

PASTOR AKAMATSU Looks East and West

THE policy of fostering negotiations through the Emperor of Japan was called "wise" by Rev. Alfred Akamatsu, pastor of New York City's Japanese Methodist Church, in an interview held while peace negotiations were under way with the Japanese. Since the militarists, who had governed the country, are now without prestige in defeat, thinks Mr. Akamatsu, the Emperor remains as the only person who can speak for the country. He is also convinced that thousands of lives—both American and Japanese—have been saved by this policy, which eliminates any possibility of "martyrizing" the Emperor, a very logical reaction if stiff punishment had been imposed on Hirohito by the Allies.

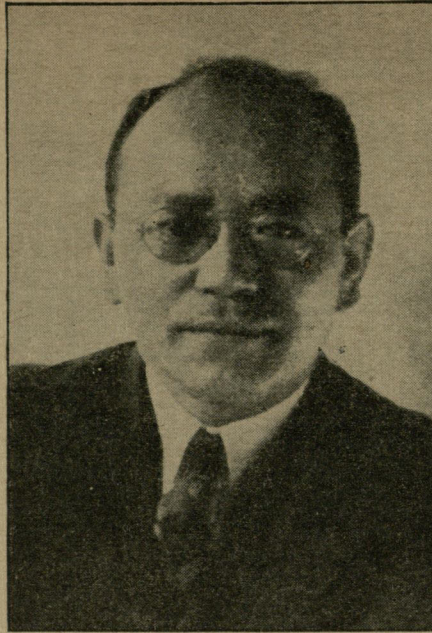
Because of the leadership she assumes, the United States now has a tremendous responsibility for what will happen in Japanese-American relations, thinks Mr. Akamatsu. "The success of missionary work in Japan will be closely related to American policy in Japan as well as throughout the Far East. If Japan is accorded a reasonable way of existence—"

"What do you call 'reasonable' in this instance?" I broke in.

"By a reasonable existence for Japan I mean the possession of extensive light industry and the possession of and access to raw materials," he replied. He underscores the importance for Japan to earn her own livelihood. "Establishment of such a policy will pave the way more quickly for Japanese policy as a peaceful, peace-loving nation in such an atmosphere that Christianity, as it comes from the United States, will be accepted."

A "soft peace"? Definitely not, declared Mr. Akamatsu. "Provision must be made whereby the militarists shall never again gain power," he continued, with a word of caution, however, that if the peace terms constitute an expression of vengeance the intense nationalism now smouldering in Japan will find its outlet in increased resentment and go "underground."

Mr. Akamatsu attributes the apparent "stalling" on the part of the Jap-



Rev. Alfred Akamatsu, who is in his sixth year as pastor of the Japanese Methodist Church, New York, N. Y.

anese to the fact that the Japanese people, particularly in isolated sections of the country, have not been informed of the successive defeats of their armed forces. A period of intensive education as to the "facts of defeat" will be necessary, he believes. On the other hand, he is confident that the formation of the Suzuki government was an indication several months ago that Japanese militarists would accept their defeat as permanent, but that by describing it as "temporary" they are making a final attempt to "save face." Also, such statements serve as a gradual method of breaking the "bad news" to the Japanese people.

"This defeat of the militarists in Japan may result in the liberation of the people from the yoke of the military masters of Japan," suggested Mr. Akamatsu. "It is possible that there may arise a really democratic Japan. This will take quite a while, and will depend on how Japan as a nation is treated by the Allies.

"We can now survey international relations more objectively than we could while the war was going on," affirmed Mr. Akamatsu. "Unless we can analyze these relations objectively and in the light of that analysis chart our course in the postwar period, we shall never be able to establish 'one

world' in the direction of the kingdom of God," he continued earnestly.

Mr. Akamatsu has served his present church in New York since 1941. On December 7, 1941, together with 200 to 300 "enemy-alien" Japanese, he was apprehended and taken to Ellis Island for questioning. Reminiscing now, he prizes the opportunities offered by that grilling experience. At the people's request, daily Bible study and hymn sings were initiated under his direction. On Sundays he preached to practically the entire group, a congregation appreciably larger than his loyal flock on West 108th Street.

While on parole from Ellis Island, Mr. Akamatsu was ordained an elder in the New York Conference of The Methodist Church, an experience memorable in its connotations. "In the eyes of the government I was still on parole as an enemy alien, but the church took me in with its hands and heart wide open," he said.

During the ordination Bishop James C. Baker said, in words that Mr. Akamatsu will never forget: "I am very glad that you are here because you are a symbol of the unity of the Christian Church. On the other side of the Pacific Ocean is the Church of the Living God, and you come to us as a symbol of the reality of the Church of Christ."

As such a symbol, blending East and West, Mr. Akamatsu has an important message for American Christians. He was born near Hiroshima, attended school in Japan and came to this country to join his family. Here he became a Christian. He is a graduate of Southern Methodist University, has done his theological work in Emory University and Union Theological Seminary, and at present is working on his doctor of philosophy degree in religious education at Columbia University and Union Seminary.

He lists several factors in the present situation which Christians must understand if they are to see the total picture.

"Emperor worship is often misunderstood because of the difference in the conception of God," he stated, explaining that according to polytheistic Shin-

An Interview by

SARAH ELISABETH EVANS

Methodists on Okinawa

By STAFF SERGEANT WALTER WOOD

Marine Corps Correspondent

"When we entered the city, the only building left standing was the church," said Marine Lieutenant Sidney B. Garland, writing to his father, Rev. C. R. Garland of Eldora, Iowa. It was the little Methodist mission that had escaped destruction in the furious bombing and shelling of Shuri, Okinawa.

For seven days Lieutenant Garland watched through field glasses as his platoon fought through bloody Wana Draw toward the city in a dogged inch-by-inch advance. He could see the bell-tower of the church and the cross silhouetted against the sky, expecting each day to see our artillery barrages or dive bombers topple the cross and blast the church to bits. But it never happened.

Empty, paneless windows, bullet pits and shrapnel holes in the masonry outer walls are the church's only battle scars. Inside, the simple wooden benches are intact, but there is no evidence that there was ever an altar or pulpit.

It was learned that Rev. Earl R. Bull, of Waverly, Ohio, was a missionary in Okinawa several years ago. The Rapier Methodist Church, Dayton, Ohio, sent him \$3,000 to help build some churches, and three were erected—one in Naha, the modern (and much-bombed) capital; one in Shuri, the old capital; and the third in Yonabaru. A brass plate on the church wall in Naha tells the story of Dayton's generosity.

toism, any person, or even an animal, can be glorified in death and become enshrined as one of the eight myriads of Shinto gods. The Emperor, as the embodiment of sovereignty of the nation, personifies to the Japanese the quality of something superior to common men. This is their way of expressing loyalty and respect. There is strength in the mythology of the Japanese. It doesn't express itself in logical terms, but it does attempt to show a unity of the organic nation—a nation tied together by the blood ties of the people. Although this is not scientifically true, it shows strength nevertheless.

"This organic conception of the Japanese nation was manipulated to intensify itself and give national unity when young Japan was ushered into the imperialistic arena of the Far East in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. This intense nationalism served to make survival possible, but at the same time it was also the nation's curse. For it became the seed of an ambitious desire for territorial aggrandizement."

Although Mr. Akamatsu does not disclaim Japan's responsibility for the hostilities just ended, he does not clean the slate of the Western nations. "I think the Western nations are partially responsible, for they have never recognized the prestige of any nation unless and until she has defeated successfully other nations in war. It doesn't make any difference how rich a culture she may have. Unless she deals successfully in the realm of power politics a nation never gains

recognition." He explains that in the modern history of Japan the rise of intense nationalism has always been occasioned by an international situation, and cited as an example the "China incident" of 1937, a result of militaristic ambition in inter-action with economic and political policies of Western nations which cut Japan off from possible avenues of peaceful expansion by erecting high tariff walls practically everywhere in the world.

Mr. Akamatsu also stresses the necessity of the Christian Church to realize its responsibility in the economic, social and political affairs of this country. He lists as important tasks for church people the fomenting of constructive public opinion in understanding the present situation in terms of Japan's heritage, the upholding of the ideals of the United Nations Organization, particularly the provi-

sions of the Economic and Social Council for the elimination of possible causes of future war. But most important, thinks the pastor, who under present laws cannot become a citizen of the United States, is that this country shall become a convincing example of democracy at work.

He recalls the closing moments of his hearing at the Enemy Alien Hearing Board, after which he was paroled. The hearing was ended. The judge asked whether he had anything to say.

"Yes, one thing," the pastor replied. He did not know how he would be received. Yet these words burned in his soul. "There are many Japanese now at Ellis Island who have been residents in New York for a long time. Many are loyal to America, but they are enemy aliens only because the right of naturalization has not been accorded them. If America fights for democracy abroad, is it not high time to practice it at home and give to these loyal people from the Far East the right to become naturalized?"

To his amazement the judge thanked him for his remarks.

"Obviously," he continued earnestly, as our interview closed. "We have a tendency to become Christian with all our prejudices intact. Christianity seldom, if ever, touches them. The celebration of victory should be that realization of our humility because of the tremendous responsibility placed on the Christian conscience. It should be a time of repentance for our share in the guilt of this tragic war. In humility and repentance can we find the real starting point for the kingdom of God."

Hiroshima and Nagasaki Methodists

By WILLIAM WATKINS REID

The Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—both victims of the world's first atomic bombs—were for three fourths of a century active centers of mission service of the Board of Missions and Church Extension. There were no missionaries of the Church in Japan when the bombing took place. All had been recalled before hostilities began. But it is believed that Methodist institutions were demolished, especially the social service centers and the churches which were located in the slum and congested areas.

In Hiroshima were Hiroshima Jo Gakuin, a Methodist college for 400 girls; Frazer Institute for young men; Takajo Machi, a home for business women; and Fukushima Settlement, including a day nursery, kindergarten, playground, and evangelistic center.

One of the most noted of Methodism's secondary schools for boys—Chinzei Gakuin—was in Nagasaki, the principal ship-building center. Other Nagasaki institutions were: Kwassui Semmon Gakko, a junior college for young women, the Melton Young Home, with social service and extension work for the ship-builders' families; and the Akunoura Settlement, near the docks, with kindergarten, nursery and high schools. It is believed these have all been carried on by Japanese Methodists during the war period.

Other Methodist institutions are in oft-bombed Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kobe, Hirosaki, Fukuoka, and Kagoshima.