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The Wages of Guilt

Memories of War in Germany and Japan

Ian Buruma

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FOR MY FATHER

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Contents

To bury Germany in the bosom of its Western allies, such as NATO and the EC, was to bury the distrust of Germans. Or so it was hoped. As Europeans they could feel normal, Western, civilized. Germany, the old "land in the middle," the Central European colossus, the power that fretted over its identity and was haunted by its past, had become a Western nation. This blessed state was challenged twice in the space of a year: first reunification and then the Gulf War. The results, as was to be expected, were mixed. The instinctive rejection of uncivilized, un-Western Ossies was one result, the anguished hesitation to join the Western allies in an act of war was another.

It was still snowing on my last night in Bonn. I had a meal of potato dumplings, sausages, and beer with a young political scientist. By young I mean a shade too young to be a 68er. He was not a pacifist. He was critical of his government's wishy-washy support of the allied coalition. He did not seem hampered by a cultural distrust of his country. He was even eager to introduce me to the local food and to the ghastly carnival music played on the jukebox in one or two bars—Gulf War or no Gulf War. The German Army, he said, was a real citizens' army now. Everyone had to serve, which is why debates on conscience and morality were so important. It was everyone's concern. And because German security was tied up in the constitution with that of its allies, military adventures had become virtually impossible. "You see," he said, "we Germans really don't want to do anything on our own again."

It was late. We walked back to my hotel together. It was an old hotel, which in its time put up many distinguished guests, but which somehow overlooked the thirties and early forties in its potted history handed out at the reception desk. We went past Beethoven holding his peace flag, past the "warning post" where young people were holding a candlelit vigil to protest against the war, past the banners that said "No blood for oil" and "German money and German gas are murdering people all over the world." I told him about my plan to write about the memories of war in Germany and Japan. He seemed a little put

out, almost shocked, but said nothing. Then, after we had said goodbye, he suddenly turned around and said: "Please, please don't overdo the similarities. We are very different from the Japanese. We don't sleep in our companies to make them more powerful. We are just people, just normal people." He did not say Western people. But he might as well have.

TOKYO

In Tokyo the Gulf War seemed far away. There were no banners, no warning posts, no candlelit vigils or peace demonstrations. The whole notion of war seems more remote in Japan than in Germany, where the ruins and bullet holes are still plain to see. There is nothing much in Tokyo to remind one of the last world war, since virtually the entire city went up in flames in 1945. The hotel that was occupied in the attempted military coup of 1936 had survived the war, but was torn down during the real estate boom of the eighties. The prison where Japan's major war criminals were hanged was replaced by a skyscraper and a shopping mall.

In the seventies and early eighties, you still saw the blind and maimed veterans of the Imperial Army standing on crude artificial limbs in the halls of railway stations or in front of Shinto shrines, wearing white kimonos and dark glasses, playing melancholy old army tunes on their battered accordions, hoping for some spare change. Young people, smartly dressed in the latest American styles, mostly passed them by without a glance, as though these broken men didn't exist, as though they were ghosts visible only to themselves. Older people would sometimes slip them a few coins, a bit furtively, like paying an embarrassing relative to stay out of sight. The ghostlike figures in their white kimonos brought back memories that nobody wanted. And now they too had disappeared forever. The only reminders of the last world war in Tokyo were mere fragments in the air, like the military marches blaring from the pinball parlors.

Roppongi is one of the most fashionable districts in Tokyo. Since 1945 it has always had a slightly Western air. There used to be an American military base there. Now the place smells of luxury. Foreign models rush to fashion studios, young men cruise down the main street in Porsches, and elegant ladies meet for light lunches at northern Italian restaurants. In the midst of all the glitter is a compound of ugly gray cement buildings. They are an oddly unkempt presence, incongruous, as though they shouldn't really be there at all. The ministry of self-defense, housed in here, is not even called a ministry, but an agency, even though its director general carries the portfolio of a cabinet minister. These buildings are among the few reminders of the last war. They used to be occupied by the Imperial Japanese Army, and by the U.S. Army after the war.

Officially Japan has no army, navy, or air force. In 1946 the Japanese, under the eyes of the American occupation, were presented with a constitution which states, in Article Nine, that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation." And that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained." The Self-Defense Forces are a rather shaky compromise. But in fact Japan has a fairly large military, which it is constitutionally unable to dispatch.

When the Cold War began around 1950, the Americans no longer wanted Japan to remain a permanently disarmed model of pacifism. So a National Police Reserve was created. The left protested, but without success. Then a U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was signed, again despite much Japanese protest. Richard Nixon, on a visit to Japan in 1953, said that Article Nine had been a mistake. Many Japanese conservatives agreed, but their view didn't prevail. The Cold War heated up, Japanese business, partly thanks to the Korean War, began to boom, and the left lost more and more ground. The Self-Defense Forces were then legalized under circumstances many Japanese still regard as dubious and unconstitutional.

In the main building of the Self-Defense Agency, as nondescript inside as outside, I had an appointment with Hagi Jiro, deputy director general of the agency. His office was basic, even spartan: a desk, a sofa, a cupboard, and some steel filing cabinets. On the wall was a calendar with pinup pictures of teenage girls on a Pacific beach. Hagi was a thin man dressed in a blue suit. I asked him about Japanese public opinion. What did most people think Japan should do about the Gulf War? He said the majority were against sending any Japanese troops. In November 1990, a special bill proposing just that had to be dropped. Most Japanese, he said, still associated the military with the old Imperial Army. But this varied from generation to generation. People with memories of World War II, he said, were very much opposed to sending Japanese soldiers to fight on any front. People between the ages of thirty and fifty felt less strongly about this. And young people could be swayed easily one way or the other by the mass media.

He mentioned Article Nine of the Japanese constitution. And as so often happened in Germany, the question of trust came up. Hagi said: "The Japanese people do not trust the Self-Defense Forces because they cannot trust themselves as Japanese. This is why they need the constitution to block security efforts."

It was an interesting phrase: cannot trust themselves as Japanese. It came back at the end of our conversation. I told Hagi that I had just arrived from Germany. He smiled and said something unexpected: "I like the Germans very much, but I think they are a dangerous people. I don't know why—perhaps it is race, or culture, or history. Whatever. But we Japanese are the same: we swing from one extreme to the other. As peoples, we Japanese, like the Germans, have strong collective discipline. When our energies are channeled in the right direction, this is fine, but when they are misused, terrible things happen." Here he paused. Then he added: "I also happen to think Japanese and Germans are racists."

This was, of course, what many people believed. It was what I had been taught to believe, that the Germans and Japanese

were dangerous peoples, that there was something flawed in their national characters. But it was not what I had expected to hear at the defense headquarters of Japan. Linking the two nations, however, as Hagi had done, was something Germans, in my experience, tended to avoid. I often heard the phrase "typically German" from Germans, almost always in a derogatory sense. ("Typically Japanese," on the other hand, is usually said by Japanese with a mixture of defensiveness and pride.) Yet to be put in the same category as the Japanese—even to be compared—bothered many Germans. (Again, unlike the Japanese, who made the comparison often.) Germans I met often stressed how different they were from the Japanese, just as Wessies emphasized their differences from Ossies. It had occurred to me that the Dorian Gray factor might have been at work. To some West Germans, now so "civilized," so free, so individualistic, so, well, Western, the Japanese, with their group discipline, their deference to authority, their military attitude toward work, might appear too close for comfort to a self-image only just, and perhaps only barely, overcome.

This is not entirely without reason. Japan learned many things from Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which no longer fit the liberal climate of the Federal Republic. Like Germany, Japan—as represented by its intellectuals and politicians—often felt the need to compensate for a feeling of national inferiority by turning to romantic nationalism. Fichte's theories of organic nationalism were imported to bolster Japanese self-esteem, even as Japan was Westernizing itself to catch up with Western might. Spengler's ideas on the decline of the West were comforting when Japan felt excluded by the Western powers in the 1920s and 1930s. But most of these theories, adapted to Japanese needs, are still widely quoted, on television, at universities, and in popular journals. Fantasies about Jewish conspiracies to dominate the world somehow got frozen in the outer reaches of Japanese folk mythology. And the ideology of pure race, much encouraged before the war by imported German notions, is anything but extinct in Japan.

In Hitler's Germany, Japan was admired for having achieved, instinctively, what German Nazism aspired to. In the words of one Albrecht Fürst von Urach, a Nazi propagandist, Japanese emperor worship was "the most unique fusion in the world of state form, state consciousness, and religious fanaticism." Fanaticism was, of course, a positive word in the Nazi lexicon. Reading Nazi books on Japan, one might think that German propagandists wished to instill in the German people, through propaganda, a culture like the one that was handed down to the Japanese by their ancient gods.

To what extent the behavior of nations, like that of individual people, is determined by history, culture, or character is a question that exercises many Japanese, almost obsessively. There was not much sign of *betroffenheit* on Japanese television during the Gulf War. Nor did one see retired generals explain tactics and strategy. Instead, there were experts from journalism and academe talking in a detached manner about a faraway war which was often presented as a cultural or religious conflict between West and Middle East. The history of Muslim-Christian-Jewish animosity was much discussed. And the American character was analyzed at length to understand the behavior of George Bush and General Schwarzkopf.

The cultural preoccupations cropped up in private conversations too. I met some Japanese friends for a drink in one of the last streets in Tokyo to have remained unchanged since the war. It is in an area called Golden Gai, which used to be a cheap red-light district. We sat in a tiny bar, with room for about ten people. The name of the bar was taken from an avant-garde French film and the voice of Billie Holiday filled the smoky air; the bar prided itself on its intellectual clientele. The majority opinion in the bar was that the Gulf War was fought only for American interests. My friends were all in their early forties, active in the arts. They saw the Gulf War as a question of cultural identity. The Americans wanted to make the Arabs conform to the American view of the world.

What about freedom and democracy? I asked. Weren't those

principles worth defending? Should one allow an aggressive nation to invade another? I knew this was not entirely convincing; Kuwait was hardly a democracy. But I wanted to draw them out. The answer was an interesting variation of anti-Western rhetoric.

"Democracy," said a cartoonist, "is not universal. It is only a Western ideal, which Westerners pretend is universal. That's why this war is wrong: the West is trying to impose its ideas on a non-Western nation. The Americans are not only hypocritical, they are arrogant."

A well-known filmmaker nodded vigorously and said that Japan would have been better off if the Americans had never come. He was referring to the arrival in Japan of Commodore Perry's black ships in 1853. "They have robbed us of our culture," he said. "We hardly know who we are anymore."

I knew him well enough to know that this was said as a provocation. But conversations with Japanese artists and intellectuals often take this turn: the identity question nags in almost any discussion about Japan and the outside world. It leads to odd identifications. In the left-leaning *Asahi Shimbun*, I read the following letter, written by Nakamura Tetsu, a medical doctor of the '68 generation active in the Middle East: "When speaking of the New World Order, we must understand our brethren in Asia whose sense of values and culture is not shared by the West. We must rethink our attitude toward Asia. Only fifty years ago it was we Japanese, caught between our traditional society and Western-style modernization, who suffered a war against America. That war is not concluded yet. It is time to think again about the meaning of the several million [sic] 'sacred spirits' sacrificed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

This comes remarkably close in tone and thinking to Pan-Asian Japanese nationalism of the thirties and forties. The idea that Japan had been struggling violently, sometimes clumsily, but still always nobly, against Western domination of Asia since the nineteenth century is not new. It started in the 1860s with the movement to "throw out the barbarians and revere the

emperor." It was promoted in Japanese war propaganda. It was defended in a famous book published in 1964 entitled *In Affirmation of the Great East Asian War* by Hayashi Fusao. Hayashi's anti-Western nationalism was the model for right-wing apologetics after the war. But Hayashi was a former Communist. And he wrote that in an ideal world, in which Japan would no longer be divided by international politics, all Japanese would think alike. As he put it: "One Japanese way of thinking will be born." There was nostalgia in these words. During the Pacific War, the Japanese people were told that "a hundred million [Japanese] hearts beat as one."

This ideal world was not yet at hand during the Gulf War. In a public opinion poll conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun*, 70 percent of the people were against using armed force against Iraq, but 29.6 percent of those in their twenties were in favor of it, and at least as many said they were not sure. Nakamura's letter in the *Asahi* was an emotional variation of a common theme among letter writers to that newspaper. A typical one read: "Now, of all times, we Japanese have the right, as well as the duty, to oppose war and tell the world about our own experiences, how our innocent civilians were sacrificed by terrible bombings."

This, to many Japanese, was the point of Article Nine. When the Prime Minister of Japan, Shidehara Kijuro, protested in 1946 to General MacArthur that it was all very well saying that Japan should assume moral leadership in renouncing war, but that in the real world no country would follow this example, MacArthur replied: "Even if no country follows you, Japan will lose nothing. It is those who do not support this who are in the wrong." For a long time most Japanese continued to take this view. The Gulf War put a dent in it.

It was a respectable view, but also one founded on a national myth of betrayal. Japan, according to the myth, had become the unique moral nation of peace, betrayed by the victors who had sat in judgment of Japan's war crimes; betrayed in Vietnam, in Afghanistan, in Nicaragua; betrayed by the arms race, be-

trayed by the Cold War; Japan had been victimized not only by the "gratuitous," perhaps even "racist," nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but by all subsequent military actions taken by the superpowers, including the decision to go to war against Saddam Hussein. The most fervent believers in the myth were men and women of the left, who clung to Article Nine as a priest to his book of prayers.

Several months after the Gulf War had formally ended, a literary critic named Matsumoto Kenichi wrote an article for the *Tokyo Shimbun* in which he compared Saddam's invasion of Kuwait to the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor. It was the counterpart, in a way, to Enzensberger's comparison of Saddam and Hitler in *Der Spiegel*. Saddam's claim, wrote Matsumoto, that he was fighting for Pan-Arab ideals "eerily echoed the Japanese militarists who, on the eve of Pearl Harbor, arrogantly proclaimed that 'Asia is one.' " Both Iraq and Japan fought "holy wars" against Western imperialism. But the parallel, in Matsumoto's opinion, went further: "Japan and Iraq went to war for virtually identical reasons." Western powers were accused of making war inevitable, by depriving those countries of trade and raw materials. Thus war for Japan and Iraq had supposedly become a matter of survival. "Japan," wrote Matsumoto, "has not atoned for its wartime atrocities. So we can't accuse the Iraqis of using inhuman methods and violating international law without pointing a finger at ourselves."

So far, so good. Introspection of this kind is rare in the mainstream Japanese press. But then the accusing finger suddenly swiveled around: "On the other hand, the response of America's mass media to the initial air attacks on Iraq recalled Japan's euphoric accounts of its early victories in the Pacific . . ." And the conclusion: "The Gulf conflict reminded me once again of the banality and cruelty of war. I was appalled when our Prime Minister, Kaifu Toshiki, expressed his firm support for the multinational coalition and attempted to deploy our Self-Defense Forces to the Middle East. Conservative politicians here appear

to have learned little from Japan's own descent into barbarism just fifty years ago."

We are left with the conclusion, then, that all were equally barbarous: wartime Japan, Saddam Hussein, George Bush, Japanese conservative politicians. The pacifist aim may be a virtuous one, and skepticism about the euphoric American press might have been just, but there was something too conveniently indiscriminate about this view. All wars are unjust: it was like the warning post on the market square in Bonn, or the peace professor who thought the bombing of Baghdad was the greatest war crime since 1945. Too much history was thrown into one basket.

But there was one huge difference with Germany: Israel. Japanese did not feel guilty about the Jews; there were no hysterical calls to the Israeli embassy in Tokyo; there was no Japanese Wolf Biermann. For many Germans, the Gulf War recalled visions of the Holocaust; to most Japanese it was just another war, another faraway war, which erupted like a natural disaster. Perhaps if the target of allied bombs had not been Iraq, but China, or even North Korea, Japanese war guilt would have been a factor. But even those Japanese who feel bad about China and Korea do not think of the Japanese war as a Holocaust.

The denial of historical discrimination is not just a way to evade guilt. It is intrinsic to pacifism. To even try to distinguish between wars, to accept that some wars are justified, is already an immoral position. What is so convenient in the cases of Germany and Japan is that pacifism happens to be a high-minded way to dull the pain of historical guilt. Or, conversely, if one wallows in it, pacifism turns national guilt into a virtue, almost a mark of superiority, when compared to the complacency of other nations. It can also be the cause of historical myopia.

Oda Makoto, the father of the anti–Vietnam War movement in Japan and the author of a novel about the bombing of Hiroshima, told me that Japan had to remain a pacifist nation: "Japan, of all nations, must be a conscientious objector." As a

military power, Oda said, Japan would be a very dangerous country. And so would Germany. Soon, he thought, Germany would be a pure-race country again. When I expressed some doubt, he said that I, as a Westerner, as a white man, was in no position to judge.

I asked him about the Vietnam War. He saw no difference between the Vietnam War and the Japanese war in Asia. Indeed, it was the Vietnam War that made him reflect on the Japanese conquest of Asia. Nor did he see any difference between European colonialism and the Japanese invasion of China and Southeast Asia. When I pointed out what I thought were differences, he became agitated and raised his voice. "Look," he said, "I have no time to discuss historical distinctions. Colonialism is bad, and that's that." His plump face reddened, his big hands crashed on the table. His Korean-Japanese wife stared silently into her tea. I had been put in my place.

Oda was born in 1932. He remembered how proud he had been, waving his Rising Sun flag after great military victories against the Americans. He could also remember, with particular bitterness, how his native city, Osaka, was bombed a day before the Japanese emperor announced on the radio that the war "had not developed in a way necessarily to Japan's advantage" and that it was time to surrender. Oda did not cry, he said. His real bitterness concerned the way in which the Americans after the war wrecked Japan's chances to break away from the past. It was the Americans who allowed the emperor to remain on his throne. It was the Americans who allowed the same bureaucrats and politicians who had led Japan into the war to continue ruling the country. It was the Americans who made the Japanese undermine their own constitution by building a new army, and it was the Americans who made the Japanese into accomplices of U.S. imperialism in Asia.

His resentment was not without justification, but Oda's ambivalence toward the West was more complicated than political disillusion. It was an ambivalence bordering on hostility. This might have been partly a matter of age. He had been educated,

after all, to despise the "Anglo-American demons." And Pan-Asian propaganda was not all that far removed from romantic Third Worldism. But despite Oda's Third Worldist views, his identification with the oppressed was not straightforward either. He also identified with the oppressors. One of the aims of his "Peace for Vietnam" movement had been to help American deserters and antiwar protesters. In Oda's view, the American GIs, like the Japanese Imperial Army soldiers before, were aggressors as well as victims; aggressors because they killed innocent people, victims because they were forced to do so.

Feelings toward the West cannot be other than complex in Japan. On the surface, Japan is the most Westernized country in Asia. Even to Oda Makoto, New York probably feels closer than Beijing (and I daresay Tuscany would be more familiar than Dresden). Even as there was a movement during the nineteenth century to expel the barbarians, there was also a movement to "reject Asia." In woodcuts of turn-of-the-century Japanese wars on the Asian continent, the Japanese are shown as large light-skinned figures in European uniforms, demonstrating their mastery over dwarfish yellow men in pigtails and silk coats.

The ambivalence comes in many varieties, and it emerges in conversations with very different people. The right-wing Liberal Democratic Party politician Kamei Shizuka is in almost every respect the opposite of Oda Makoto. They are roughly the same age, and both are stocky men, with broad peasant features. That is about all they have in common, however. Kamei is a hawk on defense. He wants Article Nine to be scrapped from the constitution. He wants education to be more patriotic, to instill pride in Japanese military heroes, and so on. He does not believe that Japan's war in Asia was all that bad. He wants the emperor to be reinstated in his former status as sacred father of the family state. He wants to revive Shinto as a national cult. He thinks that the Americans after the war robbed Japan of its identity, its pride, its virility.

I visited Kamei in his office in Tokyo, near the Diet building.

His language, like Oda's, was deliberately rough, not so much to express familiarity as to stress a kind of rugged masculinity. Our conversation was interrupted once or twice by telephone calls. Kamei never articulated a word. All I heard were grunts and growls, of affirmation, of negation, of farewell.

I asked him what he thought of the Gulf War. He grunted and said: "We Japanese have a term, *tatemae*, which means official reality, the way you say things are. Then we have *honne*, our real feelings, the way things really are. Now, the *tatemae* is that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait cannot be allowed. The *honne* is that we Japanese were not consulted before America started the war." The resentment was unmistakable. From the opposite perspective, Kamei was making Oda's point: America had forced Japan to be an accomplice.

"Then," he went on, "there is the question of Israel. You know, we Japanese are well informed. We know what the real face of America is. People here have seen Henry Kissinger on television. He is a Jew. And we know about Jewish influence in America. We know all that. So our *honne* tells us that this war is fought for Israel."

This is fairly standard rhetoric in Japan. It is disturbing, but easy to misinterpret. The main point here is not about Jews, but about America. In ill-informed Japanese minds there is a confusion of Jewish and American interests, a confusion which exists not only in Japan. "America," like "the eternal Jew," is shorthand for rootless cosmopolitanism, international conspiracy, and so on. That Kamei discussed this common paranoia in such odd, Volkish terms could mean several things: that some of the worst European myths got stuck in Japan, that the history of the Holocaust had no impact, or that Japan is in some respects a deeply provincial place. I think all three explanations apply.

"During the nineteenth century," Kamei explained, "Japan was threatened by Western imperialism. The borders in the Middle East were all drawn by Western powers. The British were responsible for Palestine. What Iraq is doing now is no different from what Western powers did until recently. That is

my personal impression. Of course, Saddam Hussein is not right. But it cannot be said that Western powers are right and other races are wrong. That cannot be said."

Like Oda, indeed like many people of the left, Kamei thought in racial terms. He used the word *jinshu*, literally race. He did not even use the more usual *minzoku*, which corresponds, in the parlance of Japanese right-wingers, to Volk, or the more neutral *kokumin*, meaning the citizens of a state.

The Japanese government was officially in favor of the Gulf War and paid nine billion dollars toward the allied cause. The Japanese Socialist Party was absolutely opposed to it, far more adamantly so than the German Social Democrats. But the politics were never simple. Kamei explained his party's position: "The *honne* of our party is about the same as that of the Socialists. We are only supporting the war to keep the Americans happy."

Kamei is not a mainstream conservative. He is to the right of his party. Being on the right, he was more prepared to sound anti-American or anti-Western than his government. He could bluster about new alliances in Asia and cutting loose from America. He could say that the Japanese people felt closer to Asia than to the West. I put it to him that German conservatives insisted on being part of the West, that they had made the Western alliance, so to speak, a part of German national identity. I told him about Adenauer's concept of Asia.

Kamei laughed, revealing an even row of gold fillings. "Well," he admitted, "the problem with the U.S.-Japan relationship is difficult. A racial problem, really. Yankees are friendly people, frank people. But, you know, it's hard. You see, we *have* to be friendly . . ."

Again, one felt there was a confusion here, a common one in Japan. Kamei was conflating a political problem and a cultural one, as though they were the same thing. In fact, the reason Japanese officials feel they have to be friendly to the United States has little to do with culture, even less with race, and everything with the peculiarly lopsided security arrangement between the two countries. It is possible, of course, that having

different, non-Western cultural traditions has made it harder for Japan to come to terms with the Western world than it has been for West Germany. If there is indeed a border, more unbridgeable than the river Elbe, between Japan and the West, this would help to explain another *idée reçue*: whereas many Germans in the liberal democratic West have tried to deal honestly with their nation's terrible past, the Japanese, being different, have been unable to do so.

It is true that the Japanese, compared with the West Germans, have paid less attention to the suffering they inflicted on others, and shown a greater inclination to shift the blame. And liberal democracy, whatever it may look like on paper, has not been the success in Japan that it was in the German Federal Republic. Cultural differences might account for this. But one can look at these matters in a different, more political way. In his book *The War Against the West*, published in London in 1938, the Hungarian scholar Aurel Kolnai followed the Greeks in his definition of the West: "For the ancient Greeks 'the West' (or 'Europe') meant society with a free constitution and self-government under recognized rules, where 'law is king,' whereas the 'East' (or 'Asia') signified theocratic societies under godlike rulers whom their subjects serve 'like slaves.' "

According to this definition, both Hitler's Germany and prewar Japan were of the East. As the title of Kolnai's book implies, Germany fought a war against the West. Now, it may be so that Adenauer's Germany found its way back to the West. In 1949 the German Basic Law was drawn up by German jurists. In 1954 West Germany formally became a sovereign nation, even though Western powers still kept troops there. An emergency law was passed enabling Germany to take control of its own defense. Except in Berlin, the occupation was formally over. In Japan, in some ways, it is not over yet.

Japan's godlike ruler was told by the Americans to renounce his divinity. Perhaps with a feeling of relief, the lover of rare crustaceans, Mickey Mouse watches, and English breakfasts was

swift to comply. And the Americans imposed a constitution which read like translated English and which surrendered the right of Japan to defend itself. Most Japanese were so tired of war and so distrustful of their military commanders that they were happy to do so. Then, when the Cold War prompted the Americans to make the Japanese subvert their constitution by creating an army which was not supposed to exist, the worst of all worlds appeared: sovereignty was not restored, distrust remained, and resentment mounted. Kamei's hawks are angry with the Americans for emasculating Japan; Oda's doves hate the Americans for emasculating the "peace constitution." Both sides dislike being forced accomplices, and both feel victimized, which is one reason Japanese have a harder time than Germans in coming to terms with their wartime past.

If it is possible to draw lessons from history at all, this cannot really be put to the test in Japan. Without formal sovereignty, such questions as whether to appease an aggressor or not make no sense. When I asked a socialist politician in Tokyo to consider whether the German-Japanese war against the West could have been avoided had Western force been applied sooner, he replied: "Perhaps. I don't know. But we deny any solution by military means." When I asked Oda whether one country had the right to help another country defend itself against an aggressor, he said: "No." When I put it to him that in that case the war would have been won by the Axis powers, he replied: "You think as a person educated from the point of view of the victim. I was educated from the point of view of the aggressor."

This was true enough, but it was he, not I, who was still convinced that the Japanese and the Germans were dangerous peoples. There was a great irony here: in their zeal to make Japan part of the West, General MacArthur and his advisers made it impossible for Japan to do so in spirit. For a forced, impotent accomplice is not really an accomplice at all. In recent years, Japan has often been called an economic giant and a political dwarf. But this has less to do with a traditional Japanese

mentality—isolationism, pacifism, shyness with foreigners, or whatnot—than with the particular political circumstances after the war that the United States helped to create. To understand the complexity of Japanese memories of its Asian war, one has to understand the conditions that grew from its defeat. One has to return to 1945.

ROMANCE OF THE RUINS

IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY when the war actually began for the Germans and the Japanese. I cannot think of a single image that fixed the beginning of either war in the public mind. There is the famous picture of German soldiers lifting the barrier on the Polish border in 1939, but was that really the beginning? Or did it actually start with the advance into the Rhineland in 1936, or was it the annexation of the Sudetenland, or Austria, or Czechoslovakia? As far as the war against the Jews is concerned, one might go back to 1933, when Hitler came to power. Or at the latest to 1935, when the race laws were promulgated in Nuremberg. Or perhaps those photographs of burning synagogues on the night of November 9, 1938, truly marked the first stage of the Holocaust. Possibly to avoid these confusions, many Germans prefer to talk about the *Hitlerzeit* (Hitler era) instead of "the war." When people do refer to "the war," they think of soldiers freezing on the eastern front and German cities smashed by bombs.

In Japan, the establishment of a puppet state in Manchuria in 1931 was a hostile harbinger of much to come. But the invasion of China proper began in 1937 with a shoot-out near Beijing, and the Pacific War started with the attack on Pearl Harbor four years later. Incidentally, only Japanese of a liberal disposition call World War II the Pacific War. People who stick