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The Repatriation of Japanese POWs and the Early Cold War in East Asia

Frank Jacob

The Cold War was, as scholars Liu Hong and Michael Szonyi correctly called it, a “battle for the hearts and minds”¹ of millions of people around the globe. In East Asia, this battle was particularly fierce, especially when the Chinese Civil War ended with the victory of Mao Zedong’s (1893-1976) communists. The Cold War was very intense on its peripheries,² where proxy wars divided newly-established nation states and where the superpowers supported different national factions to draw into or to keep a whole region within their zone of influence. Immanuel Wallerstein was therefore right when he argued that the Cold War in Asia was anything but “cold.”³ The global conflict, nevertheless, was not only a war on land and on sea, but one fought in the imaginations of the people as well.⁴ Both superpowers were eager to emphasize their own successes as a result of their “ideological” systems, i.e. of communism or Western liberalism. One group in particular that was the subject of debates and with regard to whom there were struggles in the case of early Cold War Japan were the Japanese prisoners of war (POWs) that remained in the Soviet Union in the years after the end of the Second World War. While the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), wanted to get them back to Japan as fast as possible, the Soviet influence on these men was also considered a menace with regard to the occupation of Japan, because a mass of communist veterans could pose a threat against the integration of the island country into the Western Bloc. MacArthur, who “defined his role from the start as that of a sort of latter-day *shogun*, aloof from the masses of ordinary Japanese,”⁵ was of course aware of the possible threat to his rule, especially since he was also being reminded about the danger

¹ Liu Hong and Michael Szonyi, “Introduction. New Approaches to the Study of the Cold War,” in *The Cold War in Asia. The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, eds. Liu Hong, Michael Szonyi and Zheng Yangwen (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 1.

² For a more detailed discussion of the Cold War on its peripheries see: Frank Jacob, ed. *Peripheries of the Cold War* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015).

³ Immanuel Wallerstein, “What Cold War in Asia? An Interpretative Essay,” in *The Cold War in Asia. The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, eds. Liu Hong, Michael Szonyi and Zheng Yangwen (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 19 and 24.

⁴ Benjamin Ziemann, “Situating Peace Movements in the Political Culture of the Cold War,” in *Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA during the Cold War*, ed. Benjamin Ziemann (Essen: Klartext, 2007), 11.

⁵ Robert B. Textor, “Success in Japan – Despite Some Human Foibles and Cultural Problems,” in *MacArthur and the American Century: A Reader*, ed. William M. Leary (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 258.

of Japanese communism by press reports in the United States. However, since “a professional soldier was given the post of civil administrator in Japan,”⁶ who tended to “impose democracy like a dictator,”⁷ MacArthur addressed the issue of the communist threat to his position by conducting a red purge in 1949/50. The present chapter will elaborate on the role of Japanese POWs imprisoned in the Soviet Union during the early Cold War and the repatriation of these veterans to Japan, and it will embed their history into the ideological conflict between the US occupation forces there and the possible menace of a rise of communism in the East Asian country. As a first step, MacArthur’s rule in Japan and its character shall be discussed, before the struggle between the SCAP and the Soviet authorities over the fate of the Japanese POWs in the Soviet Union is taken into closer consideration. The image of Japan’s veterans, however, was twofold, which is why a further step will analyze how the fears of a communist menace represented by the POWs were perceived and addressed by the occupational government. The chapter consequently provides a deeper insight into the problems related to the role of former POWs and veterans in post-war societies in general, and to the question of the abuse of former POWs and veterans with regard to political conflicts in particular.

MacArthur’s Japan

Douglas MacArthur, who would determine the fate of Japan during the occupational period, staged his rule from the first moment on, and he may have thought that he had been chosen by fate to rule the former enemy country.⁸ As Allied Supreme Commander, South-West Pacific Area (SWPA), MacArthur had demanded the leading role in the Pacific theater of the Second World War early on and thereby made enemies due to his “overarching ego.”⁹ The conservative US general ordered the British not to accept any partial surrender from Tokyo, as he wanted to receive the offer of unconditional surrender personally. Due to this behavior, many British POWs suffered for much longer in the hands of the Japanese.¹⁰ Once the war was over, MacArthur also wanted to be the first on Japan’s soil, and he ultimately landed at Atsugi airbase even before the Marines or the US

⁶ Justin Williams, Sr., *Japan’s Political Revolution under MacArthur* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1979), 263.

⁷ John Gunther, *The Riddle of MacArthur: Japan, Korea and the Far East* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 9.

⁸ Mark Felton, *The Final Betrayal: Mountbatten, MacArthur and the Tragedy of Japanese POWs* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2010), 40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

Navy could set foot on the ground. On 30 August 1945, a C54 named Bataan landed at Atsugi, allowing MacArthur to reach the land he was supposed to rule in the years to come.¹¹ On his way to the New Grand Hotel in Yokohama, the general and his officers were guarded by Japanese soldiers, who had turned their backs towards the street, which was obviously partly because they needed to protect MacArthur in case some hardliners had not accepted the end of the war.¹² MacArthur, who never underestimated the Japanese enemy after the fall of the Philippines,¹³ was still careful in 1944, as, for the US general, a Japanese attack towards the south could still be likely to happen;¹⁴ however, by August 1945, he “had dismissed [any] danger from his mind”¹⁵ and, in an act of “absolute foolhardiness,”¹⁶ he symbolically took possession of Japan almost alone.¹⁷

Although MacArthur’s strategy seemed to pay off, it was not certain if Japan could simply be occupied without causing large numbers of casualties due to possible guerilla warfare by the remaining Japanese forces. The Americans had encountered what it meant to fight until the last man against the Imperial Japanese Army on Iwo Jima and Okinawa,¹⁸ which is why the prospects for mainland Japan were not too optimistic; some American observers were assuming that the Asian “country would blaze with a permanent flame of hatred for the conquering Americans.”¹⁹ In Potsdam in July 1945, the Allied Powers had

¹¹ Russel D. Buhite, *Douglas MacArthur: Statecraft and Stagecraft in America’s East Asian Policy*, (Lanham et. al.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 69.

¹² Robert Harvey, *American Shogun: MacArthur, Hirohito and the American Duel with Japan* (London: John Murray, 2006), 308; Hiroshi Masuda, *MacArthur in Asia: The General and His Staff in the Philippines, Japan, and Korea* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 193.

¹³ Exemplary see: “International, Australia: The Authorities in the MacArthur’s Office Warns to Underestimation of the Japanese Marine Transport,” [n.d. presumably 1944]. National Archives of Japan, Cabinet, Intelligence Materials, Various Reports and Records/Information obtained by monitoring American domestic broadcasts, A03024987900.

¹⁴ “International, News on Japan: A spokesman of MacArthur makes complaints to increased power of Japanese air force,” 9 March [presumably 1944]. National Archives of Japan, Cabinet, Intelligence Materials, Various Reports and Records/Information obtained by monitoring American domestic broadcasts, A03024955500.

¹⁵ Theodore Cohen, *Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 62.

¹⁶ Harvey, *American Shogun*, 307.

¹⁷ Gunther, *The Riddle of MacArthur*, 1.

¹⁸ On the battles fought for Iwo Jima and Okinawa see: Richard F. Newcomb, *Iwo Jima: The Dramatic Account of the Epic Battle That Turned the Tide of World War II* (New York: Holt, 2002) and Bill Sloan, *The Ultimate Battle: Okinawa 1945 — The Last Epic Struggle of World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

¹⁹ Gunther, *The Riddle of MacArthur*, 2.

already decided that Japan would be occupied after the end of the war,²⁰ and the State-War-Navy-Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) had already begun to plan the details of the occupation, which MacArthur would later simply adopt and sell as his own.²¹ In addition, there was an internal US discussion about Japan's future: while the so-called China crowd demanded a harsh peace for the enemy, the destruction of the economic conglomerates, i.e. the *zaibatsu*, and a "complete purge of the ruling class,"²² the Japan crowd, led by Joseph Grew (1880-1965), who was a former ambassador to Japan and served as director of the Office for Far Eastern Affairs in the later years of the war, demanded that the enemy country should be rebuilt without its traditional values and ideas being destroyed. The two factions also struggled over the future role of Emperor Hirohito (1901-1989), yet in the end neither of the two groups were really able to interfere with MacArthur's own agenda, especially since the general "viewed with suspicion men who had a special knowledge of Japan and the Far East."²³

The Allied plan for the invasion of Japan, called "Downfall," was based on "a gargantuan blow against the islands of Kyushu and Honshu,"²⁴ and the first wave of landings, called "Olympic" and "Coronet," would start on 1 December 1945 and 1 March 1946 respectively. MacArthur was sure to possess air control, and as he declared on 20 April 1945, "[t]he Japanese Air Force has been reduced to a line of action which involves unco-ordinated, suicidal attacks against our forces, employing all types of planes, including trainers."²⁵ Events, however, went in a different direction, and after the use of the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the occupation of Japan was decided upon on 11 August, and "[t]he immediate objectives were the early introduction of occupying forces into major strategic areas, the control of critical ports, port facilities, and airfields, and the demobilization and disarmament of enemy troops."²⁶ Hirohito was eventually willing to accept the demands of Potsdam and, as the *Tokyo Nippon Times* reported on 9 September 1945, he was "also prepared to issue his commands to all the military, naval, and air authorities of Japan and all the forces under their control wherever located to

²⁰ William L. Neumann, *America Encounters Japan: From Perry to MacArthur* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1963),

²¹ Buhite, *Douglas MacArthur*, 68-69.

²² Neumann, *America Encounters Japan*, 295.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ General Staff MacArthur and Department of the Army, eds. *Reports of General Mac Arthur: The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific*, Vol. 1 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 395.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 398.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 444.

cease active operations, to surrender arms, and to issue such orders as may be required by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces for the execution of the above-mentioned terms.”²⁷ Regardless of this declaration to cooperate, there were doubts about the Japanese attitude towards the occupying forces, especially since the Emperor of Japan had also issued the following warning on 15 August 1945: “Beware most strictly of any outburst of emotion which may engender needless complications, and refrain from fraternal contention and strife which may create confusion, lead y[ou] astray and cause y[ou] to lose the confidence of the world.”²⁸

MacArthur, on the other hand, thanked God when he received the Japanese acceptance of the terms for surrender: “I thank a merciful God that this mighty struggle is about to end. I shall at once take steps to stop hostilities and further bloodshed. The magnificent men and women who have fought so nobly to victory can now return to their homes in due course and resume their civil pursuits. They have been good soldiers in the war. May they be equally good citizens in peace.”²⁹ The SCAP was ready to begin the occupation of Japan, although “[t]he American elements, outnumbered by thousands to one, were landing in a hostile country where huge numbers of enemy soldiers still had access to their arms.”³⁰ The occupation plan was consequently first and foremost based on the assumption that Hirohito would be able to control his people successfully. Signs that this was not the case, like the kamikaze pilots who released pamphlets over Tokyo demanding resistance against the decision of the Emperor and his advisors,³¹ were simply ignored.

Regardless of the danger, the occupation of Japan began peacefully, and why will forever remain some kind of mystery. Historian Kazuo Kawai therefore correctly called the events a “happy surprise” for both the occupiers and the occupied.³² The Japanese “lost no time mourning over their failure” and realized that it might have been wiser to cooperate with the American forces than to sabotage them.³³ Due to these considerations and the lack of a broader resistance against his person or policies, MacArthur, as the Japanese historian Masuda Hiroshi remarked, “probably saw himself as a second Perry, charged with the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 445.

²⁹ GHQ, AFPAC, Press Release 15 Aug 45, *ibid.*, 446.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 452.

³¹ Court Record for the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, 31194-31198 and 29322-29326, cited in: *ibid.*

³² Kazuo Kawai, *Japan's American Interlude* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3 and 10.

opening of Japan.”³⁴ On board the USS Missouri, the American general attended the official capitulation ceremony on 2 September 1945. At this moment, he represented the ultimate power that would determine the further fate of Japan, and MacArthur would do that without any doubt: “Because his world was Asia, it was the most important.”³⁵ In the years of the occupation, he would leave Japan only twice, once for the Philippines in 1946 and once for Korea in 1948.³⁶ Historian Theodore Cohen therefore correctly remarked, in relation to the first years of the occupation, that “MacArthur bestrode the land like a Colossus, and the Japanese called him ‘father.’”³⁷ Residing on the 8th floor of the Dai-Ichi Building in Tokyo, he would rule like a *shōgun*, backed by his officers, the so-called Bataan Boys, who were absolutely loyal to him.³⁸

Not everybody was allowed to meet with the new ruler of Japan, who received fan mail from many different countries but was reluctant to greet visitors in person, and when visitors were granted an audience they “were enraptured not only by what he said, but how he was saying it, and the fact that he was saying anything at all.”³⁹ When MacArthur met Hirohito for the first time, “[t]he Emperor bowed deeper than ever,” and the general is reported to have said the following after the meeting: “I could have humiliated him, publicly exposed him, but what for? I fought the war; he ended it. He deserves respect, the magnanimous gesture a noble defeated enemy deserves. Besides, with him as figurehead, our job is so much more easy.”⁴⁰ It was clear that Hirohito no longer dominated the Japanese state. MacArthur had replaced him by defeating the Japanese Army and leading the occupational forces. His leadership role therefore eventually became the “most natural thing in the world.”⁴¹ Besides Hirohito, the Japanese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and some other high politicians, the SCAP did not meet with many Japanese,⁴² yet the common people in Japan “saw the Occupation personified in his image.”⁴³ The

³⁴ Masuda Hiroshi, *MacArthur in Asia*, S.195.

³⁵ Buhite, *Douglas MacArthur*, 83.

³⁶ Gunther, *The Riddle of MacArthur*, 6-7.

³⁷ Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 53.

³⁸ Faubion Bowers, “The Late General MacArthur, Warts and All,” in *MacArthur and the American Century: A Reader*, ed. William M. Leary (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 241; Masuda, *MacArthur in Asia*, 196-199.

³⁹ Bowers, “The Late General MacArthur,” 245.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁴¹ Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 55.

⁴² Gunther, *The Riddle of MacArthur*, 7.

⁴³ Kawai, *Japan’s American Interlude*, 11.

person of MacArthur filled a power vacuum that had appeared by the end of the war due to the fall from power of the military and supposedly the Emperor. From the first moment on, the US general made it clear that he had replaced the former authorities and that his claim to rule was absolute. His first proclamation to the Japanese people emphasizes this demand:

The unconditional surrender of the Imperial Japanese Government to the Allied Powers has brought to an end the armed conflict which has long existed between these forces. By the terms of the Instrument of Surrender, signed by command of and behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the Japanese Government and the Japanese General Headquarters, the victorious military forces under *my* command will today occupy the territory of Japan. [...]

I hereby establish military control over all of Japan. [...]

Article I

All powers [...] will henceforth be exercised under *my* authority. [...]

Article III

All persons will obey promptly all *my* orders and orders issued under *my* authority. Acts of resistance [...] will be punished severely. [...]

Article VII

Further proclamations, ordinances, regulations, notices, directives and enactments will be issued by *me* or under *my* authority, and will specify what is required of you and what you are forbidden to do.⁴⁴

In his second proclamation, MacArthur made clear that violations against his rule would be severely punished: "ANY PERSON WHO: Violates the provisions of the Instrument of the Surrender, or any proclamation, order, or directive given under the authority of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers [...] [shall] suffer death or such other punishment as the Court may determine."⁴⁵ MacArthur had therefore established a monopoly of violence for the occupational forces, and used similar measures to restrict foreign financial transactions.⁴⁶

The occupation of Japan was "nominally an Allied enterprise,"⁴⁷ but officially turned into an exclusive American business run by one man only, namely the US *shōgun*. And what a *shōgun* MacArthur was: "By the course he followed, he left his stamp on the Japanese

⁴⁴ "General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Proclamation No. 1," September 2, 1945. The National Institute for Defense Studies, Ministry of Defense, Army Records, C12120339600. My emphasis.

⁴⁵ "General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Proclamation No. 2," September 2, 1945. The National Institute for Defense Studies, Ministry of Defense, Army Records, C12120339700.

⁴⁶ "General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Proclamation No. 3," September 2, 1945, in The National Institute for Defense Studies, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Defense, Army Records, Chuo, Zenpan, Nenpyo, C12120339800, Article III, 4.

⁴⁷ Kawai, *Japan's American Interlude*, 16.

bureaucracy, the Emperor institution, the feudal aristocracy, the Diet, the family, religion, freedom, disarmament, education, the legal system, farm tenancy, labor.”⁴⁸ While many officers worked on the measures taken by the occupational forces, MacArthur throned above them and would make suggestions, which were usually interpreted as demands rather than friendly advice. He pushed for five main reforms:

1. Women’s suffrage,
2. The establishment of unions,
3. The liberalization of education,
4. The abolishment of repressive (political) institutions, and
5. The democratization of the Japanese economy.⁴⁹

To achieve these aims, MacArthur needed the support of the Japanese government, which showed a high level of continuity, allowing many former supporters of the war to stay in their seats as long as they were willing to obey the Americans’ demands.⁵⁰ The Far Eastern Commission (FEC) and the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ) supposedly ruled the country, but the final decision was always made by MacArthur and his close officers, although after spring 1946 “[t]he flood of directives to the Japanese had become so immense that I doubt if anyone could have kept track of all of them.”⁵¹ The American *shōgun* had to deal with many different issues at the same time.

One of these issues was the future role and position of the Emperor. Could he continue in his role within Japanese society, or should he be indicted as a war criminal? Only the communists requested the latter option, but with no more than 3.8% of the votes in the first election, it was rather unlikely that their voices could gain sufficient political weight.⁵² With regard to this issue, MacArthur’s influence became very obvious, as he kept Hirohito in order to secure a successful occupation by avoiding public resistance. He ensured the Emperor avoided trial and wanted to use him to reform the country, starting with Hirohito

⁴⁸ Williams *Japan’s Political Revolution*, 267.

⁴⁹ Hata Ikuhiko, “Japan unter amerikanischer Besatzung,” in *Zwei zaghafte Riesen? Deutschland und Japan seit 1945*, eds. Arnulf Baring and Masamori Sase (Stuttgart/Zürich: Belser 1977), 204; Masuda, *MacArthur in Asia*, 205. Some of these points had been defined by MacArthur already, when he was on his flight to Japan. Hata Ikuhiko, “The Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952,” in *MacArthur and the American Century: A Reader*, ed. William M. Leary (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 320.

⁵⁰ Reinhard Zöllner, *Geschichte Japans: Von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn et. al.: UTB, 2006), 385.

⁵¹ William J. Sebald with Russel Brines, *With MacArthur in Japan: A Personal History of the Occupation* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), 78.

⁵² Satō Seizaburō, “Die Demokratie in Japan nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Zwei zaghafte Riesen? Deutschland und Japan seit 1945*, eds. Arnulf Baring and Masamori Sase (Stuttgart/Zürich: Belser 1977), 276.

acting as a constitutional monarch.⁵³ Due to the above-mentioned meeting, the power relationship between the two was determined, and in retrospect it was considered to have been “a meeting of different kinds of gods, nothing less.”⁵⁴ MacArthur had realized then that “[t]he survival of the emperorship would be a potential asset of great utility, as an instrument not only for promoting domestic stability, but also for bringing about changes desired by the United Nations in Japanese policy.”⁵⁵ For MacArthur, the eventual success of the occupation was closely related to the continuation of Emperor Hirohito’s rule, and he argued that he would need fewer occupation forces if the Emperor remained in his role.⁵⁶ The prospect of needing more than one million soldiers in Japan was too frightening and politically dangerous for many people in Washington, which is why MacArthur could secure the fulfillment of his wishes. Hirohito remained as Emperor and was not brought to trial as a war criminal. MacArthur’s strategy, on the other hand, was successful, and he could reduce the occupying forces from 435,000 in December 1945 to 200,000 in 1946.⁵⁷ In the meantime, the Japanese monarchy got involved in the modernization process of the country and the radicalization of the military could be prevented.⁵⁸ As well as the role of the Emperor, MacArthur also had to deal with the Japanese constitution; this was a very serious issue, as a strong constitution could prevent Japan from another radicalization such as the one it had been going through since the late 1920s. Japan would be converted into a democratic society based on a revised constitution.⁵⁹ This revision was one of the major aims of MacArthur.⁶⁰ It took the SCAP office only nine days to draft this new constitution, and the draft would serve the Japanese government as

⁵³ Wilhelm Grewe, “Japan und Deutschland nach dem Kriege – Parallelen und Divergenzen,” in *Deutschland – Japan: Historische Kontakte*, ed. Josef Kreiner (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984), 290; Harvey, *American Shogun*, 313-319; Masuda, *MacArthur in Asia*, 195.

⁵⁴ Harvey, *American Shogun*, 320.

⁵⁵ Notter Files, Box 63, T-315 of May 25, 1943, cited in Robert E. Ward, “Presurrender Planning: The Treatment of the Emperor and Constitutional Changes,” in *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 4.

⁵⁶ Radiogram MacArthur to WARCOS-JCS, CA 57235, January 25, 1946 in National Archives, Record Group 218, Box 117, CCS 091.11 Japan, sec.1, cited in *ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁷ Masuda, *MacArthur in Asia*, 196.

⁵⁸ Theodore McNelly, *The Origins of Japan’s Democratic Constitution* (Lanham et. al: University Press of America, 2000), 89-95.

⁵⁹ “Letter from General MacArthur to Prime Minister’s Office,” 16 September [presumably 1945], in National Archives of Japan, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of the Interior Polica and Public Security Bureau Records, Others, A05020311200.

⁶⁰ Ray A. Moore and Donald L. Robinson, *Partners for Democracy: Crafting the new Japanese State under MacArthur* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 81.

a guideline.⁶¹ It was elementary for the Americans to place power in the hands of the people, meaning that the Emperor was supposed to lose his political influence. When this first draft was put in front of “Japanese eyes in 1946, it detonated one bombshell after another.”⁶² Despite being threatened with the total abolishment of the imperial house, the Japanese representatives complied, and it was announced on 6 March 1946. Japan’s negotiators, among them Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1878-1967), had realized that the Americans had “very definite ideas concerning the policy to be pursued in the Occupation.”⁶³ For the Japanese, the process was also too fast, and Yoshida later wrote in his memoirs about this: “the general feeling in Government circles was that a change of such importance should be brought about with all requisite and proper care and study; or in other words that undue haste in the matter was not only unnecessary, but clearly to be avoided.”⁶⁴ The time aspect was particularly concerning, especially since “the GHQ draft was of a revolutionary nature”⁶⁵ and the tremendous changes that were supposed to be implemented with the snap of a finger went far beyond everything the Japanese could have thought of at this time. It was only the pressure on the imperial house and the threat of bringing Hirohito to trial as a war criminal that eventually did the trick for MacArthur, who did not hesitate for a second in playing this card to get what he wanted.⁶⁶

While Japan was supposed to turn into a peaceful country, the Japanese themselves saw no reason to abolish the Meiji Constitution.⁶⁷ The political transformation, as requested by the SCAP, caused some unease on the Japanese side.⁶⁸ This was, however, also related to misunderstandings with regard to the language used on both sides.⁶⁹ Article 9 in particular was nevertheless important for the future of Japan as it demilitarized the country. MacArthur later claimed that the proposal for this article came from Prime Minister

⁶¹ Masuda, *MacArthur in Asia*, 214; Moore and Robinson, *Partners for Democracy*, 93-95.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶³ Yoshida Shigeru, *The Yoshida Memoirs. The Story of Japan in Crisis* (London et. al.: Heinemann, 1961), 126.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 111-113.

⁶⁷ Kyoko Inoue, *MacArthur’s Japanese Constitution: A Linguistic and Cultural Study of Its Making* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1.

⁶⁸ Hans H. Baerwald, “Early SCAP Policy and the Rehabilitation of the Diet,” in *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 137.

⁶⁹ Inoue, *MacArthur’s Japanese Constitution*, 2. A detailed description of the constitutional process from Japanese surrender to its announcement can be found in *ibid.*, 6-37.

Shidehara Kijūrō (1872-1951), but the SCAP documents provide no proof for this.⁷⁰ Despite the new constitution, the political arena in Japan remained unstable, with different coalitions ruling between 1946 and 1952.⁷¹ Regardless of the changing cabinets, MacArthur was eager to fulfill the demands he had set up for the transformation of Japan. Emancipation was another issue for the US general, and *Time Magazine* spoke of the social revolution Japan was currently being transformed by on 9 May 1949.⁷² MacArthur represented an enlightened position with regard to female emancipation and recommended, even requested, “[e]qual rights in marriage, access to divorce, ending of arranged marriages, voting rights, and participation in public affairs and in the workplace.”⁷³ As well as women’s rights, the SCAP also granted more rights to workers. Labor unions were no longer prohibited, and the number of their members grew up to six million in the first two years after the war. Land reforms were initiated at the same time to prevent a radicalization of the peasants, as such a development had been held responsible for the communists’ success during the Chinese Civil War.⁷⁴ The *zaibatsu* were supposedly destroyed, but many of the structures continued to exist unofficially. Eventually, stability in Japan was more important than reforms, which is why the old cliques would continue to determine the economic structure of the country. The initial work of the Holding Company Liquidation Commission between 1946 and 1948⁷⁵ was later redefined by the necessities of the Cold War, and no longer by the idealistic aims of the SCAP from the first hour of the occupation.

The same can be said for the old political elites. While Operation Blacklist was prepared by MacArthur long before he actually reached Japan, on 6 September 1945 the US general authorized a purge against 210,000 individuals in politics, administration, economy, and the media.⁷⁶ The first wave of the purge hit Japan as a “major shock” on 4 January 1946,

⁷⁰ McNelly, *The Origins*, 106 and 120.

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion see Masaru Kohno, *Japan's Postwar Party Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁷² Williams, *Japan's Political Revolution*, 263.

⁷³ Buhite, *Douglas MacArthur*, 88. For a detailed analysis see Susan J. Pharr, “The Politics of Women’s Rights,” in *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 221-252.

⁷⁴ Buhite, *Douglas MacArthur*, 75-76.

⁷⁵ “Documents of Holding Company Liquidation Commission, Instructions by the Committee,” October 1946 – December 1948. National Archives of Japan, Cabinet, The Holding Company Liquidation Commission, Commission Materials, Documents of Holding Company Liquidation Commission etc./ Headquarter permission file, A04030014200.

⁷⁶ Masuda, *MacArthur in Asia*, 209-212.

especially since the “Japanese had no particular desire to prosecute and judge those who were, or might have been, responsible for our miseries.”⁷⁷ Regardless of these initial attempts to purge the old elites, eventually, MacArthur needed them to rebuild Japan due to the necessities of the Cold War and, in contrast to Nazi Germany, interest in the Japanese case had no strong lobby outside of Asia.⁷⁸ Regardless of his specific position towards the American aims, MacArthur often just did what he wanted, and the support of the media empire of William Randolph Hearst made the general uncontestable.⁷⁹ When mistakes had been identified, the latter would just point the finger at his staff, considering himself to be inerrant. The Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) that had to prove all news before it was allowed to appear in Japan had a simple agenda: “Nothing could be printed which was derogatory to the United States, even though it originated in the United States.”⁸⁰ And in Japan, the United States meant Douglas MacArthur. His rule was uncontestable, but there was one issue the SCAP had to deal with more carefully and with a twofold strategy. The issue of Japanese POWs who needed to be repatriated was not only logistically but also politically a problem of a high caliber. This question, related to the post-war order of Japan, led to a severe political conflict with the Soviet Union, but at the same time created the fear of a politically indoctrinated fifth column of communism on Japanese soil. The issue must therefore be taken into closer consideration, especially since it provides valuable information about the role veterans can play within post-war societies, and how they are perceived by these societies as well.

The Problem of Japanese POWs in the Soviet Union

According to the Potsdam Declaration of 26 July 1945, “[t]he Japanese Military Forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.”⁸¹ Between 500,000 and 750,000

⁷⁷ Yoshida, *The Yoshida Memoirs*, 148 and 160.

⁷⁸ Jeffrey E. Garten, *Der kalte Frieden: Amerika, Japan und Deutschland im Wettstreit um die Hegemonie* (Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 1993), 85. For a comparison of the different Allied measures to deal with the past of the Second World War in Germany and Japan see: Manfred Kittel, *Nach Nürnberg und Tokio: “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” in Japan und Westdeutschland 1945 bis 1968* (München: Oldenbourg, 2004).

⁷⁹ Felton, *The Final Betrayal*, 43.

⁸⁰ William J. Coughlin, *Conquered Press. The MacArthur Era in Japanese Journalism* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1952), 47.

⁸¹ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Fourth Meeting, (Special) Allied Council for Japan, Meiji Building, Tokyo, Wednesday, January 4, 1950, MacArthur Memorial Archives (henceforth MAMA), Record Group 5, Records of General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), 1945-1951 (henceforth RG 5), Box 71, Folder 16, 3.

Japanese soldiers were taken prisoner by the Soviet Union and brought to labor camps, where they had to work for the Soviet state in the aftermath of the war.⁸² MacArthur had “instituted a program for the repatriation of many millions of Japanese from areas abroad,”⁸³ and most of the Japanese soldiers who had been stationed abroad could have been brought back to Japan until 1947. In contrast to the British authorities in Southeast Asia and the Chinese government, whose representatives had been interested in a fast repatriation, the “Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, [...] many months after the repatriation of Japanese from other areas had been completed, still held several hundreds of thousands of Japanese in detainment.”⁸⁴ More than 350,000 soldiers had not been repatriated, and the other members of the Allied Council for Japan were demanding answers about the whereabouts and the health status of these POWs. The Soviet Union and its representative in the council had “at no time provided [...] any information whatsoever with respect to the number of Japanese held, their names or location, or any form of vital statistics by which we might know the number who have died by disease, undernourishment, exposure, or maltreatment.”⁸⁵ To avoid answering questions that would demand clear answers that might have caused unease for the Soviets, their representative regularly stayed away from meetings that would discuss such issues. The chairman pro tempore of the Allied Council, Cloyce K. Huston, therefore declared on 15 February 1950:

I feel impelled to note, however, before proceeding to today’s business, that we have seen the SOVIET MEMBER walk out of this Council chamber, with his staff, at three previous meetings when the question of Japanese repatriation was under discussion, and today is the second meeting from which he appears deliberately to have absented himself. Although the work of the Council will, of course, proceed as usual in the absence of the SOVIET MEMBER, it is difficult to understand how, if he refuses to attend the meetings of the Council or to participate in the conduct of the Council’s business, he can find it possible to consider himself to be fulfilling the functions for which he is assigned to this headquarters.⁸⁶

⁸² For some parts of the Soviet Union, e.g. Primorsky Krai, data and sources have been made available: V.N. Karaman et al., eds. *Yaponskiye voyennoplennyye v Primor'ye, 1945-1949 gg.: Dokumenty Gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Primorskogo kraya*, 2 vols. (Vladivostok: GAPK, 2006-2007). For Siberia Japanese journalist Kurihara Toshio has provided a more detailed study, partially based on interviews with former POWs. Kurihara Toshio, *Shiberia yokuryū: mikan no higeki* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 2009).

⁸³ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Fourth Meeting, 4.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Sixth Meeting Allied Council for Japan, Meiji Building, Tokyo, Wednesday, February 1, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16, 5.

⁸⁶ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Seventh Meeting Allied Council for Japan, Meiji Building, Tokyo, Wednesday, February 15, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16, 2.

It seemed clear from the beginning of the work of the Allied Council that the Soviet Union had no serious intentions of repatriating the Japanese POWs as soon as possible, but instead would abuse them as a form of cheap labor in different parts of its territory. From the 8th meeting of the Allied Council for Japan on 26 June 1946, the topic kept appearing on the agenda. On 29 October 1947, the topic was for the first time discussed with Major General Kislenko, who represented the Soviet Union, and “[a]t that meeting, for the first time, the magnitude of the problem, its implications, and its impact upon the social and political aspects of the situation in Japan were fully explored.”⁸⁷ It was also argued at that meeting “that the implementation by the Soviet authorities of the Repatriation Agreement of 19 December 1946, was spasmodic, delayed by excuses, and partly nullified by devious unilateral interpretations.”⁸⁸ In short, the Soviet Union was unwilling to repatriate its Japanese POWs. In the meantime rumors appeared, claiming that the death rate among the latter had reached 20-30%. The issue regularly reappeared, but the Soviet Union was neither represented nor fulfilling any requests. It therefore not only ignored existent agreements with regard to the work of the Allied Council for Japan, but also violated international law, e.g. the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1949.

The chair of the council, William J. Sebald (1901-1980), therefore made a statement to the Soviet Union in the meeting of the Allied Council on 10 May 1950 and noted that

fundamental principles of international law accepted by most of the nations of the world and recognized as such by the Soviet Union through its own advocacy in at least two recent instances, has [sic!] clearly been violated. If I were to attempt to draw up even a partial bill of particulars with respect to the conduct of the Soviet Union in connection with the repatriation and treatment of Japanese prisoners of war and other internees held in Soviet-controlled areas, as a minimum, I would include the following:

1. Failure to provide an accounting of any kind with respect to prisoners of war and civilians incarcerated by the Soviet authorities;
2. Failure to report the death of any Japanese subject while in Soviet custody;
3. Failure to comply with the provision of the Potsdam Declaration [...]
4. Failure to comply with the spirit and letter of the Repatriation Agreement entered into with the SUPREME COMMANDER on December 19, 1946;
5. Failure to provide for means of exchange of information with respect to prisoners of war;
6. A callous disregard for human life by its failure in numerous cases to provide even the minimum facilities to sustain human beings;
7. Disregard and violation of fundamental international law as set forth in the International Conventions of 1899, 1907, 1929, and 1949;

⁸⁷ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Thirteenth Meeting Allied Council for Japan, Meiji Building, Tokyo, Wednesday, May 10, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16, 1-2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

8. The use of prisoners of war for political purposes through the process of political indoctrination.⁸⁹

The Soviet member of the Allied Council was directly addressed by this criticism, and it was highlighted how he had “steadfastly refused to carry his share of the burden by his failure to offer constructive assistance or advice regarding this subject.”⁹⁰ The Soviet Union remained adamant and did not respond to these accusations at all. Even a direct letter from Sebald to Lieutenant General Kuzma N. Derevyanko (1904-1954) on 29 April 1950 did not cause any reaction.⁹¹ It remained unclear what had happened to the more than 350,000 Japanese soldiers who had not yet been repatriated. The Japanese House of Representatives passed a resolution on 2 May 1950, which emphasized the fact that “today, after the lapse of almost five years since the end of the war, there still remain in the Soviet Union and in the areas under Soviet influence [...] more than 300,000 Japanese whose fate is unknown.”⁹² Mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, siblings and children, all were waiting for a reply from the Soviet Union to gain knowledge about the whereabouts of their loved ones. Due to the lack of the Soviet response, the members of the House of Representatives argued

the whole people of Japan have been deeply pained in heart and mind. Representing this feeling of our people, by means of this resolution taken by this House, this House is resolved to request the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers to appeal to the justice and public opinion of the world through the United Nations Organization and to afford every possible assistance for bringing about the early settlement of this question and especially for his highest consideration with regard to the realization of the following:

1. That all our nationals still remaining in the Soviet Union and in the areas under Soviet influence [...] be repatriated as early as possible.
2. That it be arranged to announce the names of those among the internees in the Soviet Union and the areas under Soviet influence who have died, who have been associated with war crimes, who are serving sentence and who are detained for illness.
3. That it be arranged for an investigation team of the United Nations or neutral or humanitarian body to investigate in the Soviet Union and in the areas under Soviet control the situation of life and death of our interned nationals.⁹³

⁸⁹ Ibid., 14-15.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁹¹ William J. Sebald, Allied Council for Japan to the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, Diplomatic Section to Lieutenant General Kuzma N. Derevyanko, Member for the Soviet Socialist Republics, Tokyo, April 29, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16.

⁹² Resolution of the House of Representatives, Tokyo, May 2, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16.

⁹³ Ibid.

The Allied Council had been provided with relatively detailed numbers about those who were serving in the regions occupied by the Soviet Union at the end of the war, and the members were wondering if the Soviet Union had ever cared enough about the Japanese POWs to collect information about them in the first place, and was now only covering up that so many had died while being held captive in Stalin's Gulag system.⁹⁴ General Ho Shai-lai (1906-1998), the representative for China in the council, who "had some experience in the repatriation of Japanese war prisoners and nationals from China," highlighted that the Chinese "government's handling of the Japanese repatriates was done efficiently and without any feeling of enmity or bitterness."⁹⁵ All fingers were pointing towards the Soviet Union, demanding answers and an explanation.

In 1949/50, close to 100,000 Japanese were eventually repatriated, in addition to the 350,000 who had reached their homes since the end of the war from the Soviet Union, but there was also a problem with those veterans who had made their way back to Japan.

The Menace of Communist Veterans

Professor Thomas George, who had written a "Summary of the Communist World Strategy" for the SCAP, made it clear that Asia would be the most decisive region in the Cold War. With more than one billion people there, "Asia is the real center of the world, the real center of the coming world."⁹⁶ The professor underlined the value of human beings with regard to labor and the constructive as well as destructive potential of human beings. According to his evaluation, "[t]he greatest human potential [was] in Asia, and thus who ha[d] Asia, w[ould] finally have the world."⁹⁷ In another report on the basic strategy against communism, the academic advisor warned the SCAP directly:

If Asia is lost to Communism, the United States are indefensible. A mortal blow of the World Communism against the United States will never come from Europe through Great Britain, but from Asia to Alaska, through the very backdoor of the United States, through the indefensible Canada, mountaneous West coast, ideal

⁹⁴ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Nineteenth Meeting Allied Council for Japan, Meiji Building, Tokyo, Wednesday, August 2, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16, 5.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁹⁶ Professor Thomas George, A Summary of the Communist World Strategy, n.d. MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16, 5.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

places for the locusts of paratroopers, of guerilla partisans, followed by the swarming communist red armies of Asia.⁹⁸

The eventual loss of China to the communists under Mao's leadership was shocking for the US and intensified the fears of a communist menace in Japan as well. The veterans arriving from mainland Asia were consequently considered particularly problematic, and that even before China had been lost.

A "Special Report" on the veterans repatriated from Soviet Territory dealt with the danger of communist indoctrination as well.⁹⁹ It was reported that the demobilization of the Japanese Army, under the control of GHQ, the Eighth Army, and the US Navy, proceeded without interruption, especially since the Japanese Demobilization Board cooperated without hesitation.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, it also highlighted "[t]he repatriated demobilized soldier as a social problem. Already communism is stretching its claws at the disillusioned, defeated millions of soldiers, sailors and airmen."¹⁰¹ The possible communist indoctrination of the veterans, especially in the Soviet Union, was considered a severe problem, especially since the occupation force, counting approximately 59,000 men in December 1946 in addition to the 84,000 men of the Japanese police, seemed insufficient to control 73 million Japanese in the case of a communist-driven uprising, especially since 5 million of these people were demobilized soldiers. These veterans could pose a serious threat to the US' control of Japan. The veterans, it was argued, "once led into the path of Communism, will permeate and influence the rest of these vast millions, and instantly create serious problems for the Occupation Forces in the maintenance of public order."¹⁰² In response to this menace, the "Special Report" provided the following considerations:

- i - The repatriated ex-soldier, disillusioned, jobless, is an easy prey to subversive ideas, especially communism.
- ii - The rapid inroads already made by communism in the labor unions of Japan, presage the infiltration into repatriate groups.
- iii - The brilliantly efficient demobilization machinery, in the past, has been a "cushion" for repatriated, jobless, millions.

⁹⁸ Professor Thomas George, *Is the Basic Western Attitude and Basic Strategy Concerning the World Communism, Realistic?*, n.d. MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16, 15.

⁹⁹ Final Report: Demobilization of the Japanese Armed Forces, December 15, 1946, in: Civil Intelligence Section, *Special Report: Japanese Repatriated from Soviet Territory, Communist Indoctrination*, MAMA, Record Group — 6, Records of General Headquarters Far East Command (FECOM); 1947-1951 (henceforth RG6), B. 17, F. 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

iv - The repatriated ex-soldier must be controlled. The demobilized millions must be influenced in thoughts and actions in order to remain tranquil within the purviews of our occupation.¹⁰³

Measures were therefore recommended to address the danger of the veterans' communist indoctrination abroad. The former soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army themselves, however, were not considered as willing agents of communism, but as its victims. The veterans were just "vulnerable to communism, to exploitation by those who seek to discredit a stable government and create chaos," which is why the SCAP and his forces had to take counter-measures early on:

The employment, under our direct control, of former officers in the demobilization process is the only method by which we can hope to influence and control, indirectly and without publicity, the actions, thoughts, and philosophy of former members of the Japanese armed forces, and guide them into proper, conservative, law-abiding attitudes and channels.¹⁰⁴

Communist indoctrination itself was a consequence of the foreign imprisonment of the soldiers, especially in the Soviet Union, where the communists had

launched an elaborate plan designed to propagandize and subvert them. The enslaved army was rendered leaderless through the culling out and segregation of senior officers, and by the creation of a schism between officers and enlisted men. Then the Soviets disposed of the recalcitrants, the weak, and the aged, leaving a compliant youthful group. Dissident elements among the captives were welded into a firm core of Soviet-protagonists and were used as "stooges" to whip the mass of internees into line. Prisoners were subjected constantly to a barrage of propaganda, buttressed by Soviet-directed newspapers and formalized indoctrination.¹⁰⁵

Having returned to Japan, the veterans would then, according to reports, be approached by the Japanese Communist Party, whose members would try to enlist the former soldiers into the ranks of the party. Poisoned with communist propaganda and struggling with the post-war economic order in Japan, the veterans were easy prey for the communist enemy, who could, according to the Soviet strategy, easily establish a fifth column on Japanese soil.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ To CoS and C-in-C, Brief, GHQ FECOM, February 2, 1949: Jap[anese] Repatriates From Soviet Territory: Communist Indoctrination. General Headquarters, Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Civil Intelligence Section: Special Report, Jap[anese] Repatriated from Soviet Territory, Communist Indoctrination, MAMA, RG 6, B. 17, F. 5.

According to information received by some of the 2,500 repatriates who arrived in Japan on 21 January 1950, it was obvious that thousands of Japanese POWs were still being held captive in Soviet camps, while “among them are perhaps several thousands who are either awaiting trial on so-called war crimes charges, or who have already been sentenced, and strangely enough, these sentences usually amount to 25 years.”¹⁰⁶ As well as these accusations, the POWs, according to the named reports, were also under steady pressure from indoctrination by communist propaganda. The Allied Council discussed these statements in its meeting on 1 March 1950, when its chair William J. Sebald referred to these reports to highlight the Soviet strategy towards the Japanese POWs.¹⁰⁷ The repatriates had provided 44 affidavits that all give evidence of the “systematic program of political indoctrination being carried out by the authorities of the Soviet Union in an effort to convert Japanese prisoners of war to communism.”¹⁰⁸ According to the witness reports by Matsu Shigeto, Yoshimoto Ryoji, and Koybayashi Shoichi, “the Red Army at Camp No. 9 in District 99 (Karaganda) told a group of Japanese prisoners of war that Secretary General KYUICHI TOKUDA of the Japan Communist Party had written a request to Soviet authorities to detain all ‘reactionary’ Japanese prisoners of war in the Soviet Union and to repatriate only those prisoners of war who have accepted communism.”¹⁰⁹ The Soviet Union had therefore considered the Japanese POWs as a political tool in the early phase of the Cold War. First and foremost, Stalin wanted to exploit their labor force, especially for the construction of the Baikal-Amur Line, a parallel track to the Transsiberian Railway in the south. Furthermore, if they had to be repatriated, they should be so as communists, providing allies within the borderlands of the Cold War in East Asia, i.e. Japan.

There, MacArthur had to deal with a growing fear of communist influence, which was not just related to the veterans, especially after the beginning of the Korean War in June 1950. Japan was now declared essential to the US strategy in East Asia,¹¹⁰ and the communist menace there needed to be addressed more actively. In 1949/50, a red purge was consequently initiated by MacArthur, due to which employees who were considered to be pro-communist in the Japanese administration, economy, universities, and schools lost

¹⁰⁶ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Sixth Meeting Allied Council for Japan, Meiji Building, Tokyo, Wednesday, February 1, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Corrected Verbatim Minutes of the One Hundred-Eighth Meeting Allied Council for Japan, Meiji Building, Tokyo, Wednesday, March 1, 1950, MAMA, RG 5, B. 71, F. 16.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4. For a more detailed presentation of the single reports, *ibid.*, 5-7.

¹¹⁰ Hanson W. Baldwin, “Japan is Key to Orient,” *New York Times*, December 22, 1950, 4.

their jobs.¹¹¹ With regard to the veterans, their return to their homes aroused suspicion by the US authorities about their ideological conditioning, their possible anti-American feelings, and their dealings with Japan's surrender and the rise of communism in Asia alike. They were veterans now, yet they also had to find their way within their new society as Japan wanted to look forward instead of being reminded of the past.

Conclusion

The case of Japanese veterans repatriated from the Soviet Union after the end of the Second World War shows how the fates of the former soldiers and POWs were embedded into the global and transnational conflict of the Cold War. Their history with regard to their imprisonment in the Soviet labor camps raised some red flags for the ruling authorities in Japan, who not only feared the military potential of the Japanese veterans but also their political indoctrination by the ideological aims of communism. The men who returned home consequently must have felt ostracized. The causes they had gone to war for were no longer valuable; for many, the burden of having survived and not died with honor must have been problematic enough. Yet in the new political order of the Cold War in East Asia, the veterans were not only a menace, they were also a tool with which the finger could be pointed at the Soviet Union, which was depicted as an evil traitor against the new international order in the meetings of the Allied Council for Japan. All in all, neither of the two superpowers really cared for the veterans once they could no longer be used as strategic assets within the new conflict. Once they had returned to Japan and had been cleared of their possible communist identity, they would be forgotten rather quickly, forced to find their own ways back into a society that did not want to be reminded of the war or of the related crimes of the past.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Fukui Haruhiro, "Postwar Politics, 1945-1973," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 6, *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Duus (New York et. al.: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 158; Kondo Shigekatsu, "Japanese Response to the Korean War," in *The Occupation of Japan: The Impact of the Korean War. The Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium Sponsored by The General Douglas MacArthur Foundation*, ed. William F. Nimmo (Norfolk, VA: General Douglas MacArthur Foundation, 1990), 9; Sakamoto Yoshikazu, "The International Context of the Occupation of Japan," in *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 42-43; Zöllner, *Geschichte Japans*, 392-396.

¹¹² For a detailed discussion of Japanese war crimes see: Frank Jacob, *Japanese War Crimes during World War II: Atrocity and the Psychology of Collective Violence* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2018).

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