

INTERVIEW WITH ADMIRAL NOMURA

Sea Power for Japan

*Interview
Summer 1954*

Last week the upper house of the Japanese Diet passed the Mutual Defense Assistance Treaty by which the Japanese armed forces are to be built up with U. S. aid. To secure an authoritative opinion on this build-up, Compton Pakenham, chief of Newswax's Tokyo bureau, obtained this interview with Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, former Ambassador to Washington and now one of the most respected figures in Japanese life. Here, Admiral Nomura gives his views regarding rearmament in general and, in particular, how he feels a new Japanese Navy should be developed.

How do you foresee Japan's naval revival in terms of length of time required and size of her fleet?

Japan will require at least 250,000 to 300,000 tons of destroyers, destroyer escorts, mine sweepers, and small carriers. Owing to our economic condition and the present state of our industries, with the greatest effort, it will take at least ten years for us to reach this point. In the Russian war home-trained crews fought in British-built capital ships, and we could satisfactorily complete our required strength with vessels from abroad.

Should Japan aim at a balanced fleet or concentrate on special types for defense of Japanese waters only?

We do not need big ships and they are impossible to get in any case. What we need is enough to protect our trade routes and defend Japan against small-scale invasion. Beyond that we must rely on collective security.

How do Japanese naval concepts fit new developments in weapons and strategy, including use of atomic and hydrogen bombs?

Naturally we are in the atomic age but from the situation in which we have been placed and are in presently we have not been able to assimilate all aspects of the atomic problem. With the requirements I have stated above, our activities

must be on an equally limited scale. Though I cannot blame them because their horizons are so limited, I have no sympathy with those who maintain that in this atomic age it is futile to arm ourselves. This would mean Japan could be subjugated by the very smallest force.

Should the Japanese Navy build-up be closely coordinated with the United States with joint operations in view for the future?

This is absolutely necessary. For our future independence it is essential we stand steadfastly with the United States. I have the strongest conviction on this point.

Do you agree with the present American trend toward relying on sea and air power and avoiding commitments on the mainland of Asia?

It is an extremely wise policy. Air, sea power, and new weapons are the greatest deterrent to war whereas committing troops to the vast spaces of the Asian continent would be like throwing pebbles into the ocean.

Is neutrality possible for Japan or must she rearm?

Neutrality is absolutely impossible. The world is far too small for such concepts, and it is obvious that we are lying midway between two powerful and opposed groups. There is no choice.

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