accuracy.

Now I shall describe the course of events that led to the publication of this book. I began work on a booklet intended as a study guide for my university students on July 15, 1982; it was published in October of the same year. Then I embarked on the preparation of three additional booklets, which were completed in November, 1984; all four volumes bore the title *Study Guide to the Greater East Asian War*. Work on the fifth volume, begun in September 1984, was completed in three and one-half years, on March 9, 1988; it filled 1,400 pages of manuscript paper. I decided against having the fifth volume printed because of its extraordinary length. Instead, I decided to combine all five booklets into one book intended not only for students, but also for the general reader. I began the rewriting process on March 10, 1988, the day after completing the fifth volume. After rewriting for almost a year, I was fortunate enough to be offered an opportunity to have my booklets serialized in the monthly magazine *Shokun!*, published by Bungeishunju Ltd. For that purpose I used, for the first time, a title that had been on my mind for some time: *The Road to the Greater East Asian War*. The response to the series, which

appeared over six months between the May 1989 and October 1989 issues, was excellent. I was reminded that this was what the Japanese people were longing to learn about. Since there was not enough material in the series for a book, I began writing again once the last installment had appeared, adding approximately 1,000 pages. I was very pleased that what had begun life as a study guide was now, after eight years of work, a proper book!

In connection with the writing of this book and its publication, I am indebted to a great many people. But I am especially grateful to Professors Kobori Keiichiro (of Tokyo University) and Nagoshi Futaranosuke (of Takachiho University of Commerce) for their thoughtfulness in providing me with the opportunity to publish this work in book form. I would also like to thank the members of the 1st Infantry Regiment Veterans Association (China Garrison Army), who were kind enough to share their exceedingly valuable recollections of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.

Special thanks must be proffered to Otsuka Kenzo, who was attached to Infantry Brigade Headquarters, China Garrison Army, during the period when both the Marco Polo Bridge and Tongzhou incidents erupted, for his thoughtfulness and generosity. Mr. Otsuka provided me with copious advice, as well as reference material, records, translations – enough to fill a book. These are first-rate resources, and they are particularly valuable since he was on the scene when the incidents occurred. The material he gave me is a product of his extensive knowledge of China, prodigious memory, and inquiring mind. I deeply regret that I was able to use only a portion of it in the preparation of this book.

I also offer my heartfelt gratitude to Aizawa Hiroaki (president of Tendensha Publishing Co.) who, day and in a gesture uncommon in this day and age, had the generosity of spirit to offer to publish this book, as well as to Tendensha's editor in chief, Yuhara Masataka, who painstakingly organized my voluminous manuscript.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife for her assistance. She set aside her household responsibilities to read each installment of the *Shokun!* Series before it was submitted for publication, and with great good humor!

Nakamura Akira

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