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 SUBJECT: Taketara OGATA's (Deputy Prime Minister) Views on Rearmament
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SUMMARY OR SID REPORT:

This report covers a personal interview with Mr. Taketara OGATA, Deputy Prime Minister, on 3 June 53. His personal views on the subject of Japanese rearmament may be summarized as follows:

The Constitution need not be revised before Japan can build a national defense force. If the U. S. would offer MSA aid under the guise of "police force assistance," the Diet would accept it but otherwise the Government may run into some difficulty. The U. S. should deny emphatically that it wants to employ Japanese troops to fight American's battles abroad.

Japan is presently too poor to embark upon a rapid and extensive build-up of armed forces. Japan's best defense now lies in the presence of U. S. security forces. The Japanese people are apathetic to rearmament but in their hearts they recognize the need for a self-defense force. Japan badly needs a spiritual reawakening.

The U. S. must not be misled by the present wave of anti-Americanism. Leftist and Communist elements are exploiting isolated cases. A South East Asia mutual defense pact would be very helpful and the U. S. should help in organizing such a pact.

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Background. On 3 June 1953, the Reporting Officer had a luncheon meeting at the Imperial Hotel with Mr. Taketora OGATA, Deputy Prime Minister. The luncheon was arranged through ex-Colonel Nobuhiko JIMBO who also attended with his secretary-interpreter. The purpose of the meeting was to hear Mr. OGATA's personal views on rearmament. Although Mr. OGATA speaks and understands English fairly well, the conversation was carried on in Japanese through an interpreter. Mr. OGATA's views on rearmament are outlined hereafter.

1. It is not necessary to revise the Constitution before Japan can build a defense force. If the Government can hold to the view that the present forces are not military forces, then there will be no need to bring this question up. However, if the United States, in rendering assistance to Japan, stresses that such assistance is for "military forces," it will probably be necessary to raise the question politically.

2. The use of the word "rearmament" has a bad connotation to most Japanese because it implies a reversion to the former military system. Therefore, both Japanese and United States leaders should avoid the use of this specific term. If the United States could indicate that the assistance given under NSA was designed for a Japanese police force, the Government would have no trouble in getting the Diet to ratify such an agreement. If, however, the United States insists that the agreement refer to "military forces" there may be some difficulty. (Reporting Officer's note: In this regard Mr. OGATA asked if the United States did not give equipment to Indo-China which was specifically identified as equipment for a police force. He was informed that while the Reporting Officer was not familiar with the terms of a specific agreement with Indo-China he knew of no case where the United States was giving NSA assistance to build up a local police establishment as opposed to military forces designed to repel aggression.)

3. Many Leftist and Communist elements in Japan state that the United States wants to build up Japanese troops so they can fight America's battles abroad. United States leaders should deny this point emphatically in all their public utterances and emphasize clearly that they envision any forces created to be solely for the defense of Japan. This is particularly important because many of the Asian countries are suspicious of Japan's intention and therefore must be convinced that any rearmament program was designed solely for defense and not for aggressive war.

4. Japan is presently too poor to embark upon a rapid and extensive build-up of armed forces and from the Japanese viewpoint her best defense for the immediate future lies in the presence of United States security forces and bases in Japan.

5. There are three basic reasons why Japanese people are apathetic to rearmament, viz.:

(1) Fear that it would upset the economic stability of the country and reduce the standard of living.

(2) Fear of resurgence of a powerful military clique and the restrictions that it could impose.

(3) Concern over antagonizing neighboring Asian countries.

Despite the above, 99 percent of the people recognize the need for self-defense in their hearts and if their fears can be quieted they will not oppose the creation of self-defense forces.

6. Japan badly needs a spiritual reawakening. While Americans have such slogans as the "American way of life," upon which they can build a national pride, the Japanese have nothing. The Occupation taught the Japanese that much of their old history and culture was untrue and bad and therefore the people lost confidence in their past beliefs. To restore their pride in a Japanese way of life more emphasis must be placed on Japanese history within the schools.

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7. The Japanese truly have unique characteristics of which they can be proud and the Tenno (Emperor), who epitomizes these characteristics much as does the Royal Family of England epitomize English characteristics, can properly serve as the center or core of Japanese pride and loyalty. Although no Japanese would desire the position and prestige of the Emperor to be misused by private cliques, they all want to feel and express a real reverence and pride in him.

8. The United States must not be misled by the irritations which are inspired by leftist and Communist elements and which indicate that there is a growing wave of anti-Americanism over a broad field of subjects. Actually, the Communists are exploiting isolated instances but the people of Japan in their hearts really look with favor upon and trust the United States.

9. A South East Asia mutual defense pact would be very helpful in furthering the relations between the free countries of Asia, and the United States should help in the organization of such a pact.

10. The Occupation lasted too long but General MacArthur was very successful. YOSHIDA was the first Japanese leader who really cooperated and worked effectively with General MacArthur.

COMMENTS:

1. Mr. OGATA, who presently serves as Deputy Prime Minister, has been mentioned in many circles as YOSHIDA's personal first choice as his successor. He evidences great loyalty to YOSHIDA and is lavish in his praise of him. OGATA himself is supposed to be a political protege of Prince HIGASHIKUNI (Prime Minister from 17 Aug 1945 to 5 Oct 1945) and served as his Cabinet Secretary during the HIGASHIKUNI Cabinet. It is known definitely that Mr. OGATA called on HIGASHIKUNI before his interview with the Reporting Officer and talked with him concerning HIGASHIKUNI's previous interview with the Reporting Officer.

2. It is interesting to note that OGATA confirmed SHIGEMITSU's previous statement to the Reporting Officer that the Liberal Party would like to obtain MSA assistance on the grounds that it is being provided for a "police force." While this obviously would be a desirable political course from the Liberal Party point of view, it is not believed that any of the members have any real conviction that they could negotiate an agreement on such terms.

3. OGATA appeared to be particularly concerned with the need for a "spiritual reawakening" of the Japanese people. By that, it is presumed that he is acutely conscious of oriental mores and customs and would be unusually sensitive on matters which might reflect "a loss of face." Although he appears quite conversant with and understanding of Western culture, it is believed that he is deeply convinced that all Japanese should hold to their old established culture.

4. The following observations are submitted for inclusion in a biographical data file on OGATA:

"Subject is a short but solidly and heavily built man. Has very slow and deliberate movements and speaks with a very studied air as if groping for the right words. Tends to stretch his sentences and often times stops mid way so that the listener is not certain whether he has finished or merely pausing. He does not create a warm and affable atmosphere upon first greeting but rather maintains a dignified and superior air. However, seems to break down quickly in conversation and after a short time this first impression is erased and one of friendliness established. He does not appear to be especially forceful but rather a man who could work most effectively as a henchman or a loyal subordinate."

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