

# Problems and Prospects of the New Japan



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(Courtesy of USIS)*

Japan is ready to assume the status of a sovereign equal in the international family. The ratification of the Japanese peace treaty will mark a new start for her, testing the result of six years' endeavors which have sought to transform Japan into a bulwark of democracy and an outpost against the militant communism which has engulfed China and threatens all Asia. The future of Japan, therefore, may be crucial not only to Asia but to the world. A review of the world's knowledge of this island nation is in order.

The treaty limits Japan to the four main islands and more than 500 islets, forming a narrow barrier, 1,300 miles long, off the continent of Asia. The Japan of today is only about half as large as the pre-war empire but occupies a strategic position. The terrain is mountainous, reaching 12,461 feet on Mount Fuji, and the climate is hot and humid in summer, mild in winter except in the northern areas.

Mountains and wastelands limit the possible farming area to about one-third of the total, and in prac-

tice to considerably less. Only about 16 percent of Japan is under cultivation. The lack of food-growing land is offset in part by the neighboring seas, which produce a high yield of fish, a staple of the meager Japanese diet. There are some minerals, chiefly coal, copper, and gold, but the deposits are not large, and Japan's steel industry must import coking coal. Hydroelectric power from the swift-flowing rivers is capable of further development. In few essentials of modern life is Japan self-sufficient.

The primary problem of Japan is overpopulation. Stabilized at about 26,000,000 until a century ago, the population now is 84,000,000. Birth control and mass emigration have been advocated, but little progress has been made.

The Japanese are an intelligent and adaptable people, clever at utilizing adopted technical methods. Yet they cling to their own social forms and are dominated by a "national family" concept which holds the family group and the welfare of the community more important than the



conscience of the individual. The Japanese culture was derived chiefly from China, and the most popular religious faith — Buddhism — reached Japan from India via China. Shinto, a combination of animism, ancestor worship, and veneration of the imperial forebears, stands second. Christianity has a considerable influence also.

Led by their Emperor, the Japanese neither broke under the occupation following World War II nor fought against it. The pine tree, Hirohito told his people, bears the weight of the snow — but how green it is in the spring. The treaty will bring the spring weather he anticipated. After World War I the real control of Japan had passed from the Elder Statesmen and the bicameral Diet into the hands of militarists and industrialists. After World War II the occupation set up a new system guaranteeing the basic freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and person, and making the Emperor a "symbol of state." The lower house of the Diet was granted most of the legislative power. Executive functions were vested in a premier elected by the lower house.

Japan has four significant political groupings, the Liberal Party, which controls the Government; the Democrats, the Socialists, and the Communists. Headed by Premier Shigeru Yoshida, the Liberal Party is the most conservative in the nation, favoring private enterprise and strongly anti-Communist. It vigorously advocated a "separate" peace with the

West. The main strength of the Liberal Party is among the small landholders created by the occupation's land reform and among large and small business elements in the cities. Socialists were the leading group in 1947 but split into two wings and lost ground. The Communist Party, although legal, is largely underground, with its top leaders in exile or hiding. It might poll 1,000,000 votes, or about 3 percent of the total.

The nation's economy is balanced between agriculture and fisheries; manufacture, trade, and transport. Of the labor force of 36,000,000 men and women, more than 15,000,000 work on the land, the remainder in industry. Private enterprise controls agriculture and industry but the Government operates key public services such as railroads. Industrial output, based on cheap labor, and farm production have risen in the past six years, but neither is yet high enough to meet the requirements of even a low standard of living without outside assistance.

Half the present farmed area is in rice. Other important crops include wheat, sweet potatoes, tea, vegetables, and fruit. The land is rich and well cultivated and yields are good, but the small size of family holdings and the country's rough terrain preclude much mechanization.

Land reform has spread ownership. In prewar Japan 73 percent of the farmers were tenants wholly or in part; 89 percent of them owned their



land by 1950. But while redistribution has satisfied the aspirations of many farmers for ownership, it has not changed farming methods nor greatly increased output.

Japan's industrial plant and skilled labor are its greatest resource for survival. The big silk and cotton textile industry furnished the most important prewar exports. Steel, shipbuilding, and other heavy industries made Japan one of the leading industrial countries of the world. Industry was badly damaged during World War II, but with American assistance, and spurred by the need for goods and services during the Communist aggression in Korea production has passed the 1932-36 level.

Low wages and long hours of labor formerly enabled Japan to sell a large volume of manufactures abroad and thus pay for food imports. The occupation's labor legislation and the introduction of trade unions have brought wage increases and a shorter work week averaging 50 hours. There are 32,000 local unions with a membership of more than 6,000,000, yet city workers must spend their income for food alone, while the higher wages they receive have placed higher prices on Japan's exports.

In war reparations, the Republic of the Philippines and the Republic of Indonesia together seek nearly \$2,000,000,000 from Japan. Furthermore, military expenditures again are in prospect under the defense pact. Meanwhile, stripped of its once great merchant marine, Japan

must import food, oil, iron ore, and other necessities in ships of other lands. With most imports coming from the dollar area and most exports going to sterling areas, Japan expects a dollar shortage.

Unable at present to stand on its own feet economically or as a military power, Japan faces a generally hostile continent and relies on new and tenuous relations with the rest of the free world. The Japanese have been given a chance for self-rule, but they are a feudalistic people accustomed for centuries to obeying orders. Democracy and habits of thought natural to peoples accustomed to self-government are strange new developments to them. Given reasonable help and encouragement, there is cause to believe that Japan will find her own answers without abandoning its democratic gains. Left-wing strength centers in socialism rather than communism, which has little appeal to the Japanese. There appears to be little internal danger of communism while the nation's economy provides a reasonable living for the people.

Externally the situation is different. Communist-dominated China and Soviet Russia have denounced the peace treaty and the defense pact as proof of a new Japanese "imperialism." It is patent that retaliation may be undertaken when an opportune moment arrives. Meanwhile, Communist China seeks to lure Japan with a market, offering to supply raw materials in return for Japan's manufactures. Both the threat and the



ture will be used in the future to detach Japan from the free world alliance and absorb the nation into the Communist orbit.

Under the defense pact the United States will keep troops in Japan during the immediate future and will use Japanese bases for an indefinite period. Although in time Japan is expected to supply the bulk of her land defense, she now has only 75,000 men in the National Police Reserve. There is much opposition to rearmament because of its cost.

Japan must trade to live. She must find new customers, cheaper and more efficient production methods, and, in addition, must somehow

make restitution for damage wrought in Asia and meet the costs of self-defense. This tremendous burden raises the question whether the free world can supply Japan's needs and, eventually, make available to the Japanese the means of self-support they must have to live and defend themselves as a democracy. The Japanese problem is a world problem. Much of its solution will depend upon the economic fortunes of the nation, which in turn will depend upon the policies of the rest of the free world. It is up to the free world as much as to Japan itself to determine the eventual result.

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### Spain and Our Educational System

*"...It was Spain that brought and planted in our Philippine soil the seed of a Christian civilization that grew and developed into a firmly rooted tree; and on this tree America grafted an educational public school system that in turn grew and developed into wide branches that reach now every nook and corner of our land. It was Spain that laid the foundation of our Christian culture and traditions through a long and patient process; and upon this foundation America built the structure of our present system of public education. It was Spain that painted the Christian background of our history; and on this background America added the vast scenery of government-supported schools from massive, concrete structures to nipa-bamboo school houses. Spain made our people thirst after an education that would benefit every child of the country; America quenched that thirst with the establishment of a nation-wide chain of schools that embraces the remotest municipal barrios. Spain made us hunger after cultural, literary and professional training; and America fed our people with educational facilities to be found in our present school system largely supplemented by a vast number of private schools. Yes, the stage was set by Spain for the extraordinary rise in enrollment of 150,000 per cent in fifty years, a phenomenon in all educational history..."*

— Rev. E. G. Salvador, S. J.