

**EAST NIGHT'S CABLE FLASHES**

# PETER RUSSO

The Argus man, meets

## Hirohito's brother—

**TOKYO, Tuesday: Fool, coward, and double-crosser are some of the kindlier terms being used by nostalgic Japanese militarists to describe His Imperial Highness Prince Mikasa, the youngest brother of the Emperor.**

They hint also that, a few short years ago, before Japan's unnecessary surrender in the Pacific war, the Prince would have been patriotically disposed for the Imperial good.

This ferocious outburst, expressed in pamphlets and letters to the Japanese Press, follows the publication of Prince Mikasa's book, "Emperors, Graves, and People." The book itself is a scholarly research into ancient Oriental history, but it is not the main subject matter which is wracking so many of Japan's devotees of the old Imperial Way.

His Highness also saw fit to add a chapter entitled "My Recollections," and it is this long and soul-searching epilogue which has infuriated the tradi-

tionists and made the book one of the most significant political and social documents of modern Japan.

I read the book, found it enthralling, and decided to take the Prince up on the challenge it contained. Trading on my former associations with the Imperial universities of Japan, and my 25 years' friendship with Dr. Tatsunosuke Ueda, of

the Imperial Academy, I invited the Prince to take pot luck with my wife and myself at our hotel.

A slight deviation is necessary here to recall the kind of Imperial protocol which once obtained. Before the war there was about as much chance of getting an Imperial Japanese prince into a public dining-room as there was of taking Tibet's Dalai Lama on a round of Shanghai's night-clubs.

The ancients of the Imperial Household, together with their administrative wardens, are still fighting a

solid rearguard action against what they call the "democratic deterioration" of the Imperial rites.

### Exalted color

They look with horror on the wicked modern necessity which now enables even lesser foreign diplomats to share members of the Imperial family on a pro rata basis, merely to get a bit of exalted color for their foolish diplomatic parties.

Prince Mikasa, on the other hand, does not co-operate in this necessary diplomatic evil, and seems to have gone completely round the democratic bend.

He has not only become a simple lecturer at Tokyo Women's University, but has said that he decided against

renouncing his Imperial status in order to promote democracy by identifying at least his share of the clan with the mass of the people.

In reply to my invitation,

In reply to my invitation, Prince Mikasa said he would be at the hotel main entrance at 7.30, and he was there on the dot. He came alone, and we proceeded to the dining-room, where no special arrangements of any kind had been made.

Judging from the ultra deep bows of the head waiter and the startled glances of some of the Japanese diners, I assumed that the Prince's descent into democratic ways of feeding was still having the effect of a social earthquake on many commoners.

The Prince ordered steak and a slice of melon for dessert, but merely fiddled with a glass of sherry I had poured — he is accurately accused of not drinking or smoking and being astoundingly devoted to his wife and numerous children.

Rather rudely, I fear, I began almost immediately to draw the Prince out on aspects of his book, which had not yet been commented upon in the Japanese or foreign language Press.

The cables had already picked up his book's more vigorous reflections on how he was compelled to join the Imperial Army, on the deep suspicions his attitude engendered among the militarist hierarchy, on his denunciation of Japan's "Holy

# A PRINCE OF NEW JAPAN

War" as "an orgy of pillage, assault, arson, and rape."

What I was particularly interested in, however, was

interested in, however, was the order of precedence he himself gave to his "recollections," and the impact he felt they were having on the

lections," and the impact he felt they were having on the readers who were making his book Japan's most controversial best-seller. The

controversial best-seller. The Prince answered my questions with complete frankness, even those I predicated as being off the record.

## China missions

There is no doubt of the extent to which Mikasa was moved by the selfless, sacrificing Christian missionaries he met in the remote interior of China during his "holy war" days. This was the type of missionary that toiled on in spite of hardship and privation, made no political capital out of the persecution it suffered, and left judgment of the sinners to a Higher Being.

It was to solve the riddle of these dedicated souls that Mikasa began his study of the origins of Christianity in ancient Oriental history. "What was it that inspired them to such sublime acts of humanity?" Mikasa asked himself, and he sought the answer in the Testaments and the prophets' cry for social justice.

The riddle was the more complex in that the allegedly Christian countries from which these true Christians came fervently slaughtered one another in the name of the same Christian God.

Another Chinese puzzle which urged Prince Mikasa on to deeper historical studies was the behavior of the Eighth Route Army (the Yen-an Communists). He believed it important that the derivation, perverted or not, of their high moral code and discipline should be studied in more precise historical terms and not solely as an exercise in political propaganda.

## Personal freedom

But the most enlightening part of this dinner and talk with Prince Mikasa (we went on for nearly three hours) was his underscoring

(and nobody could know better) that the extent of Japanese "democratisation" will be reflected in the kind of home life that his nephew, the Crown Prince, will be allowed to live in the near future.

If Prince Akihito, heir to the throne, is gradually hedged in and made to conform with the ancient rites, Japan's popular democracy will also suffer.

The proof of Mikasa's deduction was found in the vicious reaction to his book by the old-time militarists. They understood that, until the Imperial Household again became a closed shop, there was little possibility of stifling the democratic nonsense that was threatening the revival of Japan's divine mission.

To this degree, Prince Mikasa becomes not only a "dangerous radical" in the eyes of the traditionalists, but also a rallying point for all who see in him a worthwhile Imperial reflection of the Japanese people. The ancients are the more furious in that Prince Mikasa's book has received overwhelming support, the letters for him flooding out the abuse, and demonstrating that Japanese youth will not—and cannot—become a party to the conspiratorial Shinto creed of archaic divinities.

## Patriotic accident

As, in the present circumstances, it might be indiscreet to arrange a patriotic

accident to arrange a patriotic accident for Prince Mikasa, the elders are doing the next best thing.

The nicest people, cleverly coached without their knowing it, will repeat the fiction that Prince Mikasa is really an eccentric whose head has been turned by too much exotic study of democratic filmflam and Christian superstition.

My own impression — and I went into this meeting with a nastily critical approach — is that Mikasa's eccentricity has been purely one of a genuine — and amazing — breakaway from the most rigidly Imperial routine since the days of the Pharaohs.

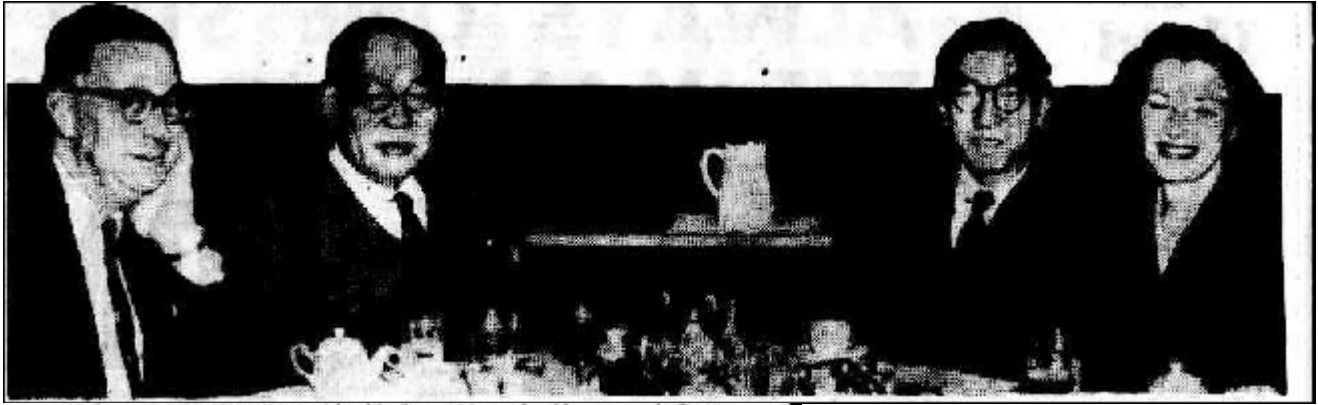
Foreigners here, especially the diplomats, are observing a rather embarrassed silence in relation to Prince Mikasa and this first blunt documentation of Japanese Imperialism from the inside. One gets the impression that we, too, feel this Imperial Prince has let down the good old side of blue

blood and ordained privilege.

This young man (41) certainly has let it down in terms of domestic protocol. At about 10.30 of this memorable evening, Prince Mikasa glanced at his watch and almost leapt from his chair.

"Goodness," he said. "I have to pick up my wife at the cinema."

AND THEN, AFTER A WARM FAREWELL, HE WAS ON HIS WAY, BUT MORE LIKE AN ORDINARY ANXIOUS HUSBAND THAN AN IMPERIAL DESCENDANT OF JAPAN'S ANCIENT GODS.



**Dinner at Dr. Russo's Tokyo Hotel: (L. to r.) Peter Russo, his friend Dr. Uede, Prince Mikasa, Mrs. Russo.**



● The book that has shaken Japan—Prince Mikasa's "Emperors, Graves, and People." The Prince wrote: "The war was an orgy of pillage, assault, arson, and rape."