The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
n-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

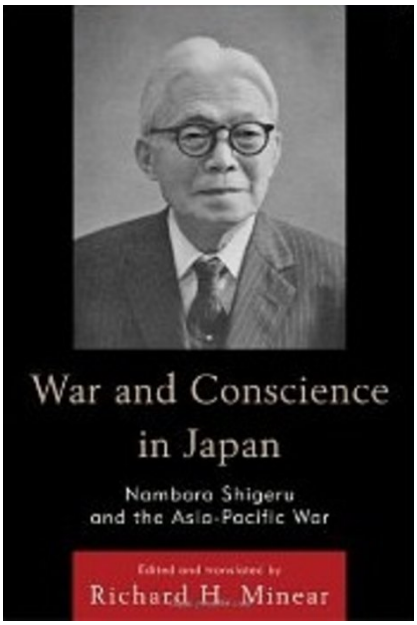
Nambara Shigeru (1889-1974) and the Student-Dead of a War He Opposed
南原繁と彼が反対した戦争の戦没学徒

Richard Minear

Nambara Shigeru (1889-1974) and the Student-Dead of a War He Opposed

Nambara Shigeru with an introduction by Richard H. Minear

What follows are excerpts from Nambara Shigeru's speeches and poems illuminating the conscience of an intellectual in war-time and its aftermath, introduced by Richard Minear, who translated and introduced the book *War and Conscience in Japan:Nambara Shigeru and the Asia-Pacific War*.



Born in 1889 into an obscure family in Shikoku, Nambara Shigeru rose through Japan's educational system to the very top: the Law Faculty of Tokyo Imperial University. In early 1945, he became dean of the Law Faculty; soon after Japan's defeat, he was elected president of Tokyo Imperial University. Thus his mature years, his time of significant influence, spanned Japan's fifteen-year war (1931-45) and the American Occupation (1945-52). In the late 1930s and early 1940s, he defended Tokyo Imperial University against the right wing and state interference. He was trenchant in his criticism of Nazism, and that criticism had implications for Japan, too. A Christian, Nambara spoke out in favor of reason and conscience. Between 1936 and 1945 he kept a poetic diary—his greatest writing—that reveals his candid thoughts about the war. For the most part, the poems are elliptical enough that the thought police, had they read them, wouldn't have understood; in any case, most of the poems saw the light of day only after Japan's surrender.

Nambara was not a rebel. He did not shout his beliefs from the rooftop. He thought the war wrong-headed, but he considered it his duty and the duty of his students to share the suffering of the people; they were part of the people, not separate from the people. In a poem he composed just after Pearl Harbor, he used the term "community of fate"—a translation of the German term Schicksalsgemeinschaft:

民族は運命共同体といふ学説身にしみてわれら諸(うべな)はむか

"The nation: a community of fate" is second nature;

I can't really doubt

It holds true.

And in 1963, on the twentieth anniversary of the call-up of university students, Nambara spoke eloquently about the dilemma he faced in counseling students:

For us professors, that was the most bitter, most difficult task in the whole war. I couldn't say to them, "Act according to your own consciences even if that means refusing to obey the state;" no, I didn't say it. Had I said that, I should first have stood up myself and criticized the country's war policy. On reflection, I myself, out of cowardice, might have lacked bravery; but on the other hand, down to the present I'm still uncertain that that was the right attitude to take. I have never felt so painfully as then the fact that for better or worse, politics and the people aren't separable, that the nation constitutes a community of fate.

During America's Vietnam War, dissident American professors faced a similar dilemma in advising their students facing military service and responding politically to the war. Forty years later, during American's second war on Iraq, the dilemma resurfaced, or would have except that the U.S. now has a professional military, not a draft or a lottery. Still, recent U.S. history, notably the Iraq and Afghan wars, should give us insight into the pressures Nambara faced and the merits of his response.

Immediately after the war, Nambara was elected university president and played a major role not simply in rebuilding Tokyo University but in the postwar psychological and spiritual revival of the nation. In a real sense, he became for a few short years the conscience of the nation.

In his poetic diary for January 1, 1945 ("New Year's Soliloquy"), Nambara addressed himself:

ただならぬ時代(とき)の流れのなかにして汝(な)がたましひを溺れざらしめ

Don't let your spirit drown

In the currents

Of extraordinary times.

...

わがどちのいのちを賭けて究めたる真理のちからふるはむときぞ

The power of the truth

To which we dedicate lives:

It's time we use it.

たまきはるいのち献げてたたかふは豈前線のことのみにあらず

To fight, giving one's own life:

Surely that isn't only

For those at the front.

うつしみの老いゆくわれのかがやきて今ひとたびを起たしめたまへ

This mortal frame is growing old:

Lord, let me stand up and shine

Just this once!

In fact Nambara risked much in an attempt to bring the war to an early end, and when the war ended, Nambara celebrated. Here is a poem he wrote on V-E Day:

真夜(まよ)ふかく極(きは)まるときし東(ひむがし)の暁(あけ)の光のただよふにかあらし

In the darkest depth of night,

Is daylight breaking

In the east?

What follows are the two postwar speeches that Nambara devoted to the issue of the student-dead. The first speech came in early 1946, when Nambara was president of Tokyo University; the second one, in 1963, long after Nambara had retired.[1]

Mourning the Students Who Died in the War: Statement at the Ceremony to Console the Souls of the Battle Dead and Those Who Died at their Posts

Editor's Introduction: This is the third of seven major Nambara statements in the first half of 1946. Note that here Nambara addresses his remarks less to those present and more to the souls of the war dead.[2]

As we hold this sad memorial service in honor of the young men, fellow students, who took the field in this great war never to return, our emotion knows no bounds.

Looking back, we ask how we Japanese took the path we did these last years. It's as if we were wandering in chaos and confusion, in a hazy dream. Yet it was historical reality, all too harsh; major events happened one after the other, and they led to an interweaving of unrest and worry, tension and excitement, despair and grief. But one thread ran through it all and is exposed now to the bright light of day: the path straight to war, planned by an ignorant, reckless, and even sinister minority—the military, the ultranationalists, and their ilk—and the entire nation's plunge over the cliff to ruin.

And yet at the outbreak of the war that followed on the long war between China and Japan and finally sealed the nation's doom, the atmosphere on this campus—despite the victories in the opening phases—was grave rather than light, and you were not stirred up. The children "piped to you, and you did not dance."[3] As befit people embarked on the search for truth and living in the academy, reason and conscience did not permit you to be aroused. Because particularly those specializing in the study of philosophy, politics, law, and economics knew too well from the start how absurd and reckless it was. You simply attended quietly to your own realm, your duties as students, and that's what we teachers had preached and taught you to do.

However, once you were called up and, student deferment at an end, summoned to fight, you exchanged the pen for the sword and set out solemnly on that brave path. At that point, not one of all the students sought—as did happen in other countries—to evade his duty as a subject by refusing to offer his life. You all obeyed loyally the will and order of the state. Were we who had long argued in favor of that course right or wrong in doing so? I don't know. Not only did you obey without complaining. In that unforgettable November several years ago, when all students were mobilized, you also burned with the fires of patriotism and loyalty, acted so bravely, and justified our faith in you. Moreover, on battlefields in far places and on military posts at home and abroad, you risked your lives in the fierce fight and fulfilled your soldierly duties so well. Only those who went through that experience with you can know your suffering and distress.

But you were different from ordinary soldiers who knew nothing. You were simultaneously soldiers and students. You didn't fight aimlessly or with arbitrary and fanatical "absolute faith in victory."[4] Although you were at odds, of course, with the determination that the war, once decided on, "had to be won," you prayed above all for the victory of right and truth. However, right and truth unfortunately were not on our side, but instead on the side of England and the United States. It was not simply that "might makes right;" it was the clear "verdict of reason" in world history, and we had to receive that pronouncement grimly amid the intense grief of defeat.

You did not live to see August 15 of last year, that most fateful day in our country's history. Our deep sorrow on that day, the resentment aimed more at ourselves than at others, the misery in our nation's life we have been experiencing since then, and our even greater spiritual suffering: these are a veritable "true cross" that our people carries. We must bear up and endure these things to the end. The nation is now going through a trial greater even than the war.

But I want to report to you that a new day for our race, a great dawn, is already breaking. Our country is now accomplishing a great and unprecedented political, social, and spiritual transformation. We must use it to construct a true Japan of peace and principle and create a new Japanese culture. This is the noble effort that we students in particular must pursue with all our vitality, this new fight into which we pour our hearts and our blood, a peaceful fight to bring the rose of "Reason" and harsh "Reality" into harmony.

In this fight for peace and this new construction, the obligations of our university are extraordinarily heavy. While you went off to war, those of us who stayed behind defended the halls of truth; during labor service and under all the other adverse conditions, we kept on with scholarly research, preparing, indeed, for this day. During that time, there were those who died at their posts to permit the university to escape the flames of all the fierce air raids. We must never forget their hidden, noble sacrifice. After most students left, the university truly was desolation itself; beneath the colonnades of gingko trees, one rarely saw a soul.

After the war ended, how joyfully we greeted our comrades reassembling from all parts of the world! Comrades who had stood shoulder to shoulder with you in battle came back, laboring under a shame probably worse than death, for the sole purpose of taking part in a new fight—the work of resuscitating the university and rebuilding the homeland. It is our profound sorrow that with virtually all of them now back, you highly gifted ones will never again enter classroom or study.

When I think back, some of you came in great haste to take your leave, saying you were off for the battlefield: that was our final parting. How many times we have wept over the letters you sent us, composed so earnestly at the front! Indeed, once you entered the world of strict military discipline, a world far from the academy, and particularly on battlefields far from your native land, you cherished the university all the more, thought of scholarship, and even looked back fondly at your teachers. Occasionally we couldn't resist the impulse to call out your names and plead your cause to heaven and earth. When we think of the feelings of your fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, who bore you and educated you to this point and shared with you the pleasures of happy homes, and of how this ignoble war taught all mankind such a grim lesson, our regret and sympathy as human beings and as relatives are all the more unbearable.

But in this war such was the sacrifice our people had to pay—sacrifice to atone for our nation's guilt. In place of your fellow-countrymen, you stepped forward to pay it and went with a smile to the land of the dead. It's as if you are speaking to us. "Now is not the time to begrudge anyone or blame anyone. Let the entire university, the entire nation unite and set about the task of rebuilding the homeland. This is our eternal, earnest prayer." Yes, we must construct the homeland anew atop your noble sacrifice. We must not let the homeland die. In accord with your wishes, we, the entire university united, must become the nucleus of the nation and set about the building of a new Japan and the creation of a new culture.

This auditorium full of memories where you gathered so many times is the same place where some years ago we held the ceremony to see off all the students. Today, as we hold this ceremony of mourning here, your spirits have returned to be with us. We embrace your spirits in a simple and straightforward memorial service that, as befits the academy, has nothing of religious ritual, and you surely understand our sadness in this ceremony in which I have served as unworthy officiant.

Now I dedicate to the spirits of the departed two poems of lament I composed in my sorrow:

桜花咲きのさかりを益(ます)良(ら)夫(を)のいのち死にせば哭(な)かざらめやも

Cherry-blossom time, and brave men

Dead in their prime:

How could we not grieve?

戦に死すともいのち甦(よみがえ)り君とことはに国をまもらむ

You died in war but return

To guard the country

Forever.

Spirits of our beloved young scholars and students, please accept these poems.

—March 30,1946

You Who Inherit the Legacy of the Students Who Died in the War

—December 1, 1963

Editor's Introduction: December 1, 1963 was the twentieth anniversary of the ceremony in 1943 that sent student-soldiers from the universities off to war. Nambara was seventy-four years old and had been retired for a dozen years.[5]

I speak on this topic today as one professor who on this day twenty years ago sent off to war many young scholars, my own students, sending not a few of these outstanding students to their deaths. I do so in order to offer memories I cannot forget even now and to make my confession and offer my reflections.

December 1, 1943. Education in liberal arts universities and higher schools was suspended, and the system of draft deferments for their students was abolished; most were called up that day into the military and ultimately sent into battle.

I think it was the same at all universities, but on November 12 at our Tōdai, in the central auditorium, a rousing all-university send-off was held for the student-soldiers heading to war. The ceremony began with bows to the palace and the singing of the Kimi ga yo, the imperial proclamation on the opening of hostilities against the U. S. and England was read, the president of the university gave a rousing speech, and the representative of the student body spoke words of farewell. Then a representative of the students heading off for war read a pledge, *Hinomaru* flags dyed with the words "Praying for eternal military success" in the president's own hand were presented to all the students, the *Umi yukaba* was sung, and the ceremony ended with a final shout of "Long may the emperor reign."[6] Thereupon the student-soldiers marched off to the plaza in front of the palace.

At the time I was on the Law Faculty, and the plain truth was that I couldn't bear to see them lined up on the platform; so I stood on the Law School side of the colonnade of gingko trees that extends from the auditorium to the main gate, waited for the ceremony to end, and saw off the students as they emerged from the auditorium. At last, wearing the latest student uniform, service cap, and puttees, and with the *Hinomaru* as a sash on their shoulders, they came out one after the other, literally jumping off the raised platform of the entryway. They had no time that day for looking up at the gingko trees under which, in normal times, they sauntered, or for taking a backward glance at the classrooms in which they had studied, but marched in solemn procession under the gingko trees, which were shedding their late-autumn yellow leaves, and out the gate.

Among them were a number of young men for whom this was the end, who did not return. What were they thinking, they and the students who did come back, in the month or two before they left for active duty? What did they do? As before, they studied quietly. No, they studied even harder. But not necessarily their school subjects and texts. They read by preference the classics and books on life, almost as if they prized the time. Some students even wrote up reports on their courses and studies up to that point, left the reports in the keeping of us professors, keepsakes of a sort, and departed for the front.

Still, this is not to say these students were particularly cool or clear in their feelings. On the contrary, I think they harbored much doubt and unease. This was true above all of the students in law, letters, and economics. They could infer, on the whole, how grave the situation was in the war theater to which they were heading. It was already thirteen years since the Manchurian Incident and then the China Incident,[7] and two long years had gone by even since the

plunge into the “Pacific War.” Despite the glittering initial successes against the U.S and Britain, in June of the previous year [1942] our navy’s major defeat in the Battle of Midway opened the way for the Allied counterattack. On the European front, in February of the year the students took the field, the German forces at Stalingrad surrendered, and the tide of World War II began to turn. In September of that same year, Italy—with Japan and Germany one of the three Axis powers—surrendered unconditionally, and in November Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, leaders of the Big Three, consulted on the postwar disposition of Japanese territory and issued the Cairo Declaration.

Even amid this looming crisis, some students went off to war not doubting the policy and propaganda of the military government that still held high the banner of “absolute faith in victory” and proclaimed that the war was turning in our favor, that we should pursue the war to successful completion. Some even of our faculty colleagues had extolled the justness of this war from the first and never stopped preaching its rightness. But the doubts and apprehensions about the war of most earnest students I knew were already serious even before the beginning of the Pacific War, from the time the Axis Alliance was signed [September 1940]. At that stage, as they awaited the time when they would all lay down their pens and take the field, how could we respond to their doubts and apprehensions about the war? How could we counsel them?

For us professors, that was the most bitter, most difficult task in the whole war. I couldn’t say to them, “Act according to your own consciences even if that means refusing to obey the state;” no, I didn’t say it. Had I said that, I should first have stood up myself and criticized the country’s war policy. On reflection, it may be that I myself, out of cowardice, lacked bravery; but on the other hand, down to the present I’m still uncertain that that was the right attitude to take. I have never felt so painfully as then the fact that for better or worse, politics and the nation aren’t separable, that the nation constitutes a community of fate.

I said to the students: “Now when the state stands on the brink of doom, no matter what our individual wills, we must act in accordance with the will of the whole people. We love this homeland and should share its fate. But like individuals, nations have failures and make mistakes. On that account our nation will likely have to make great sacrifice and atone. But that may be the path whereby Japanese nation and state become truly self-conscious and make progress.”

2.

This inner anguish and pain on the part of the students was not something that was wiped away all of a sudden, that vanished once they entered the military and then were sent to the front. They were not ordinary soldiers, but were forever students who were also soldiers. They knew what humanity is, what truth and justice must be. They experienced themselves how military life consisted of inhuman violence and illogical regimentation, a society of arrogance and trickery, and how reckless and meaningless this war was, indeed, how brutal and demonic war itself is. These things we know from the letters and diaries of students who died in the war, collected in *Voices from the Sea* and *Human Voices* and the recently-published *Fifteen-Year War*.[8]

F. (a Waseda University student), who died in battle on Bougainville in 1945, wrote: “One year of army life strips everyone of their humanity. Second-year men have no other duty than simply to turn us first-year men into slaves, no, to treat us like machines, make us suffer, bully us…. Virtually nightly their overshoes caused groans. After being struck by scabbards, some of us even got stitched up and hospitalized.” It was no different in the navy, either, with cruel chief seamen summoning the seamen for “moral education” administered with oaken staves. Passion for knowledge and learning were trampled on, of course, and also, it also goes without saying, the slightest desire as human beings for freedom and value; human feelings were gradually rubbed out, and in the end, they feared they were descending to the level of animals.

It is true that some volunteered or were forced to become officer candidates, falling positively into line amid the life of barracks and unit, in time becoming officers and echoing the ideals of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, believing to the last in victory in the war and going to their deaths burning with patriotic fervor. Probably for them, steeled night and day and having received special education and training, this was not cause for regret. In some sense, their pure and unsullied mindset was even fortunate.

But the feelings of most student-soldiers were filled with a bit more complexity and suffering. Some already foresaw defeat in the war. “That time particularly will be a time of supreme testing. Even in simple numerical terms, I think I can figure out myself where we are bound…. The unfavorable battle situation—it’s not as if I’m shocked, meeting it today for the first time. From my student days I’ve seen this coming. … Today, the people aren’t allowed to criticize openly and justly. … Perseverance and resignation—those two alone—have been forced on the people, so they can’t grasp reality” (T., Keiō University graduate, killed in flight, April 1945).

Under such battle conditions, they understood of course not only their own fate but also the fate of their homeland. In a letter to his sweetheart, the same student-soldier wrote: “Our sense of forlornness is a forlornness directed at the homeland. No matter how much we twist and turn, we cannot escape fate. … Where is Japan going? Ah, what are we fighting for? … [But] to the end we won’t lose our burning passion and hopes and dreams. My heart burns constantly for only one ideal. Only one ideal—freedom.”

It’s not simply Japan. All countries are fundamentally the same; the problem is war itself. In our age, it has to be human foolishness and ignominy that wage so brutal a war. Having pursued the issue to that point, one student said: “I feel acutely that perhaps human bestiality, or something like it, has roots deep, deep in human nature. Since God created the world, man hasn’t made the slightest progress. … In this war, it’s no longer an issue of justice or anything like it; it’s simply that there’s an explosion of hatred between nations. Nations that meet in enmity probably don’t stop fighting until they’re both dead. How fearsome! How wretched! Mankind—relatives of the apes!” (H. Meiji Gakuin University student, dead April 1945 in a *kamikaze* attack off Okinawa). I. (graduate of Shizuoka First Normal School), who died at sea en route to the Philippines at the end of 1944, said: “Only Japanese mourn Japanese deaths. Only foreigners mourn foreign deaths. Why does it have to be this way? Why can’t humans grieve and rejoice with fellow-humans? O, you who love peace….”

But these student-soldiers, harboring this distress and aware of the trends and the fate of the war that state was now prosecuting against state: what in the world could they fight in support of? why bear that hardship? why fight so resolutely and throw away their young lives? That was their duty and responsibility simply as human beings, not for army or navy but for homeland, Japan—its beautiful mountains and rivers, the place where beloved parents and brothers and sisters lived.

S. (Tokyo University economics student), who died as a *kamikaze* off Okinawa in April 1945, wrote in his diary: “…I don’t know whether war is by nature reactionary or not. But duty and responsibility are laid on us. Our sole aim is to fulfill them. I want to do my best. Reactionary or not, I want to die giving my most beautiful and supreme effort.” This was probably a feeling all the student-soldiers shared. I. (Waseda University student), who died similarly as a *kamikaze* at about the same time southeast of Okinawa, wrote in his final diary entry: “My life of 25 years is drawing to its close. … People should be diligent until death…. That I have lived a fine life till now, both mind and body in the state I received them from my parents, is thanks to the great love of God and to the beautiful love of those around me. I feel great pride and joy in being able to dedicate my innocent life to the infinitely beautiful homeland.”

They were passionate patriots. But at the same time, perhaps even more they were sincere apostles of truth. So the wishes and hopes that they bequeathed upon their deaths to homeland and the next generation are that we build a prosperous society that reveres truth and seeks freedom and peace. To the end, they never lost their hopes and ideals and passion.

3.

However, only those who fought with them, who shared their sadness and anguish and shed blood and sweat together with them, can know those hopes and desires. So the students who came back alive from the battlefield—saved by inches, a hair’s breadth, the caprice of fate—carried in their hearts above all the desire to act for their classmates who had fought and died and to build from the scorched earth a new Japan.

The burned-out cities, the food shortages worse even than during the war, the chaos in transportation, the shortage of housing: even in those difficult circumstances right after the war, the academy united—teachers and students—and burned with the ideal and the hope of rebuilding the homeland.

For several years right after the war, I was president, and at Tokyo University, too, we had a number of graduation ceremonies where most of the graduates had survived the same fires of war, with students back from the battlefield forming the core and the others having been on labor mobilization and service during the war; the ceremonies marked their setting out into a new society. In attendance at these ceremonies each year, there were always the families of students who had died in the war, and they attended carrying the photographs and sometimes the ashes of sons who had died in the war. While in the military, their children had yearned for the academy and the classrooms they had left in mid-stream, and they'd hoped, dreamed of completing the schoolwork that was their true mission in life. For the parents, it was a sad look back: their now-dead sons, had they lived, would have taken part in that same glorious ceremony. No, not only that. It was also an expression of the parents' sad hope and resolve that their sons' spirits join with those graduating that day, classmates who had once gone off to war with them and were now setting out on a new life, in the construction of the future nation and society.

Indeed, a new constitution was established, and one after the other, political and social reforms unprecedented in our country were started. But beginning around the time of the conclusion of the peace treaty at San Francisco in 1951, signs began to appear of a change of course for our country. The principal one, of course, was the rearmament of Japan, brought about on the occasion of the Korean War by a change in U.S. policy toward Japan. For the dozen years since then, our country, which had proclaimed at home and abroad the renunciation of war and the abolition of all armaments, has gotten to the point today that under the same constitution we have more than two hundred thousand troops, more even than in the prewar days; one can only call this a mutation in the spirit of the construction of the new Japan—an erasure and a self-negation. Setting other things aside for the moment, what was most important in this connection was tumult and disarray in the new postwar education ideals. Today the government and the political parties all preach liberty and peace, but in spirit and intent those words have meanings quite different from what they once had.

It's not simply the statesmen and politicians. I fear that for us the people, even for the prewar cohort (I include in it the wartime cohort), the passage of time in the eighteen years since the war has diluted our wartime experiences and our immediate postwar resolutions or made us forget them. And as for you students who grew up and matured in the postwar era, you don't know war, so it may be inevitable that some of you can't think deeply about the state tragedy that our nation faced. Recently, in particular, as if reflecting—no, as if brewing up—the nation's mood, there is a tendency for the mass media—beginning with movies and TV, but also letters, the arts, and even scholarship—to be used to sing war's praises and for bellicose propaganda.

At such a time, today, on the twentieth anniversary of the call-up of the students, it's enormously significant that we remember that day solemnly. At least for those of us in scholarship and education, it's a major opportunity for reflection and resolve. Of course, only those who experienced them can know those vivid personal, once-only experiences of the war; we can't inherit them and make them our own, unchanged. But their significance—their historical meaning—we can understand and pass on to later generations, transmit as the "legacy" of the young students who fought and died.

4.

Recently, I realized something as I was reading *War Experience*, written by a student soldier.[9] There it said that the pledge that "we must never again make our homeland's young men repeat the tragedy of war" is "avenging themselves," "vengeance," for classmates who died in the war. Frankly, when I read this, I gasped. That's how incisive these words are, how they touch the soul. We too can understand this fixation on the war experience, like a deep attachment to something that can never ever be forgotten.

What this brings to my mind is the time in early spring of the year after the war ended, in March, with the last embers of the war still glowing, when we held a memorial service at Tokyo University for the student soldiers who had died. At the end of my statement then, I said: "But in this war such was the sacrifice our nation had to pay—sacrifice to atone for our nation's guilt. In place of your fellow-countrymen, you stepped forward to pay it and went with a smile to the land of the dead. It's as if you are speaking to us. 'Now is not the time to begrudge anyone or blame anyone. Let the entire university, the entire nation unite and set about the task of rebuilding the homeland. This is our eternal, earnest prayer.'"

This interpretation of mine, my reading of the hearts of the students who died in the war, is unchanged today; but is it perhaps different from the hearts of people who, as I've said above, experienced the war firsthand? I think it isn't. What I've called the earnest desire the war dead have for the people is that we never forget their bitter war experience. We must not forget; precisely by not forgetting, we must not repeat it: that is the solemn wish they bequeathed at the last to the entire people, their fellow-countrymen.

Some of the students didn't die in battle but, although they had committed no crime worthy of death, were sentenced to death and executed in places like Rabaul and Singapore, perhaps not allowed by their superiors to make a clear statement of the truth or voluntarily saying inaccurate things to protect fellow-soldiers. One wrote: "I don't die because of what I did to Australians; I die because of what Japan did in the war." Or again: "I can't reconcile myself to death as a sacrifice for the Japanese army, but I go happily to my death as atonement for the crimes and faults of the Japanese people as a whole."

In the final analysis, they saw this war as the mistake or crime of the Japanese people and defeat in the war as the people's atonement for that mistake and, thinking themselves a sacrifice, died bravely. To be sure, there's an obvious difference in responsibility between leaders who planned and prosecuted the war and ordinary Japanese, and that difference can't be elided by such pat phrases as "one hundred million atoning together;" but fundamentally, one has to call it the fault of the people as a whole, that from the Manchurian Incident on we sanctioned the actions of the military leaders and followed where they led. What is more, there isn't a single Japanese who did not cooperate during the war, in one way or another, with the wartime order.

When the historian Ranke lectured in his presence on world history, King Max asked: "What should we expect of Nemesis in history if not only the leading personalities but the nation as a whole commits national crimes and the people as a whole acts unjustly?" Ranke answered: "The whole nation will have to suffer thereby."[10] That is precisely the tragic path our nation took and is still taking today, our nation's agony. In this sense you may be the postwar generation with absolutely no connection to the war, but you cannot escape responsibility for the homeland's distress and for the national community of fate.

Meanwhile, however, some people have attempted, especially recently, not to see this war as Japan's fault or crime but on the contrary to emphasize its historical significance. They say our country lost, alas, but the world-historical significance is that through Japan's loss the nations of Asia and Africa came to be freed from the control of European and American imperialism. Indeed, the war does mark an epoch in world history: nations newly on the rise became independent, and a long period of great-power colonialism was liquidated. But that was not what Japan itself aimed for or planned, nor was it Japan's accomplishment or honor. As you know, Hegel called such developments in history "the cunning of Reason" in world history. That is, in the developmental process of world history, world Reason or the world spirit (call it God) selects some great nation and via its demise spurs the development of liberty and the progress of Reason in history. It is the plan of the world spirit; the specific nation is simply its tool.

To speak in terms of our country itself, it thought our people's sacred mission was to spout "holy war," raise the flag of "eight ropes, one roof" as the spirit of our country's founding, call the U.S. and Britain "demonic animals," chase them out of Asia, and seize authority over an East Asian New Order; on the Chinese continent, on the islands of Southeast Asia, it committed all those cruelties and sacrificed all those millions of lives—what was that war if not our people's recklessness and error, a crime against fellow-countrymen and against humanity?[11] What I fear now is that regardless of motive and intent, reevaluating the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere and stressing its positive significance will resuscitate the ghost of the East Asian New Order and lead in particular to war to destroy communist China. Isn't it still alive somewhere among our people, the hope of "dreaming once more," of not awaking from the dream of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere?

5.

The crux of the problem is China; as in the past, our country's attitude toward new China is the one thing that will decide Japan's future fate. China is no longer the China of old. It has seen vast change. Now, for the first time in China's three thousand-year history, there is a people's government for the sake of

the people. In its past history, down to and including the regime of Chiang Kai-shek, which dynasty, which government really ruled for the sake of the masses of the people? Its modern history at least has been a tale of rivalry and conflict among military cliques with no regard for the people's livelihood within and semi-colonization by the powers without.

Old Shanghai epitomized it. The only ships at anchor in the Yangtze were foreign gunboats, and on land, there were the foreign concessions with foreign troops and police guarding them. The Chinese led grim lives in a dirty and dark city: that was Shanghai, "city of darkness and women." But now you won't find a single foreign gunboat in the Yangtze, the concessions have all been liquidated, and the stately buildings they left behind have been liberated to serve as facilities for young people and workers. The tongs have been eliminated, and even the so-called slums are clean, with no trace of women of the night. Naturally, on the Chinese continent, with its huge territory and vast population, each year so far there have been floods, and if there is famine, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people are its victims. But even the water of the Yellow River, once called the "hundred-year purification project," is gradually getting cleaner. That is a huge "remodeling of nature."

China has regained its complete independence. And in the ten-odd years since the revolution, the base for a new social structure has been laid, and young men and women lead the way in its attainment. Of course, there are differences in content and in direction, but for them, in a sense, it is similar to our Meiji Restoration. Unless we welcome the birth and future of this new China, clasp hands with China, and work for the peace and prosperity of East Asia, the day will never come when Japan finally fulfills its glorious role in world history. Or do we choose, on grounds of ideology and differences in political and social structure, not to live together under heaven but forever to draw a line between them and us and once again repeat the terrible catastrophe of war? That would be the homeland's road to eternal ruin.

It's not merely China and East Asia that have changed. With World War II, the world has changed. This is a turning point in world history. Not only Japan, but the world powers that were its forerunners have declared an end to modern colonialism and imperialism. World history, till now focused on Europe, has become true world history, and willy-nilly, the peoples are entering an age of universal human history. This century's two great world wars were no longer wars of one country against another country but developed necessarily into world wars; no country, no matter how strong, was able to make war alone, and most countries of the world had to participate and cooperate.

Moreover, in the wake of World War II, war brought about qualitative change, and because of the development of atomic and now hydrogen bombs, it has brought us to a decisive stage where we have only two options: the end of mankind or the abolition of war.

According to American nuclear physicist [Ralph] Lapp, the U. S. nuclear arsenal totals thirty thousand megatons, and it can wipe out the Soviet people at least twenty-five times over. The Soviet stockpile is thought to be about half that. And Soviet defense chief [Rodion] Malinowski has said: "One thousand megatons is enough to wipe out the two hundred main cities of the U.S. and its military allies who offer it bases—including Japan. Figuring two hundred thousand people per megaton, two hundred million people will die." President Kennedy, now dead, and Prime Minister Khrushchev and the military chiefs know better than anyone how cruel the next war using these fearsome "weapons of the devil" will be. Against this background can be understood the finessing of the Cuban crisis, then this summer's negotiation of the partial nuclear test ban treaty. And this treaty pledges the general abolition of nuclear weapons and thereafter total world disarmament.

The renunciation of war and the establishment of a structure of world peace are now not simply the ideal of philosophers and thinkers but have been placed on the real international political agenda by realistic politicians. That is the trend of human history, and no state can change it; history will take its revenge on those who would subvert it. In this sense, even with President Kennedy dead and replaced by President Johnson, there will be no change in this fundamental direction. Indeed, President Kennedy's untimely death is a world tragedy and an immeasurable loss to humanity; but the spirit he grasped has the support of the U.S. majority now even more than earlier, and the policy of peace will go forward.

That being the case, the declaration in our new Japanese constitution of the renunciation of war and the jettisoning of all armaments is a fundamental truth that is neither dream nor illusion; is it not today the goal that all states—the U.S. and Soviet Union, and the rest—hold in common and are striving to attain, the goal of humanity? Japan collapsed through its own arrogance and excess; no, thanks to that very collapse, amid complete destruction Japan seized the opportunity of the world-historical turning point to rediscover its nation's world-historical mission and the glory of bearing it.

Recently critics complain that young people, particularly students, have no "patriotism." Is that in fact the case? As someone in contact with quite a few students, I know it's not the case. This homeland of their birth, this Japan where those we love live, its beautiful scenery—which of us does not love Japan with its long history and culture that, for better or for worse, our ancestors built? Still, that's a natural patriotism, linked to blood and soil. More than that, we want to make this homeland, internally, a land good to live in where all enjoy freedom; at the same time, externally, we want to be a great people contributing to world peace and culture. That is what true love of homeland means. What is lacking in Japan today is a national ideal and vision and passion such as appeal to the hearts of young people.

But now amid the opposition of two worlds and cold war more severe than ever before in the postwar age, defending—no, creating—the peace can't happen without much difficulty and hard struggle. In one sense, it is a task much harder than war. Tens and hundreds of thousands of young lives, your predecessors, the generation before you—our dear children—died hoping fervently for the liberty and peace and prosperity of the homeland. On this point the fellow-soldiers who were not students likely differ not in the slightest. But their deaths were not in vain. With the blood they shed, Japan was able for the first time to redeem liberty and peace. One student soldier left this statement: "History will determine who the true patriots are."

I repeat. To love the homeland truly and to attain liberty and peace will likely take as much blood and sweat and tears as flowed in the war. And that is your duty, you of the new generation. No, that must be the new mission of our whole nation, as the people that has paid the sacrifice as the world's first victim of the atomic bomb, to lead the way for the other countries. At the least, when you become the cadre of the people, join forces, and stay forever true to this mission, you will have inherited the legacy of our students who on that day twenty years ago went off to war and never returned.

—December 1, 1963

Richard H. Minear is the author of Victors' Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial *(1971) and* Dr. Seuss Goes to War *(1999) and the editor of* Through Japanese Eyes *(4th edition 2007). He is translator of Requiem for Battleship Yamato (1985), Hiroshima: Three Witnesses (1990), Black Eggs (1994), the autobiographies of Ienaga Saburo (2001), Nakazawa Keiji (2010), and Oishi Matashichi (2011 forthcoming), and writings of Takeyama Michio (2007) and Nambara Shigeru (2010). He has written and translated a number of essays for Japan Focus and is a Japan Focus associate.*

Recommended citation: Nambara Shigeru and Richard H. Minear, Nambara Shigeru (1889-1974) and the Student-Dead of a War He Opposed, The Asia-Pacific Journal Vol 9, Issue 4 No 1, January 24, 2011.

Notes

[1] These speeches are two of the eight postwar speeches that make up Part III of *War and Conscience in Japan*. Part I consists of five essays and speeches from before the surrender; Part II is some three hundred verses from his wartime *tanka* diary.

[2] "Senbotsu gakuto o omou—senbotsu narabi ni junshokusha ireisai ni okeru kokubun," Chosakushū 7:34-9.

[3] *Matthew* 11:17. The topic is the unfriendly reception of John the Baptist, and Jesus says: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear. But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'"

[4] "Absolute faith in victory" was a wartime slogan. Nambara seems to speak of the Pacific War as primarily against England and the U.S., thus eliding Japan's China war.

[5] *"Senbotsu gakuto no isan o tsuguru mono—gakuto shutsujin nijūshūnen kinenshūkai ni okeru kōen," Chosakushū* 9:226-44. This version carries the following header: "Given on December 1, 1963 at the meeting on the twentieth anniversary of the sending off of the student-soldiers. The contents are pretty much the same as presented in *Sekai*'s issue of January 1964, except for a section that I omitted when I gave the speech and a section that I have newly added."

[6] Nambara was then a professor on the Law Faculty, not president. The *Kimi ga yo* was the *de facto* national anthem; the *hinomaru* was the red-on-white flag; *Umi yukaba* was the leading martial song.

[7] The China Incident is the war with China that began in 1937.

[8] *Kike wadatsumi no koe* (1949), *Ningen no koe* (1962), *Jūgōnen sensō* (1963). The first of the three was made into a film in 1950 and again in 1995.

[9] Yasuda Takeshi, *Sensō taiken: 1970-nen e no isho* (1963).

[10] For the German original, see Leopold von Ranke, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte: Vorträge dem Konige Maximilian II von Bayern gehalten* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 166-7. Nambara glosses Nemesis as "the goddess of revenge."

[11] "Eight ropes, one roof" (uniting the world under Japanese leadership) was the wartime slogan for the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Created by Datamomentum