

Profile of Masanobu Tsuji

Ex-Colonel Dietman Says U.S. Forces Should Leave

By KIYOAKI MURATA

A middle-aged, bespectacled figure with a balding head spryly walks in and out of committee rooms in the Diet building, sometimes firing poignant questions at the debating legislators.

In moments of overenthusiasm he will bowl out the Dietmen in the manner of an Army officer—for a good reason. Until Japan's surrender nine years ago, he was a colonel in the Japanese Army and a brilliant strategist at that.

For Masanobu Tsuji, 51, a man who was seven times wounded and still carries a score or so of shrapnel and bullets in his body, conceals he is an amateur as a politician.

His present status, to be sure, was something he never dreamed of in his wildest dreams as he conquered Malaya under General Tomoyuki Yamashita and as he fought against overwhelming odds and malaria on Guadalcanal.

Born in 1902 in Ishikawa Prefecture, he started his military career early. In 1917 young Masanobu was enrolled in the Nagoya Junior Military Academy at the age of 14 and a half, and then went on to the Military Academy and later to the Army Staff College.

Wounded Twice

His first combat experience came in 1932 at the time of the first Shanghai incident. As a company commander he led men from his home division and was wounded twice.

In 1933 Tsuji joined the Imperial Army Staff and was assigned to the Kwantung Army Command in Manchuria in 1934.

Col. Takushiro Hattori, another bright strategist of the defunct Japanese army, says of Tsuji, his junior by a year: "As a staff officer, he was always at the frontlines, risking danger, and guided operations to our advantage. Few could excel Tsuji in handling a fouled-up situation and restoring order."

Although Tsuji is apt to be taken for an extremely reckless character, this is due to his nature which does not tolerate the slightest degree of crookedness," according to Hattori.

Like any other man of quick decision and candor, Tsuji has many critics. But Hattori explains they are those Tsuji mercilessly exposes for what he thinks is wrong.

Sneaked Back to Japan

What really made the fiery colonel famous, however was his "underground escape" over a distance of 7,500 miles on the Chinese continent following Japan's surrender when he was sought by the Allied Powers as a war crime suspect.

He sneaked back into Japan under Allied Occupation in May 1943 and continued to elude his pursuers for two more years until 1950 when he was dropped from the wanted list.

While living underground, Tsuji wrote his first bestseller "Senko Sanzenri" (A 3,000-mile Underground Escape) based on his unique experience. The dramatic memoirs published also in English were followed by more of Tsuji's literary activities which covered the writer's accounts of the battles of Burma, Guadalcanal, Nomohan and Malaya.

Ran for Lower House

In October 1952 he ran for the Lower House from Ishikawa Prefecture, garnering 109,000 votes and outnumbering the scores of other candidates from the same constituency.

As an independent, he advocated in and out of the nation's legislature "self-defense by neutrality" with the same fervor he showed on the battle ground.

His record as a Dietman during the last two years is dis-

marked with the characteristics of the daredevil and somewhat erratic colonel.

A year ago when the National Safety Force held its first large-scale maneuver at the foot of Mt. Fuji, Tsuji as a member of the Cabinet Committee of the Lower House, was among the several Diet men and women to see it.

When the legislative group on the first night of the three-day maneuver met the press at a Gotemba Hotel, Tsuji alone was missing. Wearing an NSF fatigue, he was bivouacking with the troops.

Tried to Reach Korea

During last fall when Japanese fishing boats were being seized by ROK patrol ships of the Korean waters, Tsuji decided to take a personal look at the fishery situation by boarding a Maritime Safety Board ship. But his real motive, as he later admitted, was to be captured by the Koreans and taken to Seoul so that he could conduct one-man negotiations with President Syngman Rhee to tell him to stop the nonsense.

"Unfortunately," Tsuji observed, "the press found out my well-guarded trip to Kyushu, and the news apparently traveled to Seoul fast. For seven days our ships roamed on the Rhee Line, but not a single ROK ship came into sight."

Still anxious to settle the Korean-Japanese problems, Tsuji wrote in a recent open letter to Rhee that if the ROK President so desired he would be willing to meet Rhee in Seoul even by smuggling himself across the channel.

In the early summer of 1953, when the Uchinada firing range issue broke out, the ubiquitous Dietman was in the midst of Red banners and tensed-up local residents and "successfully restored order and forestalled a serious incident."

Deplores Scandals

Tsuji opened a recent interview with the Nippon Times by deprecating the current political scandals. "It is simply appalling," he deplored "and the situation closely resembles that in Nationalist China on the eve of its collapse under Communist dominance after the war."

Two factors which are peculiar to Japan, however, may yet prevent Japan from following in the steps of the Nationalist Government. They are: 1) that the prosecutors are not yet corrupt and 2) that unlike Chinese Communists, their Japanese counterparts are "juvenile" in their tactics.

Menace Not Unlikely

But Tsuji does not dismiss an "immediate menace" which stares Japan in the face, namely, the possibilities of "indirect invasion" by the Communists. By "indirect invasion" Tsuji means a civil war and "objective circumstances for it are 70 per cent ripe."

For the remaining 30 per cent the peril may be accelerated by the people's distrust in the Government and the collapse of the smaller businesses due to a deflation.

"And yet the Government is almost indifferent to these conditions," Tsuji lamented. "Nor is the U.S. aware of the situation because she lacks experience of this sort."

Tsuji said he saw the entire process of a corrupt government driven out of power by the Communists in postwar China and Japan is nearing that stage.

On the basis that Japan is not exposed to the danger of immediate "direct invasion," Tsuji blasts the National Safety Force as "completely useless and sheer waste of money."

When the time comes, the NSF may be easily taken over by the Reds through their agents who have successfully infiltrated it.



Nippon Times Photo
Masanobu Tsuji

ranks, according to the ex-colonel.

Bad Parts Adopted

"The NSF," he charged, "has adopted only the bad parts of the U.S. Army, which does have good points, too." An army for a poor country like Japan must be an expensive one but should be engaged in more productive undertakings in peace time as the Army in Red China is.

An argument of his, which paints Tsuji in the eyes of the public as one of the most vitriolic champions of anti-Americanism here is that the U.S. forces should get out of Japan as soon as possible.

Their presence here is the biggest obstacle to Japan's rearmament, according to Tsuji.

His theory of course is based on the premise that there is no danger of "direct invasion" by Red forces unless there is a U.S.-Soviet war. But if and when a full-scale war breaks out, Japan would not and should not be an important battleground for the U.S., Tsuji maintains.

Needs Forces in Europe

"America cannot afford to leave her armed forces in Japan because she must employ all her might on the main battle-grounds, the Army in Europe and the Air Force in the Arctic."

Japan should remain "neutral" in such an eventuality, he argues, and if Japan successfully resists all foreign armed forces, it would mean victory half won for the U.S.

"I want America to know Japan cannot be made a U.S. base," Tsuji emphasized. "But if the U.S. is satisfied with the prevention of Japan's communism, I will give her full cooperation. On the other hand, if she does not agree to this, I will fight her to the bitter end."

The best solution for abating the anti-American sentiments which have been rapidly mounting since Bikini, Tsuji proposes, is to remove all U.S. forces from Japan.

Can't Defend Japan

"Americans cannot defend anything in and around Japan," Tsuji pointed out. "Japan should be defended by the Japanese themselves and there are still 5,000,000 veterans from the last war. Of them at least 2,000,000 are fit for combat. We can hold our own."

As for himself, the ex-colonel has organized a "Jiei Domei" (Self-Defense League), a kind of militia, of his followers that include those who fought under him in actual warfare. Of the total of approximately 3,500 "Jiei Domei" men, 2,000 are in his home prefecture, Ishikawa, Tsuji revealed. "In our own prefecture at least, my men can handle the Communists if they try to create a civil disturbance."

An American magazine recently remarked that in view of the current political irregularities and the people's disaffection with the Government, Tsuji might instigate a coup d'etat—a fear shared by some Japanese.

But the stylish ex-colonel himself laughed at the speculation: "If I were to plan a thing like that, why should I have gone to a lot of trouble to become a member of the national legislature?"