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353

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Pearl Harbor  
Anniversary,  
Japan Still Says,  
“Don’t Blame Me”

*By Seth Cropsey*



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Washington, D.C. 20002-4999  
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202/546-4400

# On the Pearl Harbor Anniversary, Japan Still Says, “Don’t Blame Me”

By Seth Cropsey

In his *Guide to the Composition of Poetry*, the twelfth century Japanese scholar, Fujiwara no Teika, wrote that there are no teachers of Japan’s poetry. The ancient verses themselves instruct; and of those people who are capable of absorbing their poetical forms and learning the words by heart, who among them, he asks, will fail to write poetry? This is not merely a tribute to the elegance of Japanese poetry. It is rather a universal statement about education: a teacher may coax or inspire or illuminate, but the idea itself is what truly instructs.

Missing today in the ideas that Japan’s educational system teaches its secondary school students is an account of Japan’s record in Asia during the years that led up to the beginning of World War II. Absent is a complete record of her imperial ambitions in the neighboring countries of China and Korea, of her provocation and slaughter in the former, and subjugation of the latter. Although facts about the attack on Pearl Harbor are presented, the war that followed is covered scantily. Indeed, a recent *New York Times Magazine* article by Steve Weisman reported the complaints of a Japanese high school teacher who had just introduced his students to the war with the United States. The first thing they asked was, “Who won?”

Anniversaries, such as the one we will observe on December 7 of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, offer an appropriate moment to look back in time. However, the proper reason for doing so is not to rekindle old anger or open aging wounds. It is rather to combine the perspective of the years which have passed with our knowledge of history to look with increased understanding into the future.

**Fundamental Questions.** Tensions between the U.S. and Japan have been growing for some time now. And while those strains are not proof of a future break in the relationship, they—together with the history we recall today—are good reason to ask fundamental questions about the character of Japan’s political regime, and of her commitment to the principles she accepted during the American occupation. What does Japan’s refusal to acknowledge an important part of her recent history mean? Are our basic ideas of right and wrong so foreign to Japan that it is impossible for her to render a moral judgment about the wholesale slaughter of innocent civilians? Or, is it the very shamefulness of her deeds that makes it so hard to admit them? True, there are strong bureaucratic and political interests today that exert profound influence over the textbook debate which is the crucible for Japan’s domestic argument over its history, but they do not change the conclusion: Japan will not look its history in the face.

And that refusal should worry Japan’s friends and allies, of which the United States is the staunchest.

Not only because Japan’s unwillingness to teach the rising generations about her past contradicts her admirable respect for education; not only because it flies in the face of Japan’s unique veneration of the past, and not only because it clashes so violently with her people’s belief in the healing power of reflection and self-examination.

**Tokyo Re-emerging.** No. The significance of Japan’s reluctance to recognize her deeds is simply this: Fifty years after Pearl Harbor, following a period of vigorous economic growth that has lasted decades, and topped off recently by Japan’s dispatch of naval vessels to missions in the Persian Gulf far from her

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He spoke at The Heritage Foundation on November 25, 1991.

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borders, Tokyo is re-emerging as an international power. She is questioning what her role in the world should be, where her foreign policy interests lie, and how to achieve them. Japan's sense of being victimized by the outcome of World War II, and her sense of shame which, I believe, grows more from having lost rather than having started a great conflagration are for moral philosophers to lay up. It is clear that her people suffered grievously in a war their leaders began, and it is possible—however such things are gauged—that in human misery the World War II accounts between America and Japan cancel each other, or it is even conceivable that because of the devastation brought upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki by American nuclear weapons, the Japanese feel a moral debt owed them. This is understandable, but wrong. Unlike Japan, the U.S. harbored no imperial ambition; it was dragged against its will into a war it had sought to avoid. But American and Japanese perceptions notwithstanding, there is no historical balance in Tokyo's relations with many of its Asian neighbors.

And with nations as with individuals, how one deals with those who are closest is a critical measure of one's own character. The failure to acknowledge great injustices committed in China and Korea is a failure to treat the peoples of those neighboring countries as equals, as men and women whose personal suffering deserves to be understood throughout the land so that it will not happen again. This recognition education alone bestows.

As "checkbook diplomacy" cannot give Tokyo a real foreign policy, the informal compensations Japan has in various forms rendered to China and Korea do not demonstrate a true change of heart. Until Japan shows that such a change has occurred; until it is clear that she regards her neighbors as complete equals, even her friends, such as the United States, will question whether she is entirely prepared to become a full participant in the international community. Contrition is not what is called for. What is needed here is the truth.

After summarizing her deeds in Asia during the war that began there in 1937 when Japan invaded China, and which served as an overture to World War II, I will look at how Japan teaches the history of those bitter years, and conclude with some thoughts about the future.

**Harsh Spirit.** Japan's modern colonial adventures began in earnest in 1894. Near the mouth of the Yalu River, and to the surprise of nearly everyone, she defeated the flotilla China had purchased from German and British shipyards during the previous decade. The Sino-Japanese conflict also saw the diversion of growing Japanese ultra-nationalism into a new and harsh spirit directed against China. Songs became popular with such verses as:

Evil Chinamen drop like flies, swatted by our Murata  
rifles and struck by our swords.

Our troops move ahead, our troops fight away. Chinese  
soldiers massacred everywhere. What a sight!

In the treaty negotiations that followed Japan's victory, China ceded possession of Taiwan and the Manchurian peninsula known as Kwantung. But, other nations were watching closely: Russia nourished Far East ambitions of her own. In 1895, she prevailed upon Germany and France to join in forcing Japan out of the Kwantung Peninsula. Petersburg waited three years, claimed the Kwantung for itself, and promptly linked the contested peninsula's southernmost ports, Dairen and Port Arthur, to the recently completed Trans-Siberian Railway.

Japan's anger at this straightforward display of international hypocrisy produced the seed from which sprang the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. When Admiral Heihachiro Togo crushed the Russian Fleet at the Straits of Tsushima on May 27, 1905, Japan triumphed over her European enemy and emerged as a world power. President Theodore Roosevelt received the Nobel Peace prize for his diplomacy in bringing the worn out combatants together to sign the Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire). And, Japan re-

ceived Russia's acknowledgment of her "paramount interest" in Korea as well as title to Russia's claims in the Kwantung Peninsula, and a large chunk of Sakhalin Island.

**Annexing Korea.** Tokyo's hands in Korea were now freed. Prime Minister Ito made it a Japanese protectorate in November 1905, and appointed himself Resident General. Japanese nationals replaced Koreans in the executive and judicial branches of the Seoul government while the Korean armed forces were disarmed and sent home. When eminent Koreans began committing suicide in protest, parts of the subjugated nation rose up. The rebellion was ruthlessly subdued. Japanese troops torched the countryside, killing 12,000 Koreans within a year.

In 1910 Tokyo annexed the unhappy neighbor it had renamed Chosen, but political incorporation only called attention to the conquering power's treatment of its subjects. Koreans—like the Taiwanese—were refused representation in Japan's Diet. The Japanese expropriated vast tracts of Korean-owned lands.

When dispossessed Koreans sought employment in Japan, they found instead low-paying jobs and open contempt. Continuing popular resentment kept occupation forces busy, but Tokyo was achieving its foreign policy goals. With colonial administrations and troops firmly established in Korea, Taiwan, and southern Manchuria, Japan had staked her claim to membership in the international circle of imperial powers.

Propelled by the momentum of colonial success on the Korean Peninsula, and taking full advantage of the European nations' determination to soak the Belgian forests with blood, Japan in 1915 shifted attention to China. As a British ally, Tokyo had entered World War I opposed to the Axis powers, and then seized Berlin's possession in China, the province of Shandong. Japan now presented a document known as the Twenty-One Demands which forced the Chinese government to accept this *fait accompli*, and exacted other economic concessions in Manchuria and Eastern Mongolia.

Between the end of the Great War and the 1920s Japanese interest and commercial activity in Manchuria continued to grow. A million of Japan's subjects lived in the southeastern Chinese region almost all of them Korean, and Japanese businessmen eventually accounted for three-quarters of foreign investment in the province. Local, docile Chinese warlords governed at Tokyo's pleasure, much as ancient Rome administered her empire—through puppets.

**Eyeing Asia's Mainland.** This usurious relationship sailed along calmly until the late 1920s when China's nationalists began to stir. A boycott of foreign goods and short-lived truce between the Kuomintang and fledgling Chinese Communist party illuminated the danger of Japan's position in Manchuria, and generated a current of jingoist passions. In his 1929 book, *Why Fear the United States?*, the defense writer Ikezaki Tadakata pointed to Japan's serious overpopulation and asked, "Where should we find an outlet for these millions? ...the only remaining area is the Asian mainland." A lieutenant colonel of the Kwantung Army, Ishiwara Kanji published a proposal to address the gathering problem in China. In it he noted that "the future of Manchuria and Mongolia will only be satisfactorily decided when Japan obtains those areas. Japan," he continued, "must expand overseas to achieve political stability at home."

Rejecting the diplomatic and commercial incentives advocated by Tokyo's civilian political leaders to patch relations with Manchuria, Lieutenant Colonel Ishiwara along with other mid-level officers of the Kwantung Army took matters into their own hands. A convenient provocation materialized on the railway tracks just outside the southern Manchurian city of Mukden near where the lines from Pusan, Port Arthur, and Tientsin meet. There, on the evening of September 18, 1931, a bomb exploded.

Within hours a major attack on the Chinese garrison in Mukden had been ordered, and the entire Kwantung Army mobilized. In Tokyo, the divided cabinet of Prime Minister Wakatsuki looked on im-

potently while Japan's army in Manchuria widened the hostilities, invading lands beyond the railway zone which had, until then, formed the boundary of colonial jurisdiction.

**Rogue Military.** The senior officers of the Kwantung Army kept their own counsel, ignored the requests of their nominal civilian masters in Tokyo for information on their ultimate objectives, and continued to advance. By the spring of 1932 the entire province of Manchuria had fallen to Japan's rogue military.

The next January the Kwantung Army took possession of the coastal city of Shankaikwan. From there it moved west to occupy the inner Mongolian province of Jehol. Skirmishes between the Kwantung Army and ineffective Chinese opposition forces flared the next four years. But more important, tensions grew as Tokyo watched Soviet strength in its Far Eastern provinces increase to 240,000 vice Japan's 160,000 troops in Manchuria. Heightening the imperial power's strategic anxiety was the possibility that Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government in Nanjing might form an alliance with Moscow allowing it to threaten Japan's continental position from the South. In July 1937, a local clash between Chinese and Japanese forces at the Marco Polo bridge in Beijing quickly led to full-scale war.

By the middle of November the outflanked Chinese military had been all but routed. Advancing swiftly up the Yangtze Delta, Japanese forces launched a systematic campaign against noncombatants. An American who had lived in China over 30 years witnessed and later published an account of the aerial bombardment of the undefended city of Suzhou, and its subsequent looting. Fifty-eight miles southwest of Nanjing, the city of Wuhu fell on December 10. Civilians attempting to escape by sailing across the Yangtze river were machine-gunned, and foreign nationals' property stolen or smashed. This, however, was only a prelude to the devastation of Chiang Kai-shek's capital.

**Rape of Nanjing.** The Japanese Army came upon the city with its sword raised high. Nanjing fell on December 13. What followed was ugly even when measured against the surpassingly cruel record of the twentieth century. Prior to the triumphant arrival of the commanding general Matsui Iwane, thousands of men in civilian clothing who looked as though they may have discarded their Chinese army uniforms were rounded up, tied together in bunches, and shot. Over the next six weeks, Nanjing became a catalogue of horrors. Young girls, their mothers, and old women were dragged from their living places and raped by Japanese soldiers in every quarter of the burning city. Foreign eyewitnesses reported the sound of executions by gunfire around the clock, of small children bayoneted multiple times, of passers-by hauled off the street and put to death for no apparent reason except the spreading and unchecked bloodlust of the occupying forces.

Before order was restored, the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal later estimated that some 142,000 innocent men, women, and children were slain.

Over a half century later the textbooks approved by Japan's Ministry of Education speak of Nanjing, the war against China, and the subjugation of Korea in phrases so untroubled by detail that it is impossible to understand what happened or guess that any questions of moral culpability were raised by the events described.

In its fourth chapter, a textbook for high schoolers entitled *History of Japanese Studies* and published in 1977 explains that Japan's army moved—and “moved” is the precise word—into Shanghai in July 1937, and that a “strong faction” among politicians and the military advocated the use of “harsh methods.” Without explaining what this could possibly mean, students are then informed that, although some military opinion held that victory would be swift, the facts were otherwise. Then, almost incidentally, the text declares that “Nanjing was occupied”—again, “occupied” is the word—in December of 1937. End of subject.

A 1987 high school textbook, *The National History of Japan*, is even more opaque. Nanjing is mentioned as the 1928 Nationalist Chinese capital. The next time the city's name appears, students are told that a Japanese-supported government was established there in February 1940.

And, that's it. The attack on the Nanjing is simply written out of existence.

Another recent Japanese textbook for high school students observes that, "in the 12th month of the same year [1937, i.e.], the Japanese forces occupied Nanjing." True, a footnote admits that Japanese soldiers killed many Chinese noncombatants, but the force of this admission is dulled by the text's claim that the deaths occurred in "a sweep for stragglers," and by its remarkable conclusion that the episode, "stirred up anti-Japanese consciousness in China." As though the Chinese deserve some portion of blame for feeling angry at those who put them to the sword.

**Toothless Combs.** Japan's early twentieth century subjugation of Korea, its subsequent effort to eradicate Korean national identity, and the virtual enslavement of millions of Koreans as part of Japan's war effort are brushed with an equally toothless comb. A December 1988 *New York Times* article reprinted excerpts from a *New Detailed Japanese History* on the occupation of Korea:

In 1905, Japan concluded an unofficial agreement between the United States and then revised the treaty of alliance between Japan and Britain, and made both countries acknowledge Japan's control over Korea as its protectorate.

Based on this, Japan deprived Korea of its diplomatic rights and established a supervisory government...Then Japan assumed authority over Korea's domestic policy.

Another current history for high school students describes Japan's effective seizure of the Korean government's reins of power as though force and intimidation were never involved, they were; as though the loss of Korean sovereignty was an orderly process mutually agreeable to both nations. It was not. "The first Japanese-Korean Agreement was concluded in 1904," says the book, and then matter-of-factly, "the second Japanese-Korean Agreement was concluded in 1905 which extended Japanese control over Korean foreign affairs and set up a Korean supervisory government in Seoul."

It's as though a textbook in this country were to say no more about the mistreatment of American Indians in the nineteenth century than to describe it as an act necessitated by expansion westward during which the U.S. Army assumed a supervisory role in the conduct of the rebellious tribes' affairs. Lest there be any doubt, let me assure you that American textbooks say nothing of the sort. They are quite explicit about this sad and unjust episode in our history.

Closer to modern events, Germany's textbooks have long provided an accurate report of Nazi responsibility for starting World War II in Europe, and for the regime's effort to destroy European Jewry. Photographs of the deathcamps, their doomed and murdered inmates, and descriptions of the machinery of death carry the facts of this national crime forward in the minds of the young.

**Ministry's Control.** An important procedural obstacle to a similar Japanese acknowledgment of its twentieth century history is the Ministry of Education's effective central control over the editorial content of the entire nation's textbooks. Since 1886, when the Meiji rulers took alarm at the spread of Western political ideas like democracy, the Ministry of Education's authority to shape the minds of young students had grown luxuriantly. By the time of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, her educational system had become a national instrument to assure students' fervent patriotism, their veneration of the emperor, and more than a little contempt for foreigners like the Chinese. After World War II, American occupation forces tried to cut back the Ministry of Education's considerable central powers.

But old habits are hard to break. Effective authority seeped back to the Ministry in the 1950s and '60s as it took increasing advantage of a textbook screening law passed in 1949 for the original purpose of preventing the inclusion of ultranationalist indoctrination in teaching material. Turning this authority on its head, the Ministry eventually applied it to weaken textbooks' descriptions of Japan's wartime deeds.

The Ministry also started to supply local school districts with textbooks free of charge. Today, the local boards are free to decline a particular text, but only from a selection approved by Tokyo. The national government remains firmly in control of the material taught throughout the land.

**Politicization of Textbooks.** A direct result has been the national politicization of the textbook issue. After simmering for decades, it erupted in 1982 when the Education Ministry in Tokyo stepped up its effort to dilute textbook accounts of Japan's twentieth century aggression against her neighbors. The officially-sanctioned revisions have caused a series of embarrassing incidents which will continue to vex Tokyo so long as it insists on tailoring the facts to political purposes.

In 1982, the new textbooks authorized by the Education Ministry changed the description of Japan's 1931 invasion of China from "aggression" to an "advance." The atrocity in Nanjing was dismissed without elaboration as a "mob confusion," in which "innumerable civilians and soldiers were killed." Understandably angry, Beijing accused the Ministry of trying to "obliterate from the memory of Japan's younger generation the history of Japan's aggression against China and other Asian countries so as to lay the basis for reviving militarism."

The new books shrugged off Japan's annexation of Korea as well calling it too an "advance." The colonial rulers' ban on the Korean language was turned into, "education in the Japanese language." And, although the last Korean king, Kojong, was forced by the Japanese to abdicate, the 1982 books said he had "resigned."

Seoul was incensed. When Japan's Education Minister Heiji Ogawa stonily refused comment for six weeks, Korean demonstrators took to the streets urging a break in diplomatic ties and a ban on Japanese imports. Newspaper articles around the world recorded this most recent reminder of Asian fractiousness, and ambassadors registered objections. The incident subsided with Tokyo's promise to address Seoul's concerns, an expression of Japan's intention "not to repeat such past deeds." The Education Ministry also pledged China that it would, "seriously self-examine the great harm Japan inflicted upon the Chinese people during the 1937-1945 war."

However, when another high school history text appeared four years later, the promised self-examination had not taken place, or—as the darker interpretation put it—maybe it had. Of the events that occurred in Nanjing, the 1986 version explained that, "research has been continuing." China's Foreign Ministry promptly accused Japan of failing to honor its 1982 promise. Through official channels, the Chinese claimed that the book, "grossly distorts the history of the Sino-Japanese war."

Again, officials in Japan's Foreign and Education ministries became involved in the effort to turn aside international accusations, and in the end no one was very satisfied at all.

**Professor's Lawsuit.** Three years after the 1986 incident, the Tokyo District Court upheld the Education Ministry's right to soften a textbook's account of history. This elicited a comment from South Korea's ruling Democratic Justice Party which accused Japan of "trying to justify" its recent aggressive history. The author of the textbook, Saburo Ienaga is a retired professor of history who once taught at the Tokyo University of Education.

Ienaga has been filing law suits against the Education Ministry since 1965 when he tried to recover royalties following the Ministry's rejection of his textbook, *New History of Japan*. In a part of that suit that anyone who has ever been edited will understand, Professor Ienaga also petitioned the court to compens-



ate him in cash for the mental stress induced by the 300 alterations he made to comply with the Ministry's original editorial suggestions.

During the 1989 trial, Professor Ienaga testified that the Ministry eviscerated passages describing how Japanese soldiers had killed civilians and raped women in the 1937 sack of Nanjing, and how references to a Japanese army unit's "human body experiments" on thousands of Chinese had been deleted entirely.

**Passionate Debate.** No doubt the effort to appear conciliatory was behind the court's finding that the government had indeed abused its editorial authority: Ienaga was awarded \$700 compensation for the Ministry's reworking of a passage that discussed a volunteer army recruited to support the Emperor in the 19th century. The court's attempt at face-saving had no effect on Ienaga who vowed, "to continue this fight to my death."

His remark offers a clear picture of the depth of passion on both sides of the textbook debate within Japan, and it is not surprising how hotly fought and bitterly contested the issue is. Rather it is a testimony to the extremely serious view Japan's people take of education, a portrait of the acrimonious divisions between leftists and conservatives, and a telltale to the winds of internationalism which are now blowing stronger in Japan than at any time since World War II ended.

When U.S. occupation forces decided to change the ultranationalistic message of the Japanese public education system, they aimed first at the Education Ministry's nearly total control, transferring some of its authority to prefectural and local levels. In addition, the occupation forces transformed the ends of public education: reverence for the state and its leaders was replaced by less authoritarian and more democratic goals. Finally, teachers were allowed to form unions. Mission accomplished, the Americans departed. Japanese leftists then took control of the teachers' union.

Headed by socialists, the Japan Teachers Union (JTU) pursued a leftist political curriculum in the classroom, and maneuvered to substitute its own power for the control which postwar Education Ministry officials were made to relinquish. Conservative Japanese, quite naturally, resisted.

As a result, says Thomas P. Rohlen in his 1983 study of Japan's high schools, the occupation forces' goal of political neutrality for Japan's public education system has never been realized. Far from it. The issue is as intensely politicized as it is polarized—both domestically and internationally. Japan's left finds their nation's brutalization of its Asian neighbors a useful illustration of capitalism's evils, so it agitates to include graphic accounts of the past in the classroom. When the more conservative Education Ministry officials finish editing the passages that offend them, or when texts written by conservatives that glide silkily over the facts are published, word reaches Seoul and Beijing quickly. And the Korean and Chinese governments enthusiastically exploit these unsought morsels from the past for current purposes whether they involve obtaining trade concessions from Japan or resolving the outstanding diplomatic issue of the moment. In the textbook debate, politics helps force both the left and the right away from the truth; the former to persist in Marxist drivel about history and the wickedness of capitalism, and the latter to deny what in fact happened.

**Outrageous Assertions.** More destructive of Japan's interest, the domestic textbook wars have recently escalated into attacks several national figures have launched on the public's understanding of the truth. In a *Playboy* magazine interview that appeared in the October 1990 issue, Shintaro Ishihara the Japanese writer, now politician, and author of *The Japan That Can Say No*, denied that any atrocity ever happened in Nanjing. "People say," he noted, "that the Japanese made a holocaust there, but that is not true. It is a story made up by the Chinese. It has tarnished the image of Japan, but it is a lie."

Not even Masayuki Fujio, Education Minister under Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone until being sacked in 1986, would go as far as Ishihara. Mr. Fujio didn't deny the rape of Nanjing. He merely suggested that it wasn't such a big deal. In the September 1986 issue of *Bungei-Shunju* published shortly

before Nakasone fired him for causing a diplomatic flap by repeatedly stating that Japan's treatment of its Asian neighbors was justified, Fujio asserted that the 1937 massacre in Nanjing did not violate international law. "It is not murder under international law to kill in war," he said.

In 1988, another minister left the Cabinet for similar reasons. Seisuke Okuno, head of the National Land Agency submitted his resignation to Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita after his remarks touched off angry objections from China and South Korea. Mr. Okuno denied that Japan had been the aggressor in the war fought between 1937 and 1945.

He insisted that the conflict in China had started "accidentally." "Japan," he argued, "fought to protect itself at a time when the white race had turned Asia into a colony." Okuno offered these thoughts after returning from paying his respects at the Yasakuni Shrine, a Shinto holy place in Tokyo dedicated to the memory of Japan's 2.5 million war dead, and the seven "Class A" war criminals hanged for such war crimes as having "ordered, authorized, and permitted" inhumane treatment of POWs and others, and of having "deliberately and recklessly disregarded their duty" to prevent atrocities. In one of his final comments, Okuno, who was 75 at the time he left the Cabinet, said that he wanted Japan, "to stop being pulled around by the ghost of the occupation forces."

**Open Sore.** I believe this sentiment lies at the heart of Japan's contentious view of its past. Professor Ienaga's 25-year dispute with the Education Ministry over its suppression of the facts identifies an itch on the Japanese body politic. Almost ten years ago, the irritant became an open sore. Why? Because Japan's leaders foresaw their nation's reemergence as an important global power, blown in this direction not only by the need wisely to exploit her vast economic power, but for very immediate and pressing reasons.

Jimmy Carter's 1979 abandonment of the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty, and self-doubts lingering in the U.S. from Vietnam raised questions about Washington's capacity and will to hold up its end—the important one in Japan's eyes—of the 1960 U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. Fueling those doubts, Washington was urging Tokyo to take a larger role in its own defense, specifically to increase military spending and assume responsibility for its sealanes out to a thousand miles. To complete this darkening picture, the Soviet Union, in its final paroxysms of aggression, was bludgeoning Afghanistan, fomenting revolution on America's doorstep, and generally running wild in international streets.

Japan must protect itself. Embracing the long-term view for which they are justly famous, it appears that one of the courses Japanese policy-makers adopted was to improve the nation's self-esteem by air-brushing history. There are, of course, other good explanations for why the textbook issue burst in the early 1980s: maneuvering with neighbors, and power shifts in the left-right squabble, to name a couple. What is not subject to scholarly dispute is the Ministry of Education's centrally-directed laundering of history.

The diplomatic protestations Beijing and Seoul have been making since 1982 should have registered by now in Tokyo, as should the concerns of Americans expressed over the years, and most recently by *The New York Times* article I mentioned earlier.

The ghosts Mr. Okuno wished to rid his country of will not be exorcised by ignoring them nor by pretending that the events they represent didn't happen or were insignificant. Clearly, the Education Ministry cannot surrender its central authority for reviewing texts. It would slip inevitably into the hands of an energized, ideologically left, and well-organized teachers union. But it is just as plain that, however honorable their motives, the impulse of Japanese conservatives to cloak the past in the untruthful fabric of omission and misrepresentation is certain to be counter-productive. Tokyo's falsification of history will continue to provide the governments of mainland China and South Korea's with irresistible diplo-

matic opportunities, and leave the rest of the world uncertain that Japan understands what it did well enough not to do it again.

The time to correct this error is now. And, not only for the welcome political message which Tokyo would send the world were it to use the 50th anniversary of its attack on Pearl Harbor as an opportunity honestly to confront the past. The more important reason for closing the textbook controversy today was suggested by newly-elected Prime Minister Miyazawa in his November 8 speech to the Diet. "We must recognize," he said, "that our international role in the building of a global order for peace can only grow larger."

A nation as wealthy and industrious as Japan can be a great force for peace. But Japan's aversion to looking squarely at her past and accepting the moral judgment of her actions will leave other nations wondering quite naturally what internal sense of conduct will guide the way she treats others in seeking peace. Does Japan now understand that ruling another people without their consent—such as the Koreans—is wrong; is Tokyo's democratic form of government a bow to Western sensibilities, or has it truly been embraced in the years since the American occupation; is Japan's own commitment to popular rule deep enough to come to the aid of another whose democracy is threatened?

**Accepting Nations As Equals.** If Japan truly wants to enter international affairs as an important and respected participant, then she must be prepared to make concessions to certain fundamental principles of the international community. Among the most important is the need to recognize other nations as equals. Accepting this does not require agreement, friendship, or even cooperation with other powers. Denying it opens the way for invasion, plunder, and rape as Saddam Hussein reminded the civilized world last year.

So long as Japan forswears her aggression in China and Korea the first half of this century, her willingness to treat other nations with the same respect she expects of them must be in doubt. When Japan acknowledges the past as wrong, the world will know that she is ready to join the international community as a full and active member. The ghosts will sink into the distance.

