

The author's decision to omit discussion of such events as the Taiping Rebellion or the Boxer uprising is unfortunate. The point that needed to be made was China's tragedy in her struggle for Westernization and modernization (partly caused by her political leaders' arrogance and ignorance and partly by the humiliation of the Heavenly Kingdom)—the Center of the World, Changuo—by drug-dealing elements from the imperialist West. This national trauma so thoroughly corrupted the soul of the Chinese that a mostly generous and gregarious people perpetrated quite “un-Chinese” murder and mayhem on innocent people during the Boxer Rebellion.

Lazzerini also neglects the moot point of how, under the circumstances, Mao's CCP was perceived by the people as honest, sincere, patriotic, and pragmatic as compared to the bullying and bungling GMD. Finally, the author is somewhat overly harsh on the communists. He would have done better by consulting a few specialist works showing Marxism-Communism in the non-Western World (for example, articles by Goran Hyden).

All in all, a few shortcomings notwithstanding, Lazzerini's book may be recommended for classroom use. ■

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Bridge to the Sun

By Gwen Terasaki

NEWPORT: WAKESTONE BOOKS, 2000
272 PAGES

In the winter of 1930, twenty-three-year-old Gwen Harold left Johnson City, Tennessee, to visit an aunt in Washington D.C. for what she thought would be no more than two or three months. Little did she know that within a year, she would fall in love and marry Hidenari (Terry) Terasaki, a diplomat with the Japanese Foreign Office, and thus guarantee herself a “front row seat” to the approaching juggernaut of World War II.

Bridge to the Sun is Gwen Terasaki's record of how she, as an American married to a Japanese, along with their daughter, Mariko, make their tortuous way leading up to and through the chaotic war years. And yet, what makes *Bridge to the Sun* such a fascinating memoir is not simply the author's unique vantage point but also, and perhaps more importantly, her perspective on the life and times of war-torn Japan through “American eyes.”

In brief, the first seven chapters offer a detailed account of Mr. Terasaki's service in the Japanese diplomatic corps, as he and his family hopscotch from Tokyo to Shanghai, to Havana and finally back to Washington D.C., where they are stationed when

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BOOK REVIEWS

Pearl Harbor is attacked. During these early diplomatic wanderings, Gwen Terasaki does not hesitate to share her joys and victories as well as her fears and frustrations with readers. For instance, when she first encounters life in Shanghai, she is appalled by the devastating hunger and poverty that surround her. She wants to help, but what can one person do when so many are in need? And yet, she does come up with a viable solution: instead of trying to assist the many, which she comes to understand is both physically and financially impossible, she gives money, food and clothing to one, a little beggar girl.

While still in Shanghai, another incident occurred on February 26, 1936, that captured the intensity and uncertainty of the times. We are made privy to an early morning phone call from Tokyo, informing Terry that there had been an insurrection; a group of junior military officers of a Tokyo regiment had assassinated a number of liberal statesmen. This, of course, became known as the infamous February 26, 1936 Incident. What frightened Gwen about this situation was not simply the turmoil within the Japanese government, a turmoil that would only serve to help pave the way to World War II, but how “those distinguished men had been killed for believing as I knew my husband believed.”

Once the U.S. declares war on Japan, we then follow the Terasakis into internment, along with other Japanese and German diplomats, as they are sequestered in Hot Springs and White Sulphur Springs, Georgia, until June of 1942 when they sail back to Japan. As an American, Gwen could have stayed in the U.S., but she decides that as a family they should stay together.

In the remainder of the book (some eight chapters), spanning 1942–7, Gwen Terasaki records the events, situations and emotions that she and her family must cope with as they struggle to

survive in wartime Japan, and its aftermath. This portion of the book is, I think, the most insightful and intriguing, for it gives readers a first-hand account of what life was like in a Japan that was poor and starving, as well as misinformed and misled by its government.

Once back in Japan, the author gives us glimpses of the Japanese mindset during this troubled period. One of the many stories she passes on is how she often wore “dark glasses” whenever she went out shopping or walking, and how at that time the “accepted idea of a saboteur was anyone who always wore dark glasses”; as a result, it was not uncommon for someone to yell at her, *supai* (spy). She goes on to mention that as the war persisted the food problem became so profound that all pets and even the animals at the zoo were killed. There was simply not enough food for humans, let alone animals. And then there was the time of the neighborhood meeting when instructions were given that “every person of adult age must provide himself with a bamboo spear of certain length with which to meet the enemy [the Americans] when they came to invade the islands.” These are the sorts of anecdotes and mini-tales that serve to capture the essence of Gwen Terasaki’s personality. Towards the end of the war, with an American invasion seemingly eminent, the Terasakis escape the city and the American bombers and move to the hills where, once again, their primary concern is food—how to get it and how to keep it.

First published in 1957, Gwen Terasaki’s *Bridge to the Sun* is a rare treat not only because it is history made personable, as time and time again she gives readers a behind-the-scenes perspective of the war, but more importantly, for students who may know nothing more than some basic facts about World War II—



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the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the Americans dropped atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, along with the assorted bits and pieces of information that they might have gleaned from Grandma and Grandpa's dinner table stories—this book affords all students the opportunity to visit Japan and the Japanese during World War II. While many of our history books often present a general overview of life and times in America during the war years, few offer even a general commentary on what life was like during this period for the Japanese. To the best of my knowledge, there are very few first-hand accounts from Americans who actually lived in Japan during the war years. This in itself makes *Bridge to the Sun* a valuable document.

This being said, *Bridge to the Sun* is not just about World War II and one family's fight to survive. In many ways it is larger than that, for it is the story of every family that has ever been entangled in the jaws of war. ■

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Old Man Thunder

Father of the Bullet Train

By Bill Hosokawa

DENVER: SOGO WAY, 1997
MAPS, INDEX, GLOSSARY. 224 PAGES

Its official name is *Shinkansen* ("New Trunk Line"), but its sleek lines and distinctively shaped front end make it instantly recognizable as the Bullet Train even outside Japan. It began operation on October 1, 1964, just before the Tokyo Olympics opened. Both the train and the Olympics signaled Japan's remarkable recovery from the devastation of World War II in less than two decades. Yet few people outside Japan are aware of how the Bullet Train came to be built and even less that it was due primarily to the vision and tenacity of one man: Sogo Shinji.

Sogo's life and career paralleled the transformation of Japan from an agricultural to a high-tech country. Born on a farm on Shikoku (the smallest of the four main islands) in 1884, he escaped his rural environs through the selflessness of his older brother and graduated near the top of his class at Tokyo Imperial University. He was hired by the new Railway Agency in 1906 and helped consolidate the many private lines that had proliferated. In 1916 he went to the United States and spent a year studying

administration and finance. Posted to Dairen (Dalian), China, in 1930 to serve as a director of the South Manchurian Railroad, he saw firsthand how the Kwantung Army ruthlessly exploited the puppet state of Manchukuo. He tried, with limited success, to help China develop its economy, but was ultimately frustrated by the militarism and ultranationalism that led to all-out war, first against China, then against the United States and its allies.

During the first part of the war he headed a volunteer student group that undertook public works projects. He left Tokyo briefly during the early part of the Occupation, but returned in 1946 and resumed work for Japan's railroads until high blood pressure forced him to retire. A series of disasters involving Japan National Railways in 1954 led to the resignation of its president as the traditional means of accepting responsibility. Sogo, his health improved, was persuaded to assume the post the following year, although he was then seventy-one years old. His years of experience in rail transportation, administration, and dealing with politicians well suited him to oversee this aspect of the revitalization that was crucial to Japan's economic recovery from the war, and he needed to call on all these resources for his vision of a standard-gauge, high-speed passenger train to be realized. Its success is unquestioned now, but Sogo had to fight entrenched bureaucrats and elected officials—sometimes with guile and adroit maneuvering but with consummate patience—to see the project through to completion. His patience, though, did not always extend to his subordinates. His tirades earned him the affectionate nickname, "Old Man Thunder."

This, in broad outline, is the narrative presented by Bill Hosokawa, a Japanese-American journalist. He explains in the Introduction that he first became aware of Sogo on a visit to Japan in 1964 to research an article for *Reader's Digest* on the nearly completed high-speed train. (His article appeared in the August 1965 issue.) He didn't meet Sogo on that trip, but by chance Sogo's son retired to Denver, where Hosokawa worked as a journalist, and asked him to write a book about the elder Sogo. The younger Sogo's wife translated a biography of Sogo written by a noted Japanese writer, but additional research was needed to flesh out the story. What Hosokawa found out and wove into his biography makes the story of Sogo Shinji and how he almost single-handedly built the Bullet Train more dramatic and well worth reading by advanced secondary and collegiate-level students who have some knowledge about Japan. Those who teach about Japan can also benefit from reading it for the reasons given below. The author is careful to explain things a general reader might not know, and there is a glossary and list of terms. Note, however, that in the text and in the list of Chinese names, "Chang Jiang" is given as the Wade-Giles or Postal Atlas rendering, and "Yangtze River" as the Pinyin version. It is the other way around.

Besides being an engrossing story of a determined man who succeeded despite obstacles, *Old Man Thunder* can be recommended on other grounds as well. The reader can learn through the experiences of Sogo Shinji some important elements