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A Chess Game with No Checkmate: Admiral Inque and The Pacific War

Sadao Seno

A key issue that confronts naval strategists in every age is whether they are planning for tomorrow or for yesterday—Are the weapons, ships, aircraft, and tactical doctrine suitable to achieve victory in combat or are they the product of precedent and familiarity? One of the progressive thinkers in the Japanese Navy prior to World War II, Adm. Shigeyoshi Inoue, held that the Imperial Navy was not recognizing the impact of the submarine and aircraft on naval warfare. He contended that the Japanese building program, which centered on battleships, was looking in the wrong direction. What lessons can we learn from Admiral Inoue's example?

A CHESS GAME WITH NO CHECKMATE:

ADMIRAL INOUE AND THE PACIFIC WAR

An article prepared

by

Commander Sadao Seno, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force

At the eve of World War II, the Japanese Navy was one of the three largest navies of the world and was perhaps "number one" in real power among the big three. By August 1945, after 3½ years of continuous war in the Pacific, this formidable naval force lay decimated, possessing almost no power. At the opening of the war, the Imperial Japanese Navy had 10 aircraft carriers, 10 battleships, 41 cruisers, 111 destroyers, 64 submarines, 29 auxiliary ships, four coastal defense units, et cetera—a total of 396 ships with a displacement of 1,429,000 tons—and 3,302 aircraft. Its aircraft carriers outnumbered those of both the fleets of the U.S. Navy and the Royal Navy; in battleships the *Yamato* and *Musashi*, displacing 70,000 tons and carrying nine 18-inch main batteries, were much more powerful than those of other navies.

Since 1,187 vessels totaling 1,137,000 tons and 30,295 aircraft were constructed during the war, the total force available to the Imperial Navy was 1,583 ships of 2,566,000 tons and 33,597 aircraft. In this struggle, in which hundreds of thousands of patriots were to die in vain, the final tally of the operating force was one small aircraft carrier, no battleships or heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, 30 destroyers, 12 submarines, and three auxiliaries—a total of 49 vessels of 96,000 tons—and 5,886 aircraft. Among the personnel casualties suffered in action were two full admirals, nine vice admirals, 56 rear

admirals and 259 captains. The loss of naval personnel totaled more than 466,000. No such a debacle in history can be found. This raises the question, Could no Japanese naval officer foresee such a tragedy before the war?

Some 28 years have passed since the war ended. As a Japanese naval officer who has carefully studied a massive amount of United States and Japanese related material concerning the war, the conflict seems to have been predestined. However, even though it was predestined, one wonders if there was not a strategy available by which Japan could have escaped such a miserable defeat. Didn't any of the excellent line or staff officers of the Japanese Navy develop suitable plans to avoid defeat, fully realizing what seemed to be the inevitability of the approaching war?

Since the war many have claimed that they had recommended courses of action to the leadership before or during the war which, if followed, would have saved Japan from a humiliating defeat. Comparing these claims with the actual recorded facts reveals that in many cases the postwar critics were only partially reliable. In some cases it is apparent that the recommendations some officers claimed to have made before or during the war were, in fact, the lessons they had learned in combat and in defeat.

Nevertheless, there was one admiral who submitted to the Minister of the Navy an official naval plan with specific and concrete recommendations for the conduct of the coming war, recommendations which apparently would have been able to overcome many hard lessons Japan learned in the war. This plan seems to have gauged with amazing foresight the essence of the coming war as viewed in January 1941. In the same month a conference between the leaders of the Navy Ministry and the Navy General Staff was convened to discuss a proposal for naval procurement in the period 1942-1946. The draft was prepared by the General Staff of the Navy. The plan, named "Maru Go" (literally Number Five) Supplementary Armament Plan, called for the following:

Ship/Aircraft	Number
Battleship (*Yamato* type)	3
Supercruiser*	2
Aircraft Carrier	3
Cruiser (medium)	5
Cruiser (small)	4
Destroyer	32
Submarine	45
Miscellaneous	65
Total Displacement	about 650,000 tons
Operational Air Squadron	67 squadrons 1,320 aircraft (132 squadrons total at completion)
Training Air Squadron	93 squadrons 2,138 aircraft (156 squadrons total at completion)

*Supercruisers were scheduled to be 17,000 tons displacement with six 12-inch main batteries. (They were never built.)

Source: "Maru Go" Preliminary Requirement Armament Plan of the General Staff of the Navy (contained in official records of the Second Demobilization Liquidation Bureau, Liquidation Division, Repatriation Relief Agency, Welfare Ministry. This bureau is the last remnant of the Imperial Navy Ministry).

The head of the Second Department of the Navy General Staff, who was in charge of making up the supplemental armament plan, explained its contents. He strongly recommended that the Navy Ministry staff seek budget support to implement this plan in the following fiscal year, in view of the deteriorating international situation.

The Strategic Concept of the Imperial Japanese Navy. It was not until 1907 that an imperial defense policy was enacted, but once this policy was set, forces necessary to defend the Japanese Empire were established and a principle of operation (*Yohei-Koryo*) was drawn up. The latter became the fundamental national strategy for the deployment of forces. At that time Russia, the United States, Germany, and France were listed as hypothetical enemies. The Imperial Army was assigned the leading role in operations against Russia and the Imperial Navy against the United States, a decision based on the geography and principal armaments of these potential enemies. In view of the potential difference in power between these adversaries and Japan, it was considered risky to fight more than one enemy at the same time. Therefore, the objective of Japanese diplomacy was to ensure that no more than one enemy would be engaged militarily. Making it a general rule to fight a lightning-quick war, it was believed that the Empire would be able to manage singular conflict situations if the Imperial Army could gain victory in a war with Russia or if the Imperial Navy could do the same against the United States. In planning its naval campaign against the United States, the Imperial Navy would assume a strategic defense posture. Under such a concept the enemy would be drawn into the Western Pacific and given a fatal blow when exhausted at the extremity of his journey. This strategy was necessary to provide Japan with a favorable margin of strength necessary to compensate for smaller or, at best, equal naval force compared to that of the U.S. Navy.

After 1907 Japanese defense policy was revised three times—at the close of World War I, again in 1922 after the Washington Naval Conference, and for the third time in 1936 when the naval building holidays were about to expire. In 1917 Germany and France were deleted from the list of hypothetical enemies. China was added to the list in 1917 and Great Britain in 1936. The procedure of operation in a war with the United States was described by the *Yohei-Koryo* of 1917 as follows:

> In the outset of a war, the Navy will gain control over the United States fleet in the Orient, and at the same time destroy the enemy's naval bases in Luzon and Guam in co-operation with the Army. The Navy will try to reduce gradually the force of the enemy fleet units in transit and destroy them totally with our capital fleet units, seizing an opportunity when the main body of the enemy fleet proceeds toward the Orient.

The Imperial Navy had drawn up its war plan on the assumption that the United States would invade Japan. The Japanese believed the invasion inevitable, owing to the strategic commitment of the U.S. Navy to support U.S. Far Eastern policy. They believed that the enemy would strike soon after war broke out, and their suspicions were believed verified by intelligence information gathered on a continuing basis.[1] In actual fact, the U.S. Navy had had such an invasion strategy since it first began to write war plans against Japan.[2]

The operational doctrine of the Imperial Navy employed the interception battle principle. In its early days this principle envisioned:

- The dominant U.S. fleet with a main body consisting of battleships

advancing to fight a decisive battle with the Imperial Navy.

- The Imperial Navy setting up early warning lines in the vicinity of the Bonin Islands.
- In full strength, the Imperial Navy intercepting and destroying the enemy fleet with a decisive blow in the seas adjacent to mainland Japan.

Later—because of changes in strategic thinking brought about by developments in weaponry and by the Japanese acquisition of the Marianas, Marshall, and Caroline Islands following World War I—the operational doctrine was revised. However, the principle that the Imperial Navy would destroy the enemy fleet in a decisive battle was kept intact. The outline of the interception operational procedure was as follows:

> a. At the opening of war the Imperial Navy destroys the U.S. Fleet in the Orient. The Imperial Army and Navy co-operate to capture Luzon and neighboring strategic points including Guam in order to completely destroy enemy bases in the Western Pacific.
>
> b. The Imperial Navy dispatches its submarine force to the vicinity of the main units of the United States Fleet to watch the movement of the enemy. The submarine force shadows the enemy fleet when it sorties, trying to reduce the enemy force by repeated attack while shadowing.
>
> c. The Imperial Navy deploys to the Marianas, Marshall and Caroline Islands its land-based naval air forces which attack the enemy fleet jointly with aircraft carrier forces when the enemy fleet enters within range and tries to further reduce the enemy forces thereby.
>
> d. The Imperial Navy carries out a night attack supported by high-speed battleships and strikes a heavy blow at the enemy. At dawn, following the night encounter, the Japanese Fleet fights a decisive battle with all its forces, the nucleus of which is battleships, and destroys the enemy.[3]

The military preparations, fleet organization, education, and discipline stressing such a strategy had been in effect for more than 30 years prior to the actual outbreak of hostilities. The greater part of the Imperial Navy officers believed that if Japan were to engage in a war with the United States that this operational doctrine should be followed exclusively. As such, they devoted themselves to the study of how to best apply advances in weapons to support this basic operational doctrine. While this concept of interception had been generally accepted as doctrine, the development of naval aviation sponsored serious objections to it.

Since the Washington and London Conferences relegated the Imperial Navy to a position of relative inferiority, certain elements in naval leadership strove to develop an air arm that would make up for the inferior numbers of combatant ships. By 1934 the progress made in aircraft, aerial weapons, and aeronautical technology became so rapid as to convince officers engaged in aircraft development that battleships could be sunk by air attack. When word of the construction of super battleships leaked within navy circles, some air-oriented officers argued that the money could be better spent for aircraft and associated equipment. They criticized the battleship plan as obsolete and urged the abolishment of the battleship in lieu of aircraft as the principal weapon of the fleet. Because of insufficient research, however, even those who supported adoption of aircraft as the principal combatant could only envision using the aircraft in a combat environment. There were almost none among them who urged changing the basic pattern of naval warfare because of the development of aircraft. As might be expected,

this opinion—aircraft as the principal weapon—was being sponsored by persons concerned with aviation, especially the young officers, and their impact had little effect on the important decision-makers of the navy who felt the opinions of the young officers to be like the barking of young pups.

Military Preparations in the Era of Showa (1926-1945) Planned by the Minds of the Meiji Era (1868-1912). All the attendants from Navy Ministry who were involved in the draft of the Supplementary Armament Plan in January 1941 thought it would be very difficult to enact because of its huge budgetary requirement. Those who might have taken issue with it thought there was no use complaining, even though it greatly bothered them, because of the simple fact that the plan was prepared by the Navy General Staff which was extremely powerful. With one exception, there was no person from the Navy Ministry who dared to criticize, and the general atmosphere of the conference made ministry representatives feel that the draft was an accomplished fact.

Vice Adm. Shigeyoshi Inoue attended the conference as Chief of the Department of Naval Aeronautics, Navy Ministry. Although Lt. Comdr. James E. Auer, USN, who studied the history of the postwar Japanese Navy calls Admiral Inoue the "General Billy Mitchell" of Japan, Inoue was never a "brown-shoe" admiral.[4] He was instead considered a political-military expert because he had served as Chief of the Military Affairs Section and of the Military Affairs Bureau of the Ministry. He never had duty in the naval air force but, realizing the importance of naval airpower and desiring to gain a position of command concerned with the air force, he was appointed Chief of the Department of Naval Aeronautics in the fall of 1940. He harbored strong convictions that naval warfare would be fundamentally changed by the developments in naval aircraft and that the days of the battleship had already passed away. The supplementary draft seemed unwise to Inoue who considered it to be a case of making military preparations for the Era of Showa using old Meiji Era thinking. He doubted whether the General Staff had studied the problem of national defense in sufficient depth. He said:

> I have read the plan and have heard the explanation of it, but, allow me to tell you that the plan is too old-fashioned. It looks like military preparation plans of the era of Meiji or Taisho [1912-1926]. According to your explanation, we need to have .8 "A" battleships because the United States Navy will have "A" battleships, we must have .8 "B" carriers because the United States Navy will have "B" aircraft carriers. The plan aims to have a certain rate of various type of ships maintained by the United States Navy. The plan is very mediocre, blindly following the American ship construction program. The plan calls for the construction of ships, but contains no explanation as to what kind of war we are to wage, what weaponry is necessary for victory, or what category or quantity of weapons is necessary. Such a country as Japan has special characteristics which require creative thinking; this plan has nothing unique or suitable to Japan's peculiarities. Our country is not rich enough that we can appropriate the massive budget necessary for a defective plan such as this. We will not be able to win a war with the United States with such a plan even if it be carried out completely. Even if we spend the money required by this plan, I think it can be more wisely utilized. I think the General Staff

should withdraw this plan and study the situation more carefully.[5]

Inoue's comments were so critical that the members of the General Staff suffered a complete loss of face. However, the proponents of the plan could not find any way to answer his charges, and the conference was adjourned without discussing the plan further.

"Shingunbi Keikaku Ron"—A Thesis for Modern Military Procurement Planning. Admiral Inoue had intended to express his own views on the major weak points in the Navy General Staff plan after its representatives responded to his criticism, but the sponsors of the plan did not provide him with that opportunity. Since the drafting of new military procurement plans was a primary job of the General Staff and not a subject to be addressed by the Department of Naval Aeronautics, Inoue did not pursue the matter further at the time, leaving the immediate restudy effort to the General Staff. Nevertheless, Inoue was aware that his criticism had become a bombshell but did not want to be known as a critic for criticism's sake and took no satisfaction in destroying the hard work of other men.

As such, Inoue continued to ponder over the problem and several weeks later wrote a thesis entitled "Shingunbi Keikaku Ron" (Modern Military Procurement Planning). The principal points of this paper were "the obsolescence of the battleship" and "the conversion of the Navy to an Air Force." He submitted the document to the Navy Minister, describing his ideas on the coming war as follows:

> In considering the conduct of a war the Empire might fight with the United States, depending on military preparations, it is possible that the Empire might not be defeated, and such must by all means be the case, but it is impossible for Japan to defeat America and obtain that nation's surrender. The reasons which are listed below are very clear and simple:
>
> a. It is impossible to capture all American territory because the United States is extremely large.
>
> b. It is also impossible to capture the capital of the U.S. for the same reason listed in item "a" above.
>
> c. It is impossible for Japan to destroy all America's operational forces.
>
> d. Since the United States has abundant natural resources and strategic materials and does not therefore rely on foreign imports to any great extent, Japan will be unable to exert significant pressure on the U.S. by means of a blockade.
>
> e. It would be almost impossible for Japan to blockade the United States by sea in any case because of America's long Atlantic and Pacific coastlines which are located far away from the Empire.
>
> f. Further, it is impossible for Japan to completely blockade the U.S. since that nation occupies the central position of the North American continent and has land borders with other nations.

Although operational difficulties resulting from the long distance between the United States and Japan across the Pacific are common to both countries, Inoue believed that an American invasion of Japan would be much different in character than any attempted Japanese invasion of the United States. He listed the enemy's capabilities as follows:

- It is possible for the U.S. to occupy all Japanese territory.

- It is thus also possible for the U.S. to take Japan's capital.
- It is possible for the U.S. to destroy all of Japan's operational forces.
- The United States has the golden opportunity to drain Japan's resources and strategic materials with a sea blockade or by controlling the sealanes.
- It is not technically impossible for the U.S. to carry out a sea blockade of Japan.

Viewing Admiral Inoue's points today, it seems that he only listed self-evident truths, but it is necessary to review the international and domestic situations of the time to understand why he described his idea so basically. The European war had begun in September 1939 with the Nazi invasion of Poland, and following the successful blitzkrieg of the European Continent, Great Britain was considered to be in a very precarious position. These events, coupled with the signing of the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in September 1940, evoked a euphoria in the leadership of the Imperial Japanese Army and in the majority of Japanese people.[6] They believed that with Germany on the side of Japan neither the United States nor Great Britain could take any effective action against Japan.

Inoue warned that the time of a great revolution in naval strategy had already come, brought about by the progress in aircraft- and submarine technology. He stated:

> In former times we could compensate for all our deficiencies and provide for our national defense by possessing a naval force which could not be defeated in a decisive battle with the United States. Progress in the development of the submarine and the aircraft, however, have brought about a great revolution in naval strategy. We must be aware of the fact that we cannot any longer evaluate the outcome of a war only by the concept of major sea battles as in the past.

Since war is relative, he stated, situational rather than following a fixed pattern, it is very difficult to predict the exact nature of a future war. Nevertheless, he confidently predicted the general outline as follows:

> a. The United States will deploy many submarines in the seas adjacent to Japan and across Japan's vital sealanes, blockading Japan and tenaciously destroying its sea commerce jointly with American aircraft. To continue to exist and carry on the war, Japan must certainly secure its sea routes from attacks by U.S. submarines and aircraft. The securing of sea routes will be one of the most important operations in a war between the United States and Japan.
>
> b. Japan will deploy many submarines and aircraft to counter attacks from the sea, and the enemy will take measures to capture our bases with aircraft attacks. Operations of this type will take place in the Philippines, Formosa, the Palau Islands, the Micronesian Islands, and in the Northern Pacific, the latter only in some seasons. The United States will attempt to make air raids to the Japanese mainland when it has good opportunities . . . *It is quite unlikely a decisive fleet battle involving battleships will take place unless the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet is very ignorant and reckless* [Italics added] . . . instead this struggle over island bases will be the primary mode of operations in the war between the United States and Japan. It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the Empire depends on the success or failure of this operation, the importance

of which is equal to that of the decisive battles between fleets of capital ships in the old days.

c. The Empire will virtually rule the Western Pacific by capturing all U.S. territories in the area such as the Philippines, etc. and the battles [in the Western Pacific area] can be almost brought to their final issue. It should of course be remembered that the meaning of control of the sea is not as absolute in the days of the submarine as it was in the old days.

d. Japan should offensively deploy as many submarines as possible around Hawaii and the American mainland and attack enemy's ships as well as interrupting its sealanes at every opportunity. Since submarines will scarcely ever succeed in detecting a west bound sortie of enemy warships and then be able to shadow and report such movements, we should employ our submarines exclusively in an offensive attack role.

By Inoue's reasoning the United States-Japanese clash would have the characteristics of a protracted war with repetitious situations as neither the United States nor Japan would be able to gain a predominant advantage. Following this logic, it becomes obvious that the lightning quick war which had long been studied would not take place. Thus, even if Japan actually would acquire those forces necessary for the decisive fleet encounter, they would not be adequate. Inoue considered that Japan's preoccupation with the decisive fleet encounter failed to take into consideration other serious strategic threats and thus placed the Empire in jeopardy. "We must recognize the danger," he warned, "that the Empire might have to yield to the enemy by being attacked at its weakest points while we have no opportunity to execute the decisive fleet encounter.

He specified the military preparations the Imperial Navy should take:

a. The Empire should prepare forces necessary to secure the sea routes the nation needs for its existence and for the conduct of the war. Since the Empire needs to hold the lines connecting Japan, Manchuria, and China as well as those in the Western Pacific including the Dutch East Indies, it is absolutely necessary to protect them during the war. In order to do this we can expect to be opposed by aircraft, submarines, and mobile ship task forces. We thus should maintain and operate forces to cope with these threats.

b. Since the Imperial Navy needs to secure its own strategic lines of communications for its forces which will operate from sea and air bases in Western Pacific islands and from other bases, we should maintain forces necessary to do so. The enemy forces we can expect to be opposed by in these operations are the same as those listed in paragraph "a" above and our forces to oppose them should be similar. The point we must be very aware of is that we have had no experience in fighting enemies with submarines in either the Russo-Japanese War or in the China Incident [1937-present]; and since we have had the good fortune never to have been attacked on the communication routes listed in paragraphs "a" and "b" . . ., we are likely to ignore the problems involved should this come about. In a future war with the United States we have to very seriously consider this since it is very likely that the United States will stress

attacking the Empire at its weakest points.

c. The Imperial Navy should prepare forces necessary for defense (strategic not tactical defense) against enemy ships entering the Western Pacific. Since we have considered only that a decisive fleet encounter will resolve everything and have only tried to prepare for the moment of this battle, the concept of such a strategic defense has not been considered except by nations which are inferior seapowers. But in the present days with the rapid progress in submarine and aircraft technology, likelihood of a decisive fleet encounter involving battleships is virtually nonexistent if the Imperial Navy has powerful submarine and air forces. The dominant role of aircraft means that capital ships coming within range will be destroyed [before the large ships can engage each other].

d. The requirement of paragraphs "a"-"c" above can be met by securing control of the air with a dominant air force, by the operations of many submarines, and by building numerous convoy vessels and powerful mobile sea task forces.

e. The Imperial Navy should build submarines which can be deployed to the coastal areas of the United States to attack American ships and interrupt U.S. supply routes.

f. The Imperial Navy should build operational forces capable of capturing enemy island bases. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in a war with the United States our operations to seize American territories in the Pacific are of the highest importance for advancing and extending the range of our naval aircraft while hindering the operations of enemy aircraft, submarines and naval ships. Therefore, it is mandatory for the Empire to study and build the most suitable types and quantities of ships and aircraft to conduct such operations.

The old idea [of the Imperial Navy] has been to maintain forces constructed for a decisive fleet battle. For capturing enemy territories and bases the Imperial Navy keeps the old plan of organizing an invasion fleet, using a portion of the decisive fleet encounter forces and older types of ships which cannot be used in the front lines. At the present time, when no decisive fleet encounter is likely, however, we should plan and construct forces designed for seizing bases from the outset, rejecting the old idea. The reason of course is that the invasion operations have come to supersede the old decisive fleet encounter operations as the most important.

We should consider that the capture and use of enemy air bases is truly equal to the destruction of enemy battleships in former times.

In his conclusion Admiral Inoue emphasized that the Imperial Navy should have a strong air force. The reinforcement of air and submarine power, he strongly stated, was not only absolutely essential but also made "possible the reduction of other kinds of forces provided enough of those two vital forces were maintained."

Inoue appealed further for reconsideration of the concepts of sea and air control in light of new technology. He warned again of the obvious necessity of the Empire to control the Western Pacific but also cautioned paying heed to the following points:

The meaning of control of the sea is hereafter a three dimensional one. In the day of the submarine

and the aircraft, control of the sea is not absolute as in the days before the submarine. We have no control of the sea without control of the air and considerable control of the sea if we can obtain control of the air . . .. The Empire should hold control of the air in the Western Pacific as a prerequisite to control of the sea. The concept of control of the air has not been emphasized. In former days when a decisive fleet encounter was all important, control of the air was limited to the local scene of the decisive battle and was not considered as the prerequisite to control of the sea. Air power has been regarded only as a contribution of our aircraft to a decisive fleet encounter at the scene of battle. Specifically, in former times when carrier aircraft were considered to be the prime element of naval air force, air power and sea power were considered to be mutually dependent and a naval air force without carrier aircraft was not contemplated. Consequently we could not gain control of the air in the fleet operating area until we obtained local control of the sea with seagoing forces. Recently, with the development of the land-based aircraft, however, these aircraft along with seaplanes have become the main element of air power and thus control of the air can be obtained without the prerequisite control of the sea. Control of the air can be obtained without naval ships but with an air force alone. It has come to pass that we should think of control of the air by such an air force independent of naval ships as prerequisite of control of the sea.

As seen from the foregoing, Inoue felt the Imperial Navy's preparatory plan had grave faults. While the plan should have been updated to implement the technical advances in submarine and aircraft technology, it remained unrevised. He attributed this static thinking to a carryover from the philosophy of capital ship production rations in the disarmament treaty days but warned of the danger "of even though acknowledging the recent progress of the medium-type, land-based attack aircraft, the excellent seaplanes, and other new aircraft, continuing to plan in outmoded military preparation concepts, overlooking defects and putting in effect a plan which will continue the already attained obsolescence into the future."

Deaf to Suggestion. Vice Admiral Inoue initially wanted to submit his thesis to the Navy Minister as a personal opinion, but at the request of Rear Admiral Yamagata, head of the Administrative Division, he personally delivered it to the Minister, Adm. Koshiro Oikawa, as an official document of the Department of Naval Aeronautics. When he handed it to the Minister, Inoue repeatedly requested, "Please do not pigeonhole it. If I were a merchant I would request a receipt but I cannot do that to the Navy Minister! But I would appreciate your acknowledgement of receipt."

The Minister stated, "I have received it."[7]

Although Admiral Inoue's recommendations were farsighted, predicting the subsequent events of the Pacific War accurately, they did not influence any change in thinking on the part of the Navy General Staff. The staff remained obsessed with the ideas of ratios, superiority of huge ships with big guns, and with the concept of a decisive fleet encounter.[8] Inoue was viewed coldly as a member of the anti-United States-Japanese war faction headed by Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto and was transferred (in reality, eased out of the Ministry) in August 1941 to the post of Commander in Chief, 4th Fleet.

Not only was Inoue transferred, but his "Modern Military Procurement Planning" thesis was never found later in the official documents of the Imperial Navy, and there is no indication that it ever was reviewed by naval leadership. The only reference to the manuscript to be found was in a change of command record of the Department of Naval Aeronautics of August 1941 when Vice Admiral Inoue was succeeded by Vice Admiral Katagiri. The manuscript was almost destroyed after the war but fortunately was salvaged and is now in the War History Office of the Japan Defense Agency in Tokyo. It shows evidence of having been recorded as Department of Naval Aeronautics top secret document number 798. Six typewritten copies were made; the original was given to the Navy Minister, and one copy was sent to the Vice Minister, Vice Adm. Teijiro Toyota, on 30 January 1941, and four copies were retained in the files of the Department of Naval Aeronautics.

The concept of a decisive fleet encounter which had been taught as gospel at the Imperial Navy War College, in the fleet, and the other echelons of the navy would not die easily. The General Staff —whose "Maru Go" Supplementary Armament Plan had been thoroughly criticized by Admiral Inoue—submitted a draft "Maru Roku" (Number Six) Supplementary Armament Plan to a new conference in October of the same year. Elements of the plan are shown in the figure below.

The Imperial Navy felt it had won history's most perfect victory by the "decisive fleet encounter strategy" in the Battle of Tsushima during the Russo-Japanese War. In World War I the navy did not participate in major battles and failed to learn from the Battle of Jutland that a decisive fleet encounter was not likely unless both sides wished to engage in such a confrontation. Neither did the Japanese take serious note of the fact that even a continental power such as Germany was forced to surrender because of an internal collapse resulting from a sea blockade, despite the stalemate on the Western front.

The Imperial Navy leadership earnestly asserted that it could compensate for the inferiority in numbers of ships

Ship/Aircraft	Number
Battleship (*Yamato* type)	4
Supercruiser	4
Aircraft Carrier	3
Cruiser	12
Destroyer	34
Submarine	67
Miscellaneous	130
Total Displacement	more than 800,000 tons
Operational Air Squadron	68 squadrons
Training Air Squadron	68 squadrons
	(200 squadrons total at completion)

Source: "Maru Roku" (Number Six) Preliminary Requirement Armament Plan of the General Staff of the Navy (contained in official records of the Second Demobilization Liquidation Bureau, Liquidation Division, Repatriation Relief Agency, Welfare Ministry). The plan was for the period beginning 1945. In those days the last year of the previous plan overlapped the first year of the next. (See previous listing.)

established by the limitations of the naval disarmament treaties with an intangible: "quality." However, in this writer's opinion, this was fuzzy thinking which only considered the capabilities of individual combatants. *Quality*, after all, meant equipping existing ships with larger or more guns, and this concept really meant *quantity* as well. It is apparent that Admiral Inoue's "Modern Military Procurement Planning"—the essence of which was a strategy for fortification of Western Pacific islands and the best possible uses of land-based aircraft and submarines—was the best of its time. Its objective called for a qualitative revolution in naval strategy and tactics, and the concept contained a clear understanding of the nature of the coming war.

A Chess Game with No Checkmate. In the days prior to World War II, the General Staff of the Imperial Navy, bolstered by a tradition of successive victories and no defeat dating from the time of the Sino-Japanese War, assumed a "holier than thou" attitude. The General Staff kept Vice Adm. Yuzuru (which means "concede") Hiraga of the Imperial Navy's Construction Corps at a distance since he never agreed to their excessive requirements for ships' armament and gave Hiraga the nickname "Yuzurazu" (never concede). As a result of their design specifications, the destroyer *Sawarabi* and the torpedo boat *Tomozuru* overturned in storms in 1932 and 1934, respectively. Additionally, in a powerful typhoon of 1935 the bows of two destroyers, *Hatsuyuki* and *Yugiri*, broke off; the same storm destroyed the superstructures of several aircraft carriers and destroyers. Damage to these ships was the responsibility of naval planners (unlike Hiraga) who acceded passively to the General Staff's demands for excessively high speed and heavy armament relative to ship displacement. A commission was finally established for the implementation of improvements to such warships and then retired Admiral Hiraga was requested to join the commission as an adviser. Complete strength tests were conducted for all combatants, and all necessary improvements were made to reinforce defective ships. At the same time, naval ship designers adopted standards for safety in future ship construction. The typhoons of 1932, 1934, and 1935 pointed out the lack of realism in ship design, but the General Staff was still unwilling to seriously examine the conceptual faults in its armament planning.

Likening a future war between the United States and Japan to a chess game, Admiral Inoue would explain that Japan could not checkmate the United States, while the latter did have the capability to execute such a fate vis-a-vis Japan. He remained adamantly opposed to war with the United States, declaring it was foolish to try to engage in a "chess game" in which there was no chance for a checkmate. He was seriously worried about the inevitability of war with the United States, particularly following the signing of the Tripartite Pact.

The Imperial Japanese Navy at first opposed the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact. Through the Hiranuma, Abe, and Yonai Cabinets (January 1939-July 1940), primarily because of Navy opposition, signature of the agreement had been forestalled despite strong backing of the pact by the Japanese Army. The navy's opposition was led primarily by the trio of the Navy Minister (and onetime Prime Minister) Adm. Mitsumasa Yonai; the Vice Minister, Vice Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto; and the Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau, Shigeyoshi Inoue. The army was highly incensed by this opposition, and there were rumors of assassination attempts by ultrarightists on the lives of Yamamoto and Inoue. Finally, the Imperial Army purged the Yonai Cabinet with a poison—i.e., the Army Minister, Gen.

Shunroku Hata resigned and the army would not assign a replacement, thereby forcing Yonai's Cabinet to fail. The subsequent Konoe Cabinet forced the Imperial Navy to accede to the Tripartite Pact by appointing Admiral Oikawa as Navy Minister. Navy acceptance was induced by fears of a civil war pitting the army against the navy following the discovery of another army coup d'etat plan after the famous 2-2-6 incident of 1936.

The second Konoe Cabinet was followed by Tojo's Cabinet in which "army and navy cooperation" became, at the Emperor's request, a supreme order. The result was an assumption of leadership in the navy by a group of compromising men. Admiral Inoue was "banished" to the Naval Academy from October 1942 to August 1944 where as superintendent he prohibited the midshipmen from answering letters from army cadets. "The Imperial Army is like a shogunate which ignores the Greatest General of the Army [the Emperor]. Prussia was not a nation which had an army, but was an army which had a nation. Our cooperation with the Prussian-like Imperial Japanese Army will destroy our nation."[9]

Tojo began to rapidly lose his support among the people after the fall of Saipan in 1944, and on 18 July of that year his Cabinet finally fell. In the succeeding Koiso Cabinet, Admiral Yonai was recalled to active duty and assumed the post of Navy Minister. The rapidly expanding forces of the United States landed at Leyte and soon recaptured the Philippines. Premier Koiso, however, spoke only of continuing the war, stating loudly, "Leyte is a ten-no-zan" (decisive turning point in an old popular battle). Opposing the Prime Minister once again, the Imperial Navy began preparing the ground for peace. Soon after Yonai became Navy Minister he asked Inoue, still at the Naval Academy, to assume the post of Vice Minister. He did on 5 August. After 10 days of listening to morning battle reports, the new Vice Minister—astonished at how really desperate the situation was—stated to the Minister, "There is no use in continuing this war any longer. May I be permitted to begin preparing for peace henceforth?"

The minister replied, "It is quite all right. You are permitted."

On 29 August, exactly 1 year prior to the end of the war, the Vice Minister transferred Rear Adm. Sokichi Takagi from his job as head of the Education Bureau of the Navy Ministry to a minor post on the General Staff without routine duties. Takagi was also assigned as a researcher to the Naval War College, supposedly because of ill health, an arrangement that would allow him to maneuver behind the scenes.

The Koiso Cabinet resigned in April 1945 after the American forces had taken Iwo Jima and invaded Okinawa. General Koiso was succeeded as Prime Minister by Adm. Kantaro Suzuki, the most senior living naval officer; Yonai

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Comdr. Sadao Seno, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), is a 1945 graduate of the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy, and before the conclusion of World War II served on the cruiser *Oyodo* and as a student in the Submarine School. Following the war he served on the carrier *Katsuragi,* transporting repatriated Japanese soldiers, and subsequently as commanding officer of a minesweeper, active in sweeping the Inland Sea. He is a graduate of the Gunnery Officers Ordnance School (U.S. Navy), of the Japanese Maritime Staff College, and has served as editor in the War History Office of the Defense College and as editor of the JMSDF periodical *Kansen to Anzen* (Naval Ships and Safety). Commander Seno is currently doing research at the Maritime Staff College on the Pacific War.

remained as Navy Minister; and Inoue also continued as Vice Minister. (On 15 May Inoue was promoted to full admiral and subsequently vacated the Vice Minister's job and was given the title of military counselor.) After 4½ months more of desperate fighting, the Suzuki Cabinet finally managed to conclude the war, a war in which Admiral Inoue foresaw no opportunity for successful prosecution by Japan, given its strategy and supporting weapons.

NOTES

1. In October 1920 the Imperial Navy obtained a U.S. Navy classified document entitled "Overseas Campaign" written by three naval officers: J.J. Yarnel, W.S. Pye, and H.H. Frost. Sokichi Takagi, *Shikan Taiheiyo Senso* (My Private Views on the Pacific War) (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju sha, 1969), pp. 64-66.

2. Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific--Strategy and Command: the First Two Years* (Washington: Military History Department of the Army, 1962), pp. 21-44.

3. War History Office, *Hawaii Sakusen* (Hawaii Operation) (Tokyo: National Defense College, Japan Defense Agency, 1967), p. 38.

4. James E. Auer, *The Postwar Rearmament of Japanese Maritime Forces: 1945-71* (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 276, n. 23.

5. Thirty-seventh Class, Imperial Naval Academy, *Kaigun Seikatsu no Omoide* (Recollections of Navy Life), 1957, v. II, pp. 38-39. Admiral Inoue was the number two ranking midshipman of the 37th graduating class of the Naval Academy.

6. An example of the frenzied atmosphere of the Navy Ministry is quoted as follows from Auer, p. 23: "Yale-educated Rear Admiral Zenshiro Hoshina, head of the Naval Ordnance Bureau, frankly warned at a prewar conference that adequate logistics for a war with the United States were impossible, but was pressured into reversing his position by several middle level officers."

7. Personal interviews with Admiral Inoue after the war.

8. The Chief of the General Staff of the Imperial Navy reported to the Emperor in November 1941 as follows: "Concerning a decisive battle with the United States Capital Fleet, we have acceptable odds in our favor, as I explained the other day, from the viewpoint of the enemy's and our potential power and |our| advantage in position . . ." "Heiki ni yoru Sakusen Keikaku Gosetsumei ni kansuru Ken" (Explanation of War Plan from War Games) (8 November 1941), *Josokankei Tsuzuri* (File of Reports to His Majesty) (Tokyo: War History Office, Japan Defense Agency), v. I.

9. Source unknown to publisher at time of printing.

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In times of peace the general staff should plan for all contingencies of war. Its archives should contain the historical details of the past, and all statistical, geographical, topographical, and strategic treatises and papers for the present and future.

Jomini: Précis de l'Art de la Guerre, 1838