

Pearl Harbor

continued from our cover . . .

becoming increasingly important for Hollywood films. We can only hope that their desire for these markets will not result in revisionist history.

Japanese Nationalism

Japan spent much time this summer explaining the official state visit of their Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to a Shinto shrine dedicated to Japan's war dead. Some wonder whether the popular but relatively unknown prime minister, who has advocated revisions to Japan's pacifist constitution, is a hawkish nationalist who wants to reassert Japan's military might in the region.

Koizumi's visit followed a recent government decision to permit publication of a junior high school textbook that justifies Japan's colonization of Korea and minimizes events such as the 1937 Nanking Massacre, in which the Imperial Army killed an estimated 250,000 Chinese civilians.

Visitors to the Yasukuni shrine pass under a giant torii, a traditional Japanese gate, which sanctifies important Shinto temples, and see a statue saluting Masajiro Okuma, the general who modernized Japan's military. To one side of the shrine are plaques and exhibits describing suicide bombers, human torpedoes, missiles and artillery used during World War II.

Farther along, in the Yasukuni Museum, school children and adult tour groups crowd in to look at dioramas of Japanese aircraft carriers, glass cases holding weapons and military uniforms and a life-sized reconstruction of a Mitsubishi Zero fighter, along with maps and photos detailing colonial conquests.

To be sure, many in Japan are firm supporters of their official pacifist standing in the world. Koizumi's spokesman said that the prime minister "wishes to pay respect to those Japanese people who sacrificed their lives for the country and to renew the resolve not to engage in war again."

Patriotism or Propaganda?

Several years ago a best-selling book of cartoons was published in Japan which celebrated the old Imperial Army as a noble liberation force rather than a brutal colonizer. The book called "*On War*", lauds Japan's civilization as the oldest and most refined, dismissing as fiction the Nanking Massacre and the sexual enslavement of 200,000 Korean and Taiwanese "comfort women" during the War.

Although not fully organized, Japan's new right-wing activists pursue a wide-ranging agenda that includes returning to the stricter, more conservative values of the past, rewriting the constitution to allow Japan to rearm and to wage war so that the nation would be prepared to go it alone in a world they depict as full of threats to its survival. They also call for the United States to surrender control over a major airbase in Japan.

Since the mid 90s, revisionism--or nationalism--has been surging in Japan. Their biggest coup is rewriting textbooks that critics say will whitewash the past. Proponents ask, "why should Japan be the only country that teaches its children bad things about itself?"

These efforts to rewrite Japanese history has seriously heightened tensions with some of her neighbors, especially South Korea.

Japanese Warships Join U.S. Forces

For the first time since 1945, Japanese warships have steamed to the Indian Ocean during a time of armed conflict, marking Japan's first logistical support of the U.S.-led war on terrorism. Two navy destroyers carrying helicopters and ammunition are accompanied by a supply ship. The deployment is all legal under recent new legislation from the Koizumi government. Critics are claiming that despite good intentions, the move undermines the post-war pacifist constitution.

The new law allows Japanese troops to provide fuel and supplies, transport weapons and ammunition by sea, and provide medical services while strictly limiting operations to areas outside combat zones. Japan was actually criticized a decade ago for not supplying troops or materiel during the Persian Gulf War, although it did contribute some \$13 billion in financial support.

While this support is no different than German participation in NATO, the right-wing movements in both nations are worth watching closely. And so we come full circle with our former enemies now contributing militarily to the war on terrorism.

This article was compiled by *Flotilla* editor Ron Swanson from various news releases and general history sources.

