

AUSTRALIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE
OCCUPATION OF JAPAN, 1945-1952

By

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Australian experience of the Allied occupation of Japan that followed World War II. Its primary focus is on what the occupation brought to Australia, rather than what Australia brought to the occupation. I analyse Australian participation in the occupation both at the level of government policy and the experience of the troops who went to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. I argue that participation in the occupation was a key experience for the Australian government and for Australian society: it reinforced Australia's growing independence from Britain, its accommodation as a small nation with Pax Americana and the realities of the Cold War, and its creation of postwar agendas of democracy and reconstruction. The reality of the occupation experience revealed both the ambition of and the limits to these emergent national agenda. The experience of ordinary Australian soldiers in Japan, moreover, and their responses to the realities of postwar Japanese life, foreshadowed longer-term shifts in Australian attitudes to Asia.

As soon as Australian soldiers arrived on the ground in Japan, however, problems arose, often in the glare of the media. Amenities for the troops were at first inadequate, relations with US forces were sometimes strained, some troops behaved badly, and the official policy of 'non-fraternisation' with the Japanese population proved difficult to implement. Such problems led initially to a significant reconstruction of the occupation, involving a building program, an expanded role for female personnel, and the arrival of Australian families to join troops in Japan. These changes reflected the Australian government's extraordinary commitment to the occupation even as other national contingents were winding back their involvement.

With the emergence of the Cold War, the Chifley government found less room to pursue its agenda in the international realm. Concerned about a potential confrontation with the Soviet Union that might involve Japan, it withdrew all but a small force from Japan in 1948. The latter stages of the occupation are marked by a decline in the Australian government's expectations, a normalisation of its military and a focus on returning soldiers to civilian life in the postwar period. The limits of Australia's role as a small power become much more evident, and the occupation experience reflected this limitation. The occupation nevertheless produced one final legacy, in the attempts by Australian soldiers to return home with Japanese war brides, at a time when the general postwar immigration program excluded Asian people.

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Conventions

Japanese names are given in Japanese order, with the surname first, except in the case of Japanese authors writing in English who have chosen to reverse the name order. Macrons are omitted in well-known place names such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto.

Abbreviations

AAMWS	Australian Army Medical Women's Service
AAES	Australian Army Education Service
AANS	Australian Army Nursing Service
ACJ	Allied Council for Japan
AIPS	Australian Institute of Political Science
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Pact
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BCAG	British Commonwealth Air Group
BCOF	British Commonwealth Occupation Force
BCFK	British Commonwealth Forces Korea
BRINDIV	British Indian Division
FEC	Far Eastern Commission
IPR	Institute for Pacific Relations
JCOSA	Joint Chiefs of Staff Australia
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NLA	National Library of Australia
NZAES	New Zealand Army Education Service
NZAF	New Zealand Air Force
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
PACUSA	Pacific Air Command United States Army
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
SCAP	Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers
WEA	Workers' Educational Association

Timeline

1934	Minister for External Affairs, John Latham, sent on goodwill mission to Asian countries
1936	Trade Diversion Dispute
7 Dec 1941	Attack on Pearl Harbor
Apr/Jun 1945	Formation of the United Nations
15 Aug 1945	Pacific War ends
Sep 1945	Chifley informs MacArthur Australia will participate in a unified Commonwealth occupation force Surrender ceremony aboard US warship <i>Missouri</i>
18 Dec 1945	MacArthur-Northcott Agreement, providing for the formation of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force under MacArthur's authority
31 Jan 1946	Australian government press release announcing formation of BCOF
Feb 1946	First contingent of Australian troops arrives in Japan Publication of <i>Know Japan</i> , which outlines non-fraternisation policy.
26 Feb 1946	Commander-in-chief Northcott arrives in Kure
Apr 1946	Supervision of the general election Prime Minister Ben Chifley visits Japan
25 Apr 1946	Anzac Day parade
May 1946	Northcott steps down to become Governor of NSW and succeeded by Lieutenant General Horace R. Robertson

Aug/Sep 1946	Australian troops participate in US Operation Foxum: raids on brothels
28 Sep 1946	Australian federal election
Mid-Nov 1946	Australian contingent returns from first tour of duty
Dec 1946	Leslie Haylen raises questions in parliament about reports of troops' behaviour
16 Dec 1946	Cyril Chambers visits Japan
Jan 1947	Chifley government approves family reunion program
21 Jan 1947	Chambers report to Military Board about visit to Japan
Feb 1947	Chambers press conference on visit 5 th British Battalion leaves Japan Australian Army Public Relations announces that 46 families will go to Japan
Apr 1947	Investigation by Chaplains-general
Jun 1947	First group of wives and children leaves for Japan 1850 New Zealand troops leave Japan
Jun 1947	Evatt visits Japan
26 Aug/2 Sep 1947	Commonwealth Conference in Canberra
Oct 1947	Last Indian troops leave Japan
31 Dec 1947	JCOSA dissolved
Jan 1948	Federal President of Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, Barry MacDonald, raises new criticisms about BCOF
6 Jan 1948	Speech by Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of the Army,

	signalling “reverse course”
Oct 1948	MacArthur issues Directive 501 prohibiting collective bargaining and public sector strikes
Nov 1948	Last New Zealand troops leave Japan
1948	Evatt elected president of UN general Assembly
Apr/May 1948	Patrick Shaw visits BCOF area
Apr 1948	Australian decision to withdraw majority of troops from Japan
Nov 1948	Three battalions of Australian component of BCOF become permanent battalions in Australian regular army
Dec 1949	Chifley government loses office to Menzies
Jun 1950	Outbreak of Korean War
Sep 1951	Peace treaty signed with Japan
1954	Approx. 650 Japanese war brides come to Australia

Maps



Overview map



Map showing area of occupation by British Commonwealth Occupation Force, at about June 1946

Introduction

Between 1946 and 1952, more than 20,000 Australian soldiers served in occupied Japan, including those who were immediately sent on to the Korean War.¹ The deployment of the Australian contingent of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) was the first large Australian military mobilisation of the postwar era. The soldiers' primary tasks were associated with the implementation of occupation programs aimed at the demobilisation and demilitarisation of postwar Japanese society, as foreshadowed in the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945. They engaged in such activities as dismantling and disposing of military weapons, supervising elections, policing the black market and sharing ceremonial duties outside the imperial palace in Tokyo. The Australians formed one component of BCOF, which also included British, Indian and New Zealand soldiers. Australia contributed the greatest number of soldiers, and Australian troops stayed longer in Japan than any other Commonwealth forces. Australia also provided the commanding officers of BCOF. As members of BCOF, Australian soldiers shared the military tasks of the occupation with the much larger force of US soldiers, who numbered 400,000 in October 1945, 200,000 in 1946, 100,000 in 1948, and 166,000 (including all military personnel and dependents) in 1949.²

¹ Neil C. Smith, *Disarming the Menace: Australian Soldiers with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces Japan 1946-1952* (Brighton, Vic.: Most Unsung Military History, 2012). Figures from the Department of Veterans Affairs do not include personnel who served in the Korean War. The Department gives a total number of 17,000: Peter Sutherland, 'Analysis of the Possible Entitlement to Service Pension of Members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force', Department of Veterans Affairs, http://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/consultation%20and%20grants/reviews/clark/BCOF_analysis.pdf, accessed 16 May 2015.

² Takemae Eiji, *Senryō Sengoshi: Tainichi Kanri Seisaku no Zenyō* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1980), p. 40.

All Australian soldiers were ultimately subject to the authority of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), the US General Douglas MacArthur.

This thesis examines the Australian role in the occupation of Japan. Its central concern is to explore the significance of the occupation both for Australia's government and for its people. I examine this question first from the point of view of politics, government policy and international relations. The Australian government had strong political motives to participate in the occupation of Japan. Joining in occupation duties was one way of establishing Australia's international status and positioning Australia for the postwar period. Second, I seek to understand how the occupation of Japan impacted upon the Australian soldiers who served as members of BCOF and how their stories add to our understanding of the history of Australia's participation in the occupation. The soldiers went to Japan with their own motivations and priorities. Examination of their motives and experiences in addition to the objectives of the government gives us a clearer picture of the Australian attempt to find a place in the postwar world.

BCOF has sometimes been labelled as a "forgotten force".³ Its low profile is partly due to its problematic relationship with the Australian public from very early in its history, and partly due to the fact that BCOF service does not fit the conventional narratives associated with military "remembrance" in Australia. Yet the nature of the BCOF deployment and the experience of the occupation soldiers signal something important about the postwar period. The Korean-Japanese scholar Kang Sang-jung has labelled the years immediately after 1945 as the "proto postwar period", in which optimism about the future

³ This was the title of the 1994 television film that initiated renewed public and academic interest in BCOF. Raymond Quint, *The Forgotten Force* (Australia: Film Australia, 1994), videorecording.

and expectations for social change were high around the world. It was not until later that the escalation of the Cold War substantially obscured the hopes that had characterised the “dawn of postwar democracy”. In Japan specifically, for Kang, the early postwar period provided a fertile context in which old and new ideas were readily juxtaposed.⁴ I argue that Ben Chifley’s Labor government in Australia (1945-1949) not only shared the general optimism of the period, but was an active agent in moulding the initial postwar period in Japan, while aspiring to shape the world more broadly. Post-war international affairs were shaped, for the government, by the frustrations of being a middling power trying to situate itself among the different agendas set by larger powers. Through participation in the occupation of Japan the Chifley government sought to defend the right of small nation-states to join in decisions on global affairs. In the early postwar years, however, decision-making about postwar reconstruction at the global level was being rapidly appropriated by the major world powers.

The Chifley Government in the Aftermath of War

In examining the immediate background to the formation of BCOF, we must consider what the Labor government of Ben Chifley faced in the aftermath of the war. Australia was inevitably drawn in to the dramatic changes occurring in south and southeast Asia in the immediate postwar years. Australia as a white settler nation-state faced large European colonial territories to its immediate north, where the successive Japanese invasions of 1941 onwards had stimulated existing movements to gain independence from the former European masters. The Atlantic Charter of 1941, issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and

⁴ Kang Sang-jung, *Kang Sang-Jung no Seijigaku Nyūmon* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2006), pp. 104-106.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill, expressed respect for the right to self-determination and for sovereign rights for the people of colonial territories,⁵ but the situation on the ground was volatile. Aspirations for independence in south and southeast Asia had an immediate impact on Australian interests. The independence of India in 1947 led to the recall of Indian troops from BCOF in the same year; British Indian troops had represented one-third of the original strength of BCOF. Moreover, in 1945 the Chifley government began a long period of engagement with the disputes between the Dutch and Indonesians over the independence of Indonesia, disputes that were not resolved until the international recognition of Indonesia's independence in 1949. In the meantime the government of the Netherlands pressed the Australian government to assist it in reestablishing its colonial administration in the Netherlands Indies.⁶ Despite the strong Australian bond with the British Empire, which was still the core of the Australian nation-state economically, militarily, socially and culturally, the Australian government refused to send troops to support the British return to Hong Kong.⁷

In taking such positions, the Chifley government alienated some prominent conservatives and government departments, including Treasury, and tensions also emerged within the Labor Party.⁸ An ideology of international isolationism was well entrenched within the Labor Party and labour unions.

⁵ 'The Atlantic Charter, August 14, 1941', Yale Law School, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>, accessed 5 March 2012.

⁶ Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), p. 32.

⁷ David Day, *Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied Defeat of Japan 1942-45* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 304-309.

⁸ Tim Rowse, *Nugget Coombs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 141-42, 157-61; Bruce McFarlane, 'Australian Postwar Economic Policy, 1947-1953', in *Australia's First Cold War 1945-1953, Vol. 1: Society, Communism, and Culture*, ed. Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 30-31, 33.

Nevertheless, the Minister for External Affairs, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, was energetic in seeking a role for Australia in international affairs. Evatt had been actively involved in the formation of the United Nations (UN) in San Francisco in 1944. Evatt took with him to San Francisco a team of young officials from the Department of External Affairs and elsewhere, including Paul Hasluck, William Macmahon Ball, Frederic Eggleston, John Burton and Alan Watt.⁹ Among Evatt's contributions at San Francisco was an amendment to the UN charter allowing the General Assembly to overturn decisions by the Security Council, which had implications for the relative power of smaller nations with regards to the larger nations that made up the Security Council. This success made Evatt popular among the foreign press and lifted his international profile.¹⁰

Although the war had tarnished the image of the British Empire within Australia, because the empire had failed to defend Australia and had left Australians feeling exposed to Japanese military aggression, most Australians, even those who felt little sense of British identity, were not ready to think about alternatives to ties with the British Empire. Nevertheless, during the interwar period, social advocates had already emerged who spoke for Australia's own interests, separately from those of the empire. A rapidly growing Australian trade with Japan in the 1930s and participation in the influential international

⁹ Young officials later recalled their involvement in the San Francisco Conference to form the United Nations: Alan Watt, *Australian Diplomat: Memoirs of Sir Alan Watt* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson in Association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1972), pp. 62-70; Paul Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness: Australian Foreign Affairs, 1941-1947* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1980), pp. 152-157. Arthur Tange criticises Hasluck's account in 'Plans for the World Economy: Hopes and Reality in Wartime Canberra. A Personal Memoir'. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 50, no. 3 (1996), pp. 259-267.

¹⁰ W. J. Hudson, *Australia and the New World Order: Evatt at San Francisco, 1945* (Canberra: Australian Foreign Policy Publications Program, Australian National University, 1993), pp. 92-110.

non-governmental organisation, the Institute of Pacific Relations,¹¹ encouraged some intellectuals and social activists to develop a sense of Australia as a power within its own region. During and after the Great Depression of the 1930s, these social advocates also actively engaged with social reform. Liberal internationalism, nationalism and reformism were at the core of the Chifley government's thinking, both in the domestic arena and in the search for a place for Australia beyond the British Empire after 1945, and the Chifley government drew on such intellectuals, policy advisors and advocates in the Department of Postwar Reconstruction.¹² The group of younger officials in the Department of External Affairs who had worked under Evatt on the draft of the UN charter continued to work for him during his attempts to shape Australian postwar international relations in the initial postwar period.

The Pacific War ended abruptly on 15 August 1945, after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the sudden entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan. The Japanese government agreed to the unconditional surrender demanded by the Allies in the Potsdam Declaration of 26 July 1945. The fact that the Potsdam Declaration had not even been shared with the Australian and New Zealand governments before it was released publicly greatly concerned the Chifley government, which suspected that Australia would be similarly sidelined in the postwar reconstruction process.¹³ Evatt began campaigning for the participation of all belligerent governments on the Allied side in the Council of Foreign Ministers, which had been set up at the

¹¹ See Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹² Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995), p. 9.

¹³ See Evatt's letter to Australian High Commissioner in Washington and former Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce, document 142, p. 270 and document 146, p. 280, in W. J. Hudson et al., *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. VIII* (Canberra: Australian Govt. Pub. Service, 1989).

Potsdam Conference in order to proceed to a peace settlement in Europe and the Pacific.¹⁴

The US had been the dominant adversary of Japan in the war in the Pacific. Within a week of the Japanese surrender, the US government called on the thirteen other governments that had fought against Japan to establish “Allied control instruments” for the occupation of Japan. The first Council of Foreign Ministers set up the Far Eastern Commission (FEC) in Washington as the machinery to handle the forthcoming peace settlement in the Pacific and formally to oversee the occupation of Japan. Although Australia was, in Horner’s words, “a junior partner in an Allied coalition”,¹⁵ Evatt gained the position of chair of the FEC’s steering committee. Britain, the USSR and Australia sought adequate decision-making powers for the Commission in order to balance the power of the US, so that the Commission could formulate “policy, principles, and standards by which Japan could fulfill its obligations under the surrender terms”.¹⁶ In reality, the second meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers ruled that the FEC was only an advisory body to the SCAP, that is, MacArthur. The FEC operated through the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ), which was based in Tokyo.¹⁷ Australia was a member of the ACJ, representing the British Commonwealth alongside members from the USA, USSR and China. In practice, the right of small nation-states to participate in

¹⁴ See Christopher Waters, 'Voices in the Wilderness: H.V. Evatt and the European Peace Settlement, 1945-47', in *Brave New World: Dr H.V. Evatt and Australian Foreign Policy, 1941-1949*, ed. David Day (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1996), pp. 47-61.

¹⁵ David Horner, *High Command: Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939-1945* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p. xviii.

¹⁶ Frank J. Sackton, 'The Occupation of Japan in International Perspective: An Overview', in *The Occupation of Japan: The International Context - The Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Sponsored by the MacArthur Memorial, Old Dominion University, The MacArthur Memorial Foundation*, ed. Thomas W. Burkman (Norfolk, Virginia: the Foundation, 1984), p. 4.

¹⁷ Terms of reference for the Allied Council for Japan can be found in *ibid.*, p. 12.

decision-making on occupation policy was not established, despite Evatt's efforts.¹⁸

The position of Australia in the anticipated Japanese peace settlement was crucial to Chifley's strategy. As the Japanese surrender had approached, the newly elected British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, had suggested to the Chifley government that the British Commonwealth should send a united force to the occupation of Japan. Chifley, who initially insisted on Australia participating on its own, finally agreed at the end of September 1945 to contribute to a united British Commonwealth force in exchange for Australia commanding the force and Australians providing support staff for the UK component.¹⁹ The initial Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, the Australian Lieutenant-General John Northcott, was the first non-British Commander of British forces in the entire history of the British Empire.²⁰

Although it called for international cooperation and agreement, the US government seemed determined to dominate the occupation and was unwilling in practice to share MacArthur's authority. The government and military of Britain and Australia pressed hard in requesting that the US government allow the military participation of the British Commonwealth. MacArthur finally agreed to British Commonwealth participation on 24 November 1945. The Chifley government accepted MacArthur's stipulation that Australia should be responsible for the maintenance and supply of BCOF.²¹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff Australia (JCOSA), set up in Australia by the representatives of member-states of BCOF, oversaw the operation of BCOF, while in Japan, BCOF was subject to

¹⁸ Waters, 'Voices in the Wilderness', p. 68.

¹⁹ Horner, *High Command*, p. 422.

²⁰ 'BCOF - Review of the Organisation and Accomplishments. Draft Press Statement', 1948, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Canberra, A816 52/301/297.

²¹ Horner, *High Command*, pp. 422-425.

the authority of the US military. The military participation of the British Commonwealth in the occupation of Japan was eventually finalised in the Northcott-MacArthur agreement of December 1945.²²

In Occupied Japan

An advance party of 1200 Australian troops landed in Kure in Hiroshima prefecture in the middle of February 1946 as the first contingent of BCOF to arrive in Japan. The rest of the 34th Brigade and the 81st Wing of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) followed. By the end of March, the British component of BCOF, comprising the British force and the British Indian force (BRINDIV), and the separate Indian component of BCOF, had also landed in Kure. The New Zealand component landed in April. The BCOF area was soon expanded from the initial Hiroshima prefecture to the whole of the Chūgoku-Shikoku region, which comprised nine prefectures in total.

BCOF was small in scale: less than 40,000 troops at its height at the end of 1946, compared with 200,000 US troops. BCOF at the end of 1946 was made up of 9,806 UK troops (including 2,553 Indians), 11,858 Indian troops, 11,918 Australians and 4,444 New Zealanders.²³ It comprised a land force, air force and naval component and was independent from the US force to the extent that it had its own supply, communications and maintenance. The successive Commanders-in-Chief were both Australian: Northcott was quickly succeeded by Lieutenant-General Horace Robertson. The Commander of the British Commonwealth Air Component (BCAIR) was Vice-Marshal C. A. Bouchier,

²² 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)', 18 December 1945, NAA, Canberra, A5954 1699/2.

²³ Ibid.

from Britain. BCAIR's headquarters were set up at Iwakuni air base in Yamaguchi prefecture, where the New Zealand Air Force was stationed.²⁴

The occupation of Japan was accepted without resistance by most Japanese people. Many people were ready for social change: female suffrage, legalisation of labour unions and land reform, which were all targets of US policy, had been seriously discussed before the war.²⁵ However, the harsh conditions in the early postwar years made the security of the occupation uncertain. An acute food shortage, skyrocketing inflation, the large number of Japanese people living in streets ruined by Allied air raids, and active industrial action by labour unions for better wages and working conditions produced a volatile situation.²⁶ The occupation authorities were extremely cautious about the Japan Communist Party, which had been gaining strength in the labour union movement: party membership, which had never exceeded more than 1000 members prior to 1945, had grown to 110,000 by 1950.²⁷ Officials also worried about the surviving ultranationalists, who could potentially have renewed their activity as a counter- response to the occupation.

As I will show, questions about control and authority were always important in the Australian occupation. One central issue was the relationship of BCOF with the American military. Although the US occupation authorities had transferred control of the Chūgoku-Shikoku region, including Hiroshima

²⁴ Bouchier was acting Commander-in-Chief of BCOF while Robertson was absent from Japan: Cecil Bouchier and D. Guyver Britton, *Spitfires in Japan: From Farnborough to the Far East: A Memoir* (Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental, 2005), pp. 282-283.

²⁵ The complex stance taken towards the occupation by the Japanese public is well observed by John Dower in the title of his book: John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (London: Allen Lane, 1999).

²⁶ Shiota Shōbei, 'Hatarakerudake Kuwasero: Shokuryō Mēdē', in *Shōwashi no Shunkan* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1966), pp. 164-172.

²⁷ Paul J. Bailey, *Postwar Japan: 1945 to the Present* (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), p. 39.

prefecture, to BCOF, US military government teams continued to implement occupation programs in the same region. These teams were subordinate to SCAP, and implemented its directives throughout Japan. In all, forty-five military government teams were formed from two US army corps. They consisted of military and civilian personnel, with the total number of staff ranging over time from 1,888 to 2,800. The teams were located in nearly all prefectures and came under the authority of eight US military government regional offices. The Japanese liaison office in Tokyo received major occupation directives;²⁸ the military government teams were then solely responsible for issuing directives to Japanese local authorities and institutions. From 1946 onwards, the headquarters of the US Eighth Army in Yokosuka, near Tokyo, supervised the military government teams along with all other military matters in the occupation. In the case of Hiroshima prefecture, where the Australian component of BCOF was stationed, the office of the military government team was located in the city of Hiroshima and the military government regional office for the Chūgoku-Shikoku region in Kure.²⁹

The US occupation authorities realised at an early point that security threats to the occupation were not as great as had originally been thought: the Japan Communist Party, for example, legalised for the first time in 1945, put up candidates in the first postwar general election for the House of Representatives, held in April 1946, but won only five seats. The occupation authorities were

²⁸ The liaison office (Shūsenshori renraku jimukyoku) was set up in 1945 to receive SCAP orders and was part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Gaikō Shiryō Q&A: Shōwa Sengoki', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/honsho/shiryo/qa/sengo_02.html, accessed 29 June 2015.

²⁹ Jacob Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948: A Civilian View of the Occupation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), p. ix; Chida Takeshi, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobō, 1997), pp. 29-44; Takemae, *Senryō Sengoshi*, p. 39.

thus quick to re-evaluate the operations of the military government teams. Surveillance of people believed to pose a security threat was reduced, and there was a significant increase in the number of personnel assigned to implement the democratisation program at the prefectural level, which aimed to decentralise Japanese administration in accordance with the US model of democracy. Over time, military government teams focused more and more on liaison and cooperation with the Japanese side rather than surveillance.³⁰

The agreement between Northcott and MacArthur stated that BCOF would not share the role of military government with US forces. From the US military's point of view, BCOF's primary task was to gather intelligence, in order to safeguard the occupation.³¹ In practice, the work required of BCOF differed according to the stage of the occupation and the prefecture where soldiers were stationed. In the early occupation, the Australian component disposed of a large amount of arms and explosives stockpiled by the Japanese military, and supervised the arrival of Japanese civilians and ex-soldiers repatriated from overseas. Some tasks were performed by both the US force and BCOF, like ensuring that voting was carried out fairly during the April 1946 election, and raiding brothels to ensure that women had not been forced into prostitution.

BCOF had very limited direct influence over the Japanese population, as the US authorities did not share access to the Japanese liaison office with the British Commonwealth, and the major tasks at the local level were carried out by US military government teams. This situation contributed to a sense of powerlessness and frustration among BCOF personnel, regardless of the

³⁰ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, p. x.

³¹ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.

member states to which they belonged.³² Officers of the British and Indian components especially complained about the area BCOF had been allocated, in a remote region far from Tokyo. Such frustration quickly affected the degree of commitment among member states to maintaining their operations. Within ten months of the start of BCOF's activities, the idea of withdrawal had arisen, initiated by the UK government, which was facing a severe manpower shortage at home and in other British territories.³³ The British Brigade subsequently withdrew in early 1947 together with British Indian Force (BRINDIV) because Indian Independence had already declared in January of that year.

The difficulties BCOF faced were not only due to its administrative position and location. Postcolonial politics were also important. The combined force from the British Commonwealth was divided by internal rivalries. Bates comments that soldiers from diverse ethnic backgrounds served together "under the same flag in the last gasp of an Empire which would never be seen again".³⁴ Officers focused on "integration" of the Commonwealth military forces. However, British resentment of Australia taking the position of Commander from members of older Empire elites,³⁵ and the different situations faced by different member states, especially the contrast between India, which was struggling for independence, and the white Commonwealth states, undermined the unity of the force. There was friction between the second Commander-in-Chief, Robertson, and Charles Gairdner, the British military attaché in the UK Liaison Mission to SCAP. Robertson considered that

³² 'BCOF - Minister for Army (Mr. CHAMBERS) - Visit to Japan - December 1946', 1946-1947, NAA, Canberra, A5954 1880/3.

³³ 'BCOF (British Commonwealth Occupation Force) Proposed Withdrawal of United Kingdom Brigade', 1946, NAA, Canberra, A2700 1069G.

³⁴ Peter Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 227.

³⁵ See Jeffrey Grey, *Australian Brass: The Career of Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson* (Cambridge and Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 133.

Gairdner's attitude and actions stemmed from an assumption of British superiority over the dominions that contributed to BCOF. Gairdner, for his part, believed any problems Britain was having in the occupation derived from "our being represented by Australia", referring to the fact that BCOF was commanded by Australians.³⁶ The notion of empire, nevertheless, still provided a common sense of identity to many BCOF soldiers, especially those of officer rank.³⁷ Moreover, there was a sense that BCOF represented a new beginning of military cooperation within the British Commonwealth beyond the time of empire.³⁸

Arguably, the most difficult aspect of the Australian BCOF experience was the relationship between BCOF and the Australian public. BCOF was heavily criticised in the Australian press. Even given the fact that it was not a battle force and was not protected by wartime censorship, the degree of negative attention directed at BCOF by sections of the Australian press was remarkable for a force serving a long way from home. For critics of the government, Chifley had sent BCOF abroad without any real military imperative to do so, and thus Australia's participation in the occupation was seen as politically motivated. Any problems that arose in Japan could be blamed directly on the government. Chifley's political opponents constantly criticised him for sending BCOF to Japan. According to Prue Torney, conservative forces (including Frank Packer's *Telegraph* newspaper) which

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 146, 148-150, 157-159, 163.

³⁷ Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, pp. 223-224.

³⁸ Arthur W. John, *Duty Defined, Duty Done: A Memoir by Major John* (Melbourne: Gen Publishers, 2004), pp. 190-192; '[Australian War Memorial Registry Files - Second Series:] Historical Records - Army, General -Preparation of History of BCOF', 1946-1952, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM), Canberra, AWM315 417/001/003.

opposed the labour-oriented Chifley government on ideological grounds were behind the continuing negative publicity about BCOF.³⁹

Australian occupation soldiers had little sense of how long they might be in Japan. The occupation was intended to be temporary. Japan had to return to the international community at some point and would resume its foreign trade. Questions of when this would be, what conditions would be imposed by the peace settlement, and when the occupation would have achieved its objectives were always pressing. If demilitarisation meant, for example, the disposal of explosives stored by the Japanese military or removing the influence of Shinto from the school curriculum, the occupation could be said to have completed its mission by 1947. In terms of democratisation, the socialist-liberal coalition government led by Katayama Tetsu and Ashida Hitoshi, elected in April 1947 in the first general election held under the new constitution of May 1946, passed much legislation that was consistent with the social reform program of the occupation. Thus, as far as legislation as concerned, the occupation completed most of its mission in 1947 with this short-lived government. US policy-makers were not yet ready, however, to pronounce on what the future of the occupation would be, despite MacArthur's own view, revealed at a rare press conference in January 1947, that the mission was completed and that an early conclusion to the occupation was desirable.⁴⁰

The Australian component of BCOF entered a new phase in 1947. The Chifley government made a further commitment to BCOF in building barracks and other facilities for troops, and in commencing the long-planned family reunification program. Wives and children of soldiers, along with female

³⁹ Prue Torney, "'Renegades to Their Country': The Australian Press and the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1946-1950", *War & Society*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (2006), p. 98.

⁴⁰ Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 143.

service members, joined the existing troops for the first time. Australian troops in Kure spent much energy preparing to receive them. Their government's decision was certainly good for the morale of the whole BCOF operation, and Australian media coverage of the family reunification program was extensive.⁴¹ Prospects for BCOF seemed promising at this stage: Evatt visited Japan in June and July 1947, demonstrating Australian government support for MacArthur's occupation project; the British Commonwealth Conference, held in August in Canberra, proclaimed that the Commonwealth would take a unified approach to the eventual Japanese peace conference.⁴² The occupation as a whole, however, was scaling down in size. A large number of US occupation soldiers had been demobilised by 1947 and had returned home, where they resumed or newly began their civilian lives. The occupation was increasingly handled by professional US soldiers who had renewed their period of service in Japan.⁴³

In 1947-1948 there was a major reorientation of US occupation policy in response to the escalation of the Cold War. With the so-called "reverse course", the emphasis of US policy moved away from punishment of Japan and the eradication of militarism, to focus instead on economic recovery, in order to reconstruct Japan as a "protective wall" against communism in Asia. Concern for social reform and democratisation were thus downgraded.⁴⁴ In the US

⁴¹ Alice Jackson, 'Australian Families Are Enjoying Life in Japan: They Live in Pleasant Houses with Every Amenity and Maids to Do the Work', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 6 December 1947, pp. 20-21.

⁴² Roger Buckley, *Occupation Diplomacy: Britain, the United States, and Japan, 1945-1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 299; Richard N. Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1962), pp. 82, 85, 87, 90.

⁴³ Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948*, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁴ Report by *New York Times* correspondent, quoted in 'Japan as a "Protective Wall" against Communism', *Advocate* (Burnie, Tas.), 10 August 1948, p. 5. Also see Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 23, 508-521, 525-526, 546.

military's postwar strategic planning, the line from Okinawa to the rest of the Japanese islands, with their US military bases, stood against an advancing communist threat from the Soviet Union and, increasingly, from China. American bases in the Philippines and islands in the Pacific backed up the more advanced military bases in Okinawa and in the Japanese main islands.⁴⁵ Prime Minister Chifley, however, insisted that Australian soldiers should only be used for basic occupation duties, rather than becoming involved in the wider Cold War. In 1947, he fiercely denied in parliament that there was potential for Australian soldiers in Japan to be involved in armed disputes and he refused to contemplate any strategy for the Australian component of BCOF if Japan should be attacked by an external force. It was only in 1949 that the Chifley government granted authority to Commander-in-Chief Robertson for armed united action by the RAAF and its US counterpart if Japan were attacked by an external force.⁴⁶

For those with liberal aspirations, the scope of the occupation was narrowing. The Australian who represented the British Commonwealth at the Allied Council for Japan, William Macmahon Ball, an outspoken liberal thinker, was one senior figure who supported a reformist approach to the occupation. Ball insisted on taking an even-handed approach to the delegate from the Soviet Union at the ACJ, whereas MacArthur opposed the Soviet delegate on ideological grounds. It seems MacArthur fully used the opportunity to undermine Ball during closed discussions with Evatt during his 1947 visit to Japan. Ball clashed with Evatt while he was in Japan and resigned the following

⁴⁵ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, p. 54.

⁴⁶ 'Policy for the Employment of British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan', 1949, NAA, Canberra, A816 52/30/346.

month, subsequently returning to Australia.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, with no prospect of an early peace treaty, the Chifley government decided on a large reduction of the Australian component of BCOF in January 1948, although the decision was not made public until April.⁴⁸ In response to the Australian plan, the US government stated that it would be difficult to fill the gap with US forces, noting that actually, given the ongoing international situation, it desired an increase in the Australian force. US government calls for Australia to maintain its occupation forces in order to “maintain Australia’s participation in the united security effort in the Pacific-Far Eastern area” continued until just before the Australian component began to repatriate the majority of its force in November 1948.⁴⁹ The Australians initially left 2,750 personnel, the minimum required to maintain an independent force, in Hiro camp in Kure and Iwakuni base, with most returning home in early 1949.⁵⁰ The Chifley government’s actions throughout the occupation period demonstrate its efforts to chart a path as a small independent power not slavishly following either Britain or the US.

Soldiers

The main body of the land force of the Australian component of BCOF, the Australian 34th Brigade, comprised the 65th, 66th, and 67th battalions, drawn from three Divisions of the Australian Imperial Force, which had recently ceased fire in battlefields that extended across the Netherland Indies and New Guinea.

These troops might have become part of an Allied force for the direct invasion

⁴⁷ See Ball’s diary entry for 6 August 1947, in W. Macmahon Ball, *Intermittent Diplomat: The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball*, ed. Alan Rix (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 231-234.

⁴⁸ ‘BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)’.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* The form of this communication suggests that the sender was the US Secretary of State.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

of the Japanese main islands that had been scheduled for November 1945 and early 1946: in May 1945, the Chifley government had decided to send expeditionary forces to join the projected US attack on Japan.⁵¹ In October-November 1945, Australian troops moved to the island of Morotai in the Netherlands Indies, where the land force of the Australian component of BCOF concentrated prior to departure for Kure.⁵² They were joined by many later arrivals. William Towers, for example, wrote to his mother on 17 December 1945 that he had finally joined his unit in Morotai, a week after departing from Rabaul with one hundred of his fellow soldiers. A language officer, Basil Archer, arrived at Morotai after four days of air travel from Melbourne (RAAF Essendon base) via Brisbane, Darwin and Ambon.⁵³ These troops had to wait months before sailing to Japan in February-March 1946, because of delays in diplomatic and political negotiations over the participation of BCOF in the occupation. No matter what their government intended, occupation soldiers had their own motivation in enlisting for BCOF, especially those who were young and with no particular vocation in civilian life. The option of going to Japan was more desirable than killing time in the tropical islands waiting for discharge.

⁵¹ Horner, *High Command*, p. 412.

⁵² The 65th battalion of 700 troops drawn from the Seventh Division embarked at Balikpapan (east coast of Borneo) for Morotai on 26 October 1945. The 67th battalion, drawn from the Sixth Division, embarked at Wewak in New Guinea for Morotai on 3 November 1945. The 66th battalion, drawn from the Ninth Division, embarked at Rabaul in New Guinea for Morotai on 9 November. 'Troops Assembling at Morotai', *Mercury* (Hobart), 26 October 1945, p. 1; '438 Men from 6th Division Going to Japan', *Argus* (Melbourne), 2 November 1945, p. 1; 'Japan Occupation', *The West Australian*, 9 November 1945, p. 9; 'A.I.F. Occupation Force for Japan', *Canberra Times*, 2 November 1945, p. 1.

⁵³ Basil Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan: The Diary of an Australian Soldier, 1945-46*, ed. and with an introduction by Sandra Wilson (Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2009), pp. 1-4.

As with their counterparts from other contingents of BCOF and from the USA, Australian soldiers were very busy during their first year in Japan. Once they had arrived, many of them found a sense of accomplishment in carrying out occupation tasks: for example, young soldiers who had the responsibility of directing large numbers of Japanese labourers in building barracks and storehouses.⁵⁴ Language officers who had undertaken intensive training in Japanese during and after the war found it rewarding to be able to put their newly gained language skills to use. Ken Wells revealed his enthusiasm for improving his Japanese language skills in a letter to his father: "I have been more than delighted with my facility in ordinary conversation with the Japanese and the ease with which I can do my business for myself and the unit. I am going to start studying the written language by reading children's books and will learn to read the simple stuff with speed and facility before I try anything hard".⁵⁵ Language officers' work was also tough, in that an individual's skill and degree of learning were immediately tested, especially in interpreting tasks. Indeed, the language unit lost two personnel to suicide.⁵⁶

There was a wide gap between what Australian soldiers saw in Japan and what they had heard or believed before they arrived. By 1948, the stories and experiences of Australian prisoners of war (POWs) captured by the Japanese military in wartime had circulated widely among the Australian

⁵⁴ George Martin, interview, 12 May 1999 (Melbourne).

⁵⁵ Ken Wells, letter to Father, February 1946, private collection. Ken Wells' letters are held by and quoted with the permission of Marguerite Wells.

⁵⁶ A qualified linguist killed himself at the office of 6 Labour Group in Kure: Colin Funch, *Linguists in Uniform: The Japanese Experience* (Melbourne: Japanese Studies Centre, Monash University, 2003), p. 247. See also Sandra Wilson, 'Reading Basil Archer's Diary', in *Interpreting Occupied Japan: The Diary of an Australian Soldier, 1945-46*, ed. and with an introduction by Sandra Wilson (Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2009), p. xxv.

public.⁵⁷ Most Australian soldiers serving in Japan had some knowledge of the brutal treatment of prisoners. As I show in this thesis, some soldiers struggled to reach a balanced judgement on POW issues. In a letter home, Wells wrote: "It is true that cruelty to prisoners is an uncommon thing in [the] Australian Army... but... [in] bombing hospitals, we are far ahead of them [Japanese forces]".⁵⁸ The tasks assigned to most occupation soldiers (other than intelligence officers) in the initial stages precluded direct contact with the local Japanese officials responsible for implementing occupation reforms. However, BCOF soldiers still mixed frequently with the local Japanese population, for example, when they needed to employ Japanese labourers for tasks such as disposing of explosives, arranging for special trains for occupation troops in the BCOF area, and establishing and running other BCOF operations, from building barracks and storehouses to washing and cooking for the soldiers. Some encounters developed into personal relationships. In making connections with Japanese people, the occupation soldiers were shocked at the impact of the war on the local Japanese population, particularly when observing the effect of the nuclear bomb on the city of Hiroshima or damage to other heavily bombed ports and towns with large populations. BCOF veterans typically reported a shift in their feelings away from an initial "war hatred" of the Japanese people towards greater sympathy.⁵⁹ BCOF rules specifically discouraged personal contact with Japanese people. The "anti-fraternisation" policy was a key element in the BCOF code of conduct, though it was much more emphasised

⁵⁷ Prue Torney-Parlicki, "Unpublishable Scoops": Australian Journalists as Prisoners of the Japanese, 1941-45', *JAS, Australia's Public Intellectual Forum*, no. 66 (2000), pp. 180-183.

⁵⁸ Ken Wells, letter to Family, October/November 1945.

⁵⁹ Quint's television film *The Forgotten Force* well represents Australian occupation soldiers' shifting emotions as they encountered Japanese people living in war-ravaged conditions.

within the Australian component than by other contingents. Behind the code of conduct, the real concern of the BCOF leadership was the possibility that some soldiers would marry Japanese women. Enforcement of the policy of not mixing with the locals, however, depended on the particular commander's attitude and the period in question.

The Australian deployment in Japan did not always proceed smoothly. Statistically, the Australian component had the highest number of criminal offences recorded against it among the member states of BCOF. Offences included serious crimes such as rape, murder and arson, but a majority were minor offences related to the black market. A large number of Australian soldiers engaged in black market activities, selling part of their own rations to provide daily spending money in order to leave their paybooks untouched and thus save money. An official check of sixty paybooks out of a unit of 400 at the end of March 1946 revealed that some soldiers 'had not drawn any money since arrival in Japan', while 'many others had only drawn one pay since that date'.⁶⁰ Some soldiers also stole other soldiers' rations. The stereotypical Australian male trait of anti-authoritarianism could perhaps be observed when young soldiers from lower ranks stole rations from the officers' mess. The Australian component also had the highest number of cases of venereal disease, and the highest rate of general illness. Having spent a long period in a tropical region awaiting deployment to Japan, many Australian soldiers suffered from malaria and skin disease.⁶¹

⁶⁰ 'Review of Pay and Allowances for Members of the Forces for Occupation of Japan and of the Interim Forces', 1946, NAA, Canberra, A2700 1069E.

⁶¹ See 'Incidence of Disease', in 'A Draft of a History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force', AWM, Canberra, AWM114 130/1/23 PART 1, p. 3.

Australian newspapers were initially enthusiastic in their reporting of BCOF. Press accounts covered the departure of the Australian troops from Morotai, the landing at Kure harbour, and encounters with Japanese citizens. Until the public announcement of the large-scale reduction in the Australian component in April 1948, journalists reported fully on the Australian participation in the occupation. Newspapers played an essential role in connecting soldiers serving in Japan and people at home. Especially in the period before the first contingent returned home for leave or discharge in October 1946, the occupation was a very remote affair for most Australians. People at home had no idea what their men in Japan were really doing. Some reports from Australian correspondents in the early stage of BCOF operations raised concerns about the welfare of Australian soldiers and issues such as inadequate accommodation and limited availability of food in war-ravaged Japan, as BCOF authorities had initially banned locally available fresh food due to health concerns. Indeed, during the Australian federal election campaign in the second half of 1946, issues concerning BCOF were highly politicised by the Liberal-Country Party opposition. One Senate candidate in the 1946 federal election who was a former high-ranking officer reported that he had advised men under his command not to go to Japan - in this case, because he believed only the British could 'run an occupation'.⁶² Chifley retained office in this election, although the government lost a large number of seats, including that of the Minister for the Army, Frank Forde, who had served in this position throughout the war.⁶³ Controversy over the deployment of the Australian

⁶² 'Advised His Men Not to Go to Japan', *Argus*, 19 September 1946, p. 20.

⁶³ Neil Lloyd and Malcolm Saunders, 'Forde, Francis Michael (Frank) (1890-1983)', (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007).

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/forde-francis-michael-frank-12504>, accessed 3 May 2015.

military in Japan subsequently arose, as we will see in a later chapter over such things as amenities for the troops and behavioural issues.

The Chifley government's decision in January 1947 to commence the family reunification program and increase the number of female service personnel created a new angle for Australian newspapers' engagement with BCOF. Throughout 1947, newspapers were filled with reports and photographs of soldiers' wives and children, and of female military personnel, who were to sail for Japan.⁶⁴ The commencement of the family reunification program was discussed at the Military Board, which was the highest decision-making organ for military matters in Australia. The record of the discussion shows that the new policy was linked to reports of bad behaviour by Australian troops, and reveals a belief among Australian military leaders that such behaviour by Australian boys in an eastern land would be lessened by the increased presence of European women.⁶⁵ It is difficult to know whether the Australian women did have a civilising influence on Australian soldiers in Japan. A newspaper article argued further that the increased presence of female Westerners would bring a civilising influence to the Japanese population as well.⁶⁶

Various official investigations of BCOF were launched from Australia, as we will see in later chapters, and sensational press reports appeared, sometimes causing discomfiture in the Australian contingent.⁶⁷ Finally, in January 1948, a group of returned BCOF soldiers called for an enquiry into problems within the

⁶⁴ 'Families for Japan in April', *Mercury*, 22 February 1947, p. 2; Stephen Kelen, 'Australian Wives in Japan', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 10 May 1947, p. 11; 'First Wives for Japan Selected', *Mercury*, 30 May 1947, p. 2; 'Australian Family Life Is Different in Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 December 1947, p. 2; 'Ran Mile to Begin Her Trip to Japan', *Sunday Mail*, 11 May 1947, p. 3.

⁶⁵ 'BCOF - Minister for Army (Mr. CHAMBERS) - Visit to Japan - December 1946'.

⁶⁶ Kelen, 'Australian Wives in Japan', p. 11.

⁶⁷ Torney, "'Renegades to Their Country'", p. 98.

BCOF leadership. Neither Commander-in-Chief Northcott nor his successor, Robertson, had much power to shape press behaviour, and as Torney observes, they “tended to react to problems as they arose”, rather than attempting to forestall them.⁶⁸ Nor was there any public relations unit in the Australian military. The Australian press eventually dropped its interest in BCOF, mainly because of the Chifley government’s decision to reduce the Australian contingent, and because of the postponement of the Japanese peace settlement, which was not signed until September 1951. The Australian public, which was rapidly putting the war behind it, apparently also tired of hearing about BCOF, after many controversies had surfaced. When the majority of the Australian contingent arrived home in February 1949, there was no acknowledgement at Sydney Harbour of the soldiers' service for the state. A veteran observes that, by the time the soldiers returned, people at home were tired of hearing about anything related to the war.⁶⁹ Indeed, the spectacle of a mass of soldiers in uniform in the street was no longer desirable for the Chifley government, which had been hurriedly demobilising. BCOF soldiers had become disconnected from the postwar experiences and views of their contemporaries. In later years, they would campaign for better recognition of their service.

Scholarly Context

Broad public interest in the history of BCOF is comparatively recent, beginning perhaps with the broadcast of the ABC documentary, *The Forgotten Force*, in 1994.⁷⁰ Several military histories published between 1993 and 2001, some written by authors who had participated in BCOF, provide valuable detail

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 92.

⁶⁹ Martin, interview, 12 May 1999.

⁷⁰ Quint, *The Forgotten Force*.

about the composition and mobilisation of the force, and about its operation in Japan. Peter Bates, James Wood and George Davies all seek to recover and recognise BCOF as an important and unique military operation.⁷¹ All three authors recognise it as the last military operation of the combined old empire, but nevertheless focus firmly on how BCOF contributed to the occupation of Japan, paying little attention to international relations and politics. The most significant Japanese contribution to studies of BCOF has been made by Chida Takeshi, a historian of the city of Kure, where the Australian contingent was based. His work *Eirenpōgun no Nihon shinchū to tenkai* (The Deployment and Evolution of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan) is untranslated and has been little used in English-language discussions of the occupation.⁷² Chida's book uses the limited available Japanese sources, including local archives and local government sources, along with the more extensive resources available from the National Archives of Australia. Chida also comments on some anecdotal popular Japanese perceptions of BCOF, such as the supposed unpopularity of the Australians and centrality of the British in BCOF, which are largely unsupported by historical documents.

Otherwise, scholarly studies of BCOF have been few. The cultural history of BCOF has begun to attract attention, notably in Robin Gerster's *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, which focuses on soldiers as travellers.⁷³ Gerster discusses, for example, the soldiers' home lives, attitudes to Japanese people, and leisure activities and aspirations, producing a much fuller understanding of

⁷¹ Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*; James Wood, *The Forgotten Force: The Australian Military Contribution to the Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998); George Davies, *The Occupation of Japan: The Rhetoric and the Reality of Anglo-Australasian Relations, 1939-1952* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001).

⁷² Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*.

⁷³ Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine: Australia and the Occupation of Japan* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008).

the meaning of the occupation for Australian soldiers than is available elsewhere. Gerster highlights the fact that Australian soldiers were suddenly empowered with the privileges of occupiers. He also draws attention to the involvement of servicemen in blackmarket activities and violence against the Japanese population. Gerster's critical perspective does not extend to the Japanese people, however, who are largely seen as innocent: Gerster fails to recognise that Japanese people, too, manipulated in various ways the opportunities provided by the occupation. Christine de Matos has also examined the cultural dimension of the occupation, especially through a focus on gender.⁷⁴

An understanding of Australia's immediate postwar politics and diplomacy is crucial to this thesis, in explaining the domestic and international context within which the Chifley government operated. Stuart MacIntyre has produced the first study of reconstruction policy in postwar Australia, providing part of the essential framework within which BCOF was formed and in which its operations took place.⁷⁵ Richard Rosecrance established the parameters of Australian diplomacy towards occupied Japan in his 1962 work.⁷⁶ T.B. Millar produced a huge study of Australian international relations from the

⁷⁴ Christine de Matos, 'A Very Gendered Occupation: Australian Women as "Conquerers" and "Liberators"', *US-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 33 (2007), pp. 87-107; Christine de Matos, 'Living the Colonial Lifestyle: Australian Women and Domestic Labour in Occupied Japan 1945-1952', in *Responding to the West: Essays on Colonial Dominance and Asian Agency, 18th to 20th Centuries*, ed. Hans Hägerdal (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2009), pp. 137-147; Christine de Matos, 'Occupation Masculinities: The Residues of Colonial Power in Australian Occupied Japan', in *Gender, Power and Military Occupation: Asia Pacific and the Middle East since 1945*, ed. Christine de Matos and Rowena Ward (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 23-42. See also Christine de Matos, 'Labor under Military Occupation: Allied POWs and the Allied Occupation of Japan', in *Japan as the Occupier and the Occupied*, ed. Christine de Matos and Mark E. Caprio (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 65-87.

⁷⁵ Stuart MacIntyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015).

⁷⁶ Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951*.

beginning of white settlement onwards.⁷⁷ The emergence of Japan as a threat from the north is a key focus; Millar himself had participated in BCOF. I diverge significantly from Millar's analysis of the Chifley government's attitude to foreign relations. Millar sees Chifley's role in international affairs as separate from the main domestic priorities of his government, whereas I interpret the two dimensions as closely related to each other.

Roger Buckley, in his study of British and American diplomacy towards occupied Japan, was one of the first to place the occupation in an international context, beyond a purely US focus. His book provides useful context for understanding Australia's increasingly independent role in regional affairs.⁷⁸ Ann Trotter's work on New Zealand is similarly instructive as a contrast with Australia: Trotter makes clear that the New Zealand government, unlike the Australian authorities, was relatively detached from broad issues relating to the occupation of Japan, and participated in the occupation only reluctantly.⁷⁹

Christopher Waters provides a perspective on Chifley and Evatt that differs from Millar's, and begins to explore the theme of Australian liberal internationalism, which is a central concern of this thesis.⁸⁰ Waters traces the emergence of a more independent diplomatic line by Australia, which as a small power, had different priorities and perspectives in the postwar period from those of Britain. By contrast to the Attlee government in London, which sought to maintain the status quo internationally to leverage reform at home, the Chifley government took a more universalist approach. Like Waters, Neville Meaney emphasises a new liberal internationalism in official Australian

⁷⁷ T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations, 1788-1977* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978).

⁷⁸ Buckley, *Occupation Diplomacy*.

⁷⁹ Ann Trotter, *New Zealand and Japan, 1945-1952: The Occupation and the Peace Treaty* (London: Athlone Press, 1990).

⁸⁰ Waters, *The Empire Fractures*.

thinking, and a search for an independent Australian foreign policy. He also, however, highlights the fact that Australia simultaneously maintained its strong traditional reliance on the UK while cultivating stronger ties with the US.⁸¹ While I do not wish to deny the considerable continuities in Australia's relationship with Britain across the prewar, wartime and postwar periods, I agree with Waters that important changes occurred. Further, I argue BCOF provides a lens through which to examine these changes.

The question of whether or not Chifley really did initiate an independent foreign policy has generated some debate. David Lee points to Australia's active role after the war in the United Nations as an indication of a new internationalism and multilateralism that emphasised both peace through economic development and the resolution of problems through diplomacy.⁸² David Lowe believes a new Labor tradition on foreign policy began with Curtin and Chifley. The new approach was characterised by involvement in the United Nations, but also by disruption of Australia's role in the Empire and Commonwealth.⁸³ Wayne Reynolds, on the other hand, argues there is no Labor tradition; rather, there has been a largely bipartisan approach to foreign policy. According to Reynolds, Australian foreign policy continued to refer strongly to Britain after the war. The real change came, argues Reynolds, in 1957 with the Bermuda conference between Britain and the US, which paved the way for the renewal of their 'special relationship', to be followed by the dismantling of the sterling bloc and the process leading to Britain's eventual integration into

⁸¹ Neville Meaney, 'Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming Cold War', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 38, no. 3 (1992), pp. 316-333.

⁸² David Lee, 'The Curtin and Chifley Governments: Liberal Internationalism and World Organisation', in *Evatt to Evans: The Labour Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy*, ed. David Lee and Christopher Waters (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1997), p.48.

⁸³ David Lowe, 'Divining a Labor Line: Conservative Constructions of Labor's Foreign Policy, 1944-49', in *Evatt to Evans*, ed. Lee and Waters, pp. 62-74.

Europe.⁸⁴ Reynolds thus echoes Millar's earlier argument that Labor policies towards Britain were not so different from conservative policies.⁸⁵ It may be, however, that for Millar and Reynolds, writing after two decades of the Menzies government, it was very difficult to recognise the distinct contribution of the postwar Labor government.

Turning to the international context of the occupation, Alan Rix was the first scholar to recognise that Australia and occupied Japan traded with each other. The existence of trade between 1945 and 1952 indicates the complexity of relations between the two countries even under occupation.⁸⁶ More recently Christine de Matos has shed light on Australia's engagement with the Far Eastern Commission and subsequently the Allied Council for Japan. De Matos focuses on the Australian commitment to enlightened social reform; she suggests the punitive approach to war reparations initially taken by Australian authorities was an attempt to ensure this reform.⁸⁷ The focus of de Matos, like that of other authors, is on the role Australia played in the occupation rather than what I am chiefly interested in here, that is, what role the occupation played in Australia.

Primary Sources

This thesis draws on a variety of primary sources, both published and unpublished, including letters, interviews, diaries, archival material, recollections, memoirs and other writings by participants. I conducted over

⁸⁴ Wayne Reynolds, 'The Foreign Policy of the Whitlam Government', in *Evatt to Evans*, ed. Lee and Waters, pp. 111-112.

⁸⁵ Millar, *Australia in Peace and War*, pp. 177-178.

⁸⁶ Alan Rix, *Coming to Terms: The Politics of Australia's Trade with Japan 1945-1957* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

⁸⁷ Christine de Matos, *Imposing Peace and Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008).

thirty interviews with BCOF veterans all over Australia; the interviews constitute crucial source material for this study. My interviewees, who were located largely by word of mouth, included officers and low-ranking soldiers, language officers who had a good level of Japanese and soldiers who spoke no Japanese. Some had married Japanese women. I also interviewed several widows of BCOF veterans. Using these interviews, carried out so many years after the occupation of Japan, raises the usual issues of problems of memory and of the different factors that go into processing that memory – especially given the fact that many of the former BCOF soldiers were involved in organisations like the state-based BCOF Associations, which tended to project a single voice and viewpoint. However, the interviews are an unmatched source of unexpected insights, for example into the soldiers' personal circumstances and motivations for participating in BCOF, and their reactions to the Japanese people they met. Many of my interviewees lent me photographs taken while they were in Japan.

I had unique access to a rich collection of letters written by Ken Wells, a language officer from Victoria whose frequent letters to family members have been preserved. Wells' insights were keen and he had a notable facility with the English language, with the result that his correspondence provides a vivid picture of one soldier's experience of occupied Japan. Other first-hand accounts produced during the occupation itself are provided by the unpublished letters of William Towers, held in the Australian National Library, and the recently published diary of the Western Australian language officer Basil Archer.⁸⁸

The National Archives of Australia contains extensive documentation of the Australian government's planning for and operation of the occupation of

⁸⁸ William Arthur Towers, 'Papers, 1941-1994 [Manuscript]', 1941, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 9112; Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan*.

Japan, including memoranda and correspondence originating from the Army, the Department of External Affairs and the Cabinet. The thesis also uses newspaper reports from all over Australia, which are especially useful in establishing the range of public opinion about BCOF and its activities. Other primary sources include the official newspaper for BCOF, which was entitled *BCON* and was published from 1946 to 1950, the journal of the Australian Army Education Service, the *Gen*, which was published from 1946 to 1951, and the Army publication *As You Were*, which contained writings by soldiers, including some stationed in occupied Japan.⁸⁹ The newsletter of the BCOF Association of Australia, *Shimbun* (Japanese for 'newspaper'), published since 1979, also contains recollections and photographs of the BCOF years.

A significant number of BCOF soldiers published memoirs of their experiences well after the end of the occupation. Many are self-published. Notable examples include works by Arthur John, Norman White and Philip Green.⁹⁰ Jennie Woods published a memoir of her experience as the wife of a BCOF member who went to Japan under the family reunion program.⁹¹ The Western Australian novelist and BCOF participant T. A. G. Hungerford published "autobiographical stories" about his time in Japan.⁹² Allan Clifton's book, *Time of Fallen Blossoms*, was published in 1950 to some considerable

⁸⁹ *As You Were: A Cavalcade of Events with the Australian Services from 1788 to 1946*, (Canberra: AWM, 1946); *As You Were: A Cavalcade of Events with the Australian Services from 1788 to 1948*, (Canberra: AWM, 1948).

⁹⁰ Arthur W. John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown: A History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan* (Melbourne: Gen Publishers, 1987); Philip M. Green, *Memories of Occupied Japan* (Blackheath, NSW: Logosprint, 1987); Norman White, *How Bluey and Friends Occupied Japan, 1946-1947* ([Wentworth Falls, N.S.W.]: N. White, 1991). See also the collective memoir edited by Larry Lacey: *BCOF: An Unofficial History* (Yamba: L. Lacey, 1995).

⁹¹ Jennie Woods, *Which Way Will the Wind Blow* (North Sydney, N.S.W.: Jennie Woods, 1994).

⁹² T. A. G. Hungerford, *Straightshooter* (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003).

controversy: it was written from a whistleblower perspective and included accounts of rape and assaults perpetrated by Australian soldiers during the occupation.⁹³ At the level of government representatives, William Macmahon Ball's diary provides an important perspective on the occupation from the point of view of an Australian official and a noted public intellectual, as does his 1948 book, *Japan: Enemy or Ally?*⁹⁴ Some BCOF soldiers wrote memoirs that have remained unpublished, but provide valuable evidence of their experiences in occupied Japan. Stephen Macauley wrote two accounts of his work for BCOF, which he made available to me.⁹⁵

Chapter Summary

The first three chapters of the thesis trace the background to and early history of Australia's participation in the occupation more or less chronologically. Chapter one examines the different strands of the relationship between Australia and Japan before 1945. The chapter discusses, for example, the Institute of Pacific Relations, whose liberal internationalist reform agenda influenced officials in the early part of the occupation. It also examines trade tensions with regard to Britain and Japan, along with the emergence of an independent defence strategy and the role of the US in prompting this change. I further examine the increasing cultural exchange with Japan in the prewar period and the emergence of Japanese-language education, which was to prove important for the occupation.

⁹³ Allan S. Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms* (Sydney: Cassell, 1950).

⁹⁴ Ball, *Intermittent Diplomat*; W. Macmahon Ball, *Japan: Enemy or Ally?*, 1st Australian ed. (London and Melbourne: Cassell, 1948).

⁹⁵ Stephen Macauley, 'The Other Side of Occupation', unpublished manuscript in my possession; Stephen Macauley, 'My Time in Japan', unpublished manuscript in my possession.

Chapter Two discusses the situation at the end of the Pacific War, the reasons for Australia's participation in the occupation, the tense negotiations over setting up a joint force, and then the establishment of the occupation machinery. Australia placed a high priority on disabling Japan militarily so that it would no longer be a threat to the region. I examine Australian demobilisation at the end of the war and the formation of BCOF, including the experience and motivations of individual recruits. Finally, I explain the situation in Morotai just prior to the deployment of Australian soldiers to Japan.

Chapter three deals with the early period of the occupation, Australia's leading role through the appointment of Lieutenant-General John Northcott as BCOF Commander-in-Chief, and Australian frustration at the dominance of the US in the occupation. I discuss the arrival of Australian troops and personnel in Kure and describe early Australian media reporting of BCOF. I examine Northcott's non-fraternisation policy, showing how it withered in the daily interactions between soldiers and local Japanese people. I also describe the actual work carried out by Australian soldiers.

Chapters four, five and six overlap in terms of the period covered, but each has its own focus. Chapter four examines the relationship between BCOF and the people at home in Australia. It analyses the emerging criticism at home during 1946 of the BCOF operation and the conditions in which soldiers lived and worked. By the end of the year the behaviour of the troops themselves also attracted negative comment. These criticisms formed the background to the visit to Japan in December 1946 by the Minister for Army, Cyril Chambers. I show that this visit ultimately led to reforms to BCOF, including the introduction of a family reunion program, and an increase in the numbers of

female personnel. The chapter finishes with an analysis of the way in which Chambers handled controversy and misbehaviour among the troops.

In Chapter five I examine the emergence of Cold War conditions and the subsequent re-orientation of US policy to emphasise economic recovery over democratic reform. This period saw the reduction of troop numbers from other contingents as reforming Japan became less of a priority for most governments. Australia tried to help cover the gaps for a while. However, uncertainty about when a peace treaty would be signed and what it would contain was also very unsettling for the Australian government and led to a reduction of its involvement in the occupation.

Chapter six notes the end of conscription in this period and shows that the forming of a regular army for the postwar world brought a new type of recruit to BCOF in the occupation's latter stages. I also describe the preparations made by the Australian government for the return of BCOF soldiers to civilian life. I discuss army education and training and the shortcomings of the Australian government's measures compared with steps taken by other governments to prepare soldiers for life after the military. I finally examine one aspect of the failure of the anti-fraternisation policy - marriages between Australian soldiers and Japanese women - as it came into conflict with notions of a white Australia when servicemen tried to return home with Japanese wives.

CHAPTER ONE

Australia and Japan Before 1945

The Australian contribution to the occupation of Japan, and the experience of Australian soldiers during the occupation, were conditioned to a significant degree not only by the Second World War itself, but also by the earlier relationship between the two countries. Australian attitudes to Japan were tinged with anxiety and fear. Nevertheless, economic, political and cultural relations between Japan and Australia throughout the 1930s were surprisingly rich and diverse, though they never assumed a high profile in the politics or foreign policy of either country. The war brought serious disruption to the normal relationship between the two countries; and the circumstances of the occupation period were in turn different from anything that had gone before. Despite the overwhelming importance of the war experience, however, some more positive legacies of the 1930s influenced Australian participation in the occupation. This chapter investigates the relationship between the two countries prior to 1945.

Anxiety about Japan was certainly “the principal (if fluctuating) source of Australian apprehension about the outside world”¹ from Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 to its defeat in the Pacific War in 1945.

Nevertheless, some brief respite came with the Versailles Treaty of 1919, which provided for a system of collective security through the League of Nations, and the Washington Agreement of 1922, which limited the naval force of the three major powers in the Pacific, that is, the USA, Britain and Japan. Australian anxiety about Japan returned, however, when Japanese forces invaded north-

¹T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations, 1788-1977* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), p. 94.

east China and created the puppet state of “Manchukuo” in 1931-32. Japan then withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933 when the League accepted a report from a commission of enquiry that was critical of the Japanese action in north-east China.² Australia’s 1901 Immigration Restriction Act was still in force, and provided the major legal basis for the “White Australia” policy. In the early 1930s, Australia nevertheless negotiated with Japan, partly as an appeasement strategy to ensure Australian security, and partly in order to protect the rapidly increasing trade between Australia and Japan.³

The relationship between Japan and Australia in the 1930s was diverse, and was shaped by a variety of actors. As became sharply evident during the Trade Diversion Dispute of 1936, Australian officials tended to patronise and underestimate their Japanese counterparts, just as Japanese officials in turn underestimated the Australians, whom they regarded as second-hand Britons who could be easily manipulated. On the other hand, a few Australian liberal thinkers took a different attitude. Frederic Eggleston and other members of the Australian Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations are the most prominent examples of Australian intellectuals who displayed a positive attitude to Japan’s continuing modernisation. Moreover, traders and others involved in business dealt with their Japanese counterparts to a very significant degree: in 1935, for example, Japan accounted for one quarter of wool clips sales (up from

² Sandra Wilson, *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society* (London: Routledge, 2002); Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis 1931-1932: A Tragedy in International Relations* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1948); Usui Katsumi, *Manshūkoku to Kokusai Renmei* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1995).

³ Neville Meaney, "'Kōkaron" to "Ōsutoraria no Kiki": Ōsutoraria Gaikō Seisakushi ni okeru Nihon 1905-1941', *Kokusai seiji*, no. 2 (1982), pp. 5-22; Neville Meaney, *Towards a New Vision: Australia and Japan through 100 Years* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1999), pp. 15-18; Shannon L. Smith, 'Towards Diplomatic Representation', in *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia Volume 1: 1901 to 1970s*, ed. David Goldsworthy (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), pp. 61-96.

17 % the previous year).⁴ A surprising number of ordinary Australians were also becoming interested in Japanese culture, and even learning the Japanese language. It is undoubtedly the attitudes of Australian officials rather than those of intellectuals or ordinary people that most affected Australia's role in the occupation. Nevertheless, legacies of the other strands in the relationship between the two countries were influential, especially in the reactions of ordinary soldiers to the conditions of the occupation.

The Institute of Pacific Relations and the Liberal Vision of Frederic Eggleston

The 1930s saw the growth in influence of an important new international, non-governmental discussion forum, the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR). The IPR, formed in 1925, played a pivotal role in redefining Australian thinking on nationhood in relation to the Asia-Pacific region. Together with the Australian Institute of Political Science (AIPS), formed in 1932, the IPR became a major agent for both generating and promoting reformist agendas and liberal thinking about the Pacific region. The agendas and ideology of the IPR had an important influence on leading figures of the Australian representation in occupied Japan.⁵

The IPR provided a forum for the discussion of issues in international affairs relating to the Asia-Pacific region.⁶ Although it was originally founded with the financial and human resources of the Young Men's Christian

⁴ Paul Jones, "'Trading in a 'Fool's Paradise'?: White Australia and the Trade Diversion Dispute of 1936', in *Relationships: Japan and Australia 1870s – 1950s*, ed. Paul Jones and Vera Mackie (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 2001), p. 135.

⁵ On the IPR see especially Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁶ John K. Fairbank 'William L. Holland and the IPR in Historical Perspective', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 52 (1979-80); Tomoko Akami, 'Frederic Eggleston and Oriental Power, 1925-1929', in *Relationships: Japan and Australia 1870-1950s*, ed. Paul Jones and Vera Mackie (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 2001), p. 101.

Association, and sought to promote broadly Western and specifically American interests in Asia, the IPR soon developed as a prominent international organisation funding research and publication on the Asia-Pacific region, promoting Western scholarship on an academic area that had barely existed previously. In Tomoko Akami's terms, the IPR involved itself in 'internationalising the Pacific,'⁷ yet saw itself as firmly separate from politics and more like a group of 'reasonable men' cordially discussing international problems. While it shared the Wilsonian internationalism of the League of Nations, its formation also implied recognition that the League displayed a Eurocentric attitude.⁸ By July 1927, there were branches (generally referred to as national councils) in the USA, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, China, Japan and other countries. From the second conference onwards, the Australian IPR sent delegates to every conference until the organisation began to decline in the 1950s, when it was targeted by McCarthyism. The IPR ceased its activities in 1961.⁹

The leading figure within the Australian Council of the IPR in the 1930s was Frederic Eggleston, an important second-generation exponent of Alfred Deakin's brand of liberalism who was associated with the journal *Round Table*. Subtitled "A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Empire", this journal aimed "to organise influential citizens in the dominions and Britain for discussion of empire and its future" Curiously, *Round Table*, an intellectual agent of the empire, became, also, a source of recruits for the IPR: in Britain and Australia the *Round Table* circle became the main group that accommodated the

⁷ Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*.

⁸ David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1999), p. 216.

⁹ Akami, 'Frederic Eggleston and Oriental Power, 1925-1929', p. 101.

IPR.¹⁰ As a rare intellectual in the Australian political domain, and having published numerous articles and several books on Australian politics, Eggleston had an important influence on a new and emerging generation of intellectuals including William Macmahon Ball, especially in relation to ideas of reformism and Australian nationhood in the Asia-Pacific context. Ball succeeded Eggleston as a tutor in the Workers' Education Association in Melbourne in the 1930s and was an active member of the IPR. He later played a significant role in the early stages of the occupation, as the head of the Australian Liaison Mission to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur, and the representative of the British Commonwealth at the Allied Council for Japan, the body set up in Tokyo to represent the Far Eastern Commission in Washington. Ball later became a well-known university academic, and a commentator on Australia–Japan relations in the post-occupation era. Ball left a diary of his mission to occupied Japan, which started the day after he arrived in Japan on 4 April 1946 and ended shortly before leaving Japan in August 1947.¹¹

The IPR provided Eggleston with a crucial forum in which to develop a regionalist perspective. Eggleston's biographer, Warren Osmond, refers to Eggleston's "Pacific sense" and points to the fact that Eggleston, during the 1930s, questioned the notion that Australia could both defend its own interests and support British imperial priorities in the region. Eggleston developed his political thinking by engaging with issues stemming from the perceived need to establish a modern Australian national sovereignty. His ideas revealed a

¹⁰ L.L. Robson, 'Preface', in *Australian Commentaries: Select Articles from the Round Table, 1911-1942*, ed. L.L. Robson (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1975), p. v.

¹¹ See also Ai Kobayashi, *W. Macmahon Ball: Politics for the People* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013), p. 103.

constant negotiation between a keen intelligence that sought more academic understanding, and recognition of the need for political solutions to immediate problems. After the Second World War, Eggleston became a leading intellectual figure, recognising the need for further independence in Australia's international stance, but also displaying a "gentle affinity for American power" in the Pacific.¹²

Osmond notes that after Eggleston returned from the IPR's 1929 conference, held at Kyoto in Japan, it was clear that "Japan stimulated him more profoundly than the USA". Eggleston was impressed by the changes produced by the rapid modernisation of Japanese society since the mid-nineteenth century. He also recognised the competence of Japanese IPR members. He saw the Japanese nation-state as constituted by highly organised institutions. The Japanese educated elite, who, he believed, represented a politically moderate force, had little difficulty in employing Western critical thinking to clarify problems of their own society. The discussion among them made him realise how complicated were the social problems Japanese society faced.¹³

Eggleston seemed to believe that a modernised and imperial Japan best served Australian security interests. With regard to Japan's aggression in Manchuria and northern China in the 1930s, Eggleston believed Japan should be appeased, and criticised the punitive attitudes displayed by some Western governments. After attending the 1936 IPR conference at Yosemite in California, however, where 'Japanese activities in Manchuria and North China were extensively documented', he concluded that Japan 'had not evolved an orderly system of government', and that 'sooner or later Japan will blunder into war'.

¹² Warren G. Osmond, *Frederic Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 201-252, 307.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

Eggleston became Australian Ambassador to China after Prime Minister Robert Menzies opened Australian diplomatic missions in Washington, Tokyo and Chungking in 1940-41. Given his involvement in the IPR and his writings on Japan, it had been rumoured that Eggleston was to be assigned the ambassadorial post in Tokyo. Appointment as the first Australian Ambassador in Tokyo, however, went to Eggleston's close friend and the former Minister of External Affairs, John Latham, who had made the first official visit by an Australian politician to Japan in 1934. Although his political position had previously been opposite to that of the Australian Labor Party, Eggleston finished his official career by serving the Chifley Labor Government as the Australian Ambassador to Washington in 1944-46, and as official advisor to the Department of External Affairs until the demise of the Chifley government in 1949. Eggleston's regionalism, firmly developed while he served in all his official positions, influenced Australian foreign policy through to the Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Keating governments of the 1970s-90s.¹⁴ Osmond seems to overlook Eggleston's influence on the Chifley government's attitude to the occupation of Japan. Eggleston's thinking on Australian strategy in the Pacific influenced the Minister of Australian External Affairs, H. V. Evatt, who dominated Australian international affairs until the demise of the Chifley government at the end of 1949.¹⁵ Eggleston was the first Australian delegate to the Far Eastern Commission in Washington.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 63-64, 137-139.

¹⁵ Christine de Matos, *Imposing Peace and Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), p. 60.

¹⁶ Osmond, *Frederic Eggleston*, p. 251.

The Depression and Growing Australian Trade with Japan

The onset of the Depression caused significant crisis in Australia, as in other countries. Both Gross National Product and the employment rate recorded their lowest levels in 1932-1933.¹⁷ The Australian economy largely depended on exports of agricultural products including wool, wheat, sugar and dairy products. The impact of the Depression on export levels of these products (apart from wool) was such that these rural industries, which had been vital to Australia from the beginning of white settlement, did not show signs of recovery until 1938. The economic pressures of the Depression accelerated the growth of trade with Japan, which had already expanded rapidly throughout the 1920s. Lobby groups and academics outside official circles pushed the government of Joseph Lyons to tackle negotiations with Japan in an attempt to increase trade.¹⁸

Wool producers first identified further potential to export to Japan after Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931-32. Woolgrowers and their organisations saw the fighting in Manchuria as an opportunity to sell stock to Japan, which was in need of extra food, clothing and other supplies for armed forces in north-east China. Such organisations lobbied the federal government to change tariff arrangements to improve trade with Japan. This move generated enthusiasm from the wider manufacturing sector and from agricultural industries, and was supported by part of the press, on the grounds that "the conflict in Manchuria could serve as a stimulus to a wider variety of sales to Japan".¹⁹ Sydney's *Daily*

¹⁷ For a short description of the impact of the Depression on the Australian economy, and its recovery, see J.R. Robertson, '1930-39', in *A New History of Australia*, ed. Frank Crowley (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1974), pp. 416-420, 436-440.

¹⁸ P.B. Murphy, 'Australia and Japan in the Nineteen Thirties', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 65, no. 4 (1980), pp. 232-233.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

Telegraph pointed to the potential sale of meat and wheat to feed the Japanese troops, and of wool and leather “to offset the freezing conditions in Manchuria”.²⁰ By the early 1930s, Australia had become a major supplier of wool, wheat, iron ore, lead, zinc and other raw material to Japan, in return purchasing manufactured products such as silk and rayon textiles, textile goods, fertilisers and various household items including chinaware and furniture. Japan’s exports to Australia, valued at 9 million yen in 1923, increased to 65 million yen in 1934. Australia’s exports to Japan, valued at 15 million yen in 1913, increased to 235 million yen in 1935.²¹ In 1935, fourteen percent of total imports to Australia came from Japan, which was second only to imports from Britain.²² The trade between the two countries maintained a balance favourable to Australia.

The Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa in July 1932 signalled Britain’s abandonment of its free market policy and the formation of an economic bloc among the member states of the British empire in response to the Depression.²³ In the wake of the Ottawa Agreement, member states of the British Commonwealth, including Australia, started to review their economic policies. In 1936 the Australian government announced the Trade Diversion Policy, a supplemental policy to the Ottawa Agreement, at least for the Australian government. The aim was to increase tariffs on imports from countries outside the empire; American cars and Japanese rayon (synthetic silk) were specific targets. This move drew angry responses from both countries. The USA stopped importing wool from Australia. Trade negotiation between

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Henry P. Frei, *Japan’s Southward Advance and Australia: From the Sixteenth Century to World War II* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), p. 123.

²² Meaney, *Towards a New Vision*, p. 78.

²³ Takahashi Kamekichi, ‘Shōwashoki no Nihonkeizai’, in *Kataritsugu Shōwashi: Gekidō no Hanseiki Vol. 1* (Asahi shinbunsha, 1975), pp. 57-59.

Australia and Japan stalled and a so-called “trade war” between the two countries broke out in 1936. While it was resolved the following year, Australian exports to the Japanese market declined dramatically. The level of Australian wool exports to Japan would not recover until the 1960s, though the impact on Japanese exports to the Australian market was much less severe.²⁴

Young urban intellectuals influenced by the IPR believed that Australia's future in the Pacific depended on the expansion of a specifically Australian sovereignty. Macmahon Ball responded to the Trade Diversion Policy and the ensuing trade crisis with Japan in his edited book, *Press, Radio and World Affairs*,²⁵ which examines the media's role in Australian society. A chapter by A. G. Pearson concluded that much of the hostility towards Japan in the 1936 trade dispute originated in British newspapers or in the interests of British capital.²⁶ In the book's introduction, Ball pointed out that eighty-five per cent of world news published in Australia came directly from Reuters through the Australian Associated Press. He wrote: “Australian people should see the world, as far as possible, through Australian eyes”.²⁷ Such views played a significant role in the Chifley government's postwar reconstruction, both in domestic affairs and international relations, and with regard to the occupation of Japan in particular.

²⁴ Murphy, 'Australia and Japan in the Nineteen Thirties', pp. 235-238; Fukushima Teruhiko, "Bōeki Tenkan Seisaku" to Nichigo Bōeki Funsō (1936): Ōsutoraria Seifu no Nihonsei Orimono ni Taisuru Kanzei Hikiage o Megutte, Nichi-Go Kankei no Shiteki Tenkai', *Kokusai seiji*, no. 68 (1981), pp. 59-78; Jones, "Trading in a 'Fool's Paradise'?", pp. 135-136.

²⁵ W. Macmahon Ball, ed., *Press, Radio and World Affairs* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1938).

²⁶ A.G. Pearson, 'The Australian Press and Japan', in *ibid.*, pp. 36, 51.

²⁷ W. Macmahon Ball, 'The Australian Press and World Affairs', in *ibid.*, p. 16.

Australian Appeasement of Japan

Successive Australian governments, from Lyons through to Menzies and Curtin, from 1931 to the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, employed a policy of appeasement towards Japan, meaning that they maintained a neutral stance towards Japan's military expansion in China and eventually the full-scale war that began in 1937. Although Britain and other Western countries also largely maintained a "hands-off" attitude towards Japan's actions in China, the Lyons government (1932-1939) was very active in forging the first official Australian ties with Japan. Japanese officials responded quickly and favourably to Australia's approach, while commencing a fierce campaign in the USA, Britain, South America and elsewhere to justify its actions in north-east China.²⁸

In 1934 the Minister for External Affairs, John Latham, undertook a "Goodwill Mission" to Asian countries that was centred on diplomatic talks with Japan. It was the first time that a member of the Australian government had paid an official visit to Asia. The collapse of the collective security system in Europe and in East Asia had spurred the Lyons coalition government to send Latham to Japan. In his discussion with the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hirota Kōki, Latham empathised with Japan's position on Manchuria, which had provoked international censure, and looked towards a mediated solution through the League of Nations. Latham's lack of open opposition to Japanese military expansion and the creation of the puppet state of Manchukuo was similar to the stance of a number of his counterparts in the USA and Britain. During his visit, however, Latham also warned Foreign Minister Hirota that "it was extremely unwise for Japan to engage in any war with the British Empire", while lecturing him on the possible difficulties Japan would encounter if the

²⁸ Sandra Wilson, 'Containing the Crisis: Japan's Diplomatic Offensive in the West, 1931-33', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 29, no. 2 (1995), pp. 337-372.

Japanese Navy advanced into Southeast Asia.²⁹ After coming back from Japan in 1934, Latham told the parliament:

It is the 'Far East' to Europe, to the old centres of civilisation, but we must realise that it is the 'Near East' to Australia ... The whole of our interests ... lie in doing everything in our power to prevent ... war in the East.³⁰

This attitude potentially signalled a new path in Australian defence strategy. Establishing an independent agenda for Australia, however, would take some time, and Australia's own strategy would not emerge until after the Second World War. Nevertheless, by the early 1930s, leading politicians and defence experts had acknowledged that unless substantial reinforcement were undertaken, Singapore was inadequate as a fortress of the British empire in the Asia-Pacific region.³¹

The Lyons government delivered a draft proposal for a non-aggression treaty among the nations on the Pacific Rim, entitled the Pacific Pact, at the British Imperial Conference in May 1937. The aim was to draw in the US, as well as China and Japan. The proposed pact recognised the independence of Manchukuo in return for limits on the Japanese military presence in China. Japan started full-scale war against China in July in the same year, however, wiping out any further discussion of appeasement. Murphy claims that Lyons' proposal of the Pacific Pact was no more than a gesture intended for Australian domestic consumption, aimed at the coming federal election.³² Waters, however, argues that Australian political leaders exerted significant influence on

²⁹ Millar, *Australia in Peace and War*, p. 99; Meaney, *Towards a New Vision*, pp. 75-76; Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia*, pp. 125-126.

³⁰ Quoted in Meaney, *Towards a New Vision*, p. 100.

³¹ David Horner, *High Command: Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939-1945* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p. 9.

³² Murphy, 'Australia and Japan in the Nineteen Thirties', pp. 240-241.

Whitehall policy on appeasement right up until the outbreak of the Second World War, with the Pacific Pact evidence of a real intention on the part of Australian leaders to support appeasement.³³

Australian labour unions and other progressive social and political organisations outside government in 1930-1931 were preoccupied with the Depression.³⁴ By 1934, however, they were turning their attention to the rapidly worsening international situation, and were particularly concerned about the emergence of fascism in Europe. The Communist Party of Australia began a popular campaign called the Movement Against War and Fascism. By 1936, with heightened fascism in Europe and Asia, the anti-war campaign had focussed its attention on Japan's war in China.³⁵ The government was criticised for allowing the export of iron ore to Japan, which would reinforce Japanese war industries.

While the Lyons government stopped exporting iron ore to Japan in 1937, it continued to sell scrap iron and pig iron to Japan. In November 1938 the waterside workers at Port Kembla in NSW protested by refusing to load scrap iron for transport to Japan. Their protest continued for two months, receiving increasing support beyond the trade union movement. Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd closed its steel works "to starve the community into submission".³⁶ Although the government supported the company, the government itself had become anxious by this time about the support offered to Japanese expansion by Australian exports. Iron-ore mining in Yampi Sound in Western Australia was partially a Japanese project approved by both the Commonwealth and

³³ Christopher Waters, *Australia and Appeasement: Imperial Foreign Policy and the Origins of World War II* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 6, 20-21.

³⁴ Robertson, '1930-39', p. 451.

³⁵ Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1901-1942: The Succeeding Age* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 310.

³⁶ Ibid.

Western Australian governments in 1935. The Australian Trade Commission in Tokyo warned the federal government that iron from Yampi Sound might be used to extend Japanese imperialist interests, and exports were interrupted in May 1938 by a federal government ban on shipping of the iron ore to Japan.³⁷

A Failed Commercial Treaty

The 1932 Ottawa Agreement's reconstruction of tariff arrangements in favour of member nations of the British empire exposed the vulnerability of trade between Australia and Japan. Discussions of Japan-Australia trade had been important to Latham's 1934 mission to Asia. Among other things, Japanese officials at that time had requested "an agreement directly with Australia", rather than through the United Kingdom. The Japanese authorities had moved quickly after Latham's visit to propose a commercial and navigation treaty with Australia, presenting a draft in November 1934 that covered the "exchange of consular representatives, immigration, trade and commerce".³⁸ It was the first opportunity for these two Pacific nation-states to conclude a formal agreement. The Japanese Consul-General in Sydney, Lieutenant-General Murai Kuramatsu, and the Australian Minister Directing Negotiations for Trade Treaties, Henry Gullett, started their formal talks in Canberra in February 1935. The Japanese side allowed for Australian regulation of immigrant labour – in reality, mainly regulation of the entry of Japanese labourers to Australia – but wanted to ensure Japanese workers would be treated similarly to other migrant labourers once they were in Australia. The Japanese government also requested a reduction in the level of tariffs on all Japanese imports to the same level as that

³⁷ Meaney, *Towards a New Vision*, p. 79.

³⁸ Murphy, 'Australia and Japan in the Nineteen Thirties', pp. 233-234.

imposed on British imports. This request was certainly too ambitious, not least because it would have violated the Ottawa Agreement.³⁹

Talks were postponed in 1935, but resumed in January 1936. Negotiations did not proceed smoothly, however, and the two sides proved unable to agree on matters concerning Japanese immigration to Australia, and trade tariffs. The talks reached breaking-point when Gullett suddenly presented a new trade policy, the Trade Diversion Policy, introducing licences for trade and restructuring tariffs. Negotiations over the new policy began, but Gullett suddenly announced the implementation of the Trade Diversion Policy to the public. In response, Japan banned wool purchases from Australia. The dispute escalated when the Japanese government went on to ban all imports of Australian produce. Australia responded in a similar manner. The result was a so-called "Trade War" between Australia and Japan, which lasted for six months, until December 1936.⁴⁰

Australian-Japanese trade underwent a huge decline in 1937. At the peak of Japan-Australia trade in 1936, thirteen percent of Australian exports went to Japan. In 1936-1937 that figure fell to six percent, and then to four percent in 1937-1938. During this period the balance of trade between the countries favoured Japan. These figures, however, did not reflect the real costs to Australia of the trade war with Japan. In the short term and in terms of direct impact, Australia did not lose very much from the dispute. The United Kingdom and the other British dominions supported Australia by increasing their purchase of wool. Although the Australian wool trade with Japan did not recover to its pre-dispute level because Japan began to purchase wool from

³⁹ Ibid., p. 234; Fukushima, "'Bōeki Tenkan Seisaku" to Nichigo Bōeki Funsō (1936)', p. 61.

⁴⁰ Fukushima, "'Bōeki Tenkan Seisaku" to Nichigo Bōeki Funsō (1936)', pp. 62-63; Murphy, 'Australia and Japan in the Nineteen Thirties', p. 234.

elsewhere, the decline in Japan's wool purchase was compensated for by increased purchase of other products such as minerals and iron after the dispute ended. Overall, the Lyons government managed to resolve the dispute in Australia's favour, and trade was normalised in 1937.⁴¹ Negotiations over a treaty of commerce and navigation, however, were over.

A complex of forces surrounding the trade talks had undermined the treaty negotiation between Australia and Japan. White Australia and the tie with Britain were the core concerns. The Trade Diversion Policy resulted from a realisation that expenditure cuts during the Depression had exacted a toll on both Australian defence and on immigration from Britain. Gullett and others hoped for a long-term benefit from the Trade Diversion Policy through a rebuilding of "Australia's London funds", which in turn would contribute to defence and the resumption of British immigration into Australia. Anxiety about such issues hampered the treaty negotiation and prevented Australia from shifting further from an imperial to a regional orientation. Fears about Australian defence underpinned discourse on the issues relating to Japanese immigration to Australia. Moreover, the Japanese government's assertive approach in the treaty negotiations suggested it saw itself as Britain's competitor in relations with Australia, a stance that aroused a reaction in Australian society, where most people were of British origin. A message from the leading Japanese negotiator, Murai Kuramatsu, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, briefly reveals Japanese feelings of rivalry with Britain as well as a view that Gullett, his counterpart, was susceptible to British influence:

[Gullett] gave a strong impression that he was rather sympathetic towards Japan. He expressed the wish for the negotiation to reach a

⁴¹ Murphy, 'Australia and Japan in the Nineteen Thirties', p. 237; Fukushima, "'Bōeki Tenkan Seisaku" to Nichigo Bōeki Funsō (1936)', pp. 70, 74.

broad conclusion before leaving [on a trip to] Britain. Indeed, it appears that he has been doing his best to assist the treaty negotiation in the Australian parliament. However, I am afraid that he may come back to Australia under the influence of Britain and change his attitude.⁴²

Indeed, when Gullett returned from Britain, he did conduct the negotiation more forcefully, but it was because he wished to end the Trade Diversion Policy on behalf of the Lyons government, not because he was influenced by Britain. Nevertheless, it appears from Murai's communication that Gullett had been hoping, at least at the beginning of the negotiation, that the commercial treaty might be possible.

The Cultural Impact of Japan

In the 1930s there were opportunities for cultural intercourse with Japan for university-based intellectuals and other members of the Australian community. In 1935 a series of public lectures and exhibitions on Japanese arts and crafts toured major Australian cities. The event was promoted by the Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai (KBS: Association for International Cultural Relations, established in 1934 in Tokyo). KBS asked Peter Russo, an Australian university lecturer in Tokyo, to join its project in Australia. It sent another "cultural mission" to the USA, headed by the prominent British diplomat and historian of Japan, George Sansom, in the same year. Russo claimed that at this time KBS "had no affiliations whatsoever with political or militarist parties".⁴³ Nevertheless, Konoe Fumimaro, Hirota Kōki, and Okada Keisuke, each of whom was prime

⁴² Quoted in Fukushima, "'Bōeki Tenkan Seisaku" to Nichigo Bōeki Funsō (1936)', p. 62 (translation mine).

⁴³ Prue Torney-Parlicki, 'Selling Goodwill: Peter Russo and the Promotion of Australia-Japan Relations, 1935-1941', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 47, no. 3 (2001), p. 351.

minister between 1932 and 1941, were listed in the organisation's *KBS Quarterly*, in the position of president or advisor, indicating that KBS was in fact close to the central politics of Japan at this point.⁴⁴

As leader of the Australian tour, Russo gave lectures and other speeches dealing with Japan's history, culture and international relations, which were broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and delivered in printed form to the press and business organisations, universities and schools. Russo's principal lecture, entitled "The Mind of Japan", was delivered to a large audience at the University of Melbourne in August 1935, at a meeting chaired by Latham. Japanese gramophone records, pictures, dolls and books were exhibited to the audiences at these lectures. Audiences also responded enthusiastically to the Japanese cultural tour in Sydney and Brisbane. In addition, books Russo had brought from Japan on behalf of KBS were distributed with the assistance of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, and an exchange of arts and crafts between Australia and Japan was discussed. Russo's hard work for the tour turned him into a publicist specialising in Japanese culture, history and current affairs. He wrote on these subjects in Australian newspapers and broadcasted regularly. However, Russo himself later described this series of cultural events as "one way traffic".⁴⁵ There was no Australian attempt to organise the same kind of cultural tour to Japan. Russo's expertise on both Australia and Japan also allowed him to contribute to language education in Australia, shortly after the 1935 cultural events: a colleague of Russo's, Seita Ryūnosuke, was appointed to a lectureship in Japanese language at the University of Queensland in 1937 on Russo's recommendation. Moreover, through Russo's introduction to the Australian

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 352.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 356.

Council for Educational Research, Tsurumi Yūsuke, a prominent politician and writer, became the first-ever Japanese delegate to the British-based educational conference, New Education Fellowship, in Melbourne in 1937.⁴⁶

Enthusiasm for teaching and learning Japanese began in the middle of the 1930s and had a continuous impact on the relationship between the two countries. The University of Queensland's establishment of a Japanese-language course in 1936 was a product of this enthusiasm. Tertiary-level Japanese-language courses had previously existed only in Oriental Studies at the University of Sydney and at the Royal Military College in Canberra. The ABC radio station in Victoria, 3LO, began a regular radio program for teaching the Japanese language in the early 1930s, signifying that interest in things Japanese was spreading beyond formal educational curricula.⁴⁷ The inauguration of Saturday morning Japanese- (and Italian-) language classes at MacRobertson Girls' High School in Melbourne in 1935 testifies to an emerging interest in language-learning beyond the conventional second-language curricula of German and French. One of my interviewees in this thesis, Lillias O'Dea (née Dora Mound), was a graduate of MacRobertson Girls' High School who started learning Japanese at the Saturday morning classes in 1935. She continued her study of Japanese at the University of Melbourne, in addition to her major study of the German language. After the Pacific War, she taught the first post-war Japanese class in Victoria and then founded the Japanese Teachers'

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 355. Tsurumi Yusuke, with his daughter, Tsurumi Kazuko, were attending the conference in Melbourne on the day Japan began its full-scale invasion of China. See recollection by Tsurumi Kazuko (identified only as 'Q'), in Tsurumi Kazuko, 'Sensō Taiken Nendaishi e no Kokoromi', in *Hikisakarete: Haha no Sensō Taiken*, ed. Tsurumi Kazuko and Makise Kikue (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1959), p. 248.

⁴⁷ Colin Funch, *Linguists in Uniform: The Japanese Experience* (Melbourne: Japanese Studies Centre, Monash University, 2003), pp. 13-16, 30.

Association of Victoria, while working at several state high schools in Melbourne, first as a teacher, then as school principal.⁴⁸

In 1935, employees of Adelaide Post Office who wanted to learn Japanese formed the Adelaide Club, with the aim of developing their conversational skills in Japanese. Max Wiadrowski was closely associated with the Adelaide Club. He enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939; the military recognised his Japanese-language skill, and he eventually he became the first Commanding Officer and Chief Instructor of the RAAF Language School in Sydney, which trained military linguists in Japanese throughout the period from 1944 to 1947. The school's graduates were mainly sent to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan. After the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941 the Australian military sought servicemen as well as civilians with Japanese-language skills. Like Wiadrowski, a number of "self-made linguists" who had learned Japanese outside educational institutions in the 1930s, together with personnel who had graduated from formal Japanese-language courses, served in various war operations requiring Japanese-language skills, until servicemen systematically trained by the military in the Japanese language joined them.⁴⁹

The outbreak of full-scale war between Japan and China in 1937 brought an end to the brief but busy and varied period of interaction between Japan and Australia in the 1930s. When war started, it became obvious that the commercial treaty negotiations were provoking suspicions in Australia that Japan intended to drive a wedge between Australia and Britain. Archival records suggest that Australian intelligence authorities assumed the existence of

⁴⁸ Lillias O'Dea, interview, 5 June (Melbourne). The Saturday Japanese classes at MacRobertson's Girls' High School were taught by Inagaki Moshi and his students from the University of Melbourne.

⁴⁹ Funch, *Linguists in Uniform*, pp. 32-33.

a conspiracy by Japan and other nations towards Australia. Intelligence reports in 1940 on Russo, who was, by then, an established broadcaster and publicist specialising in Japanese culture and current affairs, reveal that Russo was suspected of “attempting to loosen the ties between Australia and Britain by emphasising Australia’s independent interests in the Pacific region.”⁵⁰ The enthusiastic public response to the 1935 Japanese cultural tour quickly faded away with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, and then the signing of the Tripartite Pact by Japan, Italy and Germany in September 1940.

The Defence of the Australian Nation

When the Pacific War began, Australia was a small nation-state, a former colony of Britain with a population of 6.9 million descended mainly from white settlers of Anglo-Celtic family background. It had massive land and sea territory that would be extremely difficult to defend from an attack by sea or air. The neighbouring regions to the north, the Southeast Asian and Pacific regions, however, comprised almost entirely colonial territories, where European powers controlled native inhabitants through military garrisons. In the other direction, towards the southeast, there was only New Zealand, another former British colony. Since the establishment of Australia as a British colonial territory in 1788, white settlers had not had any territorial disputes with external forces nor any direct physical threats from outside. This was probably one of the major reasons that Australia was slow in building up its own military institutions after the British army left its colonial garrisons in Australia in the middle of the nineteenth century. The defence of Australia was always conceived as part of the strategy of the British empire, with immediate action

⁵⁰ Torney-Parlicki, 'Selling Goodwill', p. 360.

for the national defence of Australia in the hands of a militia that was a mixture of volunteer and part-time soldiers.⁵¹

The emergence of Japan as an imperial power was a wake-up call on Australian defence; it led to the introduction of compulsory military training and the formation of the Royal Australian Navy in 1911.⁵² The Australian military, however, had far less impact on the government and its decision-making processes than did its counterparts in Britain, the USA and Japan. The actions of a succession of governments in building up national defence were rather sporadic. The British never included the Australian military in strategic planning before the Second World War.⁵³

At the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, Australian Prime Minister W. M. Hughes managed to secure for Australia the former German colonial territories in the Pacific south of the equator (New Guinea), while Japan obtained those north of the equator (the Marshall, Marianas and Caroline islands). Eastern New Guinea became the largest and closest Australian-controlled external territory, and was vital to the battle against Japanese forces during the Pacific War. Under the Washington Treaty system of 1922, a reduction of naval armament among the Pacific Powers – the USA, Britain and Japan – brought Australia some relief concerning national defence. In any case, during the interwar period, when Australian trade with Japan thrived, as we have seen, concerns about national defence abated somewhat. At the outbreak of the Depression, James Scullin's Labor government (1929-1932) further cut the

⁵¹ See Roland Perry, *Monash: The Outsider Who Won a War* (Sydney: Random House, 2004).

⁵² Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia*, pp. 2, 8-9.

⁵³ Horner, *High Command*, p. 5.

defence budget, despite a rapidly deteriorating political situation in Europe and in East Asia.⁵⁴

The Pacific War was a catalyst in creating an independent Australian military force. It was, however, a slow process. Military circles in Australia had probably supported the British empire more strongly than had any other section of Australian society. If recruits at the Royal Australian Military Academy were to ascend the military hierarchy, for example, further training was necessary at one of two top military academies of the empire, one in England and another in India: around forty Australian officers attended the British Staff Colleges at Camberley in Surrey and at Quetta, in what is now Pakistan.⁵⁵ Both the Commanders-in-Chief of BCOF, Northcott and Robertson, attended the Staff College at Camberley after their service in the First World War.⁵⁶ The experience of BCOF undermined military faith in the empire, demonstrating the decline of the prestige of the empire in the face of obvious American dominance during the occupation of Japan.

Australian public sentiment about nationhood had been profoundly shaped by Australian experiences of the First World War. Five divisions of the Australian Imperial Forces had been sent to the war fronts in Europe and the Middle East. Nearly sixty thousand Australian servicemen had died during the war. By the late 1930s, grief and memories that had been constantly reshaped

⁵⁴ Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia*, p. 118; Horner, *High Command*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁵ Horner, *High Command*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ H.J. Coates, 'Lt-Gen Northcott,' <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/northcott-sir-john-11257>, accessed 14 January 2015; Jeffrey Grey, *Australian Brass: The Career of Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson* (Cambridge and Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 54.

formed the core of Australian national sentiment on war and nationhood.⁵⁷ Anti-war sentiment had also left its legacy. It had been expressed chiefly through a campaign against the proposed introduction of conscription for overseas military service by the Hughes governments. Although the anti-conscription campaign blocked the governments' proposals, support for conscription had been strong enough to split the Australian Labor Party.⁵⁸

At the start of the Second World War, because of the legacy of the anti-conscription campaigns, it was still not easy to suggest the introduction of compulsory military service.⁵⁹ Although in 1942 the Curtin Labor government imposed a manpower policy allowing it to mobilise any section of the Australian population into its armed forces for the war effort, it introduced compulsory military service only for service in Australia or its territories, while volunteer service was maintained outside Australian territory. The conscripts suffered many casualties in fighting the Japanese at Kakoda in Papua New Guinea.⁶⁰ The war demanded more and more troops in the field, but enlistment in the AIF was declining. Curtin therefore modified his anti-conscription stance, announcing in 1943 that both conscripted men and volunteers would serve in the region north of Australia, that is the South West Pacific Area.⁶¹

Anti-conscription ideas and the notion of the essential volunteerism of Australian forces, however, undoubtedly contributed to a renewed sense of

⁵⁷ On war memorials see K. S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press at Melbourne University Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ Ian Turner, '1914-19', in *A New History of Australia*, ed. Frank Crowley (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1974), pp. 333-336; David Day, *John Curtin: A Life* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 177-201.

⁵⁹ Horner, *High Command*, pp. 137-138.

⁶⁰ David Horner, 'Defending Australia in 1942', *War & Society*, Vol. 11, no. 1 (1993), p. 9.

⁶¹ David Day, *Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied Defeat of Japan 1942-45* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 84.

nationhood in Australia in the early postwar period, with the implication that Australian soldiers who had fought in the Second World War had done so of their own will, to defend democracy and to secure their nation's safety. In reality many eligible men enlisted for war service because they were expected to do so. However, the sense that volunteerism in the military was an important part of Australian nationalism can often be identified among the recollections of former Australian military personnel. The BCOF soldier Ken Wells recalled a Japanese man who told him that, since he had heard that all Australian soldiers had volunteered to fight in the war (unlike most Japanese soldiers, who were conscripted), he had been wondering which nation was more nationalistic, Japan or Australia? Wells told his father in a letter that the Japanese man's question had left him speechless and unable to reply.⁶²

War with Japan

Although many Australians had perceived a threat from Japan for forty years, the Japanese government in fact only started to take a serious interest in the natural resources of Southeast Asia, and thus in Australia's region, from the late 1930s onwards. In 1940 the Japanese authorities decided to send military forces into Southeast Asia in order to secure strategic resources to continue fighting the war in China, taking advantage of the colonial powers' preoccupation with the war in Europe, where Hitler's forces appeared to be overwhelming the Allies.⁶³ "Fortress Singapore" symbolised the power of the British Empire in the East. It was intended to be the greatest fortress of the empire, and would supposedly protect British dominions and colonial territories in the Asia-Pacific

⁶² Ken Wells, letter to Father, September 1946.

⁶³ Akira Fujiwara, 'The Road to Pearl Harbor', in *Pearl Harbor Reexamined: Prologue to the Pacific War*, ed. Hilary Conroy and Harry Wray (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. 151-153.

region. Contrary to the popular belief that Singapore housed the “unsinkable fleet of the Empire”, however, the construction of the naval base had not been completed by the time the Second World War broke out. The Prime Minister of Australia, Robert Menzies, was very much aware of the actual weakness of the empire in the East, pointing out that the East was not the first priority of Britain in any case. His concern about Japanese movements made him at first reluctant to let Australia’s main troops leave for the war in Europe. Menzies initially sent only an expeditionary force in response to Britain’s request for troops. However, the British government persuaded him to send more troops, partly on the basis of a British intelligence assessment that Japan would not go to war with Britain and its dominions. The Royal Australian Navy, too, insisted that “Australia could best be defended by cooperating with imperial defence”.⁶⁴ At the beginning of 1940 Menzies sent most of the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) to the Middle East on the premise that Singapore, if attacked, would be able to keep fighting against Japan for at least four months, allowing reinforcements from Europe time to arrive. In February 1941 Menzies, who had travelled to London, found out how poorly Singapore was defended.⁶⁵

The attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces on 7 December 1941, and attacks in Southeast Asia from 7 December onwards, suddenly exposed the northern coastline of Australia facing the Coral Sea, the Arafura Sea and the Timor Sea as a direct target zone of Japanese military manoeuvres. Australia was in shock. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor contradicted the predictions of strategists in Britain and Australia who believed that Japan would gradually move further south from Thailand and French Indo-China, where its troops had been positioned since July 1941. The advance of Japanese land forces towards

⁶⁴ David Horner, 'Defending Australia in 1942', pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵ Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1901-1942*, p. 332.

Singapore meant that the capability of the “fortress” was greatly impaired even before it was defeated, especially through the loss of control of sea and land areas to its immediate north. Australian leaders had been well aware that direct confrontation with Japan was only a matter of time. However, most Australians still believed that Singapore could protect Australia, even after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The rapid fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 after only ten days of fighting was a real blow to Australia’s reliance on the strategy of empire, and Australia now had to move quickly to defend itself.⁶⁶

In his New Year Message of 1942 published in the Melbourne *Herald*, Australian Prime Minister John Curtin, who had succeeded Menzies in October 1941, declared that Australia looked to America “free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom”. The article had been written for a domestic audience, but it annoyed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt also condemned the statement, saying it “smacked of panic and disloyalty”.⁶⁷ Ever since 1941, the role of Curtin’s statement in encouraging Australia into further independence from Britain has fascinated historians of modern Australia. Day argues that Curtin’s message pressured Churchill and Roosevelt to reconsider their “Hitler first” policy by highlighting the importance of the Pacific theatre. Curtin’s message potentially encouraged anti-Churchill politicians in Britain and “pro-Pacific War” elements in the USA.⁶⁸ Other historians argue that British intelligence had been aware that the Japanese authorities had decided in 1942 not to invade

⁶⁶On the fall of Singapore and re-organisation of Australian war strategy see Horner, *High Command*, pp. 147-168.

⁶⁷Day, *John Curtin*, pp. 438-441.

⁶⁸David Day, *The Politics of War* (Pymble, NSW: Harper Collins, 2003), pp. 226-229.

Australia with land forces.⁶⁹ In this view, Curtin's overture to America had more to do with his ambivalent attitude to the British tie. Horner insists that the reason Japanese forces did not land in Australia in 1942 was simply that Australian strategy and help from the USA prevented it, because Japan was defeated on the Kokoda Trail in New Guinea. Horner believes that, if the war in New Guinea in 1942-1943 had turned in Japan's favour and Japanese forces had captured Port Moresby, the Japanese authorities might have changed their mind and invaded northern Australia.⁷⁰ Despite historians' disagreement about the significance of Curtin's message, however, there is little indication that it provoked anger from the general public. It probably made sense to many people who were frightened and even panicked by the movement of the Japanese military right on Australia's doorstep.

Events following Pearl Harbor are remembered as part of the darkest period of Australian history. Two large British warships, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, were sunk off Malaya by Japanese naval ships on 11 December 1941; Singapore fell; Australian soldiers capitulated not only in Singapore but elsewhere in Southeast Asia after Japanese military victories, and from January to March 1942 over 22,000 Australians became prisoners-of-war.⁷¹ On 19 February 1942 Darwin was bombed from the air by Japanese forces, killing at least 243 people, in the first of over seventy Japanese air raids against towns on the northern coastline of Australia. This dark period lasted until the Battle of the Coral Sea in July 1942, which was won by the Allies. The arrival of American troops in Australia from April 1942 onwards, after General Douglas

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1942-1988: The Middle Way* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 15.

⁷⁰ Horner, 'Defending Australia in 1942', pp. 2, 6; Peter Stanley, *Invading Australia: Japan and the Battle for Australia, 1942* (Camberwell: Viking, 2008).

⁷¹ Hank Nelson, *Prisoners of War: Australian under Nippon* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985), p. 4.

MacArthur was ordered by Roosevelt to abandon the Philippines and set up headquarters in Australia, also provided relief from the fear of Japanese invasion for the Australian government as well as most Australians.⁷²

In Australia the Department of Information initiated an anti-Japanese propaganda campaign in 1942 in response to Japanese military advances. Radio, newspapers and posters focused on alleged racial and cultural differences between Japanese and Western people, employing the usual stereotypes. One slogan proclaimed: "We've always despised them – now we must smash them".⁷³ Macmahon Ball, who was then Controller of Short Wave Broadcasting, recalls talking to Prime Minister Curtin about the campaign, and showing him some of the scripts for broadcasting:

I thought they fell too low even for a nation fighting desperately in self-defence. Curtin fully agreed and this series was partly abandoned and otherwise altered.⁷⁴

One strand within public feeling reinforced Ball's view. Letters of protest and some newspaper editorials opposed the campaign. A letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* declared: "It is characteristic of the Christian faith ... that it deliberately teaches us to hate evil, but not to hate the person in whom the evil is found."⁷⁵ The official propaganda campaign was cancelled almost immediately. Humphrey McQueen argues that the campaign's racism caused it

⁷² Edward J. Drea, "'Great Patience Is Needed': America Encounters Australia 1942", *War & Society*, Vol. 11, no. 1 (1993), pp. 21-51; Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1901-1942*, pp. 332-336; Day, *John Curtin*, pp. 471-473.

⁷³ Humphrey McQueen, *Suspect History: Manning Clark and the Future of Australia's Past* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1997), p. 215; Prue Torney-Parlicki, *Somewhere in Asia: War, Journalism, and Australia's Neighbours, 1941-75* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), p. 59.

⁷⁴ W. Macmahon Ball, *Intermittent Diplomat: The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball*, ed. Alan Rix (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1988), p. 196.

⁷⁵ "Official hate 'blurbs'", editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1942, p. 6; "Letters to the Editor," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 April, 1942, p. 6.

to be withdrawn.⁷⁶ Torney-Parlicki is probably more accurate in her assessment that the campaign was regarded as un-Christian, un-Australian and offensive to British traditions, even though in fact it had “merely synthesised a number of ideas about the Japanese used routinely by the wartime media”.⁷⁷ Later, BCOF member William Towers wrote to his mother explaining why he had enlisted to join the occupation:

I was sick of all the propaganda I had heard and read about the people here and wanted to see for myself. I wanted to find out why I was taught at school that the Japanese was the world's little gentleman, and then ten years later told by a reliable source (the capitalist press) that he is a treacherous and uncivilised barbarian. I didn't expect to enjoy my stay here, but wanted to develop my potential outlook about a nation whose future politics will play a big part in the development of Australia.⁷⁸

By April 1942, Australia was getting ready to fight back against Japan, as trained and experienced Australian troops returned from the Middle East and Europe. Australia responded quickly to initial Japanese military movements, sending troops to Ambon, Timor, Rabaul and Port Moresby soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941. Apart from those at Port Moresby, however, these troops became prisoners-of-war. From March 1942 US troops started arriving in Australia. Australian and American troops fought the Japanese in New Guinea throughout 1942. Japanese forces had been hampered by their loss to the US Pacific Fleet in the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in

⁷⁶ McQueen, *Suspect History*, p. 215.

⁷⁷ Torney-Parlicki, *Somewhere in Asia*, p. 60.

⁷⁸ William Arthur Towers, 'Papers, 1941-1994 [Manuscript]', 7 April 1946, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 9112.

May and July in 1942, and in February 1943, the New Guinea campaign finally stopped the Japanese advance by land to Port Moresby.⁷⁹

The war in the Pacific had clearly shifted in the Allies' favour by early 1943. In September 1943, Australian and US troops recaptured Buna, Gona and Saramandra in eastern New Guinea. The US also recaptured Makin and Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands. Thus the Allies had gained the upper hand in the war in both Europe and the Pacific. Individual Allied powers began to attempt to further their own interests in the coming postwar world order; in this process, Australia's war with Japan became further entangled in the politics of relations with Britain and the USA. The question of whether Britain would send troops to the Pacific became pressing. In July 1943 Churchill was preoccupied with the land war against Germany in Italy, followed by the D-Day campaign in France in November. In an attempt to soothe the "Pacific first element" in the USA, however, Churchill formulated the idea that "there would be a two-stage ending of the war with Japan being mopped up after Germany had been defeated".⁸⁰ By July 1943, the "two-stage ending of the war" formula had been accepted by the USA and openly acknowledged among the Allies. By October 1944, Churchill and his Chiefs-of-Staff had devised a Pacific strategy, which largely relied on the dominions. As we will see in the next chapter, however, it was too late for the British to secure a major role in the Pacific. For both the US military and the American public, the strategy turned into "war with Japan by America alone".⁸¹

⁷⁹ Horner, 'Defending Australia in 1942', p. 11; Drea, "'Great Patience Is Needed'", pp. 37-39; Horner, *High Command*, p. 179.

⁸⁰ David Day, 'Promise and Performance: Britain's Pacific Pledge, 1943-5', *War & Society*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (1986), p. 73; Day, *The Politics of War*, pp. 435, 448-462.

⁸¹ Day, 'Promise and Performance', p. 81.

In the Allies' wartime strategy, the Asia-Pacific region was divided into different command zones. The Southeast Asia Command comprised Burma, Malaya, Sumatra and Ceylon and was controlled by Britain. The South West Pacific Area comprised Australia, New Guinea, the Netherlands Indies (except Sumatra), Borneo and the Philippines and was controlled by Australia and the USA.⁸² The South West Pacific Area was the major battleground in the Pacific War until the middle of 1944. MacArthur commanded this area, with the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Army, General Thomas Blamey, in charge of Allied Land Forces.

MacArthur, who saw blocking Japanese control of New Guinea as an absolute necessity if he were to return to the Philippines as he wanted to do, fully capitalised on the success of his battles in 1943 to tighten his control over the South West Pacific Area. General Blamey, as Commander of Allied Land Forces in the South West Pacific Area, was increasingly isolated from MacArthur and US land forces. For the sake of his Philippine campaign, MacArthur moved his headquarters out of Australia to Hollandia in New Guinea in September 1944. As his Philippines campaign advanced, he was to set up his headquarters in Leyte in the Philippines, and finally in Luzon,⁸³ wanting to ensure that the Allied effort in the Philippines was an American one. Other American interests agreed: in September 1944, for example, a month before MacArthur landed on Leyte Island, the *Washington Times Herald* called for the United States to "go it alone against Japan rather than allow Britain, France, Holland, and Russia to contribute token forces at this late hour".⁸⁴ MacArthur

⁸² See Map 2, Area Commands Pacific Theatre, in Charles W. Bogg, *Marine Aviation in the Phillipines* (Washington DC: Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1951).

⁸³ Drea, "Great Patience Is Needed", p. 39.

⁸⁴ Quoted in David Day, *Reluctant Nation*, p. 230.

initially offered to take two divisions of Australian land forces for the campaign to recapture the Philippines, but he insisted, as Day puts it, that each should be “linked to an American division and part of an American corps”. Australian commanders “could only operate as individual commanders of separate divisions”. There would have had been no place for Blamey in this plan, and it did not proceed.⁸⁵ In any case, Blamey was not able to spare two divisions of Australian troops for the Philippines because at the last moment MacArthur ordered him to continue the New Guinea campaign, using a large contingent of Australian forces, in order to release American troops for the Philippines.⁸⁶ MacArthur landed on Leyte Island on 20 October 1944, with more than 160 000 American troops guarded by more than 700 American ships. Eight Australian ships were also sent.⁸⁷ In the end, however, Australian forces played no real role in this very theatrical moment of the Pacific War.

At this point Prime Minister Curtin was keen to “normalise” the relationship with Britain that had fractured under his prime ministership in the early stage of the war. Churchill had finally launched Britain’s war in the Pacific. He proposed to build the British Pacific Fleet in Fremantle to provision a British Commonwealth Force, which would be used in “mopping up the Japanese” in the Pacific. It appeared as if Australia would be with Britain at the final stages of the Pacific War.⁸⁸ The British Pacific Fleet finally arrived at Fremantle with “some 96 vessels of all types” in January 1945.⁸⁹ By August 1945, the scheduled invasion of the Japanese main islands by the British Commonwealth Force had been set for March 1946, following that of the US, set for October 1945 onwards.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Horner, *High Command*, pp. 335-340.

⁸⁷ Day, *The Politics of War*, p. 621.

⁸⁸ Day, *John Curtin*, pp. 522-524.

⁸⁹ Day, 'Promise and Performance', p. 82.

Germany finally surrendered to the Allies on 8 May 1945, which was six months later than had been estimated by Allied leaders. The Japanese surrender, on the other hand, came earlier than the Allies anticipated. The explosion on 6 and 9 August 1945 of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, after other cities and towns on the main Japanese islands had already been heavily bombed by Allied air raids, together with the entry into the Pacific War of the Soviet Union on 8 August, made Japanese leaders accept unconditional surrender rather abruptly. On 15 August the Pacific War ended. Australian Prime Minister John Curtin had died in office in July 1945, a little over a month before Japan surrendered. Curtin's successor, Prime Minister Ben Chifley, now faced a large degree of uncertainty in international relations: the USA was the dominant power in the Pacific, and Australia was outside of the sphere of international political power.⁹⁰

Legacies of the War

The Pacific War was the most brutal war experienced by humankind in modern history. The use of nuclear bombs against the Japanese population proved its ferocity beyond doubt. John Dower calls the Pacific War a "war without mercy" that was conducted on both sides on the principle of "kill or be killed".⁹¹ The results were devastating. In the Battle of Iwojima in February 1945, for example, 20 000 Japanese troops were killed, with 1083 captured. American casualties

⁹⁰ Christopher Waters, 'Voices in the Wilderness: H.V. Evatt and the European Peace Settlement, 1945-47', in *Brave New World: Dr H.V. Evatt and Australian Foreign Policy, 1941-1949*, ed. David Day (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1996), p. 64.

⁹¹ John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

were 28,686, of whom 6821 were killed, went missing or died of wounds.⁹² The war produced very high civilian deaths in China, Korea, India, the Philippines, and in European colonial territories including the Netherlands Indies, French Indochina, Malaya and Singapore. Japan also suffered a high number of civilian deaths, the majority due to US air raids in the final year of the war.

Approximately 2.5 million Japanese soldiers and civilians died in total, or 3% of the Japanese population at the time. During the seven years of the war with Japan, perhaps 10 million Chinese soldiers and civilians died. More than 400,000 Korean civilians died. It is difficult to estimate exact figures for Southeast Asia but the death toll in places such as Malaya, Indochina and the Philippines, whether from the direct results of war or due to famine caused by the disruption of agricultural production and distribution, was very high. In Indonesia, for example, total deaths as the result of forced labour by the Japanese, including those who were killed or who died of hunger, malnutrition and disease, was 3,000,000 for Java, and 1,000,000 for other areas.⁹³

The cruel treatment of Allied POWs by the Japanese military remained as a painful legacy of the war. Over 22,000 Australian soldiers became POWs under the Japanese military. There were 14,315 servicemen and 30 servicewomen who survived. Thirty percent of Allied personnel captured by the Japanese did not survive, while the death rate of POWs held by the Germans was 3 percent, except for the Russians held by the Germans, who faced a much higher death rate. Of the 8174 Australians captured in Europe, the

⁹² Richard F. Newcomb, *Iwo Jima* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1965), p. 296.

⁹³ 'By the Numbers: World-Wide Deaths', The National WWII Museum, <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/world-wide-deaths.html>, accessed 29 June 2015; Dower, *War without Mercy*, pp. 295-297.

Middle East and North Africa, only 265 died.⁹⁴ The worst single case of Australian and British fatalities among POWs held by Japanese forces was the 2 000 prisoners who perished on a “death march” from Sandakan in Borneo; only six escaped. There were differences, however, between conditions for Allied POWs held in Southeast Asia and those who were sent to camps in Japan. Allied prisoners of war who were transferred to Japan fared better; the death rate in Japan was 10%.⁹⁵ Some of them even returned to Japan as BCOF personnel, as we will see in later chapters. The experience of this sub-group of BCOF personnel has been largely ignored by Australian historians.

The Pacific War has often been seen by American and Japanese observers as an American-Japanese war, with the USA as the sole winner. Although historians do not agree on whether the cause of the Pacific War lay primarily in the US objection to Japan's war in China or in competition for the resources of Southeast Asia,⁹⁶ it is undoubtedly the case that escalating confrontations between Japan and the USA from the late 1930s onwards contributed strongly to the war in the Pacific. It was Japan's spectacular attack on Pearl Harbor, the largest US fortress facing the Pacific Ocean, that brought the USA into the Second World War. Afterwards, it was US campaigns such as those in the Philippines, Saipan, Leyte, Iwo Jima and Okinawa in 1944-1945 that

⁹⁴ Nelson, *Prisoners of War*, p. 4. Dower emphasises that the figures usually given fail to take account of the very high death rate of Germans held by the Soviet Union and Soviet soldiers held by the German military: *War without Mercy*, p. 48. An English woman working for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration gives a rare though brief insight into the privations suffered by a Russian prisoner of war in Francesca M. Wilson, *Aftermath: France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, 1945 and 1946* (West Drayton, Middlesex: Penguin, 1947), pp. 22-23.

⁹⁵ Nelson, *Prisoners of War*, p. 4; Lynette Ramsay Silver, *Sandakan: A Conspiracy of Silence* (Bowral: Sally Milner, 2000); 'List of Deceased POWs', POW Research Network Japan, <http://powresearch.jp/en/archive/powlist/index.html>, accessed 17 January 2015.

⁹⁶ See essays in Hilary Conroy and Harry Wray, eds, *Pearl Harbor Reexamined: Prologue to the Pacific War* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

“mopped up” the Japanese in the Pacific. It was Douglas MacArthur who, eventually, personally represented the Allied victory over Japan and reigned as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers for most of the period of the occupation, until April 1951.

All of these factors have shaped the predominant view of the Pacific War as an American-Japanese war in the voluminous postwar literature published in the US, in Japan and elsewhere. Australia’s own war with Japan has been rendered largely invisible compared with that of the US. Australian military land force operations were confined to the South West Pacific Area during the last ten months of the Pacific War. MacArthur not only failed to acknowledge Australia’s significant contribution to the New Guinea campaigns, he took credit - unjustifiably, in the view of both Horner and Drea - for the strategy of defending Australia from New Guinea. Such attitudes continued in the conduct of the Allied occupation of Japan after the conflict ended.⁹⁷

The period leading up to the occupation of Japan was a turbulent one for Australia, in which issues of nationhood, economic depression and development, national defence, and international alliance were intensely significant. Many different historical actors –politicians, intellectuals, military personnel, farmers, businessmen– were caught up in this drama, much of which was focused on Japan. As we shall see in the following chapter, these actors would bring their own interests and concerns to the leading role that Australia would play in the formation of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force.

⁹⁷ Drea, "Great Patience Is Needed", pp. 24-25; Horner, *High Command*, p. 423.

CHAPTER TWO

Australia and the Formation of BCOF

When the war in the Pacific ended in August 1945 with Japan's unconditional surrender, the winners were in a position to impose their own agendas in order to shape the emerging postwar era. Yet they faced a mountain of tasks.

Tensions and conflicts had already begun to break down the wartime cooperation between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. Even within the ranks of the Western countries, tension stemming from the return of the imperial powers to reclaim control over former colonial territories in Asia was evident. Australia was very active in taking advantage of the choices that now emerged for smaller nations, particularly through the new international organisation, the United Nations, which was designed to provide collective security to the world. Meanwhile, the Pacific Allies' immediate attention was directed at dealing with the abrupt surrender of Japan. Australia willingly involved itself in the volatile new situation in the Pacific by participating in the occupation and reconstruction of Japan.

Australia's involvement in the military occupation of Japan began when Prime Minister Ben Chifley readily accepted British Prime Minister Clement Attlee's request to undertake most tasks associated with sending the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) to Japan. In return Attlee agreed that Australia should head BCOF. Although MacArthur had agreed to share the occupation of Japan with a British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), he initially opposed the idea that BCOF should operate as one united force independent of the US military. At a meeting with MacArthur in December 1945, Northcott, the first Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, managed to gain

agreement on an independent command and administrative operation, although BCOF as a whole would be entirely under MacArthur's command.¹

This chapter first analyses the Australian foreign policy and defence strategy that formed the framework for Australia's participation in the occupation. It then examines the overall machinery of the occupation, the actual formation of BCOF, and the motivation of the rank-and file soldiers who joined the occupation force to go to Japan. Whether they knew it or not, these ordinary soldiers were participating in a project that was crucial not only for defeated Japan, but also for the formation of postwar Australia.

Australia's Decision to Send Troops to Occupied Japan

By the end of the war, Australia's defence and foreign policy priorities were changing. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a new willingness to loosen Australia's ties to Britain and to side with the USA, which was trying to forge a postwar world order at the expense of the European colonial powers. The Chifley government responded warily to Britain's request for military assistance in returning to Hong Kong and Malaya, signalling a shift in Australia's postwar defence direction. The Chifley government was also gradually shifting in its attitudes to its neighbours, as seen by the fact that it eventually moved to cautious support of the nationalist independence movement in the Netherlands Indies.² Australia's significant involvement in the formation of the United Nations in April-June 1945 was also a key component

¹ David Horner, *High Command: Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939-1945* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 422-423; George Davies, *The Occupation of Japan: The Rhetoric and the Reality of Anglo-Australasian Relations, 1939-1952* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001), pp. 106-108.

² Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980).

of the Chifley government's progressive position in postwar international affairs. As a small nation, however, Australia was not able to convert its war effort into real influence over the postwar order in the Asia-Pacific region, where the USA had now emerged as the dominant power. Australia's future in this region was still uncertain. For Australia, the terms of peace and the reconstruction of sovereignty in the Pacific thus included the important question of Australia's own future international role.

Two days after Japan's surrender, on 17 August 1945, Prime Minister Chifley, reflecting the decision of Australia's War Cabinet, announced what he believed to be Australia's immediate military tasks in Asia and the Pacific region in relation to the surrender. Chifley stated that Australia would directly send its own military force to participate in the occupation of Japan, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur.³ This statement showed Chifley's determination to redress the non-inclusion of an Australian role in the Allied armistice terms in the Potsdam Declaration that had been issued six weeks earlier. Chifley stated that the War Cabinet:

has informed the British Government that Australian forces will be furnished to take part in the occupation of Japan itself, ... [and] that the forces should operate under an Australian commander subject only to the control of the Supreme Allied Commander, General MacArthur.⁴

The handling of the Potsdam Declaration by the US and Britain had reinforced the Australian Labor Government's deeply rooted suspicion that Australia would be expected to abide by a peace settlement implemented by those countries, rather than itself becoming a principal power in the Pacific with

³ James Wood, *The Forgotten Force: The Australian Military Contribution to the Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. 24; 'Australia Seeks a Bigger Role', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 1945, p. 1.

⁴ 'Australia Seeks a Bigger Role', p. 1.

its own role in formulating the Allied postwar settlement for the region.⁵ It seemed that Australia's efforts in the war against Japan and its considerable contribution to the formation of the United Nations would not provide it with an appropriate position in the emerging postwar world order. When the Potsdam Declaration was issued on 26 July 1945, Evatt warned the Australian High Commissioner in London, the former Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce, that "there is grave danger of our being gradually excluded from all important discussions preliminary to and involving the making of the peace settlement in Europe and the armistice settlement with Japan".⁶ Evatt complained strongly to the newly appointed British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, about the behaviour of Britain and the USA, including "the publication of [an] ... ultimatum to Japan without any reference to Australia", and the fact that the Australian government first heard of the Potsdam Declaration "in the newspapers". In the end, Evatt gave Bevin a piece of his mind: "Foreign Office talks about Dominion rights, but in practice does its best to evade them".⁷

At the moment of Japan's surrender, Australia thus had to make clear to Britain and the USA what its ambitions were. Chifley was straightforward in informing the people of Australia of the government's ongoing frustration and its agenda. Chifley was reported to have said in parliament:

The Government considered that the war effort of Australia has not had sufficient recognition in the armistice negotiations and arrangements, and that efforts should be continued to obtain for Australia, in relation to the making of terms of peace, a status fairly and justly commensurate

⁵ 'Evatt to Bruce (27 July 1945)', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. VIII*, ed. W. J. Hudson et al. (Canberra: Australian Govt. Pub. Service, 1989), p. 270; 'Evatt to Bevin (28 July, 1945)', in *ibid.*, p. 280.

⁶ 'Evatt to Bruce (27 July 1945)', p. 270.

⁷ 'Evatt to Bevin (28 July, 1945)', p. 280.

with the very substantial contribution which Australia has made to final victory.⁸

Chifley detailed the expected extent of Australia's military participation in the occupation of Japan: two brigade groups would be sent from the Australian Army, ships from the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) would be attached to the British Pacific Fleet, and three squadrons from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) would be sent. The two brigade groups would comprise more than 8000 land force personnel. Including the units from the RAN and the RAAF, the Australian force in occupied Japan would have comprised a significant military operation under this plan.⁹ Chifley also stated that Australia would manage the armistice in Japanese-occupied territories including Borneo, the Ocean Islands and Nauru. In addition, Chifley pointed out that Australia desired to participate in the reoccupation of Malaya and Singapore by Britain. Chifley's statement emphasised the prime importance for the government of tasks related to the early and safe return of Australian prisoners-of-war.¹⁰ Chifley informed MacArthur via cablegram on 24 August 1945 that he intended to send an Australian force to Japan.¹¹

Chifley's decision to send an independent military force to Japan under the control of MacArthur recalls the message in 1941 from Chifley's predecessor, John Curtin, "Australia looks to America", which I discussed in the previous

⁸ 'Australia Seeks a Bigger Role', p. 1; 'Commonwealth Government to Cranborne (1 August, 1945)', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. VIII*, p. 284; 'Chifley to MacArthur (21 September, 1945)', in *ibid.*, pp. 432-433.

⁹ The actual number of BCOF soldiers in Japan from four countries of the British Commonwealth was around 40,000 at its height in 1947, compared with 150,000 American soldiers. On Chifley's initial decision to send an independent force to occupied Japan, see Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 24.

¹⁰ 'Australia Seeks a Bigger Role', p. 1.

¹¹ Chifley mentions this cablegram and adds further information in 'Chifley to MacArthur (21 September, 1945)', p. 432.

chapter. If Curtin sought to establish a vital link between Australia and America to defend Australia from possible military invasion by Japan, Chifley wanted to emphasise the vital link with the US formed during the war in his announcement that Australia would send its own forces under MacArthur's command. The formation of BCOF, however, also marks a new stage in tensions between Australia and Britain over international politics.

Chifley's announcement of independent Australian military participation in the occupation of Japan was an utter surprise to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, who immediately expressed his displeasure to Chifley. Attlee complained that the Australian government had subjected Britain to public criticism of its role in decisions jointly made by the Powers, which Britain itself had had limited capacity to influence. Nevertheless, he promised that Britain would support Australia's interests in the projected peace settlement with Japan. Attlee now had to convince Chifley to revise his decision on solo participation by Australia in the occupation. For Attlee, participation in the Allied occupation of Japan by a combined force from the British Commonwealth had been a fixed intent since the last months of the war.¹²

Attlee probably had reason to expect a more conciliatory attitude from Chifley towards Britain. In the British general election held two months earlier, Attlee and the British Labour Party had defeated Winston Churchill, who as Prime Minister had defeated Hitler after four years of war in Europe. The Labour Party's victory in Britain gave rise to the expectation in the Chifley Labor government that wartime frictions between Britain and Australia could

¹² 'Australia Seeks a Bigger Role', p. 1; 'Attlee to Chifley (13 August, 1945)', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. VIII*, pp. 333-334; 'Chifley to Attlee (10 September, 1945)', in *ibid.*, pp. 405-406; 'Chifley to Attlee (21 September, 1945)', in *ibid.*, pp. 328-332; 'Attlee to Chifley (1 October, 1945)', in *ibid.*, pp. 474-475.

now be smoothed over. At the Prime Ministers' conference in 1946, the British Secretary of State, Bevin, jokingly claimed it was a meeting of the 'Imperial Labour Executive', since the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand all had Labour governments. Nevertheless, significant differences developed between the Attlee and Chifley governments in relation to foreign affairs from 1945 to 1949, including over decolonisation in south and southeast Asia, security arrangements for the Pacific, the expected Japanese peace settlement, the threat apparently posed by the Soviet Union to western Europe, and the nature of Soviet and American foreign policy.¹³

Attlee was determined to send a unified Commonwealth occupation force to "enhance British Commonwealth status and position in Japan",¹⁴ but it took him more than a month to convince Chifley of the merit of the proposal. He offered Australia command of the force, although he also insisted that the commander "would be jointly responsible to the Australian and UK governments" and that units of the British Pacific fleet in Japanese waters "would remain under the operational control of the British Pacific fleet". Chifley's reply, however, did not come quickly. On 1 September 1945 Attlee again urged Chifley to accept his proposal. Meanwhile, Chifley halved his initial proposal to send two land brigades, reducing it to one brigade as recommended by the Australian Defence Committee, that is, a committee consisting of the Chiefs of Staff and other officials which advised the government on defence policy.¹⁵ Evatt, who was then in London and had

¹³ Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995), p. 1.

¹⁴ David Day, *Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied Defeat of Japan 1942-45* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 422.

¹⁵ 'Attlee to Chifley (13 August, 1945)', pp. 333-334; 'Attlee to Chifley (1 September, 1945)', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. VIII*, pp. 390-391; Horner, *High Command*, p. 1.

quickly supported Attlee's view that a unified Commonwealth force should be sent to Japan, acted as a deal-maker, suggesting to Chifley that it was possible to support a joint force without sacrificing the opportunity to "demonstrate Australian leadership in Pacific Affairs and Pacific settlement".¹⁶ Chifley gained Attlee's agreement to an increase in the number of Australians and a strengthening of Australian command in the proposed unified force, and the situation rapidly moved towards the formation of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. The force was to comprise contributions from the UK, Australia, New Zealand and British India.¹⁷ Chifley finally informed MacArthur on 21 September 1945 that Australia would withdraw the proposal to send an independent Australian force to serve in Japan under his command, confirming that Australia would instead take part in a unified British Commonwealth force.¹⁸

Chifley's initial intention to send two brigades independently to Japan was forestalled by the reality that Australia as well as Britain would struggle to allocate resources to meet Allied objectives at the end of the war. The available Australian resources were too restricted to allow the sending of two brigades while maintaining other military commitments. The Australian Chief of Staff advised the government that it was simply impossible to deploy an independent force in Japan because "an independent Australian Force would necessitate the establishment of separate Australian base installations, repair facilities and provision of maintenance, common technical supplies, stores, fuel

¹⁶ 'Evatt to Chifley and Beasley (14 September, 1945)', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. VIII*, p. 417.

¹⁷ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 27; 'Attlee to Chifley (1 September, 1945)', pp. 390-391.

¹⁸ 'Chifley to MacArthur (21 September, 1945)', pp. 432-433.

and lubricants".¹⁹ By that time, negotiations between Australia and Britain regarding the formation of a unified Commonwealth occupation force were already under way. In retrospect, it was Evatt's quick response to Attlee in support of a unified Commonwealth force that prevented the unrealistic perspective inherent in Chifley's original proposal from being exposed to the public.

Chifley's initial decision certainly reveals that sending an occupation force to Japan was a high priority for the Australian government. In fact, it was Chifley's emphasis on the question of the occupation force that turned the formation of BCOF into a reality. Britain alone might not have shown such determination. Despite signalling a desire to share the military occupation of Japan with a US force and with the dominions in the closing stages of the Pacific War, in reality, the British government clearly showed that its most urgent priority was to reoccupy its former territories in the Asia-Pacific region. It is questionable to what extent Britain really would have been able to expend effort and resources on forming an occupation force for Japan under the circumstances, without substantial numbers of Commonwealth troops. As Buckley notes, Americans' preparedness for the military occupation of Japan was a shock to the British authorities. Throughout the Pacific War, the British Ambassador in Washington and the diplomatic section of the British Embassy had consistently shown their interest in sharing the reconstruction of Japan with the US, aiming to facilitate the resumption of British business interests in east Asia. However, as the war neared its conclusion, the British government knew less and less of US preparations for the military occupation of Japan.²⁰

¹⁹ Day, *Reluctant Nation*, p. 308.

²⁰ Roger Buckley, *Occupation Diplomacy: Britain, the United States, and Japan, 1945-1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 17.

Chifley's initial announcement certainly appealed to Australians, as newspaper coverage showed.²¹ There is no doubt that Chifley's determination to send troops to Japan also met with a good deal of satisfaction in Australian military circles. As Day notes, the Chiefs of Staff could hardly disguise their joy at the government's announcement of the scale of the proposed occupation force, even though they had to tell the government that the limited availability of Australian troops rendered an independent Australian operation in Japan impossible.²² Military figures understandably felt empowered by the Allied victory over Japan and wanted to consolidate their victory in Japan itself. Major Arthur John, of the education unit at BCOF, recounts the excitement in military circles in this period, recalling that, towards the conclusion of the Pacific War, rumours that "we are going to Japan" circulated widely in the military.²³ Apart from this type of response, some military leaders were concerned about Australia's defence strategy in the rapidly shifting world environment, and considered military participation in the occupation to be vital to ensure that Japan would not again threaten Australia. Such concerns were evident, for example, within the Defence Committee, for whom participation in the occupation was a high priority.²⁴

In the beginning of the first term of his government, Chifley also had the portfolio of Defence, and as Minister of Defence he oversaw the formation of BCOF. As Prime Minister, Chifley also made decisions on military policy until his defeat at the general election in 1949. It was Chifley again, then, who decided to continue to maintain an Australian military presence in the occupation of Japan in the critical period of BCOF after 1947, when other

²¹ 'Australia Seeks a Bigger Role', p. 1.

²² Day, *Reluctant Nation*, p. 308.

²³ Arthur W. John, personal communication, 22 August 2001.

²⁴ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 25.

members of the British Commonwealth all withdrew their forces. In international matters more generally, however, Prime Minister Chifley was overshadowed by his Minister for External Affairs, Evatt. With his acute intelligence and colourful personality, and his determination to set Australia in the right place in the postwar world order, Evatt overwhelmingly dominated international affairs during Chifley's prime ministership. Evatt, who was a high court judge in New South Wales and a scholar who earned doctorates in law and in literature before entering federal politics in 1940, was well recognised by his peers for his democratic judgements during his time on the bench.²⁵ In educational terms, he was the most highly qualified politician in government office that Australia had ever had. Evatt served both Curtin and Chifley as Minister of External Affairs. He was also Attorney-General to the Curtin government and Deputy Prime Minister in the Chifley government. Under his ministership, the Department of External Affairs had become an independent ministry employing a number of university graduates. Evatt's ministry expanded rapidly in the 1940s. There is no doubt that Australia's distinctive foreign policy during this period was a product of this ministry, though it was also refined by advisors and academics, including Eggleston and Ball. However, it was Evatt himself who shaped Australia's foreign policy in light of his broad approach to international affairs.

Australia and the Machinery of Occupation in Japan

While the shape of BCOF was being determined by Chifley and Attlee, the Australian government also put pressure on Britain by expressing a desire to

²⁵ See, for example, Evatt's ruling that the employer had an obligation to protect an employee's health from endangering circumstances: Peter Crocket, *Evatt: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 65-66.

take part in the ceremony at which MacArthur, as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, would receive the official surrender from the Japanese emperor or his representative. Evatt negotiated directly with Washington on the matter and received MacArthur's support. The result was a call to Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand and France to provide delegations to the ceremony, which took place on board the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945. Blamey signed the declaration of surrender on behalf of Australia, accompanied by representatives from the Australian Army, RAN and RAAF. Meanwhile, the Australian and British forces that had landed at Yokosuka in Japan three days before the ceremony were already undertaking an operation to rescue Allied prisoners-of-war held in Japan.²⁶

A summary of Washington's Basic Initial Post-Surrender Directive concerning the military occupation of Japan had been issued by US President Harry S. Truman to MacArthur on 29 August 1945. The Australian legation in Washington cabled the whole text to the Department of External Affairs when it was officially released on 22 September.²⁷ The directive showed the contradictory stance of the US regarding who would have the authority to make policy on the occupation. It suggested the establishment of Allied advisory bodies to formulate policies for the "conduct and control of Japan", but at the same time, it declared that US policies "will govern" occupied Japan.²⁸ Before

²⁶ On the Australian participation in the ceremony, see Richard Reid, 'Australia-Japan Research Project: Victory and Defeat: Aug 1945 to Sep 1946', Australian War Memorial, <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/437f72f8ac2c07238525661a00063aa6/a25ea01eacb6cdca256946001ef8ad>, accessed 15 September 2007.

²⁷ 'Legation in Washington to Department of External Affairs (24 September, 1945)', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. VIII*, pp. 445-452.

²⁸ Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Government Section, *Political Reorientation of Japan, September 1945 to September 1948: Report of Government Section, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers*, 2 vols (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. 423-426.

this directive was issued, Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, had been negotiating with the US to open up control of the machinery of occupation to other Allies.²⁹ While the US expressed a willingness to work as a member of the Four Powers (US, Britain, USSR and France) and would form an advisory commission with them, it insisted that this new commission would play no more than an advisory role. Britain, on the other hand, insisted that the new commission should have the power of implementing occupation policies.³⁰

From the Japanese surrender in August to the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers of the US, UK and the Soviet Union in December 1945, which finalised the shape of the occupation control system, Evatt and Bevin worked closely together in order to secure the position of the British Commonwealth as part of that system. Evatt had been pressuring Britain by arguing the rights of Australia and other small nations in the Pacific which had been involved in the fighting to participate in the occupation policy-making process. Meanwhile, to secure the place of the British Commonwealth in an American-dominated occupation, Bevin needed to emphasise Australia's contribution to the Pacific War. The Soviet Union joined the discussions with an attempt to create a machinery of control similar to that operating in Germany, that is, with direct control by all of the Allies. Soviet leaders insisted that, unless a direct control body were also set up in Tokyo, they would not agree to the formation of the new advisory commission already planned. The entry of the Soviet Union into negotiations on the occupation benefited Australia because it forced the

²⁹ See Buckley, *Occupation Diplomacy*, p. 36.

³⁰ Frank J. Sackton, 'The Occupation of Japan in International Perspective: An Overview', in *The Occupation of Japan: The International Context - The Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Sponsored by the MacArthur Memorial, Old Dominion University, The MacArthur Memorial Foundation*, ed. Thomas W. Burkman (Norfolk, Virginia: the Foundation, 1984), p. 4; Richard N. Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1962), pp. 15-24.

discussion beyond the role of Britain and the US. The upshot was that the US agreed to Australia's participation in the commission. The US Secretary of State, James Byrnes, also assured Evatt that Australia would take part in the negotiations leading up to the eventual peace treaty with Japan. A preliminary conference of the Far Eastern Advisory Commission was held in Washington in October 1945; Evatt successfully campaigned to ensure Australia's participation.³¹

Rosecrance is the only scholar to discuss the role of Australia in the formation of the Far Eastern Commission, but his 1962 work was produced before the relevant archival sources were available, and hence relied upon interviews and newspaper reports.³² Such sources did not do justice to Evatt's achievement in international politics in this period. Evatt used the ideas and political strategy relating to small nations developed at the Australian Ministry of External Affairs, which defined Australia as one of the small nations outside the Powers, but sought to establish Australia's role in the international decision-making process within the political framework set by the Powers.³³ With his ideology about the importance of small nations, Evatt had made a significant contribution to the Charter of the United Nations shortly before the Japanese surrender. At the conference for the formation of the United Nations in San Francisco in July 1945, he had been most conspicuous in discussions about reducing the dominant powers' right of veto in the Security Council. In the end, Evatt failed to remove the Security Council veto from the Charter, but he did

³¹ Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951*, pp. 14-24. Buckley discusses Britain's engagement with the formation of the occupation machinery, but does not discuss Australia's role. See Buckley, *Occupation Diplomacy*, pp. 48-53.

³² Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951*.

³³ Neville Meaney, 'Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming Cold War', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 38, no. 3 (1992), p. 316.

gain much support from other small nations. He also led the small nations in asserting the power of the General Assembly over the Security Council.³⁴ There is no doubt that Evatt's contribution to the United Nations helped to ensure that he became a central figure in the Far Eastern Advisory Commission. Evatt chaired the Commission's Basic Policies and Objectives Committee, where he and the Australian delegation drafted "a document on general policies for the occupation" that sought to amend aspects of the United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy.³⁵ Evatt obviously wanted the Far Eastern Advisory Commission to be the central organ of the occupation. However, unresolved questions regarding the nature, role and function of the Commission were destined to undermine its power.³⁶

It was the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow in December 1945 that finally designed the control machinery for the occupation of Japan. The Far Eastern Advisory Commission (later the Far Eastern Commission) established in Washington would comprise eleven nation-states from among the Pacific Allies. The conference also set up a body in Tokyo, the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ), which would comprise representatives from the USA, the Soviet Union, China and the British Commonwealth. The US agreed that Australia would represent the British Commonwealth at the ACJ. The Foreign Ministers' Conference did not, however, resolve the commission's terms of reference: it was unclear whether it was to be only an advisory body or would have the power to implement occupation policies. The US maintained its controlling power over the occupation, winning the right of veto at the Far Eastern

³⁴ See W. J. Hudson, *Australia and the New World Order: Evatt at San Francisco, 1945* (Canberra: Australian Foreign Policy Publications Program, Australian National University, 1993), p. 182.

³⁵ Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951*, p. 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-24; Sackton, 'The Occupation of Japan in International Perspective', pp. 6-7.

Commission. Britain and Australia intended to impose further measures to limit American monopoly of the occupation, but the rising tension between the Soviet Union and other powers in Europe undermined their efforts.³⁷

In theory, the (Australian) representative of the British Commonwealth held a position as high as that of MacArthur. However, it was obvious there would be little the British Commonwealth could do to interfere with American control of the occupation. For Britain's Attlee Labour government, this might have been the end of the attempt to influence the American-dominated occupation. It soon became obvious, however, that some high-ranking officers in Britain's Liaison Mission to the occupation openly sought to better the British position.³⁸ I will discuss this issue in later chapters. Meanwhile, the Chifley Labor government sent Australians as both the Representative of the British Commonwealth at the ACJ (Ball) and the Commander-in-Chief of BCOF (Northcott). Moreover, as we have seen, Evatt himself was deeply involved in the formation of the Far Eastern Commission. The ACJ terms of reference stated that:

If, regarding the implementation of policy, decisions of the Far Eastern Commission on questions concerning change in the regime of control, fundamental changes in the Japanese constitution structure, and change in the Japanese Government as a whole, a member of the Council disagrees with the Supreme Commander (or his Deputy), the Supreme

³⁷ Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951*, p. 24.

³⁸ See Peter Lowe, 'Sir Alvary Gascoigne in Japan, 1946-1951', in *Britain & Japan: Biographical Portraits*, ed. Ian Nish (Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library, 1994), pp. 279-294; Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, pp. 146-152.

Commander shall withhold the issuance of orders on these questions pending agreement thereon in the Far Eastern Commission.³⁹

On the other hand, Ball, as Australian representative of the British Commonwealth at the ACJ, reported that MacArthur “insists that the functions of the Council are ‘exclusively advisory and consultative’”.⁴⁰ This ambiguity was to undermine Ball, who, in addition to representing the United Kingdom, India, New Zealand and Australia at the ACJ, was also the head of the Australian Liaison Mission to the Occupation.

Australia’s policies on the occupation, which were heavily influenced by Evatt, were evident in the draft proposals issued by the Basic Policies and Objectives Commission in the Far Eastern Advisory Committee and also in *Australian Proposal Regarding Basic Policy for Japan under Consideration by F. E. A. C.*, issued by Australia’s Department of External Affairs in November 1945.⁴¹ Rosecrance suggests that with these proposals Evatt aimed to do two things: reinforce article five of the Potsdam Declaration, which concerned strict controls to be placed on the recovery of Japanese heavy industries that could serve to rearm Japan in the future, and encourage the prosecution of Emperor Hirohito in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, that is, the Tokyo Trial of ‘major’ war criminals.⁴² Australia’s approach was seen by others as retributive and was to cause some tension within the Anglo-American circle of occupation officials close to the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (SCAP). Evatt might have been a little too eager to distinguish Australia from the US regime

³⁹ See appendix to Sackton, 'The Occupation of Japan in International Perspective', p. 12.

⁴⁰ 'Ball to Department of External Affairs (11 April, 1946)', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49, Vol. IX*, ed. W. J. Hudson et al. (Canberra: Australian Govt. Pub. Service, 1991), p. 285.

⁴¹ Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, pp. 146-152.

⁴² Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951*, p. 17.

in the occupation, insisting on Australian policy on key issues such as the treatment of the emperor and the danger inherent in Japanese economic recovery. In practice, MacArthur in partnership with Japanese conservatives reshaped the postwar Japanese monarchy, closely linking it to the new constitution as the symbol of the Japanese state.⁴³ Evatt, however, believed that prosecuting the emperor in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East would be an opportunity to impose democracy on Japanese internal politics. He believed it would also bring “justice and satisfaction” to the Australian public, whose images of the Japanese had been nurtured by wartime propaganda and the experience of Australian POWs. On the other hand, MacArthur, together with senior Japanese leaders, wanted a quick conclusion to the war crimes trials and the exclusion of Emperor Hirohito from the proceedings.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, participation in the UN changed Australia's position in world affairs. When Japan surrendered, Chifley had made a speech to the Australian people, entitled “The War is Over”, declaring that “The United Nations Charter for a world organisation is the hope of the world and Australia has pledged the same activity in making it successful as she showed in the framing of it”.⁴⁵ Under Chifley, the Australian government was one of the major patron states of the UN, becoming the fourth largest contributor of funds. Evatt was to be elected president of the UN General Assembly at its third session in 1948. Activity at the UN formed the core of foreign affairs of the Chifley government.

⁴³ Robert E. Ward, 'Postsurrender Planning: Treatment of the Emperor and Constitutional Changes', in *Democratizing Japan: The Allied Occupation*, ed. Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 3-18.

⁴⁴ See Higashino Makoto, *Shōwa Tennō Futatsu no Dokuhakuroku* (Tokyo: Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 1998), pp. 84-87.

⁴⁵ Joseph Benedict Chifley, *Things Worth Fighting For* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1952), p. 14.

Australian Soldiers and the Formation of BCOF

Japan's abrupt surrender immediately led the Australian military authorities to begin demobilising service personnel. General plans for demobilisation had been approved by the War Cabinet as early as June 1944, with more specific plans discussed in March 1945. The readjustment of soldiers back into their own society after the cessation of hostilities was of key importance in the transition from war to peace for all governments. The Curtin government took demobilisation seriously, formulating policies and implementing practical measures, such as soldiers' rehabilitation programs, as part of the postwar reconstruction policy. Curtin and his government's policy of full employment for discharged military personnel was in operation as early as November 1943. In releasing men and women from military service, the Curtin government introduced a point system: points were given for age, length of service and number of dependents. The government also gave higher points to those whose "early return to civil life" was "considered essential" or whose circumstance was deserving of "discharge on compassionate grounds". Those whose "continued service was essential" to ongoing military operations, however, remained in service regardless of their number of points.⁴⁶

Australian demobilisation of military personnel was completed quickly compared with other Allies. In August 1945 a total of 598,300 personnel from the three services, of whom 43,600 were women, were awaiting discharge. The general demobilisation was undertaken in four stages, with the last stage

⁴⁶ Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970); Stuart Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015), pp. 314-352.

completed in mid-February 1947. By then, the services had been reduced to an interim strength of 60,133. All of these remaining forces were volunteers.⁴⁷

Even while troops were being demobilised in the aftermath of the Pacific War, however, significant military operations were necessary in order to carry out the armistice measures outlined by the Potsdam Declaration. In addition to its oversight of New Guinea and other areas, the Australian military worked hard on reassembling, feeding and providing medical care to defeated Japanese troops and preparing for their eventual repatriation to Japan, although self-support by Japanese POWs themselves, by cultivating local crops such as sweet potatoes, for example, was encouraged. By the end of 1947, Japanese POWs and civilians in the areas handled by the British Commonwealth had been repatriated.⁴⁸

Responding to the decision of the Chifley government, the military authorities formed the Australian component of BCOF in 1945. It was the only new force the Australian military formed between 1945 and the beginning of the Korean War in 1950. It was also significant in terms of its scale alone. From 1946 to 1952, up to 20,000 Australian personnel served in BCOF in Japan, while at home in Australia the number of service personnel had been reduced to 60,000 by 1947. The Australian component of BCOF comprised an infantry (4,700 troops) and base units (5,300 troops), an air force wing (2,200 troops), and the Australian General Hospital (130 service personnel). The RAN also served as part of the British Pacific Fleet.⁴⁹

The major combat units were the 34th Infantry Brigade, comprising the 65th, 66th, and 67th battalions; a car squadron; a field battery of artillery raised

⁴⁷ Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, pp. 613-614.

⁴⁸ Katō Yōko, 'Haisha no Kikan: Chūgoku Kara no Fukuin. Hikiage Mondai no Tenkai', *Kokusai seji*, Vol. 109 (1995), p. 115.

⁴⁹ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, pp. 46-51.

from several artillery units; and a field engineer squadron reinforced by a number of engineering units from diverse sections of the Australian military. The non-combat components included signals, supply and transport, medical and dental, provost, amenities, canteens and education, numbering seventy-one units altogether.⁵⁰

The major combat forces were drawn from the AIF serving in New Guinea, which had been waiting for deployment for the expected final wartime assault on the Japanese main islands. A call to enlist in BCOF was also issued to forces stationed all over the former South West Pacific Area and throughout Australia. Enlistment in BCOF as one-year overseas service was undertaken on an individual basis. Most of my interviewees who landed in Japan as part of the initial contingent of BCOF had no clear memory of how and when they agreed to go to Japan. They generally said that they went to Japan because their unit was chosen as part of BCOF rather than as their own decision, even though no such policy was actually in place. There were, however, some exceptional recollections.

With a writer's keen eye, T. A. G. Hungerford recalls in his autobiographical fiction the moment he gave his agreement to go to Japan to a captain recruiting for BCOF. Hungerford was on the island of Morotai in the Netherlands Indies, where he had joined the AIF waiting to invade the Japanese main islands, after his original unit had ceased its mission on Bougainville. Several soldiers around him also agreed to go to Japan because, as Hungerford describes it, he and other soldiers felt like putting "a foot on the neck of

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 32. See also 'Proposed War Establishment', Australian War Memorial, Canberra, AWM 114 417/1/27. For a concise description of the formation of BCOF in all member states - Britain, New Zealand, India and Australia - see Peter Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 26-43.

prostrate Japan for a year or so".⁵¹ By the time Hungerford landed in Japan with the initial contingent, he had decided to write a novel based on his experience in occupied Japan. The novel was written shortly after his return home and won a prize in 1948 in the prestigious *Sydney Morning Herald* Literary Competition, which was regarded as the premier contest for literature in Australia at that time.⁵²

William Towers, who joined BCOF from Rabaul, where he had served in a field ambulance unit, saw enlistment in BCOF as a rare opportunity for his future. He had been studying journalism through the Army Education Service. As he wrote to his mother, going to Japan at a moment's notice meant that he had to give up a holiday with his family, but:

There are numerous advantages; I get a change not only from the monotony of Rabaul, but from the tropics; I see new places and things: I get first hand-knowledge of Japanese politics and religion, instead of having to believe the spouting of someone with an axe to grind.

Another letter to his mother showed his interest in his new assignment:

I am enclosing a map showing the island this unit will be on in Japan. I have inked it in with blue, just to the left of the centre of the map. If you keep this map, you will be able to follow any move I might write about while I am there. The name of the island is Etajima.⁵³

Going to Japan seemed an attractive option for soldiers whose points for discharge were too low to allow them to leave military service quickly. Two young Western Australian servicemen were a case in point. One was in the

⁵¹ T. A. G. Hungerford, *Straightshooter* (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003), p. 239.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁵³ William Arthur Towers, 'Papers, 1941-1994 [Manuscript]', 1941, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 9112.

RAAF stationed near Darwin and the other was in New Britain. Both of them signed up for BCOF without success. They felt that going off to Japan would be a way of escaping the boredom of postwar military life, which looked set to continue for some time.⁵⁴ These examples suggest that the military authorities may have turned down quite a number of young soldiers applying for BCOF. Certainly, young soldiers must have been bored at the war-front awaiting discharge, as fighting had ceased some time before.

As we have seen, the Australian government had turned its attention to reform agendas, domestically and internationally, and the military was not isolated from the tide of postwar change. No matter whether they were going to Japan or not, many soldiers were uncertain about their immediate future after the war. In his autobiographical stories, Hungerford conveys well his and other young soldiers' uneasy feelings when hearing of the Japanese surrender.

Suddenly we were unemployed, and suddenly we had to begin thinking about returning to civvy life: and I don't think there were many who had a very clear idea of what that meant. I know I didn't.⁵⁵

One young soldier, Jack Thorpe, was in the AIF Eighth Division when he was captured by the Japanese military in Malaya and sent to a POW camp in Japan. After his release from the POW camp he was hospitalised for three weeks, then sought work in his former occupation of bus-driving. At this early point, former POWs were given no special consideration and he was unable to find suitable work. Even when he decided to return to the military he was told that he had no option other than participating in the occupation of Japan.⁵⁶ Anxiety over

⁵⁴ James Wilson, interview, 4 December 2001 (Perth); Robert Whiteside, interview, 4 December 2001 (Perth).

⁵⁵ Hungerford, *Straightshooter*, p. 235.

⁵⁶ Jack Thorpe, interview, 29 November 2003 (Perth). In his more recent memoir, Thorpe does not mention the difficulty in finding employment immediately

civilian life after discharge was felt not only by young soldiers. In his memoirs, Major Arthur John, who was then a Sergeant in the Army Education Unit, notes the anxiety he, too, felt around the time of the Japanese surrender. Prior to enlisting, John had been a senior clerk and accountant in a gold mine in New Guinea. After serving for the full period of the war he was eager to continue his military service and applied for an officer's position in the BCOF Education Unit. He was eventually promoted to the rank of Major and became the Deputy Assistant Director of the Australian Army Education Service (AAES) in BCOF.⁵⁷

Learning Japanese

Though most Australian troops who volunteered for BCOF were not particularly interested in Japan, there were exceptions. For a minority of BCOF personnel the occupation provided an opportunity to develop an existing interest in Japan. Japanese-speaking personnel provide a particular case in point. For most personnel with Japanese-language skills, whether they were still in the process of military training or were working elsewhere in the South West Pacific Area, Japan was the ultimate destination of choice.

Comparatively few Japanese speakers were available to the Australian military at the beginning of the war, especially compared with the number in the US, where Japanese-speaking migrants, their families and descendants formed a visible community numbering 284,852 in 1940, including 157,905 in

after the war that he reported in my interview with him. Jack Thorpe, *The Life Story of Just an Ordinary Bloke who Says He was "Bloody Lucky"* (Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2006).

⁵⁷ Arthur W. John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown: A History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan* (Melbourne: Gen Publishers, 1987), p. 2; Arthur W. John, interview, 8 November 1998 (Melbourne); Arthur W. John, interview, 4 May 1999 (Melbourne).

the US territory of Hawai'i.⁵⁸ A large number of second-generation Japanese-Americans who were fluent in both English and Japanese had joined the US military during and after the war.⁵⁹ An intensive Japanese-language course started at the RAAF Language School in Sydney in June 1944, later moving to Melbourne. The course was directed at the likely demand for Japanese-speaking personnel to carry out postwar reconstruction tasks. The Australian Army also ran a Japanese-language school from 1940 until the Pacific War ended. The school was commonly called the Censorship School because it was run jointly by the army and the Censorship Board. The graduates of the Censorship School, comparatively small in number, were stationed throughout the South West Pacific Area during the war, joining those Japanese-language specialists who had individually attained language skills that were recognised by the Australian military authorities. The RAAF Language School became the main institute that sent personnel trained in the Japanese language to BCOF until the school closed in October 1947.⁶⁰

The motivation for applying for service in Japan as a Japanese-speaker, and the experience of language specialists once there, were as varied as that of BCOF personnel from other sections. Les Oates and Allan Clifton began learning Japanese before the war, and eventually graduated from the Censorship School. They were working in Morotai and Rabaul respectively as interpreters when recruitment for BCOF began. Clifton was to write about his experience with BCOF in a semi-fictionalised memoir after one year of service

⁵⁸ Brian Niiya, *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2001), p. xvii.

⁵⁹ On the intensive training of Japanese-speaking personnel of the US Navy Intelligence Centre, see Introduction to Otis Cary, ed., *War Wasted Asia. From a Ruined Empire: Letters- Japan, China, Korea, 1945-46* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984).

⁶⁰ Colin Funch, *Linguists in Uniform: The Japanese Experience* (Melbourne: Japanese Studies Centre, Monash University, 2003), p. 258.

in Japan.⁶¹ Oates retained a life-long interest in and commitment to Japan, marrying a Japanese nurse in Hiroshima and teaching the Japanese language at Melbourne University for decades.⁶² Les Burton was in the RAAF Language School in Sydney and then Melbourne from the end of 1944, and was one of the School's first graduates. Before enlisting, Burton had been a university student. He honestly admits that escaping from a tedious military life in Darwin was the main motivation for applying for the Japanese course when the RAAF Language School advertised in the army routine orders. He believes that achieving some Indonesian-language competence in a correspondence course in the army helped him to get into the RAAF Language School, which normally required a university degree. After returning from one year of service in BCOF in Japan, he completed a university economics course and received a grant from the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme for tertiary education.⁶³ When Japan surrendered, Corporal Jim McCurley was a recruit instructor at Greta in New South Wales for what was commonly known as the "Old Soldiers'" platoon because it was aimed at retraining ex-service personnel who wished to return to military service. McCurley later recalled that as a young officer who had just come out of the NCO training camp he was too naïve to deal with these hardened ex-troops, especially as his first lecture to them was on venereal disease. He was accepted into the RAAF Language School in 1946 and joined the Japanese-language unit in Kure in 1947.⁶⁴

Ken Wells was one of the few self-taught Japanese-speaking personnel. On the recommendation of his father, he started learning Japanese while serving in the army in northern Queensland during the war. His letters to his

⁶¹ Allan S. Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms* (Sydney: Cassell, 1950).

⁶² Les Oates, interview, 14 October 1998 (Melbourne).

⁶³ Les Burton, interview, 5 December 2001 (Perth).

⁶⁴ Jim McCurley, personal communication, 20 January 1999.

family reveal his hard work and gradual progress in the language while serving in New Guinea. In a letter to his wife he remarks: "Just now I'm working till my head grows dull to learn that lingo, in the hopes that it may do us some good".⁶⁵ He was well aware that his chances of getting a job that could bring him satisfaction after discharge from military service were otherwise slim. Wells had left school early but was unusually well-read and fluent in writing, and proved to be a keen observer. After much pain and hard labour in learning the Japanese language, he joined the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), and was posted in Australia, Morotai and the Philippines. Shortly after he decided to go to Japan he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. He reported sardonically:

We take up the White Man's Burden and try to spread our wonderful "Civilisation" among the barbarians. Now we have just finished fighting the only coloured nation that ever showed a desire to adopt it. In Java the black man is showing a most impertinent wish to carry his own burden. Some day we may wake up to the fact that the world is round and large. To most white people "The world" still means what it meant to the Romans. Chinese, Japanese and Indians, the bulk of the human race, are thought of vaguely as natives living somewhere in the outer darkness. Most Australians still have this frame of mind. And when the Jap treats us as our grandfathers treated the Kanakas in Queensland or Negroes in America, we are amazed and scream that they are "sub-humans, half apes and half men".⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ken Wells, letter to Wife, 14 January 1944; Ken Wells, letter to Family, 30 November 1945.

⁶⁶ Ken Wells, letter to Father, September 1947. In another letter that month, Wells refers to a speech given by General Blamey, who had said of the Japanese: "Beneath the thin veneer of a few generations of civilisation he is a subhuman

Wells finally landed in Japan as part of the initial BCOF contingent in February 1946.

Les Oates has suggested that military personnel who served in the occupation brought back a positive image of Japan to Australian society in later years.⁶⁷ A small number of Japanese-speaking military personnel continued using their language expertise after returning to Australia. For the broader Australian public, they also became, arguably, the core group in maintaining and generating further interest in Japan in the post-occupation years, a period in which anti-Japanese feeling was generally intense and long-lasting, partly as a result of publicity about the sufferings of Australian prisoners-of-war at the hands of the Japanese military.

The anxiety exhibited by young soldiers and others about their prospects in postwar life quickly dissipated, as the reconstruction policies of Curtin's and Chifley's governments, together with favourable international conditions, delivered a booming economy and full employment. By the time the young soldiers completed their service with BCOF, life in Australia was much more secure; as Macintyre has pointed out, reconstruction was so successful that the governments' policies, including mass demobilisation of soldiers and provision for their postwar education, employment and housing, quickly disappeared from public memory.⁶⁸

beast, who has brought warfare back to the primeval, who fights by the jungle rule of tooth and claw, who must be beaten by the jungle rule of tooth and claw". Quoted in John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 53.

⁶⁷ Les Oates, 'The Australian Experience of the Occupation, 1946 to 1952', in *Changing Histories: Australia and Japan*, ed. Paul Jones and Pamela M. Oliver (Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 2001), p. 75.

⁶⁸ Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment*, p. 15.

Troops Prepare for Japan

Recruitment for service in occupied Japan was completed quickly. The major body of Australian BCOF, the 34th Brigade, assembled on Morotai island in the Netherlands Indies. Meanwhile, the 81st wing of the RAAF was gradually assembled in Labuan in Borneo. At the end of January 1946, after waiting for deployment for more than five months, the main body of BCOF embarked for Japan. Following the departure of the initial contingent, newly recruited service personnel, trained at Greta in New South Wales, left Sydney in March to join BCOF. The Australian army authorities needed to make up about 1,000 service personnel to replace those who had applied to be discharged during the long waiting period. The reinforcements were a mixture of young soldiers, too young to have enlisted during the war, and older and experienced soldiers, who had returned to military life after finding some difficulties in resuming a civilian life after the war.

It is difficult to estimate how much MacArthur's initial reluctance to share the occupation with an independent BCOF contributed to the delay of BCOF troops in Japan. Chifley's reluctance to form a united force and then the actual formation of a united force from several nations in the Commonwealth took some time. Certainly, however, many Australian veterans of BCOF believe that MacArthur's reluctance contributed to the delay in BCOF's arrival, and also believed the delay disadvantaged their activities from the start. BCOF did not really overcome the disadvantage of arriving late, not participating in the military government, and then having to operate in a regional area far from Tokyo, with an occupation infrastructure that was still under construction. Moreover, BCOF troops were never free from the gaze of the occupied. The areas in which Australian troops operated had already been occupied by

American forces before BCOF arrived, and the local Japanese people were inclined to compare BCOF unfavourably with US troops. This was not only because US troops had been in place for six months prior to the arrival of BCOF, but also because it was clearly the Americans who actually had the power of decision-making in the occupation. Added to this, the degree of familiarity with and popularity of American culture in prewar Japanese society was far greater than for any of the other Allies. Hollywood films, for instance, had been very popular in prewar Japan, and were popular again during the occupation.⁶⁹

The situation on Morotai before departure was tense and frustrating, because of delays in demobilisation and in deployment to Japan. In early December 1945, 5000 personnel on Morotai reportedly marched to send a protest message to the Minister for the Army, Frank Forde, demanding that he meet promises about demobilisation.⁷⁰ Australian soldiers due to take part in the occupation were deeply frustrated by delay and by having to wait on an isolated tropical island before being sent to Japan. Hungerford claims that these soldiers were further frustrated because rumours about them were circulated by “southern” newspapers. He claims, for example, that a report said all the boys enlisted in BCOF were receiving medical treatment for venereal disease.⁷¹ In an attempt to soothe some of the discontent, Lieutenant-General Northcott officially announced on 28 December 1945 that Australian troops would embark for Japan from the second half of January onwards.

Nevertheless, frustration continued. According to Hungerford, around 3 000 soldiers on Morotai took collective action on 12 January 1946,

⁶⁹ Hiroshi Kitamura, *Screening Enlightenment: Hollywood and the Cultural Reconstruction of Defeated Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

⁷⁰ '5,000 Morotai Men Send Protest to Mr Forde', *Argus*, 12 December 1945, p. 24; 'Men in Morotai Protest at Shipping Delay', *Argus*, 11 December 1945, p. 1.

⁷¹ Hungerford, *Straightshooter*, p. 241.

demonstrating their annoyance with their situation by marching to the administration barracks. Hungerford recalls that he became a reluctant leader of the “jack up” because the actual organisers learned that he had led a similar yet much smaller incident at a training barracks near Darwin several years earlier. After the “jack up”, Hungerford met the Commander of the 34th Brigade face-to-face and passed on the soldiers’ demands, including a demand for separate bathing facilities from the Japanese prisoners-of-war.⁷² There is some independent evidence of the soldiers’ dissatisfaction. On 15 January 1946 the *Courier Mail* reported that the troops complained of a lack of recognition because they had been sent second-hand uniforms, and that they also complained about alleged newspaper reports claiming that the rate of venereal disease among them was “alarmingly high”.⁷³ A company of the 67th Battalion appears to have made further protests on 18 January.⁷⁴ In response to the discontent, Forde, the Minister of the Army, visited Morotai and attended a mass meeting of soldiers, promising to correct rumours circulated by the media at home.⁷⁵

In popular images, Australian soldiers were often portrayed as rebellious, reflecting the Australian cultural stereotype of young men as likable rogues or “larrikins”. While this rebellious image is partly attributable to mythologising, the incident on Morotai, like the earlier incident near Darwin that was also described by Hungerford,⁷⁶ shows that Australian soldiers were capable of expressing dissatisfaction if they felt their superiors were not protecting their

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 242-248.

⁷³ 'Men for Japan Discouraged and Impatient', *Courier Mail*, 15 January 1946, p. 1.

⁷⁴ 'Morotai Occupation Force Sends Complaints Directly to Chifley', *Morning Bulletin*, 19 January 1946, p. 5.

⁷⁵ Towers, 'Papers, 1941-1994 [Manuscript]'; 'Army Minister Visiting Islands in North', *Argus*, 22 January 1946, p. 3; 'Troops to Quiz Forde', *Courier Mail*, 26 January 1946, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Hungerford, *Straightshooter*, p. 220.

dignity, or that the system itself was harmful to the self-respect of ordinary soldiers. Once in Japan, too, some young Australian members of BCOF behaved as if intending to leave behind an image of young Australian men as “larrikins”. As I discuss in Chapter four, the ugly side of such behaviour within the Australian BCOF can be seen in a riot against Indian members of BCOF in 1947.

Horner writes that in early January 1946 an “unauthorised brigade parade in which soldiers presented their grievances” against the military authorities on Morotai was “resolved intelligently by Military Authorities”.⁷⁷ One assumes that “resolved intelligently” means with a minimum of fuss, which is probably why there was no official record of Hungerford’s “jack up” and why no one was held to account for the protest, although it was almost a legendary story among BCOF veterans.⁷⁸

As part of an attempt to establish a distinctive position in the postwar world, the Australian authorities had sought a strong role in the combined occupation force deployed by the British Commonwealth. Australia's potential strength in the occupation, however, was limited by the dominance of larger powers in 1946, especially the US. Chapter three shows how these power relations shaped Australian participation in the occupation, and describes the experience of the Australian contingent of BCOF once it arrived in Japan.

⁷⁷ Horner, *High Command*, p. 429.

⁷⁸ Hungerford, *Straightshooter*, pp. 239-252.

CHAPTER THREE

Australians at Work in Japan

The discussion between the US government and the British Commonwealth over sending a united force to Japan, to be called the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), concluded in mid-December 1945. The force would comprise all three services from four British Commonwealth countries – the UK, New Zealand, India and Australia. The Australian authorities, acting on behalf of the British Commonwealth, formalised the proposal, which was officially presented in Washington by Evatt, the Minister for External Affairs on 18th October 1945.¹ The United States government then formally accepted the participation of BCOF in the occupation. The Chifley government released details to the press on 31 January 1946, in a document generally known as the MacArthur-Northcott agreement.² The Australian troops waiting for deployment from Morotai, Labuan and elsewhere could finally move to Japan.

The press release outlines the scale and detail of the joint force, but the Chifley government's main message was the importance of the Australian role in the formation and operation of BCOF. It was the Australian government which would represent other member states of BCOF in official communications with the US government. The Commander-in-Chief of the force was Australia's Lieutenant-General John Northcott, and Australia also provided other senior officers. The Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief was Air Commodore F. M. Bladin of the RAAF, though the Commander of the air component, Air Vice-Marshal C. A. Bouchier, was British. Air Commodore I.

¹ 'Role for British in Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1946, p. 1.

² 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)', 18 December 1945, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Canberra, A5954 1699/2; 'Role for British in Japan', p. 1.

D. McLaughlan of the RAAF was the Senior Air Staff Officer to Air Vice-Marshal Bouchier. Commander-in-Chief Northcott was responsible for the maintenance and administration of BCOF, and had direct access to General MacArthur. Although BCOF would exercise military control as part of the occupation, it was not involved in military government, which was the preserve of the US.³ The distinction was the cause of much later frustration because it meant BCOF was kept at arm's length with regard to the implementation of occupation policy. The occupation as an Australian experience was shaped not only by occupation directives and leaders' decisions but also by the actions of BCOF members, from the top commander to rank-and-file soldiers, once they landed in Japan. Given the difficulties caused by the delay in deploying the force, and given its hurried formation, the soldiers' accomplishments were remarkable. In this chapter and the next I reconstruct the experience on the ground of the Australian army component of BCOF, beginning with an examination of the arrival of Australian soldiers in Japan. I consider the process by which Northcott determined BCOF's specific zone of control, together with his implementation of the 'non-fraternisation' policy in an attempt to restrict BCOF personnel's interaction with the Japanese people. Both decisions stemmed from Northcott's belief in the importance of British civilisation and in the relevance of a self-contained and disciplined Britishness in unifying this joint force, which combined Australians, British, Indians and New Zealanders. The non-fraternisation policy foundered, however, because common soldiers needed to deal with Japanese people on a daily basis in order to carry out occupation tasks. In practice, many Australian soldiers dealt with the Japanese people with considerable sympathy. The chapter also describes the part BCOF

³ 'Role for British in Japan', p. 1.

soldiers played in the occupation's military machinery and its choreographed public displays, which were so important in representing the occupation to the Japanese populace. Allied soldiers felt empowered by the fact of the occupation itself, and certainly did exercise power over the Japanese people. At the same time, the attitudes of many BCOF personnel shifted from wartime hatred to sympathy in dealing with Japan and the Japanese. In the previous chapter I showed that the motivations of Australian personnel who decided to serve in Japan were more varied than the conventional view has suggested; in this chapter I also draw attention to the diversity of the soldiers' reactions once they actually moved to Japan, and especially the feelings of accomplishment that interviewees and soldiers' memoirs clearly reveal.

Organisation of the Force

With regard to general operational control, the land component of BCOF was placed under the Commander of the US Eighth Army, and the air component under the Commander of the Pacific Air Command, United States Army. Under the provision concerning the formation of *HMS Commonwealth*, a squadron of the British Pacific Fleet with ships from the Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy and Royal Indian Navy currently stationed in Japanese waters would move to the operational control of the Admiral Commanding the Detachment of the United States Fleet.⁴

The Commander-in-Chief of BCOF was to be responsible in policy and administrative matters for the force as a whole to the government of each member state through the Joint Chiefs of Staff Australia (JCOSA) in Melbourne,

⁴ Ibid.

which comprised representatives from member states of BCOF,⁵ and the Australian Chief of Staff. The Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, as noted above, had the right to communicate directly with MacArthur; on administrative matters affecting BCOF he communicated with JCOSA. On issues involving member governments, he would communicate to, for example, the Australian government through JCOSA.⁶

The land force of BCOF finally comprised a British and Indian division (BRINDIV) made up of two brigades, the 5th British Infantry Brigade and the 286th Indian Infantry Brigade; the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force; and the 34th Australian Infantry Brigade. The air force was provided by the British Commonwealth Air Group (BCAG). The Royal Air Force provided two squadrons. Australia provided the 81st Wing (RAAF), with three fighter squadrons. The Royal Indian Air Force and the Royal New Zealand Air Force each provided one squadron. The navy contingent from the UK, Australia and New Zealand, which had a base on shore in Kure, was placed under the Royal Navy. Later *HMS Commonwealth* was established in Kure Harbour.⁷

The Australian government had succeeded in positioning Australia centrally within the communication channels among the Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, the member states of BCOF and SCAP. According to Bates, this was a

⁵ The Indian forces in the British and Indian Division lost their legal status with the independence of India from Britain in 1947. Indian forces in Japan were withdrawn in the same year.

⁶ 'Role for British in Japan', p. 1; 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.

⁷ On the arrival and formation of BCOF see *As You Were: A Cavalcade of Events with the Australian Services from 1788 to 1946* (Canberra: AWM, 1946), pp. 92-94; Chida Takeshi, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobō, 1997), pp. 140-166. See also map on flyleaf and inside back cover of Peter Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

direct result of Evatt's "continual lobbying in Washington".⁸ However, there is no evidence of this lobbying in Horner's detailed examination of Britain and Australia's negotiation with the US over BCOF.⁹ In fact, the US side held all the bargaining power, and the British Commonwealth had to accept that BCOF would have little or no impact on the decision-making process of the occupation as a whole. Under the MacArthur-Northcott Agreement, the Commander-in-Chief was independent from SCAP only in the administration and maintenance of his own force. If the occupation forces as a whole were required for military operations, each of the three services of BCOF would be placed under the commander of its counterpart within the US military. It remained unclear what the role of the Commander-in-Chief of BCOF would be in such circumstances.

There was undoubtedly tension between BCOF and the US military government once BCOF's operations got under way, and even BCOF soldiers on the ground were frustrated at US dominance in the occupation.¹⁰ In response to a local Japanese police report that BCOF had issued them with detailed orders, the US military government noted early in 1947 that under Occupation instruction #17:

The [British Commonwealth] Occupation Forces are NOT in any sense directly responsible for the execution of SCAP Directives, and

⁸ Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, pp. 42-43.

⁹ David Horner, *High Command: Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939-1945* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 428-429.

¹⁰ Basil Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan: The Diary of an Australian Soldier, 1945-46*, ed. and with an introduction by Sandra Wilson (Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2009), entries for 19 August 1946 (p. 102) and 31 October 1946 (pp. 121-122).

subordinate [BCOF] commanders are NOT permitted to issue orders or direct the operation of any Japanese Government agency¹¹

Arrival of the Troops

Australian troops finally started moving to Japan from the end of January 1946 onwards, with their counterparts from India, the UK and New Zealand also beginning to arrive in Japan around the same time. Advance parties totalling 1122 Australian troops embarked from Morotai on 7 February on the American warship, *Stamford Victory*. These troops were assigned to prepare for the arrival of the full BCOF force. They included units of the BCOF Headquarters and of the British Command Base, engineering corps and the 34th Australian Infantry Battalion. They landed at Kure Harbour in Hiroshima prefecture on 13 February 1946.¹²

Kure Harbour had been a military port and was the location of one of four Imperial Japanese Navy Headquarters.¹³ Diplomatic conflict with Russia in the late 1890s had stimulated the growth of naval shipbuilding in Kure, which was vital to the Imperial Japanese Navy's victory over Russia in the war of 1904-5, since it allowed for the repair and maintenance of battleships and other warships. Kure was particularly known among Japanese people as the birthplace of the gigantic battleship, *Yamato*, which, with the *Musashi*, was one

¹¹ Headquarters Hiroshima Military Government Team APO317, 'Reports', 2 January 1947, Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken, Gaikō shiryōkan (Diplomatic Records Office), Tokyo (hereafter DRO), A'1 0 0 2-1-2.

¹² Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 140-166; *As You Were*, pp. 92-94.

¹³ The other three Japanese naval bases were: Maizuru in northern Honshū facing the Japan Sea; Yokosuka in central Japan, close to Tokyo and facing the Pacific Ocean; Sasebo in Kyūshū in southern Japan, close to Korea and facing the Pacific Ocean.

of the two largest battleships ever built. *Yamato* fought and sank at the battle of Okinawa in June 1945.¹⁴

Japan's Naval Academy, from which the leaders of the Imperial Japanese Navy had graduated, was located on the small island of Etajima, which was twenty minutes by ferry from Kure Harbour. This elite institution brought prestige to the township of Kure, where a large number of the populace worked in ship-building, or on the docks or in related industries. The largest arsenal in Japan surrounded Kure Harbour.¹⁵ Midget submarines built for kamikaze attacks, with which the people of Australia became familiar when they attacked Sydney Harbour in 1942, were also produced at the Kure shipyards. Hundreds of them were still within the shipyards when BCOF arrived.¹⁶ Kure Harbour and neighbouring towns, in which docks, shipyards, a large arsenal and a naval airport were tightly packed, became the target of US air raids in the final months of the war. A series of bombing raids from March to July 1945 had destroyed Kure Harbour, the arsenal, and most of the commercial and industrial areas of the city.¹⁷

A doctor in the Australian Army Medical Service recalls his first view of Kure Harbour from the top deck of the *Stamford Victory*. He first saw “treeless hills”, stripped of vegetation by intense bombing by the US Air Force, surrounding the harbour. They appeared as if they had “been recently bulldozed into position”. As the ship neared the wharf, his attention was drawn to “a shoreline covered by low rubble, contrasting with a few taller and skeletal remains of former multi-storeyed buildings”. As he remarked, “Nothing

¹⁴ *Kure no Ayumi II: Eirenpōgun no Mita Kure* (Kure: Kureshi, [1989]), pp. 202-207.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶ George Martin, interview, 12 May 1999 (Melbourne); *As You Were*, p. 98.

¹⁷ *Kure no Ayumi: Kure Shisei Hyakushūnen Kinenban* (Kure: Kureshi, [1989]); *Kure no Ayumi II: Eirenpōgun no Mita Kure*.

seemed to be whole". The physical details of the wharf seemed to suggest death rather than life, with sunken warships all around and a "conspicuous tangle of steel piers." He concludes of the harbour: "It was reminiscent of photographs I had seen of bombed and gutted cathedrals in Europe".¹⁸

No matter how desolate Kure Harbour appeared, however, many of the Australian soldiers on the deck of the *Stamford Victory* were cheerful and simply glad to be reaching the end of their sea voyage. George Martin of the Engineer Corps recalls:

As the ship was sailing towards the harbour all troops were out on the deck watching the water and the bay. There was a small boat coming into our view. It was then we saw that a woman was rowing the boat and beside her there was a man smoking; they were probably wife and husband. One of the soldiers on the deck yelled loudly out to the man. "Why aren't you rowing?" After a moment of silence, we all fell into laughter.¹⁹

Martin characterised his experience of arrival as a cultural shock for a young male from a Western background. Even before setting foot on the conquered land, the soldiers encountered unfamiliar behaviour in the form of the man and his wife in the boat. In Australian cultural practice, a respectable male would be expected to behave differently with a female companion in public. Martin's reaction was typical of a gender-specific feeling of antipathy towards Japanese men that was expressed by many Australian personnel during the occupation period. American war propaganda had often depicted Japanese men with

¹⁸ Murray Elliott, *Occupation Hazards: A Doctor in Japan and Elsewhere*, Australians in Asia no. 14 (Nathan: Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Faculty of Asian and International Studies, Griffith University, 1995), p. 18.

¹⁹ Martin, interview, 12 May 1999.

simian features²⁰ and Australian BCOF soldiers seemed to have a similar image of Japanese men.²¹ Even so sensitive a writer as Allan Clifton, for example, contrasts Japanese men and women, describing “calm resignation to a life that has been the lot of Japanese women for centuries, a life that has ennobled and dignified them far beyond the men of their race”.²² Notwithstanding this reaction, the episode of the boat also reflects the joyous air and the playfulness of Australian soldiers who were finally to be relieved of the sea voyage that had followed a long waiting period on Morotai. Their reaction to the man in the rowing boat also suggests their assumed power over Japanese men as victors in the conquered land.

Various Australians were already in Japan at this early point, ahead of even the advance party, and there was a crowd of them waiting at the wharf. A small group had arrived in Kure in early February in the days prior to the advance party. Some Australian personnel had also been serving in the Tokyo-Yokosuka area since the Japanese surrender, and some Australians working in Manila had moved to Tokyo to serve with SCAP. There was also the Australian Liaison Mission to SCAP, which eventually formed the Australian diplomatic representation to Japan when the peace treaty came into effect in 1952. The Australian government had also provided personnel to facilitate the arrival of BCOF. From the end of August 1945, the RAN ships *HMAS Shropshire*, *Hobart*, *Warramanga*, *Bataan*, *Nizam* and *Napier* had been anchored in Tokyo Bay as part of the British Pacific Fleet. Their crews had witnessed the surrender ceremony,

²⁰ John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 147-187.

²¹ For an example, see T. A. G. Hungerford, *Sowers of the Wind: A Novel of the Occupation of Japan* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1954), p. 277.

²² Allan S. Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms* (Sydney: Cassell, 1950), p. 15.

which took place on the American warship *Missouri* on 2 September 1945.²³ To add to this list, the Australian Navy Commander, Captain H. J. Buchanan, had taken over the Yokosuka Naval Base, one of the four Japanese naval headquarters, leading a landing force of sixty troops dispatched from the British Pacific Fleet three days before the surrender ceremony.²⁴ The Australian 88th High Speed Wireless Section had also moved from Morotai to Tokyo in January 1946 and had set up direct communication between Tokyo and Melbourne, where the Australian Army Headquarters would oversee BCOF administrative tasks. *HMAS Hobart*, too, sailed from Tokyo Bay to Kure to serve as support to BCOF along with *HMAS Arunta*. They guarded Kure Bay for two weeks, awaiting the arrival of the advance party.²⁵

When the advance party on the *Stamford Victory* docked on 13 February 1946, a local Japanese newspaper reported that “a storm of joyful exchange and shouts bonded the crowd on the wharf and the troops on the deck: the British Commonwealth forces in wide-brimmed hats arrived at Kure Harbour”. The report continues:

Around 1000 Australian BCOF soldiers proudly landed at the wharf beside the third dock of Kure Harbour.... The *HMAS Hobart* has been sailing around Kure from 31 January in preparation for receiving them. There were also other warships and naval and army officers, welcoming their boys who had guarded Morotai Island on the frontline of the tropical zone [for the Allies]. The Australian soldiers with their

²³ Chida, *Eiren-pōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 131; James Wood, *The Forgotten Force: The Australian Military Contribution to the Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. 46.

²⁴ Richard Reid, 'Australia-Japan Research Project: Victory and Defeat: Aug 1945 to Sep 1946', Australian War Memorial, <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/437f72f8ac2c07238525661a00063aa6/a25ea01eacbac6cdca256946001ef8ad>, accessed 15 September 2007.

²⁵ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, pp. 44-47.

characteristic wide-brimmed hats were crowded at the deck. It seemed they couldn't help acting up, shouting to the cameras and laughing at journalists every time a camera flashed at them. Should we call it "the air of the victor?"²⁶

Some of this advance party of Australian troops were immediately deployed to camps previously assigned to US occupation soldiers. They then took up the most urgent tasks associated with receiving the second and third contingents of the British Commonwealth troops at Kure.²⁷

For the relationship with the Australian public the Australian media coverage was essential. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the arrival with a series of photographs of Australian personnel and views of Kure Harbour, including the campsite for Australian troops located on the outskirts of Kure. The pictures show a group of Australian soldiers walking and smiling in the street in the city of Kure beside a Japanese woman with a baby on her back, a smiling soldier dropping in at a vegetable store in a market, a soldier inspecting ruins with a serious face in the nuclear-bombed Hiroshima. Readers were told that these photographs were taken by a "special photographer" of the press and had arrived by airmail the night before publication. The *Melbourne Age* had similar coverage, telling its readers that a special photographer had flown to Kure on the day the Australian personnel arrived there. Australian newspapers had been reporting on issues relating to BCOF since Chifley first announced the sending of Australian troops to Japan two days after the Japanese surrender. When Australian soldiers finally arrived in Japan, the newspapers capitalised

²⁶ *Chūgoku Shinbun*, cited in Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 361 (translation mine).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

on the fact that the Australian boys would provide excellent opportunities for photographs to be published at home.²⁸

A force including 753 RAAF troops arrived at Kure eight days after the first contingent, bringing several cargo ships loaded with ammunition, vehicles, food and equipment. By the end of March, around 4000 Australian troops had arrived in Kure. Other Australian units followed them, including combat forces recruited from home for BCOF, who had embarked at Sydney. *HMAS Kanimbla* landed in Kure on 24 March, bringing doctors and nurses, and instruments and stores for the Australian field hospital that would soon open on the island of Etajima.²⁹ Thirty-six nurses from the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS) and doctors for the 130th Australian General Hospital were welcomed not only by a crowd at Kure Harbour but also by the RAAF from the sky. A nurse recalls:

It was a boisterous welcome. The ship's loudspeaker system was connected to WLK, the BCOF radio station in Kure, our point of landing, and [we heard] cheerful greetings from many units Bright music added to the excitement but this was soon muted by the noise created when RAAF pilots skilfully turned on a welcoming aerobatic display.³⁰

The apparently lively and even playful atmosphere on arrival in fact reveals the vulnerability of the Australian BCOF, as well as the ambivalence and anxieties of soldiers. It would not be surprising if those responsible for BCOF public

²⁸ 'Where Australians Will Be Based in Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 February 1946, p. 1; 'Australians See Atom Bomb Damage', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February 1946, p. 1; 'Australian Troops in Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 February 1946, p. 3; 'Australians for Japan', *Age*, 12 February 1946, p. 1; 'Australian Troops in Kure Japan', *Age*, 21 February 1946, p. 3.

²⁹ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 47; Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 159; Reid, 'Australia-Japan Research Project: Victory and Defeat: Aug 1945 to Sep 1946,' accessed 15 September 2007.

³⁰ Lorna Weir, 'Nurses Tend to Remember', in *BCOF: An Unofficial History*, ed. Larry Lacey (Yamba: Larry Lacey, 1995), p. 167.

relations had expected a more powerful image of the landing at Kure Harbour than that represented in the local Japanese newspaper. The first major group of troops of the Australian component seemed unable to help being themselves – they were youthful, easygoing, and somewhat jocular. As noted in the previous chapter, the Australian BCOF consisted of many young soldiers who volunteered to serve in Japan rather than continuing military service in Australia or Australian territories until the granting of their discharge. Even so, they had mixed motivations and experienced mixed feelings as they disembarked in Japan in the aftermath of the Pacific War. The accent on youthfulness was typical. Australia was still a nation emerging from the shadow of Britain, and was often characterised as a 'young' country, especially in contrast with the 'mother country'. In Australian military culture this national sense of being young was expressed as an emphasis on larrikinism, which had been seen as part of the identity of Australian soldiers since the First World War.³¹ Apparent Australian egalitarianism, youthfulness and larrikinism would later draw the attention of the local population in Japan, where there was a popular conception among the local population of the *ranbōna* –wild and rough – Australians for a long time after the occupation period was over.³²

By contrast with the joyous and playful Australian soldiers at the wharf depicted by the Japanese newspaper report of 13 February, an account by the senior officer of the Australian BCOF commanding the main body of troops in March-April suggested entirely different expectations. Colonel Colin East recalls:

³¹ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 46-72.

³² Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 398, 400.

We had to ... be prepared in fact to encounter hostile activity by hard-core Japanese militarists who would conduct guerrilla warfare, and this was a distinct possibility and we were in fact warned to be prepared for this, and of course it's why we arrived in Japan with all our war establishment equipment, weapons, ammunition and so forth, because we didn't quite know what to expect.³³

One of my interviewees from the 67th Infantry Battalion similarly recalls that his unit was given strict orders not to undertake any individual movements outside barracks for a while. The soldiers were confined to the barracks after scheduled daily duties were over: "We were ordered to move together as a unit when leaving and returning to barracks. We did not go outside barracks while off duty for three months. We were indeed scared of going outside".³⁴ Moreover, it appears there was no welcoming crowd for the arrival of later contingents of Australian troops. An interviewee from the 65th Battalion who arrived at Kure at the end of March on *Pachaug Victory* from Sydney recalls: "No, there was no crowd welcoming us at the harbour... but, there was a sign everywhere, warning of VD ... at the wharf, outside the wharf, and every passage we marched up from the wharf".³⁵ In the 1994 Australian Broadcasting Commission television documentary on BCOF, a former BCOF officer also comments that the Australian soldiers landed in a rather sombre atmosphere and were quickly dispatched to their allocated destinations.³⁶

³³ Recollection by Colonel Colin East, quoted in Christine de Matos, "'Un-Forgetting' the Allied Occupation of Japan: Oral Histories from Australian Participants', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 21 (1999), p. 33.

³⁴ Reg Bandy, interview, 28 October 2002 (Perth).

³⁵ Maurice Dufficey, interview, 27 January 2007 (Townsville).

³⁶ Raymond Quint, *The Forgotten Force* (Australia: Film Australia, 1994), videorecording.

The novelist Hungerford's recollection of landing at Kure and being marched up to the soldiers' "billet" over icy and muddy ground is similar in tone. The soldiers' accommodation was a half-ruined building that had been blown up in an American air raid. Nevertheless, troops were quickly served a hot dinner by the cooks who had been disembarked from the ship and deployed to the barracks earlier than the others. After the meal, despite the fact that leave had not been granted, some soldiers of lower ranks "were flitting off into [the] uncharted ruins of Kure" looking for various things they had been denied – food, drink, sex – on a tropical island such as Morotai. Meanwhile, their officers were occupied with tasks associated with setting up the camp.³⁷

Journalists sent by Australian newspapers to occupied Japan had been eagerly awaiting the Australian BCOF landing for several months.³⁸ The correspondent of the *Women's Weekly*, Dorothy Drain, who was the first female foreign correspondent to work in the Australian media in Japan, arrived in Kure on 25 March with the hospital ship, *Manunda*.³⁹ Australian journalists in Kure watched the soldiers closely. Immediately after the arrival of the first contingent, journalists began analyzing the capability of the BCOF authority to provide troops with adequate accommodation, food and other amenities.⁴⁰ In addition to scrutiny from the Australian media, the occupation soldiers were

³⁷ T. A. G. Hungerford, *Straightshooter* (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003), p. 255.

³⁸ Charles A. Pomeroy and Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, *Foreign Correspondents in Japan: Reporting a Half Century of Upheavals: From 1945 to the Present* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1998), pp. 6-77. On Australian correspondents and BCOF, see Prue Torney, "Renegades to Their Country": The Australian Press and the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1946-1950', *War & Society*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (2006), pp. 89-110.

³⁹ Dorothy Drain, 'To Japan Aboard Australian Hospital Ship', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 13 April 1946, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Massey Stanley, 'Australian Troops Poorly Billeted', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 February, 1946, p. 3; Massey Stanley, 'Our Men Can't Help Fraternising', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 March 1946, p. 6.

also subject to the passive yet persistent gaze of the Japanese public, which was quick to grasp the power relations within the occupation. We will return to this theme in the next chapter.

Establishing BCOF

As Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, Northcott landed at Hiro airport, near Kure, on 26 February 1946. The smooth establishment of BCOF would be his first task. However, it soon became clear that the area originally allocated to BCOF by MacArthur, after discussion with Northcott, that is, Hiroshima prefecture, was inadequate to accommodate 37,000 BCOF troops. The BCOF area was thus promptly extended into the Chūgoku-Shikoku region, which included the neighbouring prefectures of Yamaguchi, Shimane, Okayama and Tottori, and Shikoku Island (which itself encompassed Kōchi, Tokushima, Kagawa and Ehime prefectures). The BCOF zone was determined by June 1946.⁴¹

BCOF Headquarters was set up initially in the city of Kure. The 34th Australian Brigade was based in Hiro, five miles from Kure in Hiroshima prefecture; the New Zealand Infantry was in Chōfu in Yamaguchi prefecture; the 5th British Brigade was based in Kōchi in Kōchi prefecture; the British-Indian Division was in Okayama in Okayama prefecture; the 286th Indian Infantry Brigade was in Matsue in Shimane prefecture. With the headquarters of infantry battalions in these places, their companies were deposited all over the BCOF area. Major air force bases were established in Bōfu (RAAF), Iwakuni (British Commonwealth Air Group) and Miho (British Commonwealth Air Group). The Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy and Royal New Zealand Navy were stationed in Kure Harbour as part of *HMS Commonwealth*. The Australian

⁴¹ Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, pp. 54-56.

General Hospital was set up in the former Japanese Naval Academy on Etajima. The Indian General Hospital, the British General Hospital and the New Zealand General Hospital were set up in Kure, Okayama and Kiwa in Yamaguchi prefecture, respectively.⁴²

Peter Bates, himself a language officer of the British component of BCOF, claims that there were fundamental flaws in Northcott's formation of BCOF. His criticisms probably reflect complaints made in particular by officers of BCOF's British-Indian Division. First, Bates points out that, in order to cope with problems caused by the delay in deployment, Northcott "had taken a gamble" in deploying combat forces before the arrival of military administrative staff. Indeed, the entire BCOF force arrived in Japan within a short period, which made it difficult to provide adequate accommodation and supplies. Bates is also critical of the area that Northcott nominated for BCOF's operations. Northcott chose rural regions far from the commercial and trading centres of Japan despite the preference of Joint Chiefs of Staff Australia to extend BCOF towards central Japan, including the old port town of Kobe. The areas chosen by Northcott were regarded as remote, without adequate facilities or amenities, damaged by bombing, and far from the centres of influence. Northcott evidently preferred to control areas contiguous to each other and also saw administrative difficulties in splitting prefectures between different forces. Bates seems to suggest a certain vanity in Northcott's selection, based on his claim in a report to JCOSA that BCOF now ruled fifty percent of Japanese land. In fact, the area BCOF occupied constituted twenty-five percent of Japanese land. In the event, the Australian BCOF was crowded into Hiroshima prefecture. The British-Indian Division, by contrast, was stretched thinly across large rural

⁴² For a detailed illustration of the disposition of BCOF around June 1946, see flyleaf and inside back cover of *ibid.*

areas encompassing seven of Japan's forty-six prefectures, where the main activity was agricultural production. It was difficult to communicate and to provide amenities for the troops in these areas. Moreover, troops were frustrated at fact that these rural areas were so remote from the power of SCAP in Tokyo.⁴³ Troops heard rumours that the US had awarded the worst area to BCOF. Bates quotes one Australian officer as saying: "we soon learnt that we had a thankless job in one of the worst areas of Japan ... our part in the Allied occupation force was to be the Cinderella".⁴⁴

Besides general dissatisfaction regarding BCOF territory, there was a particular issue concerning the allocation of Hiroshima to BCOF. BCOF veterans later speculated that MacArthur had allocated Hiroshima to BCOF in order to keep the US military away from the region affected by the nuclear bomb - not because of the danger of radiation sickness, which was not yet well understood, but to avoid problems caused by the grievances and resentment of bomb victims.⁴⁵

Northcott later revealed that several options had been discussed with MacArthur, but that he chose the Hiroshima district because the Hokkaidō area, in the north of Japan, would be too cold for BCOF troops and the Osaka-Kobe area, encompassing Japan's second-largest city and the first port town opened to foreign trade in the 1850s, was a densely populated industrial region that the 40 000 troops would find difficult to control.⁴⁶ If Northcott thought the Osaka

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 59.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ Stephen Macauley, interview, 19 May 1999 (Melbourne); Stephen Kelen, *I Remember Hiroshima* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1983). Bates says that after some initial interest in sightseeing in Hiroshima soldiers preferred to avoid it "because of the doubts and depression it caused". Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Arthur W. John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown: A History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan* (Melbourne: Gen Publishers, 1987), p. 10.

region would be too much for the available troops then it is unsurprising that he also rejected the Kobe area, which, though smaller than Osaka, was part of the main commercial and industrial region of central Japan. Moreover, there was a single regional military government for the Hiroshima region. Chida argues that Northcott's decision to expand into the Chūgoku-Shikoku region was strategically sound, as it was an established region with, for example, a coherent transport infrastructure network.⁴⁷

It was an embarrassment for Northcott and the Australian government that they did not realise beforehand that the initial allocation of territory for BCOF was inadequate. Such difficulties potentially undermined the credibility of Australia's leading role in the force. Northcott's expectation that he would command a unified force of the British Commonwealth also proved mistaken. The Commander-in-Chief of the BRINDIV, Major David Tennant Cowan, refused to recognise Northcott's authority because he could not accept that the position of Commander-in-Chief of BCOF was above that of the Commander of BRINDIV.⁴⁸ Northcott, and subsequently Robertson, took a practical approach to the problem of competing interests within BCOF by allowing individual national forces to operate more or less separately rather than insisting on a formally unified force. The Indian force, for example, had its own officers, and Robertson treated it as an autonomous unit.⁴⁹ Robertson experienced further difficulties, however, with a senior officer of the British Liaison Mission to SCAP, Major-General Charles Gairdner. Gairdner claimed seniority over

⁴⁷ Personal discussion with Chida in 2006.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Grey, *Australian Brass: The Career of Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson* (Cambridge and Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 133.

⁴⁹ Bisheshwar Prasad, 'Introduction', in *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-45: Post War Occupation Forces: Japan and South-East Asia* (Kanpur: Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, India & Pakistan, 1958), p. xxxiv.

Robertson due to his military rank and acted accordingly, particularly in his communications with SCAP. Robertson's anger over Gairdner's attitude came to a head when Gairdner bypassed Robertson when giving notification of Britain's decision to withdraw its troops from the occupation in 1947.⁵⁰ I will return to this topic in the next chapter.

Whatever Northcott's difficulties, it is undeniable that he lacked political foresight as the leader of BCOF. He did not leave anything among his papers to reveal his thinking and observations about BCOF,⁵¹ but his lack of political acumen was particularly evident in the way he dealt with the issue of interaction between BCOF soldiers and the local population under his control in the conquered territory, a topic I investigate below.

For the Australian military as an institution, participation in BCOF was a formative experience. Australian military leaders were well aware that in the Australian democratic system there was little space for the military in the political domain. Unlike the Japanese armed forces, the Australian military had no tradition of engaging with day-to-day politics in order to gain something for the military. It was obvious that the Chifley government's commitment to BCOF was a heaven-sent opportunity for the Australian military authorities to shape the postwar armed forces. Setting up a course for the recruitment and professional development of officers, popularly called "Duntroon in Japan", on Miyajima, an island near Etajima, was one initiative taken by the authorities in this situation.⁵² Some arrangements that had been made hastily for BCOF became permanent. In November 1948, for instance, the three battalions of the

⁵⁰ George Davies, *The Occupation of Japan: The Rhetoric and the Reality of Anglo-Australasian Relations, 1939-1952* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001), p. 308.

⁵¹ Sir John Northcott, 'Papers', State Library of NSW, MSS 1431.

⁵² For an officer's account of graduating from "Duntroon in Japan", see John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown*, pp. 85-88.

Australian component of BCOF became permanent battalions in the Australian Regular Army, entitled the First, Second, and Third Regiment of the Australian Regular Army. By then, two battalions (the 65th and 66th) had been withdrawn from Japan. The 67th battalion, now the Third Regiment of the Australian Regular Army, remained in Kure as the sole force of the Australian BCOF until 1952.⁵³

Non-Fraternisation Policy

One characteristic of Northcott's period as BCOF's commander was his attempt to impose a strict "non-fraternisation" policy. Northcott highlighted this policy at a very early point, when the governor of Hiroshima prefecture came to pay his respects just after the commander's arrival. In that meeting, Northcott requested the governor's understanding of the restrictions on BCOF soldiers' interaction with the Japanese population, as was duly reported in a local edition of a large daily newspaper.⁵⁴

The non-fraternisation policy was part of the code of conduct for BCOF personnel that attempted to control and restrict all personal interaction with the subject population of the occupied territory. The background of the policy lies in the code of conduct of the British military that had been widely implemented in British colonies, in order to maintain a self-contained Britishness among soldiers. Government and military concerns regarding possible cross-racial liaison between military personnel and local women underpinned the code of

⁵³ Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army: A History* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 174.

⁵⁴ *Mainichi Shinbun*, 7 March 1946, cited in Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 363.

conduct in both cases.⁵⁵ As George Davies notes, the non-fraternisation policy undermined the wider aim of democratising Japan.⁵⁶

In the view of JCOSA, imposing a non-fraternisation policy was of key importance in enhancing the prestige of the British Commonwealth in Japan.⁵⁷ The policy was publicised under the direction of Northcott to personnel in a military booklet, *Know Japan*, which specified that BCOF personnel must be “formal and correct” in handling the conquered enemy, and “must not enter Japanese homes” or “participate in Japanese family life”. Personnel were expected to keep unofficial dealings with the Japanese population to a minimum.⁵⁸ The policy highlights the dual nature of the duty of personnel in Japan: both their duty as occupation soldiers with specific tasks, and their duty to uphold the perceived standards of “the British Commonwealth of Nations”. If one of the occupation objectives, as stated in *Know Japan*, was to demonstrate the democratic way of life, however, it is difficult to know how soldiers could do this without interacting with the Japanese people.

James Wood claims that the non-fraternisation policy reflects the intention of the Chifley government to take a punitive approach to occupied Japan for its aggression during the war, an approach that arose partly out of consideration for Australian society’s presumed feelings about Japan and the Japanese people at this time.⁵⁹ The policy should also be seen, however, in the

⁵⁵ On the connections between anti-fraternisation and the British empire see Oliver Simmonson, 'Commonwealth Fraternisation Policy in Occupied Japan', Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Queensland, 1991, pp. 35, 60; Carolyne Carter, 'Between War and Peace: The Experience of Occupation for Members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, 1945-1952', Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of New South Wales, 2002, p. 229.

⁵⁶ Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, p.175.

⁵⁷ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 93.

⁵⁸ British Commonwealth Occupation Forces Japan, *Know Japan* (South Yarra, Vic.: Rodney Press, 1946), p. 5.

⁵⁹ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, p. 95.

context of very uncertain feelings about Australian identity. For Australia, relations with Britain were both asserted and questioned during the Japanese occupation, but on the whole, at least for Northcott and other leaders, a British-style identity was proudly upheld. Northcott's attitude to contact with the Japanese people was probably based on his belief in the power of empire and its usefulness in creating some room for the British Commonwealth within the American-controlled occupation of Japan. From the outset, influential people in British-Australian military circles essentially wanted the dominions to set up a British-style domain in a corner of the American-dominated occupation. In some ways, the assertion of the non-fraternisation policy was a demand for respect that Australian leaders were fearful of not receiving. For Bates the idea that the occupation would enhance the prestige of the former empire was a "miscalculation", because empire was ending. As he puts it:

The occupation was a unique experience, both for governments, for their armed forces and for individuals. It was a coming together of an extraordinary mixture of people and nationalities in what they saw as a shared and justifiable enterprise ... serving under the same flag in the last gasp of Empire which would never be seen again.⁶⁰

It is often implied, by Davies and others, that the non-fraternisation policy was impractical and even ludicrous at the level of personal relationships, including romantic relationships.⁶¹ Most writers, however, fail to note that carrying out the actual tasks of the occupation also required a breaching of the non-fraternisation policy, since supervision of Japanese labour was essential.⁶²

⁶⁰ Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, p. 227.

⁶¹ Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, p. 177.

⁶² While Carter notes that the breach of the policy occurs in the workplace, she does not provide detail or illustrate the point with individual experiences. Carter, 'Between War and Peace', pp. 249-273.

Many surviving veterans of BCOF embrace the fact that the non-fraternisation policy was ignored as the occupation progressed. Almost every soldier seemed to have his own experience of breaching the policy in one way or another. Dropping in at a Japanese employee's family home after giving him or her a lift home seemed a typical beginning. Sgt Jack Thorpe, for example, who served at the labour employment section, recalls the "shack"-like family home of a Japanese employee to whom he often gave a lift.⁶³ Indeed, in many sections of BCOF operations, the active cooperation of Japanese people was essential to the tasks of the occupation. A military-trained mechanic from the Australian engineer corps recalls that the workshop he ran used a Japanese-American interpreter, three Japanese mechanics and three other Japanese manual labourers in maintaining and repairing vehicles used by around twenty-five drivers. This was a typical situation in which the non-fraternisation policy withered in the carrying out of daily tasks.⁶⁴ Some personnel met Japanese people often, including Norman White, whose memoir describes various encounters with Japanese locals. He attributes the frequency of these encounters to his particular task as a driver and his ability in the Japanese language: he had obtained basic communication skills at the Japanese language classes organised by the BCOF Army Education Service in Kure.⁶⁵

By 1947, the non-fraternisation policy seems to have been ignored by many sections of the Australian BCOF. Foster Barton, who arrived in March 1947, claims that he never heard of the policy throughout his two years of service in Japan.⁶⁶ He further asserts that, throughout his entire career in the

⁶³ Jack Thorpe, interview, 29 November 2003 (Perth).

⁶⁴ Ken Aylward, interview, 26 January 2007 (Townsville).

⁶⁵ Norman White, *How Bluey and Friends Occupied Japan, 1946-1947* ([Wentworth Falls, N.S.W.]: N. White, 1991), p. 33.

⁶⁶ Foster Barton, interviews, 7 December 1999 and 30 January 2007 (Townsville).

Australian Army, from which he retired at the end of the 1970s as a major, he had no knowledge of BCOF's policy of restricting interaction with the Japanese population. In fact, while serving in the Movement Control section, he made a good friend of one particular Japanese man who was a deputy stationmaster for the Japan National Railway, while working also as a liaison officer for the occupation. Serving with Movement Control meant that Barton worked alone at a railway station, assisted by one or two interpreters, who were often Japanese-Americans. Together with the Japanese liaison officer he controlled and monitored the scheduled trains for occupation troops that ran alongside the normal Japanese trains. His accommodation, which employed local Japanese people for domestic service, was located near the station. While his military service isolated him from other BCOF personnel, he was relatively free in the way he spent his off-duty time. He shared meals with the deputy stationmaster while serving at the station. They also often went to the river for a swim. The deputy stationmaster, who was an ex-sergeant of the Imperial Japanese Army, had been sent back from military duty in China two months before the Japanese surrender, and experienced failure of his marriage by the occupation period. Presumably he found some consolation in the company of the occupation soldier. Barton and this former Japanese soldier met up again in the 1980s.⁶⁷

Personnel from combat units, who generally worked separately from Japanese employees, nevertheless encountered locals occasionally. An interviewee from a combat battalion revealed that he did not enjoy his first visit to a Japanese family because the house was too small and was crowded with people.⁶⁸ Japanese employees also often took the initiative in inviting occupation personnel to their home. Many Australian personnel would have

⁶⁷ Barton, interview, 30 January 2007.

⁶⁸ Fred Jorgensen, interview, 22 September 1998 (Melbourne).

agreed with Elliott, a BCOF doctor, who recalls a dinner at the residence of one of his 'house-girls' (domestic workers). He remarks that "it was like a normal dinner party in Australia", apart from sitting on the floor, using chopsticks and drinking sake. Although, by the doctor's Western standard, the fact that the small sons of the widowed house-girl sat at the dinner table with their mother and her guests was unusual, he thought that the well-behaved boys increased the pleasant atmosphere.⁶⁹

Local figures in business and politics were also keen to organise functions for one reason or another, inviting BCOF personnel of officer rank. It was the manner and attitude of women on such relatively formal occasions, regardless of whether it was an official function or private dinner, which made BCOF personnel feel as if they had stepped into another world: the women provided the greatest sense of difference. Wives or daughters of the host often attended the functions, or geisha, who were trained to the craft of entertaining men. All the women were devoted to serving their guests according to the demands of the host. Many soldiers commented on the Japanese women they met on such occasions. One soldier recalls the beauty of the wife and sister-in-law of a local magnate.⁷⁰ Dr Elliott commented that he found functions at which geisha served to be boring.⁷¹ A language officer describes a long traditional party in which the guests were invited to view the autumn moon, at which he was assigned to assist a colonel who was a guest at the home of the mayor of Ujina. His main observation concerned the colonel's somewhat undignified manner as he was served by several geisha.⁷²

⁶⁹ Elliott, *Occupation Hazards*, p. 65.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, 'A Japanese Beauty', in *BCOF: An Unofficial History*, ed. Larry Lacey (Yamba: Larry Lacey, 1995), pp. 138-141.

⁷¹ Elliott, *Occupation Hazards*, pp. 66-68.

⁷² Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms*, pp. 100-106.

Despite the formal cordiality, there were inevitable tensions between occupiers and occupied, stemming from uneven power relations, which were occasionally highlighted by encounters or disturbances that could involve the military police or BCOF intelligence or the Japanese police. Jennie Wood, in Japan as the wife of an Australian soldier, recalls that her two young house-girls insisted on accompanying her everywhere after the circulation of a “rumour” about the murder of a young village girl, amid fear of possible reprisals against BCOF soldiers or their families. The “beautiful Japanese lass” was said to have been found dead outside the BCOF Headquarters, having been raped and strangled.⁷³ Wood writes that she received protection from a “yellow-skinned guardian terrier” -- that is, one of her Japanese house-girls -- who accompanied her everywhere, including to the Australian General Hospital and to a friend’s place one block away, regardless of “the time involved in waiting on the part of the housegirl”.⁷⁴ Although Wood intended in recounting this episode to highlight the loyalty of her house-girls and her intimate relationship with them, her account also reveals uneasiness and suppressed hostility towards the occupation among the locals, which threatened to become more open because of the rumoured murder of a young woman.

While the non-fraternisation policy withered among the lower ranks, the interpretation of the policy at the commanding officers’ level was diverse. The

⁷³ Jennie Woods, *Which Way Will the Wind Blow* (North Sydney, N.S.W: Jennie Woods, 1994), p. 51. I have found no independent evidence of this murder. Robin Gerster, however, tells of an entry in an official military unit diary that speaks of a “medical inspection conducted on a Japanese girl aged eight, who had been ‘criminally assaulted’ ... by an Australian soldier”. He also records a violent assault by three Australian soldiers on two Japanese schoolgirls, one of whom had her leg snapped; the leg subsequently had to be amputated. Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine: Australia and the Occupation of Japan* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), pp. 109-110, 112.

⁷⁴ Woods, *Which Way Will the Wind Blow*, p. 51.

imposition of the policy depended on the particular commander. The most striking example was in the New Zealand component of BCOF, in which commanding officers were reluctant to impose the non-fraternisation policy on troops who had been deployed from Italy, where fraternising with local inhabitants had not been prohibited. However, the second Commander of the New Zealand BCOF, Brigadier L. Potter, felt the need to issue his own instructions concerning New Zealand personnel's interaction with the Japanese population, focusing mainly on health issues and the venereal disease that was rampant among the troops.⁷⁵ Views such as "the boys need a female companion" were part of military culture. It was such attitudes, rather than any more general tolerance of their men fraternising with the local population, that underpinned the inconsistent imposition of the policy by commanding officers. Overall, BCOF never operated in practice as a unified force of the British Commonwealth. Consequently, different interpretations and applications of military discipline are not surprising, and probably did not provoke comment at the level of commanding officers.

It is difficult to estimate what effects the non-fraternisation policy had on the relationship between the occupation forces and the local population. Chida suggests that it did have an impact on the way BCOF approached the broader Japanese community. BCOF was much slower to interact with the local population than were the US forces that had occupied the region for six months prior to BCOF's arrival. US troops organised baseball matches with local teams only two months after their arrival.⁷⁶ By contrast, it seems that BCOF did not even reciprocate the hospitality of the mayor of the City of Kure, who had invited 1,200 BCOF officers to a performance at the Takarazuka Theatre when

⁷⁵ Wood, *The Forgotten Force*, pp. 94-95.

⁷⁶ Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 382-383.

the famous Takarazuka all-female musical theatre troupe played in Kure in April 1946. One exception was the parade and ceremony for Anzac Day held at Anzac Park (formerly the training ground of the Imperial Japanese Navy, located behind Kure Harbour), which was open to the public. A large crowd of locals watched the military performance of BCOF on this occasion, but the point in this case was probably to display BCOF power rather than to encourage friendly relations.⁷⁷

It is also difficult to discern how the Chifley government's initial "harsh treatment" approach towards the Japanese people in the early stage of the occupation shaped the Australian component of BCOF. In his speech on the third anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in August 1948, the second Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, Robertson, told the Japanese crowd that the Japanese people should never forget that Japan held the ultimate responsibility for making the Allies use the atomic bomb.⁷⁸ This statement might be seen as an expression of Robertson's support for the Australian government's apparent "harsh attitude" to the Japanese people. In fact, however, Evatt as Minister for External Affairs had already placed less emphasis on punishment in favour of praising the achievements of the occupation under MacArthur and support for a conference leading to a peace treaty with Japan, at which Evatt could seek an active role for Australia.⁷⁹ It is likely that in his speech, Robertson was responding primarily to the increasing Australian public awareness of the experience of Australian prisoners-of-war under the Japanese military between 1942 and 1945, as revealed by the Australian media, and wished to remind the Japanese crowd of their military's

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 383.

⁷⁸ John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown*, p. 89.

⁷⁹ 'Japan's Occupation Big Achievement, Dr Evatt Declares', *BCON*, 19 August 1947, p. 1.

culpability. Robertson's comment could also be interpreted as a sign of defensiveness, given the huge damage that the atomic bombs had done.

Anger at wartime treatment of Australian POWs by the Japanese military may have contributed to the imposition of the non-fraternisation policy. Recollections by former prisoners were widely published. Some Australian journalists had been captured by the Japanese military while working as correspondents in the Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong, and had published their recollections. One serialised account by a *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist, Jack Percival, who had been a POW in the Philippines, was published as early as February 1945; another account was published by R. J. Cloake in September, with further publications in 1946. . In the aftermath of the war, hatred of Japanese people within Australian society was reinforced by these stories.⁸⁰ Leaders and rank-and-file personnel in BCOF had begun to hear of the Australian POW experiences and the anger at the Japanese people among the Australian public before they arrived in Japan. Such feelings may have reinforced a desire to avoid contact with the Japanese population.

Chida seems to suggest that as a major player in BCOF, Australia was responsible for creating unnecessary aloofness between conquerors and conquered, pointing to the non-fraternisation policy as well as to crimes committed by BCOF personnel, to Australians' overt identification with the British, and to the Australian government's demands for the harsh treatment of occupied Japan as major factors that distanced BCOF from the Japanese population.⁸¹ Such a perspective, however, risks oversimplifying the attitude of the Australian government and the diverse relationships between Australian

⁸⁰ Prue Torney-Parlicki, "'Unpublishable Scoops': Australian Journalists as Prisoners of the Japanese, 1941-45", *JAS, Australia's Public Intellectual Forum*, no. 66 (2000), p. 181.

⁸¹ Chida, *Eiren-pōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 362, 363, 382.

occupation personnel and the Japanese population, in a period of declining empire and emerging new alliances.

Power and Sympathy

Setting up the occupation required construction works such as the building of storage facilities and the repair and building of accommodation facilities for military personnel. In addition, BCOF began carrying out the main tasks of the occupation. Given the chaotic situation that might have resulted from the late change in the area of its operations, BCOF undoubtedly achieved a great deal in a short space of time, despite the many difficulties associated with a hurried arrival in Japan, and with a force made up of elements from different countries. The effectiveness of BCOF was largely attributable to the work of experienced soldiers who had served continuously from wartime.

The soldiers managed a large variety of tasks. BCOF participated in 'Operation Foxum' in August-September 1946, which was an initiative by US occupation forces to raid brothels licensed by the Japanese government in order to ensure that women had not been forced into prostitution; conducted an operation to eliminate ultranationalism in the school curriculum; and raided black markets to eradicate illegal merchandise.⁸² In April 1946, BCOF undertook the responsibility in its region of supervising the first general election for the Japanese parliament to be held under the occupation regime, sending personnel to polling stations all over the BCOF area to ensure the smooth running of the

⁸² Basil Archer, interviewed by Sandra Wilson, 27 November 2007 (Perth); Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms*, pp. 174-182. Les Oates recalls his involvement in a raid on a school that found no evidence of nationalism in the curriculum. Les Oates, interview, 14 October 1998 (Melbourne).

national poll.⁸³ Japanese women were granted the right to vote and to stand as candidates in this election for the first time; the election was the last to be held under the Meiji Constitution of 1889-90, before the introduction of the new constitution, written by occupation officials in 1946. The Shidehara Kijūrō Cabinet, which had been in power since Japan's surrender, had endorsed female suffrage just before MacArthur issued a directive to the same effect in October 1945.⁸⁴ Partly because of the much-publicised women's participation in this election, many BCOF veterans remember it. However, most of them were not aware that there had been a long campaign for female suffrage well before the arrival of occupation troops.

Prior to the general election, BCOF Headquarters in Kure provided details of its election work through a press release from SCAP Headquarters in Tokyo. BCOF supplied forty-five military observer teams comprising over 100 personnel in the 394 towns in the BCOF jurisdiction, which had 716 polling places.⁸⁵ Subsequently, Northcott made a public announcement affirming the successful supervision of the election by BCOF and the US military government team in the BCOF area.⁸⁶ BCOF troops also received a letter from MacArthur thanking them for their contribution to the smooth running of the election.⁸⁷ SCAP's scheme for democratisation was made evident to the Japanese public

⁸³ For a description of election work, see Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan*, pp. 42-49 (entries for 28 March-12 April 1946).

⁸⁴ Eiji Takemae, *The Allied Occupation of Japan* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 240.

⁸⁵ United States Army Forces General Headquarters, Pacific, Public Relations Office, 'Press Release: British Occupation Force Teams to Observe Japanese Elections', 5 April 1946, Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken (PRESS RELEASE) tsuzuri, DRO, A'1 0 0 2-6; Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, pp. 75-76.

⁸⁶ United States Army Forces General Headquarters, Pacific, Public Relations Office, 'Press Release: Japanese General Elections', 1 May 1946, Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken (PRESS RELEASE) tsuzuri, DRO, A'1 0 0 2-6.

⁸⁷ Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, p. 186.

through the promotion of the election. There is no doubt that supervising the election also helped to create a general consensus among BCOF personnel that the occupation was truly engaged in democratising Japan.

Election work was a rare type of military operation. Other tasks, by contrast, required specifically trained forces. For example, the Australian BCOF raised the 10th Australian Bomb Disposal Platoon in February to take over from the US military in the disposal of Japanese ammunition and explosives in the BCOF area. The Japanese military had created and stored a large amount of ammunition, explosives and other weapons around Kure, including poison gas. Reportedly 180,000 tons of explosives and ammunition were stored along the shoreline of the BCOF area and on small islands in the Inland Sea.⁸⁸ Disposal operations were dangerous. In 1948, the late Sgt (then Cpl) J. R. Swell was awarded the George Medal, the highest military award in the British empire for courageous acts outside the battlefield, for rescuing Japanese labourers from being drowned when a ship caught fire while disposing of ammunition stored on Osanami Island near Kure Harbour in October 1946. Swell was killed in October 1947, with another BCOF member and thirteen Japanese labourers, in an explosion in a mine on Shikoku island, before being notified of his award of the George Medal.⁸⁹

BCOF also performed other tasks associated with the demilitarisation program, including supervising the arrival of Japanese repatriates from war fronts and former colonies in Southeast Asia, the Pacific region, China, Taiwan and Korea. Three million Japanese soldiers and three million civilians were

⁸⁸ Keith Howes, *BCOF Pictorial: A Pictorial History of Australians Who Served in the Armed Forces with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, 1945-1952* (Elsternwick, Vic.: K. Howes, 1998), p. 95.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98. Thirty-six Japanese onlookers were also killed in one accident in Matsuyama prefecture. See the description by an Australian soldier of the accident in Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, pp. 84-85.

repatriated to Japan from 1945 onwards. A proportion of such repatriates landed at ports in the BCOF region including Ujina in Hiroshima prefecture and Shimonoseki in Yamaguchi prefecture, where BCOF personnel monitored their arrival and undertook the relevant administrative processes.⁹⁰

In order to maintain their power, military occupation forces need to appear physically impressive in the eyes of the conquered. Military culture and tradition underpinned the physical presentation of BCOF troops: marching and parading, for example, were carefully choreographed. Anzac Day on 25 April 1946 was an excellent opportunity for BCOF to demonstrate the mass scale of military parade and ceremonial performance, with 3,000 troops visible to the people of Kure city. As noted above, the Anzac Day ceremony was open to the Japanese public and a large number of local people came to watch the parade.⁹¹ At the beginning of May 1946, the 66th Battalion, comprising 700 troops, set off for Tokyo for imperial guard duty, in which the occupation forces from different nations took turns in guarding the imperial palace in central Tokyo.⁹² On their arrival at Tokyo's central station, the troops staged a spectacular parade before a Japanese crowd, marching up to the Ebisu military camp, across the business and commercial district of Tokyo. The parade was followed by a ceremonial handing over of the guard duty from US troops to the

⁹⁰ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), pp. 51-61; Chida, *Eirenōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 195-196. Ujina ceased to receive repatriates at the end of 1947. For descriptions of Australian BCOF soldiers' early work in supervising arriving Japanese repatriates see Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms*, pp. 16-25.

⁹¹ Chida, *Eirenōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 383.

⁹² United States Army Forces General Headquarters, Pacific, Public Relations Office, 'Press Release: Australian Troops Arrive to Serve as Palace Guards', 8 May 1946, *Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken* (PRESS RELEASE) tsuzuri, DRO, A'1 0 0 2-6, pp. 77-78; Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, pp. 77-78.

Australian troops at the central gate of the palace.⁹³ A Japanese crowd in the Imperial Plaza watched this ceremony also. Empire Day on 24 May 1946 was another occasion for a parade and ceremonial performance by BCOF. All troops of the British Commonwealth, apart from those in the city of Hiroshima (who had their own parade), came to Tokyo to take part in the parade and ceremony.⁹⁴

In his diary, Macmahon Ball, the head of the Australian Liaison Mission to SCAP and the Representative of the British Commonwealth on the Allied Council for Japan, describes his actions on Empire Day. His Empire Day was filled with functions: attending church in the morning, watching the military parade from the official platform with other Allied representatives. He was impressed by the naval parade, but added: "I hate these military functions and am never quite sure what to do with my hat when all the saluting goes on". He watched a film at an Empire Day function at Hibiya Hall near Tokyo Station, and then attended a party at the British Embassy in the evening, where high-ranking officials were served with an impressive array of food and drinks.⁹⁵ There were similar functions and celebrations for the different ranks of all British Commonwealth forces. For the US military, American Independence Day on 4 July was the greatest occasion on which to show its presence and strength to the Japanese population. Substantial numbers of BCOF troops joined US troops in the Independence Day parades and ceremonies. Ball wrote in his

⁹³ Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 198-200.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

⁹⁵ W. Macmahon Ball, *Intermittent Diplomat: The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball*, ed. Alan Rix (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 59-61.

diary for 4 July 1947: "What an Independence Day! At 9.30 to the Plaza and a tremendous parade, the biggest yet in Tokyo".⁹⁶

The choreographed presentation of troops was a useful means of highlighting presence and power in the view of one twenty-four-year-old captain of the 66th Battalion Infantry who had been posted to Onomichi in charge of a unit of 120 troops. Onomichi was an old port town of 80,000 people located along the coastline of the Inland Sea in the east of Hiroshima prefecture. Maintaining control might have been harder in the harbour town than elsewhere because, according to the captain, it had a reputation for illegal trade with Taiwan. Although, as he recalls, there were in fact few incidents, the captain felt he needed "to remind the Japanese people of Onomichi that they had lost the War". In order to do this he periodically staged "what we called a 'Flag March' through the town":

The whole one hundred and twenty of us [marched] though the streets of Onomichi at attention with bayonets fixed and they were the nice long bayonets ... and we'd march through the streets just to let them know that we were there.

The captain's recollections reveal his feelings of empowerment in carrying out an important duty.⁹⁷

Many personnel needed to bear a large responsibility at a young age, as the situation of this captain suggests. A number of surviving BCOF personnel relate that they had their twenty-first birthday in occupied Japan. Some of them felt a sense of personal achievement. BCOF veteran George Martin recalls his feelings of accomplishment when, as a twenty-one-year-old, he supervised one

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 220. On BCOF participation in the 1948 parade, see '10,000 March on US Independence Day', *BCON*, 6 July 1948, p. 1.

⁹⁷ Colin East, interviewed by de Matos and cited in de Matos, "Un-Forgetting" the Allied Occupation of Japan', p. 33.

hundred Japanese labourers by himself at a construction site, aided by an interpreter from the Australian language corps.⁹⁸ As mentioned above, Foster Barton of the Movement Control section felt a similar sense of accomplishment. In a picture of him taken with staff of the Japanese railway station at which he worked along with two Japanese-American interpreters, he appeared much older than his actual age (Barton celebrated his 21st birthday while in Japan). Compared with another photograph of him taken with his fellow BCOF personnel at the same time, the image of him sitting in the centre of the Japanese staff and Japanese-American interpreters made it appear as if he embodied the occupation itself.⁹⁹ There were, of course, differences among individuals, but such recollections and photographs tell us that these young BCOF personnel needed to be much more mature than their real ages in order to handle occupation tasks, regardless of whether they were commanding their own men, handling Japanese labourers or controlling liaison between the occupation and the Japanese population.

⁹⁸ Martin, interview, 12 May 1999.

⁹⁹ I have a copy of the photograph given to me by Foster Barton.



Foster Barton (middle) while he was working in Movement Control, flanked by a Japanese-American interpreter (left) and stationmaster (right) and his staff.

The sense of power, however, was tempered by considerable compassion. Another interviewee from the engineer corps, Stephen Macaulay, recalls that his unit made friends first with the small Japanese boys who followed his unit everywhere and watched them carry out various tasks: “We were surrounded by small boys everywhere, regardless of whatever we were doing”.¹⁰⁰ This was a typical experience in occupied Japan. Indeed, there are numerous photographs of occupation soldiers flanked by local children. A majority of the children were boys of all ages, who often had younger siblings with them. Boys were freer to wander the streets than girls, who often stayed home to help with household chores. Published images of soldiers with children sent a message to the Japanese people and to those at home that the troops' mission was a peaceful one. The back cover of a 1947 issue of the *Gen*, a periodical published by the Australian Army Education Service, suggested this with a picture of the

¹⁰⁰ Macaulay, interview, 19 May 1999.

large figure of an Australian soldier being taught Japanese by a small Japanese boy. The *Gen* advertised a course in the Japanese language with this motif, in which the soldier and the boy appear to be communicating well.¹⁰¹

Occupation soldiers thus had many encounters with Japanese children. Sgt Ken Wells of the language corps wrote to his family:

Imagine me and a tall highland lieut[enant] in kilt walking through the level rubbish heap that was Hiroshima each leading two small children by the hand while seven or eight kids followed wide eyed and giggling and wondering whether Dizzy [the lieutenant] was a man or woman.

Following this, Wells wrote about a small, pretty girl with rosy cheeks who confidently put her hand in his and chatted about herself. “Daddy is working at the railway but Mummy is dead now. She was killed by the atomic bomb”. The girl continued, telling him that she was with her mother at home when the bomb was dropped but had escaped injury apart from a leg wound. She then showed him that she had recovered from her wound by running a little ahead of him. As an exceptionally sharp observer, Wells often wrote to his father of what he picked up from the Japanese people around him, sensing the mood of the local population. He quickly identified “a parrot phrase” (a phrase that naively imitated what the adults around her were saying) in this small girl's conversation:

“War is bad thing. We should not have any more wars”, [she said] and added naively, “Mr Yamashita [General Yamashita Tomoyuki] was a very bad man and he killed a lot of people down in the Philippines but, at that time I did not know about it”.

¹⁰¹ *Gen*, 10 January 1947, back cover.

Wells could not resist giving some food and sweets from his military rations to the girl. He finished his letter: "Don't tell any really patriotic people that I gave a kid a bit of chocolate. My name would be mud if it were known in Melbourne". He had heard that some of his relatives had been bothering his father by expressing their hatred of Japanese people, because of his Japanese-speaking son. It seems he could not help being sarcastic about his relatives in Melbourne, adding: "Though only nine years old she [the little girl] is of course a young serpent who will get teeth later on. Her children might even drop an atomic bomb on Sydney".¹⁰²

Occupation soldiers landed in a war-ravaged land where most people in cities and towns were preoccupied with day-to-day survival. Witnessing the effect of atomic bombing on Hiroshima had a life-long impact on many BCOF personnel, especially those who came in the early period of the occupation. Many surviving BCOF veterans claimed it had been central to the change in their feelings about the Japanese people from hatred to greater compassion. Visiting other cities also made a deep impression. Australian BCOF personnel soon began to travel to places outside the BCOF area, notably Kyoto, Osaka and Tokyo, while on duty or, later, on leave, giving them opportunities to see other war-ruined cities. Soldiers commonly offered food from their military rations to Japanese people, although it was prohibited by the military authorities, and although shortage of supplies was a serious problem for BCOF in the early stages of the occupation.¹⁰³

Macauley recounts the story of a girl whom he and five other personnel from the engineer corps encountered in the ruined central business district in

¹⁰² Quoted in Marguerite Wells, 'A Cannibal in Occupied Japan: The Letters of Ken Wells', *Japanese Studies Association of Australia Newsletter*, April 1991, p. 15.

¹⁰³ Davies, *The Occupation of Japan*, pp. 158-159; Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 269.

Osaka. They had been sent there to install a news-printing plant in the *Mainichi* Newspaper Press building, to facilitate production of the BCOF newspaper, *BCON*, probably in March 1946.¹⁰⁴ On their arrival at Osaka Station they discovered they were “virtually walking on people”. As Macauley commented, the platforms and passages “were choked with homeless people who had made their living space, the doubtful confines of this draughty place”. While working at the newspaper building they stayed in a hospital building that stood alone “in a sea of damage as far as the eye could see”. They befriended a girl around fourteen years old who lived with her grandmother in a “humpy of battered materials” beside the block adjoining the hospital building. The girl, who spoke good English, had a terrible skin rash on her face, probably caused by malnutrition. Finding that the girl and her grandmother were the only members of her family who had survived the air raids, they “purloined an amount of foodstuffs” for her and offered her some money with which they hoped she would get medical treatment for her skin condition. The girl was, however, terribly embarrassed and gently declined these offerings. This left Macauley wondering if he could have done more to persuade her.¹⁰⁵

In September 1946, Ken Wells described the ruined city of Osaka in a letter to his father:

The suburbs of Osaka are a desolation. Never have I seen such a frightful, desolate scene. Even Hiroshima is not as bad as this, for after all

Hiroshima is not such a big city. But Osaka is immense.

¹⁰⁴ Macauley was unable to recall in which month of 1946 he and his unit worked in Osaka to establish the printing plant for *BCON*. It was probably some time in March 1946 because the first issue of *BCON* was published on 5 April of that year.

¹⁰⁵ Stephen Macauley, 'The Other Side of Occupation', unpublished manuscript in my possession, pp. 1-2; Stephen Macauley, 'My Time in Japan', unpublished manuscript in my possession, p. 3.

Here you drive for miles and miles through paved or concreted road with no traffic, along tramlines where no trams run, through suburbs burned out & lantana overgrown with bushes and without inhabitants. Here are miles and square miles of ruin, a burned out area bigger than Melbourne...

Wells further observed that the last thing to survive bombardment is “the factory chimney” and “the first thing to go is working men’s little home”. He continued to criticise “Japanese hatred” among his relatives. This time, he hit back at his cousin, who had written to him that she wished more atomic bombs had been dropped, and had killed all the Japanese people. He wrote to his father: “I wish our stay-at-home patriots could come and see this and, seeing it, imagine, if they had brains enough, what a hell of fire it must have been”.¹⁰⁶

BCOF personnel’s shifting perceptions of Japanese people, from hatred nurtured during wartime to sympathy at seeing the desperate conditions in which ordinary Japanese people lived, features in the documentary program, *The Forgotten Force*.¹⁰⁷ The documentary starts with former members talking about their feelings before they arrived in Japan. One interviewee recalls that he had no idea of what he was supposed to do in Japan, a recollection common to numerous others; many BCOF soldiers, after all, were very young and inexperienced. The program suggested that initially, many soldiers regarded the Japanese as subhuman. BCOF personnel believed they were going to Japan to inflict a last blow, in an opportunity to stomp around on the enemy’s soil and to enjoy the fruits of victory. A former nurse who worked at the Australian field hospital in Japan, for example, recalled that she had initially hated the Japanese

¹⁰⁶ Ken Wells, letter to Father, September 1946, in personal collection held by Marguerite Wells.

¹⁰⁷ Quint, *The Forgotten Force*.

people. Initial ideas and conceptions changed, however, when people were exposed to the realities of postwar Japan. At times, soldiers' sympathy for the Japanese people led them into conflict with their superiors because they had violated the non-fraternisation orders.

A woman from Rockhampton in Queensland, whose father was an Australian soldier who landed in Japan just after the end of the war, told me that, although her father hardly talked about his experience as an occupation soldier, he did tell his family about Japanese children he met in the war-ravaged country. One was a small boy eating a pumpkin skin in a garbage dump in the occupation barracks. He also talked about two small boys found dead, having frozen outdoors on a winter morning. The boys, who appeared to be brothers, had hugged each other tightly in an obvious attempt to retain body heat as long as they could.¹⁰⁸

This chapter provides evidence of the rich Australian experience of the occupation of Japan, while also suggesting how unprepared military leaders were for the conditions they would have to handle. The necessity to expand the BCOF-controlled area before the operation even started reveals how little the Australian military leadership understood the nature and scale of the operation they were about to undertake. It was probably not the fault of Northcott alone, but more broadly of Australian military leaders and other figures who were in a position to look at logistical issues closely. On the ground, the situation was ambiguous. Young Australian soldiers felt empowered on arriving in a defeated nation as conquerors and exposing themselves to the gaze of all sorts of people, from Australian journalists to the local Japanese authorities. They

¹⁰⁸ Carol Ann Ferguson, interview, 5 December 1999 (Rockhampton).

had various kinds of contact with the Japanese people, much of it positive, despite the non-fraternisation policy. Indeed, as we shall see in the last chapter, some soldiers later sought to return home with Japanese wives. This was an indication of the extent to which the BCOF experience had transformed their outlook. The following chapter examines the deterioration of BCOF's relation with the Japanese public and the people at home.

CHAPTER FOUR

Criticism and Reform: BCOF and the People at Home, 1946-1948

The relationship between Australian BCOF soldiers and the public at home changed after the initial stage of deployment. Newspaper coverage of the conditions under which Australian soldiers were serving in Japan originally created anxiety among the Australian public about the welfare of servicemen. A news report from overseas also raised the issue of the behavior of Australian soldiers in Japan. Several official investigations resulted. The Australian government displayed its commitment to the occupation by undertaking substantial reform of BCOF in 1947 in order to reshape the military representation of the British Commonwealth and of the Australian component in particular. In addition, a family reunification program began, and in 1947, wives and children went to join their husbands and fathers serving in BCOF. Ultimately these reforms did not prevent the emergence of difficult issues connected with violence and criminal activities.

Anxiety about Troop Conditions

Families of BCOF personnel were, of course, among those most anxious about the critical reports of BCOF that reached the Australian press from February 1946 onwards. Many families sent food parcels to their sons and husbands. In May 1946 some families of BCOF personnel even organised a BCOF Club in Melbourne to support Australian soldiers in Japan, calling on “the friends and relatives of the occupation force in Japan” to join them. The club had regular fortnightly meetings. It engaged in fund-raising for Christmas hampers for the troops and organised activities such as a picture night. Northcott, as

Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, was due to address a meeting of the BCOF Club in July 1947.¹ In fact, the food situation, at least, had improved by April 1946.

The Australian public was further alarmed by newspaper accounts of the return of sick troops from Japan in the middle of September 1946. Reports stated that 437AIF troops from Kure and Rabaul, including sixty-two troops suffering neurotic symptoms, had landed in Sydney. Neither family members nor journalists were allowed to contact the sick soldiers, who were guarded closely by the army and local police while being transferred to waiting ambulances. According to members of the Australian and New Zealand Medical Corps attending these patients during their voyage home, six patients were seriously ill and the rest were “anxiety cases”. Lack of amenities, including suitable rest and recreation facilities, were said to have contributed to the men's poor mental health.² The Minister for the Army, Frank Forde, promised in the press that he would never let up until “the conditions and amenities of Australian troops in Japan are completely satisfactory”.³ In focussing solely on conditions and amenities, however, the government and the newspapers failed to acknowledge the fact that prolonged military service from wartime through to the occupation period had itself taken a toll on the mental and physical strength of some personnel by the middle of 1946.

¹ 'BCOF Club', *Argus*, 29 May 1946, p. 16; 'BCOF Club', *Argus*, 24 June 1946, p. 4; 'BCOF Club', *Argus*, 8 July, 1946, p. 3; 'Personal Paragraphs', *Argus*, 18 July 1946, p. 2; 'BCOF Club', *Argus*, 14 August, 1946, p. 19.

² 'Police Guard Troopship: Neurosis Patients', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 September 1946, p. 4; '437 Back from Rabaul: 62 Neurosis Patients', *Argus*, 14 September 1946, p. 7; 'Troopship Heavily Guarded', *Mercury*, 14 September 1946, p. 2.

³ 'Action on Army Neurotic Cases', *Mercury*, 16 September 1946, p. 1; 'Minister to Inquire into Landing of Neurosis Patients', *Argus*, 16 September 1946, p. 4; 'Mr Forde Demands Report of Neurosis Patients', *Canberra Times*, 16 September 1946, p. 2.

During the 1946 federal election campaign, the opposition questioned the wisdom of the Chifley Labor government's decision to send Australian troops to occupied Japan. At an election meeting in New South Wales, Liberal Senate candidate Brigadier M.A. Ferguson revealed that he had opposed his men's enlistment in BCOF following the Japanese surrender, estimating that around 180 to 200 of his men had decided against service in Japan as a result. According to Brigadier Ferguson, while his actions could have resulted in a court martial, the current situation of Australian soldiers in Japan had proved him right.⁴

Newspaper reports critical of the conditions in which Australian soldiers served in Japan reappeared several days before the federal election, which was held on 28 September 1946. One of them, purportedly written by well-known Japan correspondent Richard Hughes, emphasised that BCOF troops were about to experience another dreadful winter. Quartermaster-General Major-General W. Bridgeford from Australia, who had just concluded an inspection of BCOF conditions, admitted that the improvement of facilities had been delayed in some areas.⁵ A report two days later quoted a senior officer at BCOF headquarters to the effect that BCOF servicemen would endure another bitterly cold winter without barracks, heating or recreation facilities.⁶ This time, the name of the author was not mentioned. BCOF headquarters distanced itself from these reports, telling army headquarters in Melbourne that Hughes had contacted BCOF denying he had written the first article. BCOF headquarters added that the article was not written on the basis of information supplied by BCOF, and that neither of the reports had been written by any correspondent in

⁴ 'Advised His Men Not to Go to Japan', *Argus*, 19 September 1946, p. 20.

⁵ Richard Hughes, 'Drab Winter for AIF in Japan', *Herald* (Melbourne), 23 September 1946, pp. 1-2.

⁶ 'Men of BCOF Have Reason to Complain', *Herald*, 25 September 1946, p. 13.

Kure or Tokyo. A further telegram on the JCOSA file from a *Herald* photographer stated that conditions had improved very significantly since the previous February.⁷ Clearly, the media regarded BCOF as a political issue in the context of the election campaign. While the Chifley government was returned to office in the election, the Minister for the Army, Frank Forde, lost his seat. Cyril Chambers was appointed as the new Minister.

An Australian contingent of 882 troops returning on *HMAS Kanimbla* from their first tour of duty in Japan landed in Sydney in the middle of November 1946. BCOF headquarters allowed those men who had renewed their service to return to Australia on the first available ship for twenty-eight days' leave, while those seeking discharge would have to wait for later ships in subsequent months.⁸ Soldiers on the *Kanimbla* this time had signed up for another two years' military service, eighteen months of which would be spent in Japan. Responding to interviews at Sydney Harbour, one soldier said: "Everything was wrong for the first four months". Another elaborated: "Accommodation and food were poor and there was no entertainment, but things are much better. Only inexperienced soldiers complain, now". A third soldier commented: "We wouldn't be going back if we didn't like it". According to a sergeant, "the biggest disappointment was the lack of books and sporting material."⁹

⁷ 'The Press and BCOF Publicity. (i) Hughes Article in Melbourne Herald of 23rd September 1946 on Amenities and Quarter Master General Visit to Japan. (ii) Origin of Melbourne Herald Article of 25th September 1946. (iii) Report on Conditions in Japan from Toira, Melbourne Herald Photographer', 1946, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Canberra, A595 609/12.

⁸ Basil Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan: The Diary of an Australian Soldier, 1945-46*, ed. and with an introduction by Sandra Wilson (Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2009), entry for 4 November 1946, p. 123.

⁹ 'Conditions in Japan: "Much Better", Say Soldiers', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 November 1946, p. 1; 'Troops Arrive from Kure for Home Leave', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 November 1946, p. 3.

The evening after their arrival in Sydney, 311 of these soldiers arrived at Spencer Street Station in Melbourne. A newspaper reported that all of them had renewed their service and that there were no complaints about conditions in Japan. The soldiers stated that “amenities were rapidly being improved. New barracks were being built. Recent film [sic] were shown about twice a week”.¹⁰ Although the report did not mention the crowd gathered at the station to welcome the troops, there is no doubt that families and friends had waited eagerly for the soldiers. The BCOF Club, too, had called on members in advance to meet the troops at the station.¹¹

Cyril Chambers Visits Japan

In the aftermath of the election, the newly appointed Minister for Army, Cyril Chambers, announced a trip to Japan, explaining to the press:

Following certain criticism of conditions under which Australian troops are serving in Japan and allegations of lack of amenities, I feel it is essential that I should take the first opportunity to visit them.¹²

However, Chambers ended up investigating not only the conditions under which Australian troops were serving, but also the conduct and behaviour of the troops.

Shortly before the Chambers trip, on 16 December 1946, Leslie Haylen, the Australian Labor Party member for Parkes (NSW), asked a question in the House of Representatives about a report in the London press concerning apparent behavioural problems among Australian personnel in Japan. Haylen, a veteran of the First World War who had subsequently worked as a journalist,

¹⁰ 'Troops from Japan Home on Leave', *Argus*, 15 November 1946, p. 1.

¹¹ 'BCOF Club Members to Meet Troops', *Argus*, 13 November 1946, p. 12.

¹² 'Army Minister Going to Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 November 1946, p. 1.

was a Labor backbencher and self-assigned BCOF watchdog. He now mentioned a report published by the *Melbourne Herald* on 21 November 1946 which repeated a Japanese police officer's comment, quoted by the *Daily Mail* in Britain, that "Australians are the worst behaved in the Tokyo area", referring to bad behaviour while Australian troops were stationed in Tokyo for Imperial Palace guard duty in the months of May and September 1946. Haylen referred to alleged statistics indicating a rapid increase in criminal activity among Allied troops, and asked whether the Australian Prime Minister would protest to the British Prime Minister over the bad treatment of Australian servicemen in the British press. Chifley promised to inquire fully into the matter.¹³

Prime Minister Chifley replied to Haylen's question in the House of Representatives a week later on the basis of information supplied by the Defence Minister, J. Dedman, and the Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, Robertson, at the request of the Australian Joint Chiefs of Staff. First, Chifley stated that the newspaper report in the *Herald* alleging Australian troops were the worst behaved among Commonwealth troops in Tokyo was apparently a shorter version of an earlier article from the *Chicago Tribune*. He mentioned that the *Chicago Tribune* report had included another allegation, this time concerning wasteful expenditure: that the house occupied in Tokyo by the BCOF Commander-in-Chief had as many as twenty-nine staff members, despite infrequent use by the Commander-in-Chief. Chifley then informed the House of Representatives that Robertson had stated there were no grounds for singling out Australian troops for criticism over behavioural problems. He added that the commanders of Australian battalions in Tokyo had received a letter of commendation from the American general under whom the troops served,

¹³ 'BCOF Behaviour of Australian Troops - Parliamentary Question by Mr Haylen', 1946, NAA, Canberra, A5954 1883/13.

describing Australian troops as “inspirational to others”. Concerned to rebut and discredit the negative report, Chifley also explained that the house of the Commander-in-Chief was made available to BCOF commanders and officers who visited Tokyo on duty, which apparently saved the cost of hotels and other accommodation.¹⁴

In this context, in which criticism of Australian soldiers was being publicly discussed, Chambers travelled to Japan accompanied by the Secretary of the Department of Army and other officials, landing at Haneda Airport in Tokyo on 19 December 1946. Besides inspecting BCOF troops in Kure, Chambers and his party toured British and American camps, including BCOF’s Tokyo base in Ebisu. They also visited the offices of the *BCON* press and the temporary housing for dependants of British personnel. Chambers and his party left Japan on 28 December 1946.¹⁵

An Australian newspaper correspondent who accompanied Chambers’ party to the BCOF area sent a report home:

There has been a noteworthy improvement in the living conditions of Empire troops stationed in Japan, and in some areas the men are enjoying almost homeside standards. This is in striking contrast with conditions as I saw them in February, or even five months ago, when complaints were numerous. Much still remains to be done, but everywhere I have been impressed by the energy, foresight, and

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See newsreel footage: *Visits of Honourable Cyril Chambers Minister for Army, to BCOF*. 1946, Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/F07501/>, accessed 12 July 2015.

initiative with which officers and men are tackling the problems on a long-range basis.¹⁶

This latest report presumably helped to allay the Australian public's anxiety regarding living conditions for the troops in Japan. However, Chambers' investigation and his handling of its public relations aspect raised new concerns, as we will see below, over the behaviour of Australian troops and who should be held responsible, particularly over the issue of venereal disease. The distaste at this problem eventually contributed significantly to the Australian public's loss of interest in BCOF.

Shortly after returning home, Chambers wrote a letter to Prime Minister Chifley reporting on his investigation. In his letter Chambers assessed the current state of BCOF in terms of its original objectives to represent the British Commonwealth, maintain the Commonwealth's prestige and impress democracy on Japan. He concluded that BCOF had done an excellent job as a military force, and in particular, had worthily represented the British Commonwealth. On the other hand, he expressed some reservation about whether it could influence the Japanese people in demonstrating the "democratic way and purpose in life". According to Chambers, there was no evidence that BCOF soldiers were even aware of this objective. He believed that the main problem was BCOF's subordination to the US force and the damaging effect this had on morale and on soldiers' capacity to convey higher values. BCOF was, indeed, "debarred from taking any part whatever in the military government of the conquered people".¹⁷

¹⁶ 'Our Troops Are Now Living Better in Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 December 1946, p. 2.

¹⁷ 'BCOF - Minister for Army (Mr. CHAMBERS) - Visit to Japan - December 1946', 1946-1947, NAA, Canberra, A5954 1880/3.

Chambers further observed that the Australian component of BCOF was not achieving this last objective because there was “a notable absence of spiritual and moral outlook on the part of the troops”. He then suggested that a lack of religious and philanthropic organisations within the BCOF camps might have contributed to this weakness. Chambers told the Prime Minister that he had already ordered BCOF to provide some autonomous space for religious organisations so that they could take a more active role in BCOF areas. The geographical positioning of the BCOF zone, far from Tokyo and the centre of activities, also impeded its influence. Chambers reported that the Commander-in-Chief would maintain his efforts to obtain an additional area closer to the political and commercial centre of Japan. Chambers assured Chifley that the allegations raised by foreign newspapers about the behaviour of Australian troops were baseless, citing his discussion with Australian officers stationed in Tokyo.¹⁸ Within a week, Chambers reported on his trip to the Military Board, also presenting a comprehensive reform agenda for the Australian component of BCOF. Chambers was more open with the Military Board in addressing behavioural problems than he had been in his letter to the Prime Minister.

In December 1946 the US authorities had announced a ten-year sentence for a soldier convicted of murdering a Japanese woman two months earlier.¹⁹ In another case, a death sentence was imposed on two soldiers, again two months after their arrest for rape and murder.²⁰ The US willingness to address crimes through the legal process evidently contrasted with the situation for the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 'Press Release: Soldier Gets Ten Year Sentence in Manslaughter Case', 24 December 1946, Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken (PRESS RELEASE) tsuzuri, Gaikō shiryōkan (Diplomatic Records Office), Tokyo (hereafter DRO), A'1 0 0 2-6.

²⁰ 'Press Release: Death Sentence for Two Soldiers in Rape Case Upheld', 19 August, 1946, Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken (PRESS RELEASE) tsuzuri, DRO, A'1 0 0 2-6.

Australians, few of whom had faced legal proceedings and been adequately punished for crimes committed during the occupation. Chambers and the Military Board first discussed technical difficulties. Findings of courts martial held in the BCOF area in Japan had to be confirmed by authorities in Australia, and there were inconsistencies in the way the law was applied in court martial cases in the BCOF area and by the authorities in Australia. According to Chambers, these differences had resulted in longer periods of detention for those waiting to be prosecuted or had even led to miscarriages of justice in some court martial cases, where soldiers evidently had escaped conviction because of dysfunction within the military legal system. It is easy to imagine how the discipline and morale of other soldiers could be undermined when a prosecuted soldier returned to his unit in such circumstances.²¹

The 1948 memoir by the BCOF officer Allan Clifton provides some corroborative comment on the reluctance of Australian authorities to pursue court proceedings and confirm sentences. Clifton notes “the constant quashing by authorities in Australia of court-martial sentences pronounced in Japan”, concluding that the reason was probably “fear of public opinion, based on a concept that anything our troops might have done was somehow justified by the war-time behaviour of the Japanese soldier”. Clifton describes a case he had encountered in which a soldier was found guilty of rape and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. The court's decision was sent to Australia for confirmation, but the documents were returned marked ‘Conviction quashed because of insufficient evidence’.²²

²¹ 'BCOF - Minister for Army (Mr. CHAMBERS) - Visit to Japan - December 1946'; Allan S. Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms* (Sydney: Cassell, 1950), pp. 144, 147.

²² Clifton, *Time of Fallen Blossoms*, pp. 144, 147.

At the Military Board, Chambers went on to assert that the spiritual and moral outlook among both officers and men was poor, as evidenced by their preoccupation with beer and women. In his view, “if we are going to keep 10,000 men in Japan we must do something for them. The first priority is proper accommodation”. Chambers added:

Then we want the YMCA and the Salvation Army – in other words, the organisations we had in the field [during the war]. In those days, wherever one went those organisations’ huts were there and men were making use of them, writing letters, playing games etc. At present there were [sic] practically none of those things; they were not being encouraged.²³

During the discussion at the Military Board it was reported that the YMCA planned to spend £30,000 in Japan.²⁴ As he informed Chifley, Chambers believed that an increase in the presence of religious organisations in BCOF camps would have a positive impact on the morale of troops. If religious organisations were willing to take a more prominent role this would also relieve the overall burden placed on the government. For Chambers, who was a staunch Catholic and believed that Australian society was based on Christian democracy, an enhanced presence of religious organisations was a practical as well as ideological solution to the morale and behavioural problem.

Chambers was also much concerned about recruitment and training, health of the troops, medical facilities, the high number of Japanese nationals employed, black marketing, ration supplies, canteen supplies, equipment and ordinance supplies, clothing, amenities, transport facilities, re-enlistments, films

²³ 'BCOF - Minister for Army (Mr. CHAMBERS) - Visit to Japan - December 1946'.

²⁴ Ibid.

and dependents. He took a reforming approach to the situation of BCOF and laid considerable blame for poor behaviour on the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) in particular. In his report to the Military Board, for example, he commented on “attitudes of officers towards men”. The barracks of one particular unit had been filthy, and he held the officers responsible. In another unit, heating was limited and hot water needed for showers had been distributed to the officers’ quarters first. Such practices were, to Chambers’ mind, proof of officers’ uncaring attitude towards their men.²⁵

On 6 February 1947, Chambers briefed the press about what he had observed during his trip to Japan. Chambers was careful not to increase concern about troop behaviour and morale. On the other hand, he criticised the BCOF leadership for “extravagant use of local resources and expenditure of yen the Japanese government provided”, pointing to the use of an excessive number of Japanese labourers for menial work. He also cited the “failure to stamp out black marketing”, and “neglect of spiritual and moral welfare [of soldiers] in some areas”.²⁶

The tone of this press conference was extraordinary for a Minister for the Army who had just returned home from inspection of an Australian force serving overseas. His first obligation would presumably have been to give as much recognition as possible to the work of BCOF and the Australians. In fact, the scheme for Japanese employment, about which Chambers complained, had been drafted by SCAP, not the Australian authorities. SCAP did not have to bear the cost of paying the labourers: the Japanese government paid the expenses of the occupation, which at one point absorbed approximately one-

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ 'Minister Attacks B.C.O.F: "Laxity, Neglect" in Administration', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 February 1946, p. 1.

third of Japan's national budget.²⁷ SCAP, for its part, seemed unconcerned about the expense of employing the men. And unless SCAP and the Japanese government made serious efforts to eliminate the black market, there was essentially nothing BCOF could do about it. Although the Board discussed the detailed reform agendas contained in Chambers' report, administrative issues, including the exchange rate of the Japanese yen used to pay service personnel, were treated as matters that could be solved practically rather than as deeper symptoms of mismanagement.

Throughout the reports on Chambers' trip to Japan there is a general sense of something amiss with the occupation. Chambers often identified cynicism, excessive expenditure and lack of decency in behaviour among the officers and troops, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, fundamentally, he was uncomfortable with the nature of the occupation itself. For example, he told MacArthur in a meeting that the use of domestic servants was not good because it was inconsistent with what could be expected when personnel returned to Australia.²⁸ His focus on employment of Japanese labourers, the black market, and the spiritual well-being of the troops seemed to stem from Chambers' moral concerns combined with his somewhat idealistic social democratic alignment with the interests of the rank-and-file. In this he revealed himself as a typical Labor Party politician of the period.

In April 1947, Chambers sent two Chaplains-General, A. H. Stewart and C. K. Daws, to undertake further investigations in Japan. Their report stated explicitly that they had been sent because of disturbing accounts of the "moral calibre" of the Australian component of BCOF, "amongst whom there was an

²⁷ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), p. 420.

²⁸ 'BCOF British Commonwealth Occupation Force Visit by Minister for Army December 1946', NAA, Canberra, A816 19/304/388.

alarming high incidence of venereal disease". Some immediate measures, such as the appointment of additional chaplains to the force, had already been taken for the spiritual and moral welfare of the soldiers. As in Chambers' letter to Chifley, the chaplains' report outlined at some length the failure of Australian troops to convey a sense of "Christian democracy" to local inhabitants.²⁹ It can be inferred from the report that the fundamental impetus for reform of BCOF by the Australian government in early 1947 was concern about how Australia would be perceived, rather than a desire to address the kind of management issues Chambers spoke about at his press conference in May.

On their return to Australia, Stewart and Daws discussed their observations of Australian personnel in Japan with newspaper reporters. In Japan they had interviewed a number of Australian soldiers from all ranks. They claimed that, while the majority were "good types" fitted for their tasks, a significant minority were "trouble makers". This minority consisted of "youthful adventurers, irresponsible and unskilled workers, would-be escapees, men with deliberate ulterior motives, and war-affected types". The chaplains advised that on the other hand there were many potential moral leaders among the troops, who should be encouraged, and a conference was to be organised involving these potential leaders. With regard to fraternisation, the chaplains recommended an organised fraternisation with a good class of Japanese people who would "render service to the cause of democratising Japan".³⁰

After Chambers' inspection tour, there was substantial change in BCOF. New barracks were built; churches and chapels, and clubs for officers and for

²⁹ 'Report of Chaplains General Stewart and Daws on Their Visit to BCOF Japan', 1947, NAA, Melbourne, MP 742/1 56/1/99.

³⁰ 'Unfitted for Task in Japan: Chaplains Criticise Section of Troops', *Age*, 15 May 1947, p. 1.

the rank and file, were increased; wives and children of BCOF personnel arrived, following their counterparts from the UK; Australian female personnel began arriving in more significant numbers; the military newspaper, *BCON*, was enlarged; and cooperation between the US 8th Army and BCOF increased.³¹ Of all of these, it was the family reunion program and the increase in female service personnel that were to capture the greatest attention of the media and the Australian public.

Australian Families in Japan

The Chifley government gave the final go-ahead to the family reunion program for BCOF personnel in January 1947. The program had been endorsed at a cabinet meeting a whole year earlier and newspapers had occasionally commented on the issue. In 1946, Forde, the Minister for Army, seemed uncommitted to the idea, saying that there were hardly any applications from currently serving BCOF personnel, that the government had not yet decided on details, or that there was not yet any suitable accommodation for families. He eventually stated that “Japan was the last place in the world Australian womenfolk should be allowed to visit”, because of disease, “famine” and extreme shortage of accommodation.³² Forde’s position reflected the Chifley government’s lack of commitment to the program at a time when the government was hoping for a peace conference at the earliest opportunity. Sending families of occupation soldiers to Japan would involve much work and

³¹ An album of photographs of churches, chapels, clubs and rest houses throughout BCOF areas was presented to Cyril Chambers by Commander-in-Chief Lieutenant General Robertson at Christmas in 1948. These facilities had obviously been built as part of the BCOF reform program that was in part a response to Chambers’ tour. Cyril Chambers, 'Papers, 1943-1958 [Manuscript]', 1943, National Library of Australia, NLA MS 5235.

³² 'Japan Unsuitable for Wives, Mr Forde Says', *Argus*, 30 May 1946, p. 3.

cost. Forde's view resonated with that of some families. Jennie Woods, for instance, encountered opposition from her brother and parents to her plans to join her husband. Family members tried to dissuade her, insisting that Japan was "no place for a European woman at any time".³³

MacArthur had given his approval to the family reunion program for BCOF in July 1946. The first dependants of soldiers from the UK component began to arrive in the same year and were housed in temporary accommodation. The UK gave priority to British dependants coming from Palestine and India because of security concerns for families in such unsettled areas.³⁴ Japan was, indeed, a much safer place in the aftermath of the war.

As a result of the Chambers visit, the Australian authorities began to support the program positively. In February 1947, the Australian Army Public Relations section announced that forty-six families comprising ninety-seven persons had been nominated by BCOF to go to Japan.³⁵ The first group of thirteen wives and twenty-one children left Sydney for Japan the following June. Other dependants followed, with the last group of 139 wives and 190 children arriving at Kure dock on Christmas Eve, 1947. In total, the Chifley government sent 492 wives and 624 children of Australian personnel to Japan. A further 175 babies were born to Australian personnel in Japan.³⁶ Around 700 families from the UK, India and Australia went to Japan to live in family quarters in BCOF camps. The New Zealand government did not institute a family reunion

³³ Jennie Woods, *Which Way Will the Wind Blow* (North Sydney, N.S.W: Jennie Woods, 1994), p. 1.

³⁴ Peter Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 71.

³⁵ 'Families for Japan in April', *Mercury*, 22 February 1947, p. 2.

³⁶ Roma Donnelly, 'The Forgotten Women: Women in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, 1946-1952', in *Relationships: Japan and Australia, 1870s-1950s*, ed. Paul Jones and Vera Mackie (Parkville: History Department, University of Melbourne, 2001), p. 206.

program. After all other national contingents of BCOF had left Japan, that is, by the end of 1948, followed by the majority of Australian troops at the beginning of 1949, a small number of Australian troops continued to operate under the BCOF title until the peace treaty came into effect in April 1952; some family members remained with them, living in the Hiro camp in Hiroshima prefecture and on the Iwakuni airbase in Yamaguchi prefecture.

The question of whether Japan was a suitable destination for Australian women had been raised in an article published in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in June 1946. The title of the article was "Life in Japan Would be Hard on Soldiers' Wives: Food, Housing, Schooling, Transport, Health, All Present Acute Problems". It was contributed by Dorothy Drain, who had just returned from Japan after a short stay as a correspondent for the magazine. On the basis of her experience in occupied Japan in 1946, she warned that children were at risk, with regard to their health in particular. She seemed mostly concerned about the level of hygiene among local inhabitants in the vicinity of BCOF camps. Despite the strong note of opposition to the family reunion program, the article was sympathetic to Australian soldiers' wives. Drain wrote that she understood those wives who wanted to join their husbands in Japan, and if she were the wife of a man serving in Japan, she would undoubtedly risk all and go there. As a woman, Drain obviously sought a connection with the magazine's readers in this way. Her attitude highlights the point that the Australian public's view of the reunion proposal in the middle of 1946 was not straightforward.³⁷

³⁷ Dorothy Drain, 'Life in Japan Would Be Hard on Soldiers' Wives: Food, Housing, Schooling, Transport, Health, All Present Acute Problems', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 22 June 1946, p. 9.

The family reunion program was an irresistible topic for the newspapers. After the selection of families to go to Japan, journalists began receiving information about BCOF's preparation for the arrival of dependants. Negative attitudes were replaced by more practical and sympathetic views in the press. A couple of weeks before the first group of wives and children departed, a newspaper lead paragraph read: "A fascinating and comfortable life – tinged with boredom if they are not careful - awaits the wives of Australian servicemen". According to the author, who had recently returned from a period as correspondent in Japan, the wife of an Australian serviceman had her own mission in Japan besides bringing family life and an Australian atmosphere to the occupation troops. She must demonstrate "the grand example of the way of living and the democratic principles we have fought for *to the Japanese*".³⁸ The Japanese people would learn the error of their ways by observing how Australian women commanded themselves. He assured readers that life in Japan for "Mrs Australia" could be quite comfortable, with the newly built cottages and other amenities, although there would be certain limitations because of reliance on the military for everyday supplies. The author also warned that handling Japanese domestic servants would be a more challenging task for Australian women than it was for their counterparts from the US and the UK, since the employment of domestic servants was not the norm in Australian society. The article was accompanied by a photograph of a newly built cottage and two Japanese women in formal kimono.

All over Australia, the local press gave prominence to wives and children going to Japan. One of my interviewees, Rose O'Brien, went to Japan with four children, then had her fifth and last child in Japan. Her departure was

³⁸ Stephen Kelen, 'Australian Wives in Japan', *Advertiser*, 10 May 1947, p. 11. Emphasis in the original.

reported by Brisbane's *Courier Mail* and was accompanied by a photograph of her four children.³⁹ Tasmania's *Mercury* reported that two women from Launceston, one with a small daughter, had been selected as part of the first group. The report further stated that a house and two Japanese servants would be provided to each of them, and that many wives of BCOF members from Tasmania wanted to join their husbands in Japan.⁴⁰

In December 1947, Alice Jackson, the editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, who had visited the family quarters of the Australian component of BCOF in Okayama, Hiro and Etajima, reported on those wives who had begun family life in Japan. Her visit reflects the level of Australian public interest in the lives of BCOF families. Despite the gloomy forecasts of what life would be like for Australian women there, the article was entitled "Australian Families are Enjoying Life in Japan". A large part of the article consisted of photographs of wives and children in their houses, either newly built cottages or traditional Japanese houses. Photos also showed the interior of the houses, revealing a telephone, which many houses in Australia lacked at the time, and a Japanese maid and nanny. The article confirmed that wives and children of BCOF soldiers were well provided for and were enjoying a privileged life. Such coverage in a popular magazine clearly represented a public relations success for BCOF in handling family reunions.⁴¹

By the time this article was published, some families in Australia had already received letters from BCOF dependants who had joined servicemen in

³⁹ 'Ran Mile to Begin Her Trip to Japan', *Sunday Mail*, 11 May 1947; Rose O'Brien, interview, 22 February 2000 (Melbourne).

⁴⁰ 'First Wives for Japan Selected', *Mercury*, 30 May 1947, p. 2.

⁴¹ Alice Jackson, 'Australian Families Are Enjoying Life in Japan: They Live in Pleasant Houses with Every Amenity and Maids to Do the Work', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 6 December 1947, pp. 20-21.

Japan. Doreen Wells, the wife of the language officer Ken Wells, who arrived in Japan in early September 1947, wrote to her husband's family from Kure:

We are living just outside Hiro and the place has been called NIJI MURA (Neegee Moora), which is Japanese for Rainbow Village and a very fitting name, too, as all the different coloured houses together look very pretty.... It is just the same as having a private house. The houses are painted in various colours, some, blue, others salmon pink, cream.... Directly in front of our place they are building another block of houses and in front of that we have the sea. From our bedroom upstairs we have a nice view. From the back door we see a pretty hill, so we are in a nice spot.... It is much nicer than I expected.⁴²

Boys up to the age of fourteen and girls up to the age of eighteen were permitted to participate in the family reunion program, so the authorities needed to arrange education for school-age children. They determined that secondary education would be provided by correspondence with courses conducted by institutions from the families' home states. By the end of 1947, seven primary schools had been established for children from Commonwealth countries, with approximately 400 students in total.⁴³ Rose O'Brien recalls assisting with school functions and activities as an important means of keeping herself busy and adding interest to her time in Japan.⁴⁴

The affirmative view of family reunification presented by the newspapers probably did not reflect the experience of every BCOF wife. Jennie

⁴² Doreen Wells, letter to Parents-in-Law, September 1947, private collection of Marguerite Wells. See also Jenny Woods' description of her family compound in Etajima camp: Woods, *Which Way Will the Wind Blow*, pp. 5-7.

⁴³ Arthur W. John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown: A History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan* (Melbourne: Gen Publishers, 1987), pp. 96-97.

⁴⁴ O'Brien, interview, 22 February 2000.

Woods recalled that, during their voyage to Japan, some wives were conscious that they needed to rebuild crumbling marriages damaged by wartime separation. She also recalled a wife who discovered her husband and a Japanese housemaid in bed together on the night she arrived. For such women, travelling to Japan possibly meant the end of a marriage rather than the beginning of an enjoyable and privileged sojourn.⁴⁵ Gerster writes of the “emotional stress” experienced by occupation wives as they dealt with “errant husbands”, tensions with neighbours and the challenge of bringing up children in an unfamiliar environment, citing Elsie Boyd, whose letters express a feeling of living in a “domestic prison” subject to the intrusions of her Japanese servants.⁴⁶ The Australian author Frank Clune, keen to see the expansion of democracy in Japan, criticised the arrangement whereby Australian wives in Japan lived in a kind of colonial garrison with local servants.⁴⁷

Servicewomen in Japan

This phase of Australian participation in the occupation witnessed the inclusion of women in BCOF. Women's was an important influence on BCOF's relationship with the home front and the Australian public. Women connected with BCOF were always valuable subject-matter for the press. For example, the family of Northcott, the first Commander-in-Chief of BCOF and later Governor of New South Wales, was an attractive subject for newspapers and for the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1946. Even after his appointment as Governor of

⁴⁵ Woods, *Which Way Will the Wind Blow*, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁶ Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine: Australia and the Occupation of Japan* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), pp. 164-166. Gerster discusses the previously neglected experience of BCOF dependants living in Japan in *ibid.*, pp. 149-202.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161; Christine de Matos, 'A Very Gendered Occupation: Australian Women as "Conquerers" and "Liberators"', *US-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 33 (2007), p. 101.

New South Wales, Northcott's family continued to have an association with BCOF through his elder daughter, Lieutenant Marjorie Northcott, who served in the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS) and left for Japan to serve in BCOF in April 1946. Marjorie Northcott's homecoming in February 1947 was also reported in the press, accompanied by a photograph.⁴⁸ For the Australian public, women's engagement with BCOF was something to be watched.



Lieutenant Marjorie Northcott arrives home from Japan (1947)⁴⁹

The participation of women in BCOF had been discussed at cabinet level several times. Northcott had requested the inclusion of women. Robertson also strongly supported female participation in BCOF and had expressed his opinion to Prime Minister Chifley when Chifley visited the BCOF area on his way back from London in May 1946. Robertson requested an additional 136 female service personnel, fifty of whom would release servicemen from clerical work.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the Australian government in principle refused to allow

⁴⁸ 'New Governor's Wife and Daughters', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April 1946, p. 4; 'Soldier Is State's First Australian Governor', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 13 April 1946, p. 19; 'Governor's Elder Daughter Back from Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February 1947, p. 15.

⁴⁹ 'Governor's Elder Daughter Back from Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February 1947, p. 15.

⁵⁰ 'Members of Women's Services in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), 23 July 1946 – 30 July 1946', NAA, Canberra, A2700 1073A.

servicewomen to be part of BCOF.⁵¹ Apart from Northcott's daughter, however, two other female officers worked in the social services section of BCOF headquarters: Lt J. Green and Lt H.I. Jack.⁵² The other exceptions, as Donnelly notes, were nursing and medical personnel. Thirty-four nursing sisters and fifty-three AAMWS personnel left Sydney aboard the *Manunda* in March 1946 (along with the journalist Dorothy Drain). In 1948, fifty-five Australian Army Nursing Service and seventy-three AAMWS personnel served in Japan. Nursing and medical personnel often worked in a hospital, notably the 130th Australian General Hospital. Apart from the normal range of nursing and medical roles they provided "occupational therapy, physiotherapy and educational and rehabilitation services".⁵³ One of my interviewees, Bettina Buckley, served in the AAMWS as a switchboard operator in the hospital in Etajima. She recalled other women with whom she had travelled to Japan, one of whom was destined to work as a hairdresser and another as an interpreter. While in Japan Buckley married an Australian BCOF member.⁵⁴ Another eight civilian women initially joined the Army Canteens Service in Kure in May 1946; their number later increased to forty-seven. Moreover, Red Cross Field Officers and representatives of the YWCA "supervised leave and transit hostels".⁵⁵

Newspapers reported favourably on women in the Australian component of BCOF, including further groups of female personnel who departed for Japan in 1947. In May 1947 the *Argus* carried a photo of seven women in YWCA uniform, taken at Spencer Street Station, who were going to

⁵¹ Donnelly, 'The Forgotten Women', p. 195.

⁵² 'Australian Military Forces - Staff and Command Regimental Lists and Manning Tables of AMF Officers Serving with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force [BCOF] Japan [Box 102]', 14 October 1946, NAA, Sydney, SP1008/1 524/1/2442.

⁵³ Donnelly, 'The Forgotten Women', pp. 195-196, 200.

⁵⁴ Bettina Buckley, interview, 23 June 2012 (Melbourne).

⁵⁵ Donnelly, 'The Forgotten Women', pp. 195, 201, 203-204.

help in YMCA Clubs for Australian soldiers.⁵⁶ The press also reported the return to Australia of twenty-four members of the AAMWS and eight members of the Australian Army Nursing Service on 9 July 1947, focussing on three members of the AAMWS who had served as Japanese-language interpreters. One of the three would be the only female member on the ship that would return to Japan after the leave was over. Private Joyce Crane was one of a very few female personnel who served in BCOF as Japanese-language specialists. She had lived in Kobe until 1941 and was fluent in Japanese. Since returning to Australia, she had served as an interpreter and teacher of Japanese language to military personnel.⁵⁷

Whistle-Blowers

Chambers, the Minister for Army, stated in the House of Representatives in November 1947 that the government expected formal moves towards a Japanese peace treaty to commence in the following year.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the reduction of non-Australian BCOF troops at the end of 1947 meant the atmosphere in which BCOF operated began to change again. Naturally there was speculation on the future of Australian troops in Japan. Although there would be no complete withdrawal of BCOF until the peace treaty was signed, it was announced that the family reunion program would cease in 1948 because of the supposedly imminent peace treaty.⁵⁹

In January 1948, criticism of BCOF again surfaced when the federal president of the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, Barry

⁵⁶ 'YWCA Workers Leaving Spencer Street Station Last Night for Japan to Help in YMCA Clubs for Australian Troops', *Argus*, 29 May 1947, p. 8.

⁵⁷ 'Servicewomen Return in Merkur', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 July 1947, p. 9.

⁵⁸ 'B.C.O.F. Men Return Next Year', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 November 1947, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

McDonald, a former member of BCOF himself, claimed that the Australian component of BCOF was suffering from “moral rot”. As Torney recounts:

McDonald had learned from a ‘reliable’ source in Japan that Australian officers were drinking excessively, neglecting the welfare of their men, engaging in black market activities, and failing to honour the promises made to Australian troops at the start of the occupation that they would be taught a trade and re-educated in preparation for their return to civilian life.⁶⁰

McDonald’s criticism, reported in the major dailies, was essentially directed against the officers and leaders of BCOF.⁶¹ Although the BCOF authority quickly brushed aside McDonald’s claims as baseless, the allegations were repeated in an article in the *Express*, a periodical of the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women.⁶² The author of the *Express* article was identified as the periodical's editor, Ian J. Ferguson, who claimed he was relating allegations made to him by a former BCOF officer. Ferguson said he was willing to repeat his statements to a public enquiry, asserting that a large number of former BCOF personnel from within his organisation would substantiate the claims.⁶³

Venereal Disease

McDonald and his fellow accusers then began to focus on the high rate of venereal disease among Australian troops in Japan. As Davies notes, public

⁶⁰ Prue Torney, “Renegades to Their Country”: The Australian Press and the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1946-1950’, *War & Society*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (2006), p. 98.

⁶¹ ‘Blunt Attack on Australian Officers in Japan’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 January 1948, p. 3.

⁶² ‘What’s Wrong with BCOF? Revelation by Officer’, *Express: Australia’s newspaper for ex-servicemen and women*, 17 January 1948, p. 1.

⁶³ Torney, “Renegades to Their Country”, p. 99.

comment on the matter was particularly evident in 1948.⁶⁴ The consequences of McDonald's intervention were rapid. Chambers immediately proposed to institute an official enquiry (while refusing a public enquiry) into black market activities and venereal disease among the troops.⁶⁵ This time he nominated three Chaplains-General to investigate: T. C. McCarthy, A. H. Stewart (who had been a member of the previous enquiry) and A. Brook. By now, Australian newspapers were filled with allegations about venereal disease among the troops. The media and service organisations were unconvinced that the proposed investigation in Japan was likely to be effective. Chambers added two public figures to the investigating committee, Major General C. E. M. Lloyd and Major Massey Stanley,⁶⁶ the former editor of the Army journal, *Salt*.

The Chaplains-General on the one hand, and the two other members on the other, in due course presented separate reports to the government, although the findings of the two reports were similar.⁶⁷ Chambers released the reports, which both stated that the claim of widespread black marketing by Australian troops had no foundation. More disturbing was the Lloyd-Stanley report, which revealed the rate of venereal disease among the troops, stated to be twenty-two percent. While the number of venereal disease cases had been falling, it was still high despite the implementation of vigorous measures to curtail infections. The report of the Chaplains-General also emphasised, however, the remarkable

⁶⁴ George Davies, *The Occupation of Japan: The Rhetoric and the Reality of Anglo-Australasian Relations, 1939-1952* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001), p. 240.

⁶⁵ 'Inquiry into V.D. Among B.C.O.F.', *Mercury*, 2 March 1948, p. 1; 'B.C.O.F. Charge', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1948, p. 3.

⁶⁶ 'Journalist to Assist BCOF Inquiry', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 April 1948, p. 5; Torney, "'Renegades to Their Country'", p. 100.

⁶⁷ Torney, "'Renegades to Their Country'", p. 103.

improvement in the amenities available to Australian troops, claiming that recent accusations to the contrary had been “grossly unjust and unfair”.⁶⁸

Within days of the reports' release, the *Sydney Morning Herald* warned that despite the government's intention to alleviate public unease by setting up an official enquiry, the revelation of such a high rate of venereal disease would result in “grave disquiet” among the Australian public. According to this article, the figure given in the Lloyd-Stanley report meant that since the occupation began, one in every five men had suffered from the infection; this was understood to be the highest rate among the occupation forces. Further, the newspaper noted that in the Second World War the rate of venereal disease had not risen higher than five percent due to strict enforcement of prophylactic measures. The rate of venereal disease among Australian troops in Japan, it was said, was probably equivalent to that of Australian troops in Egypt in the early stages of the First World War.⁶⁹ The claim that the rate of venereal disease in BCOF was much higher than during the Second World War was correct. The lower rates during the conflict were the result of the systematic efforts of the Australian military in establishing its own sexual facilities for soldiers. The military employed local prostitutes in the Middle East, for example, from 1941 to 1943.⁷⁰ BCOF, on the other hand, abandoned any plans for this kind of control of the situation in occupied Japan.

Venereal disease was generally believed to be mainly the result of misbehaviour by younger soldiers in the lower ranks. Contrary to such an assumption, the BCOF authorities were aware that infected Australian soldiers were from all units stationed in Kure and surrounding towns, including

⁶⁸ 'Report on Troops in Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 1948, p. 1.

⁶⁹ 'Disease in B.C.O.F.', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 May 1948, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Toshiyuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 93-97.

soldiers serving at the BCOF Headquarters and base units.⁷¹ In comparison with infantry soldiers, those assigned to BCOF Headquarters and other base units were more mature and experienced soldiers, or those who had been through some form of selection process because of the specialist tasks they were required to undertake. Often these tasks required higher levels of literacy, and therefore of education and maturity. It is clear that Australian soldiers engaged prostitutes regardless of their position, with all ranks contributing to the high infection rate. . Alan Hodgeman, a former member of the 6th Australian Advanced 2nd Echelon stationed in Tenno, a coastal town near Kure, recalled that twenty-seven out of twenty-nine personnel serving in his unit were infected by venereal disease at some point during their service in Japan. According to Hodgeman, he was one of only two who returned home without having contracted the disease. He explained that he had no interest in any liaison with Japanese women because he had a fiancée back in Australia.⁷²

Unlike black market activities, soliciting prostitutes did not violate any military code so long as it occurred while soldiers were off-duty. Venereal disease, however, was a serious problem. A BCOF medical report at the end of 1946 noted that it was the most prominent of the disease groups among BCOF soldiers, observing also that it “has been far more prevalent amongst Australians than in any other nationality”. Statistics presented with the report showed the incidence of venereal disease among Australian soldiers was more than five times higher than among Indian soldiers, despite the comparable strength of the contingents. Moreover, the number of venereal disease cases of Australian troops was 2.5 times higher than the combined cases among New

⁷¹ 'A Draft of a History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force', 1946-1947, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM), Canberra, AWM114 130/1/23 PART 1.

⁷² Alan Hodgeman, interview, 29 January, 2007 (Townsville).

Zealand, Indian and UK troops.⁷³ To understand the high rate of infection among Australian soldiers it is necessary to examine the broader historical context.

BCOF landed in Japan just after SCAP had banned semi-official “comfort facilities” in the occupation area. Such “comfort facilities” had been set up nation-wide at the war’s end by Japanese brothel-owners, bureaucrats and police, mobilising women within and outside the sex industry. As Dower points out, there was no doubt that, at the time of surrender, policy-makers in Japan were well aware of what military occupation might mean for the women of an occupied territory, because of what the Japanese military had itself done to women in areas it had conquered. Military leaders developed a policy to defend the chastity of “good” Japanese women through the establishment of government-funded brothels, and through the mobilisation of a limited number of women who would “willingly” serve the occupation soldiers.⁷⁴

The “comfort facilities” that awaited the first contingent of US soldiers which arrived in Tokyo at the beginning of September 1945 thrived and quickly increased in number, spreading to twenty other cities.⁷⁵ It seems that 500-750 women in Hiroshima prefecture, recruited through an official advertisement that offered scarce food supplies as incentive, worked at “comfort facilities” in Hiro, Yoshiura, Itsukushima and other places in the early occupation period. Because of the rapid spread of venereal disease, however, SCAP ordered the closure and removal of “comfort facilities” from occupation-controlled areas in January 1946. Shortly after, Japanese regulations covering licensed prostitution, which had first been passed in 1900, were also abolished by the occupation, as a

⁷³ 'A Draft of a History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force'.

⁷⁴ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 124-126.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-139.

response to the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, though brothels located in commercial and business areas were exempted because of their value in keeping commerce and business in the area.⁷⁶ Prostitution nevertheless continued to thrive during the occupation.⁷⁷ By the time SCAP banned "comfort facilities" from occupation-controlled areas, the Hiroshima prefectural government had already relocated facilities elsewhere.⁷⁸

Most accounts of venereal disease among BCOF members do not acknowledge that BCOF authorities acquiesced in the establishment of brothels in their areas.⁷⁹ Carolyn Carter states that the idea of tolerating brothels, let alone officially sanctioning them, was always dismissed, largely on moral grounds.⁸⁰ In fact, however, in the early period, BCOF authorities appeared to take a line independent of SCAP on this question. In April 1946, "Asahi House" opened in Kure as a brothel of fifty rooms, financed by a group of brothel-owners with a loan of 700,000 yen from the prefectural government.⁸¹ This initiative would have required the acquiescence of the BCOF authorities, who would have had to agree to the construction of any public facility in occupation areas, and perhaps intended to control and monitor the brothel. Asahi House most likely exposed BCOF personnel to the thriving venereal disease that had been spread by sexual contact between US soldiers and local women for several months before BCOF arrived in Japan. These actions probably explain why the

⁷⁶ Ibid. The Anti-Prostitution Law of 1958 finally made licensed brothels in commercial and business areas illegal.

⁷⁷ Hayakawa Noriyo, 'Senryōgun no Ian to Baibaishunsei no Saihen', in *Senryō to Sei: Seisaku, Jittai, Hyōshō*, ed. Keisen Joshigakuen Daigaku Heiwabunka Kenkyusho (Tokyo: Inpacto Shuppankai, 2007), pp. 45-75.

⁷⁸ Chida Takeshi, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobō, 1997), pp. 363-364.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 364.

⁸⁰ Carolyn Carter, 'Between War and Peace: The Experience of Occupation for Members of of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, 1945-1952', Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of New South Wales, 2002, p. 175.

⁸¹ Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 364.

disease rates among Australian soldiers were so much higher than among other contingents at this time.

Official concern regarding the behaviour of Australian troops began to emerge around September and October in 1946 as BCOF headquarters started evaluating its own operation from the time the soldiers had first landed in Japan. The military history section at BCOF headquarters played an essential role in collecting summaries from all units that would contribute to an official history.⁸² Reports, summaries and statistics gathered at BCOF headquarters became more or less general knowledge among officers, and people at home also began to receive reports concerning the behaviour of Australian troops. Major Arthur John, who headed the Army Education Service, recalled:

“something of a medical crisis had developed. The full extent of it was not faced up to until mid-September [1946] and at the same time distorted information was filtering to the people back home”.⁸³

The BCOF medical report mentioned above gave several reasons for the high infection rate among Australian soldiers. The primary cause was said to be “widespread sexual promiscuity amongst a Japanese population with a high VD infection rate”. The report cited the city of Kure in particular, in which Australian personnel were stationed. As a naval base, Kure already had a number of brothels servicing naval personnel and other mariners prior to the occupation. The report noted that any venereal disease control measures that had existed previously had disappeared with Japan’s defeat, commenting also

⁸² On the writing of an official history of BCOF and collecting and maintaining documents, see the communication between the director of the War Memorial Museum and the history section of the headquarters of BCOF: '[Australian War Memorial Registry Files - Second Series:] Historical Records - Army, General - Preparation of History of BCOF', 1946-1952, AWM, Canberra, AWM315 417/001/003.

⁸³ John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown*, p. 25.

on the poor quality of available medical facilities and medical treatment for the Japanese population. More convincing than the idea of voluntary sexual promiscuity, was the report's observation that due to economic difficulties, many Japanese women had had to take to prostitution to ensure the survival of their families and themselves.⁸⁴ During the occupation, the prostitution trade indeed grew rapidly in this area, with the number of prostitutes reaching 3000 in Kure alone.⁸⁵ After BCOF Headquarters moved from Kure to Etajima by July 1946, the contraction of venereal disease by Australian personnel declined significantly.⁸⁶

The report's main point was that the rate of infection had reduced significantly since September 1946, as a result of the new measures undertaken by BCOF to convert Asahi House from a brothel into a venereal disease hospital for Japanese women. This "hospital" partly had the function of detaining the women. Infected Japanese women were traced by BCOF and sent there in order to be treated and isolated until cleared of the disease. As BCOF's own draft history of the force notes: "Even if women, in whom VD had not been detected were not at once cured, they were at any rate isolated in Hospital, and could no longer disseminate the disease". The effect of this measure was evident at once: "Subsequent weeks showed a gratifying reduction in VD incidence trends at Brit Com Base and 34 Aust Inf Bde [Australian Infantry Brigade]". The report further stated that similar measures were now undertaken by Japanese hospitals in areas with large concentrations of BCOF troops. Although BCOF

⁸⁴ 'A Draft of a History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force'.

⁸⁵ Hayakawa, 'Senryōgun no Ian to Baibaishunsei no Saihen'; Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 364-365. For a general view on VD control by SCAP see Okuda Akiko, 'GHQ no Seiseisaku: Seibyō Kanri ka Kinyoku Seisaku ka', in *Senryō to Sei: Seisaku, Jittai, Hyōshō*, ed. Keisen Joshigakuen Daigaku Heiwabunka Kenkyusho (Tokyo: Inpacto Shuppankai, 2007), pp. 13-43.

⁸⁶ 'A Draft of a History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force', p. 2.

continuously lectured to troops on venereal disease and provided personal prophylactic kits, the report stated that the most effective measures involved targeting Japanese women.⁸⁷

BCOF authorities thus initially aimed to control venereal disease directly by undertaking systematic examination of women in existing or newly built brothels in cooperation with local authorities and business-owners. This approach was consistent with the actions of the Australian military during the Second World War in the Middle East, where authorities managed to keep venereal disease cases at nine percent of all troops.⁸⁸ Carter argues that the failure of educational and disciplinary measures, along with racial fears of Japanese women as the “core of the problem”, led to the targeting of Japanese women.⁸⁹ There is no doubt that the wartime approach of the Australian military had been medically successful. Perhaps what did continue from the wartime experience was the sense that military men, particularly as invaders and occupiers, were entitled to use prostitutes. This consciousness existed among all ranks and there was little attempt to change it by systematic military policy. Both investigating committee reports in 1948, the Chaplain-Generals’ report and the separate Lloyd-Stanley report, assured the public that the behaviour of Australian troops was, by and large, the same as that of their counterparts from other countries. Nevertheless, in the middle of 1948, the focus of the Australian media regarding BCOF was on the high rate of venereal disease among Australian troops,⁹⁰ with less attention paid to the troops’ more general behaviour and their engagement with the black market in particular. On the other hand, by this time, it was expected that most of the remaining

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁸ Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women*, pp. 93-97.

⁸⁹ Carter, ‘Between War and Peace’, p. 171.

⁹⁰ ‘Disease in B.C.O.F.’, p. 2; ‘BCOF Disease Rate High’, *Argus*, 3 June 1948, p. 3.

Australian troops would be withdrawn soon. Thus, BCOF was attracting much less public attention in Australia, and the problem of venereal disease could be downplayed as a public issue. BCOF was beginning to be the “forgotten force”. A newspaper article written at the end of April 1948 by a prominent correspondent reflected the atmosphere. The reporter praised BCOF as if it had accomplished its mission in Japan: “Big Job Well Done by BCOF in Japan”.⁹¹ In fact, this hurried attempt to say goodbye to BCOF occurred a full nine months before the first Australian contingent left Japan for home in January 1949. Many BCOF members recall that little fanfare surrounded their return to Australia. George Martin believed that this was because the Australian public was tired of hearing about the war and war-related issues.⁹²

The Labor Government and BCOF leadership may be considered complicit in the “forgetting” of BCOF as they must have held some ultimate responsibility for the dysfunction that resulted in bad behaviour by the troops, and thus in the public's growing alienation from BCOF. One letter-writer to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, after the release of the Lloyd-Stanley report, observed bitterly that the allegations of bad behaviour showed that senior officers and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not doing their job.⁹³ Common soldiers felt that blame was focussed unfairly on them in the revelation of the high venereal disease rate. More senior soldiers and the military hierarchy in general could protect itself from exposure to criticism, by, for example, listing venereal disease as something else in official reporting.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Jack Percival, 'Big Job Well Done by B.C.O.F. in Japan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 April 1948, p. 2.

⁹² George Martin, interview, 12 May, 1999 (Melbourne).

⁹³ J. R. Halbert, 'Troops Health in Japan: Committee Report', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 1948, p. 2.

⁹⁴ Murray Elliott, *Occupation Hazards: A Doctor in Japan and Elsewhere*, *Australians in Asia* no. 14 (Nathan: Centre for the Study of Australia–Asia

Crimes and the Black Market

The Australian press and investigators who went to Japan were preoccupied with the topic of venereal disease. Not even mentioned by the 1948 Chaplains-General and Lloyd-Stanley reports was the fact that Australian troops had the worst record of criminal behaviour among BCOF troops. Statistics included in the earlier chaplains' report of 1947 show that from 1 June 1946 to 15 March 1947, 560 Australian soldiers were held in BCOF detention barracks. This was more than twice the number of Indian soldiers detained, even though the total number of Indian soldiers serving in BCOF at the same time was slightly higher than that of Australian soldiers. Australians caused the BCOF detention barracks to be crowded and achieved the dubious honour of having the highest number held at the detention barracks in one day: seventy-one Australian soldiers (18 February 1947) compared with a peak number of twenty-seven British soldiers (6 February 1947), seventeen New Zealand soldiers (12 December 1946), and twenty-one Indian soldiers (21 August 1946).⁹⁵ This trend continued in later years. In building a new detention barracks in Kure, the BCOF Administration of Detention Barracks Annual Report noted that while the expected number of soldiers detained, based on the experience of other military forces, was three per 1000 soldiers, provision needed to be made for the detention of six in every 1000 for the Australian component.⁹⁶

Relations, Faculty of Asian and International Studies, Griffith University, 1995), p. 21.

⁹⁵ Appendix 6, 'Report of Chaplains General Stewart and Daws on Their Visit to BCOF Japan'. A report on the inspection of BCOF Detention Barracks in Kure dated August 1946 confirms the figures above: 'British Commonwealth Occupation Force Administration of Detention Barracks, Annual Report, July 1949 to June 1950', August 1946-1950, AWM, Canberra, AWM114 417/1/27.

⁹⁶ 'British Commonwealth Occupation Force Administration of Detention Barracks, Annual Report, July 1949 to June 1950'.

Carolyn Carter discusses serious crime committed by BCOF personnel from all contributing countries against Japanese people. Crimes between May 1946 and December 1947 consisted of a total of 289 assaults, fifty-seven rapes, four acts of manslaughter and three murders. Crimes between January 1948 and September 1951 consisted of 233 assaults, twenty-three rapes, four acts of manslaughter and one murder.⁹⁷ It is difficult to establish the exact breakdown among the different member countries of the number and types of crimes committed by BCOF members, because official documents regarding criminal records of member forces are scant. Gerster also notes that censorship meant there was little press coverage of “bad news stories”.⁹⁸ Australian soldiers were obviously included in those accused of crimes against the Japanese population, including murder, rape, arson, violence, robbery and burglary. The references to lack of morality and absence of spirituality by Chambers, and those investigating BCOF in December 1946, clearly registered disturbance at the behaviour and demeanour of the Australian soldiers.

The language officer Basil Archer wrote of an incident in his diary in which Australian soldiers even committed a “bushranger-style” hold-up of a train. According to the diary, one result was that all armaments in the hands of Australian troops were recalled apart from those belonging to people like Archer who performed intelligence work through the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre. The diary is clearly critical of these “infanteers” who engaged in such “crook behaviour” and Archer cannot imagine what

⁹⁷ Carolyn Carter, 'Between War and Peace: The Experience of Occupation for Members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, 1945-1952', Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of New South Wales, 2002, pp. 287, 289.

⁹⁸ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, p. 113.

“excuse or provocation” they might have claimed for their criminal acts.⁹⁹ Some Australian soldiers certainly justified their criminal activity as a form of harmless larrikinism, but for Archer, for the Japanese population and presumably for occupation soldiers from other countries, bushranger-style burglary meant no more than burglary. There was a continuum of misbehaviour extending from the criminal to the non-criminal that took up the bushranger theme. A captain of the 67th Battalion recalls a number of cases in which angry Japanese men came to the battalion’s headquarters in Kaitaichi on the outskirts of Kure because their daughters were pregnant by an Australian soldier. There were apparently numerous occasions when an angry father demanded to see Private Ned Kelly.¹⁰⁰

Some crimes or socially unacceptable activities may have been justified by the perpetrators as expressions of Australian popular and military culture, which was supposedly characterised by a typically Australian disrespect for authority. A former BCOF soldier recalled that during his one-term service he was detained four times at what he and his “BCOF mates” called “special school”, that is, the BCOF detention barracks, for stealing from BCOF stocks. In fact, the fourth incarceration caused him to miss the ship that was supposed to take him home to be discharged. He excused his acts of theft on the grounds

⁹⁹ Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan*, entry for 18 March 1946, p. 38.

¹⁰⁰ T. B. Millar, 'An Australian's Experiences in BCOF: Kaitaichi and Hiroshima, 1946-7', in *The British Commonwealth and its Contribution to the Occupation of Japan, 1945-8*, ed. W. G. Beasley and Ian Hill Nish (London: Suntory-Toyota International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1991), p. 26. The story of the children who were born of such pregnancies has recently been given greater attention: Walter Hamilton, *Children of the Occupation: Japan's Untold Story* (Sydney: Newsouth, 2012); Kathleen Cusack, 'Beyond Silence: Giving Voice to Kure Mothers of Japanese-Australian Children', University of Wollongong Research Online, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2814&context=artspapers>, accessed 8 March 2015.

that he mainly stole from the officers' mess.¹⁰¹ The same soldier admitted that he had made a handsome profit by selling stolen goods such as blankets on the black market. When he was discharged in Australia he had the considerable sum of £1500, which was his combined military pay and profits from the black market after one term of service with BCOF. By contrast, Hungerford, who did not deal on the black market, states that he had £700 of savings from his military pay when he was discharged in March 1947 after continuous service from the beginning of the war and one term of service in BCOF.¹⁰² Criminal activities by soldiers were not, of course, particular to Australians, nor to occupied Japan.¹⁰³

The fixed rate of exchange between the yen and the Australian dollar during the occupation encouraged black market trading in rations and canteen stores. The wages of the Australian soldiers if exchanged for yen that were losing value purchased less and less. As Bates explains, "the purchasing power of the yen outside Service canteens ... bore less and less relation to this fixed rate".¹⁰⁴ Les Oates confirms this, observing that as a consequence, the pay rates of soldiers became "virtually valueless for any purchases desired by troops". They coped with the situation by "selling some of their own rations of cigarettes, tinned food, soap, wool and so forth on the black market, in order to gain something like realistic value".¹⁰⁵ Although purchasing items from military canteens and reselling them on the black market was prohibited and would

¹⁰¹ Anonymous (name withheld), interview, 27 November, 2001 (Melbourne).

¹⁰² T. A. G. Hungerford, *Straightshooter* (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003), p. 284.

¹⁰³ 'Press Release: CID Finishes Investigation in New Black Market Case', 8 March 1946, Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken (PRESS RELEASE) tsuzuri, DRO, A'1 0 0 2-6.

¹⁰⁴ Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁵ Les Oates, 'The Australian Experience of the Occupation, 1946 to 1952', in *Changing Histories: Australia and Japan*, ed. Paul Jones and Pamela M. Oliver (Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 2001), p. 80.

incur a fine if detected, the practice was, understandably, irresistible for many personnel. Macaulay recalled that soldiers like himself who were not smokers had some advantage in using their tobacco ration to trade. Macaulay was saving to purchase a camera, one of the most popular items on the black market among occupation soldiers. He recalled that German cameras were the most desired and then Japanese cameras.¹⁰⁶

A majority of Australian soldiers seems to have engaged with the black market in one way or another. Most soldiers did so “only to obtain spending money”,¹⁰⁷ but soldiers' recollections suggest that many were living on the proceeds of trading their rations rather than withdrawing money against their pay. Along with this low level of day-to-day activity, there were more organised examples of black market activity. Bruce Ruxton, later a prominent president of the Returned Services League, arranged for family members to visit chemists and obtain quantities of saccharine, the sugar substitute which at the time was rationed by the Australian government, which he exchanged for pearls, silk and other goods. In 1948 he organised a shipment to Australia of antiques bought on the black market in Japan.¹⁰⁸ Some systematic theft was associated with the black market. Archer recorded in his diary that he found some goods missing from the rations delivered to him and his Field Security team while working in Kōzan, a country town in Hiroshima prefecture. He noted that before the rations reached him they would have passed through several army sections. Archer wrote that losing goods such as chocolate and aspirin would not have any immediate impact on the soldiers' work, but:

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Macauley, interview, 19 May, 1999 (Melbourne).

¹⁰⁷ Oates, 'The Australian Experience of the Occupation, 1946 to 1952', p. 80.

¹⁰⁸ Ruxton served with BCOF from Morotai right through to 1948, twice renewing his term. Anne Blair, *Ruxton: A Biography* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2004), pp. 35-36.

someone somewhere along the line is making quite a nice profit out of the man who is on the end. Canteen goods bring such a fabulous price on the black market that I suppose it is easy for many to forget their responsibilities.

Archer subsequently decided to go to collect his own ration from his unit's home base in Kure to avoid having it stolen.¹⁰⁹ Murray Elliott further points to Australian soldiers' involvement with organised local Japanese crime figures connected with the black market.¹¹⁰ As Oates also notes: "The larger dealers formed close social relationships with their Japanese counterparts, who threw them lavish traditionally-styled parties, complete with amateur geisha".¹¹¹

Controlling the black market was part of the Australian soldiers' work. Archer has left a rare record of how intelligence officers in Field Security operated on the ground investigating black market crimes in the early period of the occupation. Archer's work with Field Security began at the end of May 1946 in the city of Onomichi, which was occupied by a company of the 65th Battalion of the Australian Infantry. From Onomichi, a team of three intelligence officers, including Archer, visited towns in Hiroshima prefecture which the occupation had not previously investigated. The intelligence officers conferred with leading figures of the township, meeting with local dignitaries, investigating factories and making contact with the police. Although the primary aim of the operation was to establish an intelligence network, the occupation soldiers became involved in tracing the whereabouts of stolen Japanese military stock after they were told by a number of Japanese informers that missing military stocks were to be released to the black market. In June 1946 Archer joined in a

¹⁰⁹ Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan*, entry for 11 June 1946, p. 74.

¹¹⁰ Elliott, *Occupation Hazards*, pp. 55-56; Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, p. 127.

¹¹¹ Oates, 'The Australian Experience of the Occupation, 1946 to 1952', p. 80.

“co-ordinated black market raid” that was conducted simultaneously in the three cities of Hiroshima, Onomichi and Fukuyama.¹¹²

Oates, who served at BCOF Headquarters from 1948 to 1950, worked for the military courts and often dealt with prosecutions relating to the black market. In some cases, soldiers with access to stores had engaged in large-scale dealings on the black market. By falsifying records, such soldiers could convert large quantities of stolen army goods into goods with a ready market among soldiers and at home, including cultured pearls, handcrafts and fishing lines. Prosecuted soldiers included officers and even military police.¹¹³

Hiro Riot

Contraction of venereal disease, black marketing and criminal acts including sexual assault of local women were not unique to Australian soldiers: these problems occurred in all occupation forces regardless of nationality. Another category of problems was created by ethnic tension. Such problems, again, were spread across all forces. Tension between white and black troops within the US force, for example, was the major cause of assault, which itself was "the most frequent violent crime among the American troops" stationed in Japan.¹¹⁴

Negative attitudes to Indian soldiers, however, appear to have been expressed by Australian troops more than by any other BCOF soldiers. The use by Australian soldiers of abusive language towards Indian soldiers was widely

¹¹² Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan*, entries for 24 May to 7 July 1946, pp. 66-85.

¹¹³ Les Oates, personal communication, 15 May 1998; Oates, 'The Australian Experience of the Occupation, 1946 to 1952', pp. 79-80.

¹¹⁴ Terese Svoboda, 'Race and American Military Justice: Rape, Murder, and Execution in Occupied Japan', *Japan Focus*, no. 18 (2008), <http://japanfocus.org/-Terese-Svoboda/2737/article.html>, accessed 12 July 2015; Terese Svoboda, *Black Glasses Like Clark Kent: A GI's Secret from Postwar Japan* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf, 2008), p. 36.

observed. The term "black bastards" was often applied to Indians.¹¹⁵ The official Australian ideology that emphasised the need to preserve a White Australia must be regarded as an important influence. Archer's diary reveals, in addition to his dislike of the British, a disdain for Indian soldiers for what he saw as lack of hygiene and lack of intelligence. Even an educated Australian soldier, like a language officer, had racist feelings about and contempt for Indian soldiers in this period. For Archer, Indian soldiers were dirty and "mentally slow".¹¹⁶ Some recollections by Australian soldiers note a dislike of an apparently rigid hierarchy in Indian military culture;¹¹⁷ but a similar reaction against British military culture is also evident, as Archer's diary shows. According to a BCOF Headquarters report, Indian soldiers did not work well under Australian officers, nor Australian soldiers under Indian officers.¹¹⁸

Tensions between Australian and Indian soldiers led to an armed clash in Hiro in Hiroshima prefecture in August 1947. A dispute seems to have arisen about a Japanese woman. It escalated into general gunfire between an Australian and an Indian unit on the hill behind the two camps, which were located close to each other. An Indian soldier was shot dead and three others were wounded. The incident was investigated by the Australian Special Investigation Branch and a court of inquiry was established, but it failed to lay charges against either side, partly because the investigation was not able to determine whether the casualties were the result of deliberate action or had been accidental. The court of inquiry recommended a tightening of discipline

¹¹⁵ Les Oates, interview, 14 October 1998 (Melbourne); Macauley, interview, 19 May 1999.

¹¹⁶ Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan*, entries for 24 March 1946 (p. 40) and 3 August 1946 (p. 96).

¹¹⁷ Elliott, *Occupation Hazards*, pp. 33-34; Foster Barton, interviews, 7 December 1999 and 30 January 2007 (Townsville).

¹¹⁸ '[Australian War Memorial Registry Files - Second Series:] Historical Records - Army, General -Preparation of History of BCOF'.

and greater supervision of the distribution of liquor.¹¹⁹ The Indian unit left Japan in October 1947 as scheduled. Two Australian language officers who happened to witness the disturbance remarked that BCOF authorities made sure to play down the incident; and all dispatches were heavily censored.¹²⁰

Chambers' inspection trip as Minister for Army at the end of 1946 was part of a period of reflection on the operations of BCOF. The central issues in Chambers' report were morale and behavioural problems among the Australian troops. During 1947 the Australian government put considerable effort into reconstructing BCOF, investing resources and commencing a family reunion program. Briefly, it appeared that the questions around BCOF had been allayed and it was now gaining some more favourable support, as demonstrated by affirmative newspaper coverage. There were further issues raised, however, by returning soldiers concerning their welfare and BCOF leadership. As we have seen, even more serious problems were not solved and continued under the surface.

The reduction of British Commonwealth forces began in 1947. By this time, the environment in which BCOF operated was affected by the escalating Cold War. US occupation policy began to give priority to Japanese economic recovery rather than further democratisation. The prospect of an imminent Japanese peace settlement was fading away. By April 1948, when the Chifley

¹¹⁹ British Commonwealth Occupation Force – Riot at Hiro 30 August 1947 Concerning Indian and Australian Personnel, 1947, NAA, Canberra, A5954 1883/6.

¹²⁰ Colin Funch, *Linguists in Uniform: The Japanese Experience* (Melbourne: Japanese Studies Centre, Monash University, 2003), pp. 248-249; George Davies, *The Occupation of Japan: The Rhetoric and the Reality of Anglo-Australasian Relations, 1939-1952* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2001), pp. 207-208.

government announced the drastic reduction of Australian troops in Japan, BCOF's relationship with the Australian public had once again deteriorated.

CHAPTER FIVE

Scaling Down BCOF

The success of the occupation in Japan, as measured by the introduction of democracy and the lack of resistance to Allied reforms, caused member states of BCOF other than Australia to begin expressing their desire to withdraw troops as early as October 1946. This chapter examines the resulting reduction and reconstruction of BCOF, which occurred from 1947 to 1949, and thus focuses on Australian government policy. The Australian government was at the centre of the process of reorganisation because, under the MacArthur-Northcott agreement of December 1945, it had the responsibility, as representative of the British Commonwealth, to obtain the formal agreement of the US government if a member state of BCOF wished to withdraw troops from the occupation of Japan:

It is understood that for matters of governmental concerns affecting policy and operations of British Commonwealth Force, the channel of communication lies from the Australian Government as representative of the British Commonwealth of Nations through the United States Government and the United States Chiefs of Staff to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.¹

Australia, too, decided to withdraw the majority of its troops at the end of 1948, while maintaining a tiny force to ensure an Australian presence if a peace conference eventuated. This move contradicted the earlier efforts to reinforce the Australian presence in Japan that were outlined in chapter four.

¹ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)', 18 December 1945, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Canberra, A5954 1699/2.

The effort to implement the family reunion program, increase the number of female personnel, and construct churches and other buildings appears to have been expended in vain. This renewed effort did not mean that Australia had a significant and visible presence in occupied Japan in the lead-up to the peace conference. Despite an apparent desire to assert its status and rights in international affairs, the Chifley government thus appeared to vacillate in its commitment to the occupation and to the new problems in Pacific security.

Changes in US Occupation Policy

As we saw in chapter one, social democratic and liberal internationalist ideals, along with nationalist impulses, were important components in Australia's commitment to the occupation of Japan. The Chifley government maintained its emphasis on the democratisation process and resisted the US change of stance towards Japan that was prompted by the intensifying Cold War. The Australian government also continued to emphasise the rights of small nations in international affairs and to hope that by participating in the occupation Australia would emerge as an important party to the peace treaty and would thereby improve its independent position and international aspirations.

Australian leaders and intellectuals wanted to bring social democracy to occupied Japan for idealistic and strategic reasons.² Given the perceived requirement from 1947 onwards to integrate Japan into the international anti-communist order, however, the Australian government needed to recalibrate its approach to the occupation, and in the event, proved itself to be pragmatic. The government was prepared to consider withdrawing its BCOF contingent, while

² Christine de Matos, *Imposing Peace and Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), pp. 11-70.

maintaining a token force as an insurance policy, and still claiming the right of small nations to a voice.

Prime Minister Chifley and Evatt, his Minister for External Affairs, had anticipated an American initiative to set up a peace conference for the Pacific from the start of the occupation. At the beginning of 1947, the Chifley government believed the peace settlement would be concluded soon. The Australian government expected to sit in its own right at the conference and to represent Australian defence interests fully. Several factors and events in the first half of 1947 bolstered Australian confidence: MacArthur's evident conviction that the occupation would soon end; Evatt's visit to Japan as Minister for External Affairs; and the Australian government's role in hosting the Commonwealth Conference in Canberra, where the Japanese peace settlement was the major item for discussion. Australian leaders wanted certain conditions of peace, especially the imposition of strict conditions on the recovery of heavy industry and on Japan's ability to rearm, as outlined by the Potsdam Declaration. Chifley and Evatt had also attempted to draw American power into the region south of the Philippines, by means of a diplomatic pact, as part of Australian defence strategy.³

International events, however, moved quickly, and in the end undermined the prospects for early settlement with Japan. In Europe, the government of the Soviet Union was behaving unpredictably; and communism was gaining strength in Turkey, Greece and elsewhere. In late 1940s, civil war between the nationalists and communists also raged in China. With the escalating Cold War, US priorities changed in Europe and Japan. In the US military's strategic planning, the line from Okinawa to the rest of the Japanese

³ Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995), pp. 74, 85-86, 92-96.

islands, with their US military bases, stood against an advancing communist threat from China and the Soviet Union. American bases in the Philippines and elsewhere in the Pacific backed up these more advanced military bases in Okinawa and the main Japanese islands.⁴ One consequence was that a definite time for the Pacific peace conference seemed to recede from view; at the beginning of 1947, the US government had still not put forward a timetable for the peace settlement.⁵

In March 1947 President Harry S. Truman announced a new US foreign policy, popularly known as the Truman Doctrine, which aimed to counter communist forces emerging in Europe by sending direct economic and military aid from the US. The new policy also reviewed the postwar reconstruction of both Germany and Japan, giving the first priority to economic recovery rather than democratic reform. Both occupied countries had suffered from severe postwar inflation, to the extent that economic crisis threatened the very success of the occupation. In Japan the new US foreign policy prompted the so-called "Reverse Course", in which occupation policy moved away from social reform, punishment of Japan and the eradication of militarism. In an important speech on 6 January 1948, Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of the US Army, noted that "there has arisen an inevitable area of conflict between the original concept of broad demilitarisation and the new purpose of building a self-supporting nation [in Japan]".⁶ Such a nation could become a key ally of the West in the

⁴ Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 54.

⁵ Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, pp. 87-92.

⁶ Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 197. See 'Speech by Kenneth C Royall, Secretary of the Army, on the United States Policy for Japan,' Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/JPUS/19480106.S1E.html>, accessed 20 May 2012.

fight against communism in Asia.⁷ In the words of one newspaper report, Japan would become a “protective wall” against communism.⁸

MacArthur, however, had his own ideas. In March 1947 he publicly articulated his vision of the occupation, at a rare press briefing in Tokyo. For MacArthur, the occupation would comprise three stages. He believed he had overseen the successful completion of the first two stages: demilitarisation and democratisation. He asserted that Japan’s economic recovery could only occur after the conclusion of the occupation and the return of normal trade and other relations between Japan and other nations. Thus, for MacArthur, economic recovery was not strictly part of the occupation mission. MacArthur then called for the quick and early setting up of a peace conference for the Pacific. Despite his public emphasis on larger issues, his desire to end the occupation speedily appears to have been more closely related to his personal ambitions. The sixty-five-year-old general was by now focused on the US presidency as his final career move. Running in the 1948 election would be his first and last opportunity to become president. However, MacArthur’s call for an end to the occupation was not supported by policy-makers in Washington, who believed the occupation should continue until Japan became economically viable.⁹

Although the Australian government was initially reluctant to embrace the "Reverse Course", it did gradually accept the reorientation of the occupation towards economic recovery and quietly dropped its earlier demands for “harsh” treatment of Japan. It agreed to some relaxation of restrictions on Japanese

⁷ Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 143.

⁸ The term was used by a *New York Times* reporter in Tokyo. 'Japan as a "Protective Wall" against Communism', *Advocate*, 10 August 1948. See also Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*; John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), pp. 23, 508-521, 525-526, 546.

⁹ Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur*, pp. 143-144.

heavy industries and reduced its demands for reparations, for example. The change was registered at the Commonwealth Conference, held in Canberra from 26 August to 2 September 1947, where a united approach by the British Commonwealth in proposing a peace treaty with Japan at a future conference was decided.¹⁰

The Australian government's policy change fundamentally contradicted the approach to the Japanese occupation taken by Macmahon Ball. Ball's main concern in his work in Japan was to attempt to establish the authority and role of the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ). The US, on the other hand, regarded the administration of the occupation as mainly the business of MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. Ball agreed with Evatt on the importance of procedural matters and of the rights of all participants in the occupation, and argued that the representatives of the Soviet Union should be treated in an even-handed manner in Japan, an approach that was resolutely dismissed by MacArthur. Ball had also adhered faithfully to the previous hardline Australian position on Japan, often in direct opposition to the US occupation authorities. Ball clashed with the US representative on the ACJ, the anti-communist George Atcheson. The journalist Mark Gayn recorded in his diary:

Both General MacArthur and Atcheson are irritated by Ball. They feel that he should be a faithful and unquestioning ally in the Council. They resent his air of independence, and his occasional acid comments on some of the more extravagant claims of Headquarters.¹¹

¹⁰ Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, p. 94; Richard N. Rosecrance, *Australian Diplomacy and Japan, 1945-1951* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1962), pp. 107-108.

¹¹ Mark Gayn, *Japan Diary*, 1st Tuttle ed. (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1981), p. 301.

Meanwhile, MacArthur told Alvary Gascoigne, head of the UK Mission to SCAP, that Ball was a secret communist and was damaging Anglo-American relations.¹² One sign was that Ball had contributed to redrafting the land reform bill put forward by the Japanese government, which greatly widened the capacity of tenant farmers to purchase the land they tilled.¹³ Charles Kades, Deputy Chief of SCAP's Government Section, recalled that land reform

is not even mentioned in the Initial Policy or in any subsequent directive; and Secretary of the Navy John Sullivan who was a close, old personal friend of mine and member of SWNCC [State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee] once told me that even SWNCC never considered land reform because it had communistic tendencies and, unless the equivalent of expropriation, would be far too expensive.¹⁴

When pressured by the UK government, Evatt at this point refused to recall Ball, instead insisting on the importance of maintaining an independent Australian voice in the Allied occupation of Japan.¹⁵ However, when Evatt visited Japan in 1947, MacArthur used the opportunity to undermine Ball. Ball was embarrassed when Evatt held a press club lunch in Japan to which all officials apart from Ball were invited.¹⁶

Tensions within the occupation resulted not only from international factors but also issues internal to Japan. Democratisation programs were taking root among the Japanese people, who became more assertive in exercising

¹² Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, p. 78.

¹³ See E. E. Ward, *Land Reform in Japan 1946-1950, the Allied Role* (Tokyo: Nōbunkyo, 1990).

¹⁴ Cited in Roger Buckley, "Talk All Night: Charles Kades and His Reflections on Occupied Japan", *Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 36 (1997), p. 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

¹⁶ See Ball's diary entry for 6 August 1947, in W. Macmahon Ball, *Intermittent Diplomat: The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball*, ed. Alan Rix (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 231-234.

political rights such as the right to participate in labour unions. Driven by a declining economy and postwar inflation, growing industrial action culminated in plans for a general strike, which was to begin on 1 February 1947. MacArthur banned the strike at the last minute.¹⁷ With the winding down of the reformism of the occupation, Ball's position became untenable. By 1947, the Australian government had started to change its policy and Evatt was emphasising cooperation with SCAP. Ball resigned his position in August 1947, immediately after Evatt's visit to Japan.¹⁸

The emerging Cold War conditions are conventionally seen as the chief obstacles to calling a peace conference, because the government of the USSR had territorial claims on Japan as it had joined the war against Japan in its final stages. According to Roger Buckley, however, more important were the internal difficulties among American policy-makers within the Truman administration and divisions over what form the peace settlement should take, especially given that Japan did not now have its own military.¹⁹ The US government initially released very little information on its plans for the Japanese peace settlement. Occupation officials from Commonwealth countries realised eventually that the Truman administration was implementing "peace without peace", in which SCAP was quietly returning internal autonomy to Japan without setting up a peace conference in which difficult questions would arise over which countries should have voting rights and which had territorial claims.²⁰ The main aim of winding down occupation responsibilities was to free the US government from

¹⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 268-272.

¹⁸ See Ball's letter explaining his resignation to Prime Minister Chifley in Appendix III to Ball, *Intermittent Diplomat*, pp. 267-280.

¹⁹ Roger Buckley, 'Joining the Club: The Japanese Question and Anglo-American Peace Diplomacy, 1950-1951', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (1985), p. 302; Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, pp. 96-97.

²⁰ Buckley, 'Joining the Club', p. 302; 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.

the heavy fiscal burden of maintaining a large number of occupation troops.²¹ Meanwhile, the Cold War was escalating in the Asian region, and the US military was in a state of high alert. In one incident in June 1948, US aircraft bombed some Korean fishing vessels off Dokto Island, eighty miles east of Korea, sinking ten vessels, killing fourteen fishermen and wounding ten. US authorities admitted the incident was caused by the US Air Force, explaining that the vessels in question had been in an area previously designated by US authorities as a bombing zone.²²

The intensification of the Cold War and the reluctance to arrange a peace settlement with Japan that included both the Soviet and the US governments had a deeply unsettling impact on the Australian authorities. The Chifley government regarded participation by Australia in a Pacific peace settlement as a key Commonwealth representative to be a central condition of its future security. Without the peace settlement the Chifley government began to seek alternative security arrangements, along the lines of the Pacific Pact, mentioned in Chapter One, that had been proposed in the late 1930s. Cold War conditions also undermined the United Nations, and worried many observers who saw tension between the USA and the USSR in the northern Pacific as a “precursor to another even more catastrophic world war”.²³ Ball's successor as Head of the Australian Liaison Mission to SCAP and Commonwealth representative at the Allied Council for Japan, Patrick Shaw, for example, informed the Australian Department of External Affairs in September-October 1947 of his concern about the fact that senior officers within the US military stationed in Japan talked openly about the use of nuclear bombs in a war with the Soviet Union, which

²¹ Buckley, 'Joining the Club', p. 229; Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, pp. 96-97.

²² 'Bombing Attack Off Korea', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 June 1948, p. 13.

²³ Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, p. 96.

they believed to be imminent. He noted that the US Fifth Air Force already had nine atomic bombs in Japan. Alarmed by Shaw's report, Chifley speculated that if the American officers in Japan reflected the position of their government, the Australian government might need to withdraw troops from Japan, order to avoid becoming unwittingly involved in a war between the USA and the Soviet Union.²⁴

The Joint Chiefs of Staff Australia (JCOSA) had decided in 1947 that BCOF should take united action under the command of the US military if Japan or the occupation were attacked by external forces.²⁵ JCOSA thought that any military conflict between the USA and the USSR would probably lead to a wider conflict. Robertson, as BCOF's Commander-in-Chief, was dissatisfied with the JCOSA decision, on the grounds that it had not provided sufficient detail on how to respond to a US military request to take action. During the first half of 1948, Robertson asked his home authority, the Chiefs of Staff, to clarify "the measures he was entitled to take for the safety of his command", and whether he should "engage in staff discussions on possible courses of action to be followed".²⁶ Robertson here avoided direct expression of his concern but clearly wanted to know how he was to command the Australian component of BCOF if the US had to defend Japan against an external attack.

This issue became a matter of contention between the Chifley government and its military authorities in 1948. When the Chiefs of Staff asked Chifley for advice regarding the attitude to be adopted by the Australian component of BCOF "in the event of orders being issued to BCOF by the United

²⁴ Ibid., p. 97.

²⁵ David Horner, *High Command: Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939-1945* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 428, 429.

²⁶ Cited from Dedman's later summary: 'Policy for the Employment of the BCOF in Japan', 1948-1949, NAA, Canberra, A5954 1637/1.

States Commander ... the execution of which might be capable of provoking an international incident with, for example, Soviet Russia", the Prime Minister stated:

[T]he Australian component and Navy Support Units had been organised to discharge the duties and responsibilities of an Occupation force ... they should not be involved in any activities inconsistent with the fulfilment of their role as an Occupation Force.

Military leaders reacted strongly to Chifley's statement. As the Defence Committee put it:

If the Occupation Force were attacked, they should take unified action against such aggression, as they are all under the operational control of Supreme Commander, Allied Powers.²⁷

Robertson again requested government advice, in January 1949, regarding RAAF involvement if the US military took action in an emergency. This time the Chiefs of Staff suggested more directly that the government

should decide now, so far as Australia is concerned, [that] an attack on Japan by another nation would be regarded as an attack on Forces of which Australians are an integral part ... [and that in such an event] ... B.C.O.F... will act in full co-operation with American Forces from the outset of such hostilities.

At this point, the Chifley government endorsed JCOSA's suggestion with some amendment.²⁸ Meanwhile, MacArthur had failed in his 1947 bid for the Republican presidential nomination. Although he remained the head of the occupation, the failed nomination bid undermined his influence and power. It

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ 'Policy for the Employment of British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan', 1949, NAA, Canberra, A816 52/30/346.

was becoming increasingly difficult for him to manipulate the occupation as if it were his own personal domain, independent of the Truman administration. The direction of the occupation was controlled more and more by policy-makers in Washington.²⁹ By 1947-48, Washington's policy was clear. US interests were now focused on the integration of Japan into the world system of market economies and inclusion of Japan in the US defence strategy against communism.

Because of Japan's proximity to the Soviet Union, China and Korea, Japan's domestic security was deemed crucial to US interests. MacArthur, believing communism posed a threat to Japanese society and politics, thus issued Directive 201 in October 1948 to Prime Minister Katayama Tetsu, ordering an amendment of labour legislation to prohibit collective bargaining and strikes in public sector unions. Within the occupation, this move again revealed tensions among the coalition partners; Ball's successor, Shaw, was fiercely opposed to Directive 201. The Australian delegates to the Far Eastern Commission brought the issue before the Commission, supporting Shaw's position, but backing for Shaw was insufficient to force a revision of the directive.³⁰

In Australia, the Chifley government lost office in December 1949. It is very difficult to assess 1947-49 foreign policy, because the Chifley government had been compelled to engage with large issues and events just emerging in international affairs, including the independence of colonial territories, establishment of the United Nations and the ideologies of collective security, liberal internationalism and human rights. Military participation in the

²⁹ Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur*, p. 154.

³⁰ De Matos, *Imposing Peace and Prosperity*, pp. 210-231; Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 174.

occupation of Japan was connected to the Australian government's postwar goals for Japan, including democratisation, and was also closely related to its security priorities. Australian officials in the occupation often sought to implement far-reaching measures to encourage democratisation, which sometimes meant they became critics of MacArthur. However, the Australian government's handling of BCOF in the later stages of the occupation, and the large reduction of the force in 1948 in particular, revealed other aspects of the Chifley government: its immaturity in diplomacy towards the US, its continuing dependence on Britain, and the lack of effective communication between the government and Australian military authorities.

The Reduction and Withdrawal of BCOF Operations

Following the perceived success of democratisation and demilitarisation in Japan, members of the British Commonwealth began to reduce their troop numbers in 1947. By contrast with other member states of BCOF, the Australian government alone undertook the large-scale measures for reshaping its component outlined in Chapter Four, expending considerable resources in the process. This reconstruction of forces revealed the desire of Australian leaders to maintain a strong Australian presence up until the peace treaty, in which they hoped to have an influential role.

At the beginning of 1947, BCOF was at the peak of its strength, comprising 37,021 troops, made up of 31,509 land force troops, 5,019 air force and 493 navy personnel. The Australian component represented nearly one-third of the entire BCOF force: the Australian land force and air force numbered

9,912 and 2,006 respectively.³¹ Having moved on from its extremely busy initial period, by 1947, BCOF had established itself in the Chūgoku-Shikoku region in the south-west of Japan.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the head of the UK Mission to SCAP, Alvary Gascoigne, told MacArthur directly in October 1946 that he wanted to withdraw British troops. This direct communication contradicted the MacArthur-Northcott agreement of December 1945 in which Australia was to be the channel of communication between the Commonwealth and the US government concerning any major change in participation by Commonwealth member states, and Robertson responded angrily.³² Britain faced a serious economic crisis in the aftermath of the war. Britain still had one in twenty men of military age in uniform at the beginning of 1946, a situation that caused manpower shortages at home and thus severely restricted economic recovery.³³ The British government needed men to secure the remaining interests of the shrinking British Empire in Southeast Asia, Egypt (especially the Suez Canal) and elsewhere in the world. By contrast, Australia's postwar demobilisation would be implemented quickly and efficiently.³⁴ Increasing economic problems made it difficult for the British government to justify keeping military forces in occupied Japan.

In November 1946, UK Prime Minister Clement Attlee wrote to the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, seeking support for the UK government's withdrawal of troops from BCOF. The letter explained that

³¹ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.
³² Jeffrey Grey, *Australian Brass: The Career of Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson* (Cambridge and Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 152.
³³ Waters, *The Empire Fractures*, pp. 52-53.
³⁴ Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), pp. 616-617.

Britain needed manpower for other military commitments and for the reconstruction process at home; that Britain had more troops relative to its population than the other Allies had; and that now that Allied control was firmly established in Japan, removal of British troops would begin at the earliest opportunity. Attlee pointed out that the basic formation of BCOF would not be affected by the withdrawal of around 3,500 British troops (the number withdrawn in fact rose to 4,539 in March 1947). The Royal Air Force contingent in the Commonwealth Air Forces and the Royal Naval Port Party at Kure were to be maintained. The UK element of BCOF Headquarters and of Corps Troops, the Headquarters of the British Indian Division, and the UK administrative units, were also to be maintained. Attlee's letter observed that it was "not improbable that a decision to withdraw the United Kingdom Brigade would lead to a [similar] request by the government of India who are known to be very anxious to withdraw as many as possible Indian Troops now outside India". So if the decision to withdraw the UK Brigade were made, "the Indian Brigade in the British Indian Division should be withdrawn simultaneously with the United Kingdom Brigade".³⁵ In February 1947 the Australian Embassy in Washington informed the Australian government that it had received the US government's official statement that it had no objection to withdrawal of the UK Brigade.³⁶ The 5th British Battalion was immediately redeployed from Japan to Malaya. By the end of March 1947, 4,539 British troops had left Japan.³⁷

The Prime Minister of New Zealand also informed Canberra in February 1947 that he wished to reduce the New Zealand component from 4,285

³⁵ 'BCOF (British Commonwealth Occupation Force) Proposed Withdrawal of United Kingdom Brigade', 1946, NAA, Canberra, A2700 1069G.

³⁶ 'BCOF - Withdrawal of U.K. Brigade Including Adjustment of Pool A/C [Account]', 1947-1948, NAA, Canberra, A816 52/301/248.

³⁷ Chida Takeshi, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobō, 1997), pp. 169-169, 172.

personnel to 1,200 personnel plus one Royal New Zealand Air Force Squadron. He expressed his government's "serious doubt" regarding "the value of continued British [Commonwealth] participation in the occupation of Japan", stating that "[though] we are anxious to do what we can with our Commonwealth partners in contributing to the security of the Pacific, we would however, suggest that the whole position might be reviewed". His criticism of the effectiveness of BCOF showed that the New Zealand government shared some of the same doubts as the Australian authorities about BCOF:

[T]he existence of the force does not afford any of the participating Governments any share in the military Government of Japan and an opportunity therefore of influencing directly of life [sic] in Japan which will not be a menace to the future security of the Pacific. It is doubtful also whether the existence of the force is of any value to us in the advocacy generally of policies affecting Japan while its maintenance in a position of substantial inferiority to the Americans tends to diminish our prestige in the eye of the Japanese.³⁸

The New Zealand government, however, in the end decided to retain 2,400 troops, with 1,850 returning home in June. Prime Minister Peter Fraser had promptly decided to recall the New Zealand troops on receiving word of Attlee's decision to reduce the number of British troops. He evidently changed his mind, however, and despite the reduction of troops, the New Zealand component served until November 1948. While there is apparently no surviving document to suggest why or when Fraser changed his position, Laurie Brocklebank surmises that the basic reason was "the importance placed on

³⁸ 'BCOF - Reduction of N.Z. Army Component', 1947-1959, NAA, Canberra, A816 52/301/256.

standing alongside Britain in the occupation force".³⁹ Meanwhile, the New Zealand Prime Minister's questioning of the value of BCOF's participation in the occupation seemed to raise serious concerns in Australia.⁴⁰ As anticipated by the UK authorities, the Indian government announced its decision to recall the entire Indian contingent in March 1947, citing the need to recall all overseas troops and to reorganise the Indian Army under the new constitutional arrangements that would follow Indian independence in August 1947. All Indian and British-Indian troops had left Japan by October 1947.⁴¹

A report to the Australian Prime Minister from the Minister for Defence regarding the withdrawal of Indian troops barely concealed the disappointment of the Australian military authorities.⁴² The Australian government, as we have seen, had just decided to provide further resources in order to reshape the Australian presence in Japan; the loss of the entire Indian contingent was significant, as it represented nearly one-third of the original BCOF force.⁴³ A Department of Defence minute paper estimated that the loss of Indian, UK and New Zealand troops meant a total reduction from 35,435 troops (in March 1946) to 20,082, further noting that the withdrawal of the British Navy and reduction of British Air Forces was under consideration. The minute paper records that, contrary to the general trend, the numbers of Australian Army and Air Force personnel were both to be slightly increased in October 1947. It also revealed that MacArthur had spoken strongly against the withdrawal of the Indian

³⁹ Laurie W. Brocklebank, *Jayforce: New Zealand and the Military Occupation of Japan, 1945-48* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 196-197. See also Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 172.

⁴⁰ 'BCOF - Reduction of N.Z. Army Component'.

⁴¹ 'Reduction of Indian Contingent of BCOF', 1947, NAA, Canberra, A816 52/301/255.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.

contingent. The minute paper concluded that further action by the British Commonwealth in the wake of Indian independence –this presumably included possible negotiation with the Indian government to retain Indian soldiers in BCOF – might be misunderstood and could harm the relationship between Australia and India. Thus, in accordance with the terms of the MacArthur-Northcott agreement, Australia would inform the US of the Indian government’s wish to withdraw its troops.⁴⁴

While troops were being reduced over the course of 1947, BCOF worked hard to maintain its original zone. In response to the reduction of the British component, the Australian army took over Shikoku island, in addition to its existing zone of Hiroshima prefecture. Until its withdrawal in October, the Indian component controlled three prefectures on Honshū: Okayama, Tottori and Shimane. After the departure of the entire Indian contingent of 13,000 troops, Shimane prefecture was placed under the jurisdiction of Australia, New Zealand and the British Commonwealth Air Group (BCAG). Okayama prefecture came under Australian control, and Tottori prefecture was added to New Zealand control.⁴⁵ The New Zealand component, which lost more than forty percent of its force (1,850 troops) in the middle of the year, kept control of Yamaguchi prefecture on Honshū. BCOF troops were now stretched thinly. With the withdrawal of other Commonwealth member states from the occupation, JCOSA was dissolved on 31 December 1947, and the Australian Defence Committee assumed responsibility both for the administration of BCOF and for setting its policy directions. The Defence Committee set up the Joint Administrative Planning Committee as an intergovernmental organisation to supervise BCOF, with representatives from the UK, New Zealand and

⁴⁴ 'Reduction of Indian Contingent of BCOF'.

⁴⁵ Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 168-169.

Australia.⁴⁶ Thus, while Australia had become the sole Commonwealth force in Japan by 1949, BCOF was still technically supervised by the governments of the UK, New Zealand and Australia. In this way, BCOF made it possible for the British Commonwealth to cooperate on defence in the Pacific, in accordance with the principle, outlined in the Australian post-war defence policy announced in June 1947, that Australia would rely on cooperation with the Commonwealth in defence matters.⁴⁷

Beginning in February 1948, 3,200 British troops left Japan. Around 750 key personnel (450 Army and 300 Air Force) remained. It was difficult to find alternative personnel immediately to carry out the tasks formerly undertaken by those who had left.⁴⁸ For the first time, BCOF needed to ask the US authorities to review the zones under BCOF control. Miho air base in Tottori prefecture was transferred to the US; the RAAF took over the headquarters of BCAG at Iwakuni; and the New Zealand Air Force moved to Bofu. Withdrawal of the entire UK component was completed on 15 November 1948.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the remaining New Zealand personnel had also been withdrawn. In February 1948 the New Zealand government had informed the Australian government of its decision to withdraw all its troops over the period June to August 1948. The Australian Chiefs of Staff stated that New Zealand's withdrawal would seriously affect BCOF's ability to carry out occupation tasks, observing that if New Zealand authorities could continue army representation in BCOF "even

⁴⁶ Memorandum, 'The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Australia,' cited in D. C. S. Sissons, 'The Higher Direction of a Multinational Expeditionary Force: The JCOSA (Joint Chiefs-of-Staff) -- BCOF (British Commonwealth Occupation Force) Experiment 1945-7', Papers of D.C.S. Sissons, 1950-1986 [manuscript] National Library of Australia, MS 3092, pp. 53-63.

⁴⁷ 'Strategic Planning in Relation to Co-Operation in British Commonwealth Defence', 1948-1949, NAA, Canberra, A816/52 14/301/353.

⁴⁸ 'BCOF - Withdrawal Remainder of U.K. Contingent', NAA, Canberra, A816/1 52/301/274.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

with one battalion”, it would make things much easier for BCOF.⁵⁰ However, this time the New Zealand government did not change its decision, instead highlighting a manpower shortage and the difficulty of recruiting service personnel for Japan. A total of 2,052 New Zealand troops left Japan between July and September 1948. On 26 November the last New Zealand troops departed, apart from a few personnel completing special tasks.⁵¹ BCOF Commander-in-Chief Robertson, among other dignitaries, was present for the farewell at the wharf. While the band played the Maori Farewell Song, the troops departed for home, led by the Commander of the New Zealand component, Brigadier L. Potter.⁵² From this point onwards, Australian military representation alone would carry on the occupation tasks of BCOF.

The proposal for a large reduction in and ultimate withdrawal of UK, New Zealand and Indian troops from occupied Japan before a peace settlement had been concluded had made the Australian government re-examine its own military representation in the occupation and begin moving towards a significant reduction of troops and reorganisation of BCOF. A cabinet ministers’ meeting in April 1948 at the Council of Defence, an official body that deliberated on military policy, discussed the future of BCOF in relation to the probability of a peace treaty. At this stage, the Australian government aimed through participation in the occupation to ensure Australia had an effective voice in the drafting of the treaty, but the likelihood of Australian participation in the peace conference was itself affected by the unsettled situation between the USA and the Soviet Union. The April 1948 meeting asked the Defence Committee to assess the “ideal minimum size” of BCOF given the impending

⁵⁰ 'BCOF - Reduction of N.Z. Army Component'.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² 'Reduction of BCOF ', 1948-1949, NAA, Canberra, A5104 8/2/1/1.

withdrawal of the UK and New Zealand troops and the financial cost of maintaining and administering the force. The ministers' meeting also asked for Department of External Affairs' observations on this issue.⁵³

The Council of Defence delivered its considered view to the government on 28 April 1948 in the form of a paper entitled "Future Policy for Australian Participation in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan". It offered two alternative ways of reducing the Australian force. The first allowed for the maintenance of Australian administrative control and the second, which involved a more severe cut, entailed dependence on US logistical support. The Council supported the first of these options, thus choosing to maintain the independence of Australian military representation. The Council stated that the Australian component of BCOF

should be reduced to one A.M.F. battalion, one R. A. A. F. squadron and a Naval Support Unit of one ship, with the necessary administrative units for their maintenance, of an approximate overall strength of 2,750.

The reduction should be effected by or shortly after 31st December, 1948.

Following the Council's recommendation, the Australian government instructed the Ambassador in Washington to notify the US government of the proposed reduction.⁵⁴

The Defence Council also raised the question of the location of BCOF, asserting: "the best value would be obtained if it were located in Tokyo. ... [S]hould this not be practicable, the force should remain in the Kure area", with a view to having "a detachment serving in Tokyo". Later, however, the Defence Council noted that the matter had been referred to the Joint Administrative

⁵³ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.
⁵⁴ Ibid.

Planning Committee, whose deliberations on a number of issues (including accommodation) made it unlikely that BCOF would move to Tokyo.⁵⁵ Internal Defence correspondence further noted that any move to Tokyo would cause difficulties for families and that, since the US wanted Australia to maintain responsibility for a discrete area, it was undesirable to take any further action on the proposal to move BCOF.⁵⁶

Patrick Shaw's Trip to the BCOF Area

Shaw, normally based in Tokyo, made a ten-day trip, from 29 April to 9 May 1948, to visit Australian and New Zealand troops in the BCOF area in order to assess the government's decision to reduce the force. He visited all headquarters and units of the Australian and New Zealand components, as well as the headquarters of the US military government in Hiroshima and Yamaguchi prefectures. He also interviewed the governors and some business representatives of both prefectures. He toured Kure, investigating dock areas in order to "see as much as possible of the Australian and New Zealand units which now make up B.C.O.F." In his lengthy report, Shaw noted that BCOF was well established and that soldiers were well provided for in terms of accommodation and amenities.⁵⁷

Although he recognised BCOF's contribution in carrying out occupation tasks in its areas, however, Shaw's conclusion regarding the future of BCOF was ambivalent. The trip confirmed for him that the fundamental issue for BCOF was its subordination to the US, a point that was reinforced when he had

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ 'British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Proposal to Move BCOF to Tokyo', 7 September 1948, NAA, Canberra, A5954 1886/5.

⁵⁷ 'Report by the Head of Australian Mission on His Visit to BCOF Area', NAA, Canberra, A816 52/301/273, p. 1.

to organise meetings with prefectural governors and business leaders through the US military government in the region. Shaw questioned the likely ongoing effectiveness of BCOF's military operation. He believed that the main purpose of continuing Australia's representation in the occupation was to "demonstrate our continued interest and our readiness to assume responsibilities in this area". With regard to the Australian government's decision to reduce troop numbers greatly in the context of rising Cold War tension, he warned the government:

we must be prepared for an inevitable loss of American good will when their commanders realise that our armed forces and national policy would not necessarily be behind them in whatever development occurred.

Shaw added that he had already felt some "cooling off" towards him among the most senior American officers he had met in the past several weeks. He made it clear in his report that he believed the reason for the Australian government's decision to reduce the Australian component was political, in that the intent was to maintain some distance from the emerging Cold War confrontation between the USA and the USSR, and that the decision was not attributable to practical factors such as a potential shortage of manpower at home.⁵⁸

Despite his doubts about maintaining an Australian presence in the occupation, Shaw's report reflected an open and positive attitude to the future of Australian-Japanese relations. Shaw tried to see BCOF in the broader context, focusing on a future when the trade relationship between Australia and Japan would be normalised after the peace settlement. He was much impressed by evidence of "Japanese energy and organisational capacity" at the bombed Kure docks and arsenal, describing the area at some length:

⁵⁸ Ibid.

At one end of it are stock piles of iron ore and at the other a giant dock where the world's largest battleship [the *Yamato*] was built. Between are miles of workshops formerly crammed with modern metal working machinery. Nowhere in the world was there such concentration of naval armament equipment ... and nowhere else in the world could the complete task of building and fitting a warship be carried out in the same area.

As an occupation official, Shaw saw the mass of machinery, iron ore and scrap stored in the area as a potential part of war reparations payments. He also concluded this part of the report with the gloomy observation that "Although grass now grows in the workshops, one has the disturbing thought that what had been done in the past could be done again". Nevertheless, throughout his report it is very evident that Shaw's main interest was in current and future issues. For example, he reported his encounter with an unnamed Japanese businessman representing the Harima Ship Building Co. and their conversation about the future possibilities for Australian investment in Japan and for trade between Japan and Australia. To Shaw's question about whether his firm could build whaling vessels for Australia, the Japanese businessman replied that they would "produce such a craft within a year" if certain materials were granted. Shaw noted that he would make a separate report on this topic.⁵⁹ To Shaw's surprise, the businessman was a former diplomat who had once been stationed in Melbourne; he asked Shaw whether Australia would establish a consular office in Kure.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid. The Chifley government set up a whaling station in South Australia: R. L. Wettenhall, 'The Australian Whaling Commission in Restrospect', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 33, no. 4 (1961), pp. 80-85.

⁶⁰ 'Report by the Head of Australian Mission on His Visit to BCOF Area', p. 10.

Shaw's conversations with the governors of Hiroshima and Yamaguchi prefectures were very different from each other. The governor of Hiroshima did not talk about BCOF, instead raising concerns about food shortages and his hope for the development of textile industries in his prefecture in the near future. The governor of Yamaguchi prefecture pointed out the importance of BCOF troops as reinforcement for the local police and in maintaining law and order, and was obviously concerned about the withdrawal of BCOF from his prefecture. The governor was particularly concerned about Korean "disturbances", but Shaw casts doubt on the necessity for such anxiety, observing that the local New Zealand commander was not worried. In fact, none of the Australian and New Zealand forces, even though they were now thinly spread in the BCOF area, appeared concerned about "the problem of internal law and order". According to Shaw, the fear of "Korean disturbances" had been "overemphasised by the Americans".⁶¹ It is true, however, that the New Zealand component of BCOF helped to deport significant numbers of Koreans, who would often re-enter Japan illegally; and Tessa Morris-Suzuki has found evidence of cooperation between BCOF and local Japanese police to control the movements of the Korean population in Yamaguchi prefecture.⁶²

The US Government Request

In July 1948, the the US government responded to Australia's decision to call the bulk of its troops back home, observing that the proposed reduction of Australian forces "would leave a token British Commonwealth Force", which would be "inadequate" for the occupation of the BCOF area. The US

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Brocklebank, *Jayforce*, pp. 133-135; Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 'An Act Prejudicial to the Occupation Forces: Migration Controls and Korean Residents in Post-Surrender Japan', *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (2004), pp. 11-12.

government stated that it was unable to deploy additional troops of its own to the BCOF area, and asked the Australian government to “give favourable consideration” to maintaining a British Commonwealth force “equivalent to one United States Infantry Division ... plus necessary service troops”.⁶³

At a meeting of the Defence Committee, the Chief of the General Staff estimated that the force required by the US government amounted to 10,000 field troops plus an additional 2,000 troops supporting them. He added that keeping 12,000 troops in Japan meant a further 6,000 personnel would be needed at home in supporting roles. The Defence Committee concluded that this was beyond the recruiting resources of the Australian Army under current conditions. Further, after 31 December 1948, when a new defence program came into effect, the majority of soldiers would be in the citizen forces, which could not be deployed overseas in peacetime. However, the final decision would rest solely with the Australian government, in consultation with other members of the British Commonwealth.⁶⁴

The Australian government consulted the UK and New Zealand governments about the US request. The UK government replied that it would leave the matter to Australia, while the New Zealand government commented that New Zealand troops had already begun to withdraw, and that it could not participate in any enlargement of BCOF.⁶⁵ By this time, most of the UK troops

⁶³ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.
⁶⁴ Ibid. The Chifley government had announced a five-year defence plan in June 1947. According to this plan, the final number in the land force would be 69,000, comprising 19,000 in the permanent forces and 50,000 in the citizen forces: 'Five Year Defence Programme', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 June 1947, p. 5. The number of troops in the Australian Army in 1950 was 32,779, made up of 14,543 in the permanent forces and 18,236 in the citizen forces: Grey, *Australian Brass*, p. 198.

⁶⁵ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.
⁶⁴ Ibid. The Chifley government had announced a five-year defence plan in June 1947. According to this plan, the final number in the land force would be 69,000, comprising 19,000 in the permanent forces and 50,000 in the citizen forces: 'Five Year Defence Programme', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 June 1947, p. 5. The number of troops in the Australian Army in 1950 was 32,779, made up of 14,543 in the permanent forces and 18,236 in the citizen forces: Grey, *Australian Brass*, p. 198.

⁶⁵ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.
⁶⁴ Ibid. The Chifley government had announced a five-year defence plan in June 1947. According to this plan, the final number in the land force would be 69,000, comprising 19,000 in the permanent forces and 50,000 in the citizen forces: 'Five Year Defence Programme', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 June 1947, p. 5. The number of troops in the Australian Army in 1950 was 32,779, made up of 14,543 in the permanent forces and 18,236 in the citizen forces: Grey, *Australian Brass*, p. 198.

and part of the New Zealand contingent had already left Japan. The Australian government replied to the US government on 2 September, stating that the US request for large numbers of British Commonwealth troops to be stationed in Japan could not be met by the Australian government alone. In reality, BCOF then consisted of Australians, a few specialists from the UK, and some New Zealanders who were scheduled to leave soon. The US government had agreed to the UK and New Zealand withdrawals because of manpower shortages in those countries. The Australian government believed that the same justification applied to the reduction in the Australian component. The Australian military had been facing difficulties in recruiting members for Japan. Furthermore, many personnel currently serving in Japan would complete their period of service during 1948.⁶⁶

The US government's response arrived in early November. It expressed sympathy over the difficulties in recruiting, but suggested that "steps might be taken either to overcome them or to modify current plans for deployment of the regular forces in order to maintain Australia's participation in the united security effort in the Pacific-Far Eastern Area", adding that "the Government of United States cannot subscribe to this proposed further reduction of the British Commonwealth forces in Japan". The Australian government replied that without cooperation from other members of the Commonwealth, it was not only impossible to provide a greater force, but there was no option other than to commence the reduction of the Australian contingent to 2,750 in total. The Australian government believed this communication would meet the requirement under the MacArthur-Northcott agreement to provide notification six months in advance of the withdrawal of forces. In February the following

⁶⁶ Ibid.

year the US government gave its final response regarding the reduction of the Australian component:

The United States Government regrets that the Australian Government has not found it possible to retain in Japan a British Commonwealth Force equivalent to one United States infantry division... plus necessary service troops.... Information received from General MacArthur indicates that United States Army units have been obliged to assume responsibility for certain areas and functions previously assigned to the British Commonwealth Force.⁶⁷

Although the Australian contingent had already begun to return home in January 1949, transferring facilities to the US military took some time. The 65th and 66th Battalions returned home and were reshaped into the First Royal Australian Regiment and the Second Royal Australian Regiment. Thus only the 67th Battalion continued to serve in Japan; it moved from Kaitaichi, near Kure, to Hiro, now as the Third Royal Australian Regiment.⁶⁸ Along with the Iwakuni airbase, where the RAAF was stationed with one squadron, Hiro became the garrison of the Australian military presence in Japan, which was small yet logistically independent of the US military.

The Australian government's claim about the increasing difficulty in obtaining new recruits for Japan was certainly accurate. Those personnel who had renewed their service in Japan would again complete their period of service (eighteen months' service outside Australia) in 1948. By that time, Australian society was rapidly putting wartime conditions behind it. More importantly, however, Australian military authorities had completed the demobilisation and

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army: A History* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 174.

reorganisation of Australian military forces by the end of 1947. Prime Minister Chifley had stated in September 1946 that the Australian government had achieved a world record speed of demobilisation. The 600,000 personnel released from service had been smoothly transferred to the labour market, and yet Australia's unemployment rate was said to be only 0.5 percent.⁶⁹ Under the new military recruiting system, it would be impossible to keep a large-scale force outside Australia, as the Defence Committee recognised, because there would be insufficient numbers in the permanent forces.

The US government's request that Australia keep 12,000 troops in Japan might have been unrealistic. Undeniably, however, the Australian government's reduction and reorganisation of BCOF did appear sudden and abrupt, especially as it followed efforts during 1947 to reshape the Australian component, in which substantial resources had been expended in order to keep 10,000 troops in Japan. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Australian-led BCOF had worked hard in building new accommodation for soldiers, churches, houses for families of personnel, and leisure facilities for troops even as other member states were reducing and withdrawing their forces. Despite the official emphasis on Australian participation in the occupation of Japan, and a rapid reorganisation of the military presence there, the Australian contribution to BCOF was not sustained, even in the medium term.

The Australian government's aspiration to establish security for Australia through its participation in the postwar reconstruction of Japan was undermined in the second half of the occupation period. Following success in democratisation and demilitarisation in the first phase, BCOF faced the

⁶⁹ 'Chifley in Brisbane: Demobilisation Record Claim', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 September 1946, p. 3.

reduction of forces and ultimate withdrawal of its members without the realisation of a peace settlement. The Cold War ensured that prospects for such a settlement receded. Different reasons for withdrawing troops from Japan were given by member states of BCOF. Absolute shortage of manpower at home and military commitments elsewhere forced Britain to be the first to withdraw troops. The UK government, however, made an effort to ensure BCOF maintained its original areas for a while. The Indian component, which had been sent to occupied Japan by the British government, was called back home by its own newly independent government. The New Zealand Prime Minister wanted to recall troops because of an acute realisation of the subordination of BCOF to the US, which, he believed, meant the Commonwealth had no direct strategic interest in the occupation. In the end, he agreed to maintain the majority of New Zealand troops in Japan for an extended period. All troops of these three member states had left Japan by the end of 1948. The Australian government also commenced withdrawing the majority of its troops in 1948, leaving only a tiny force, which became the sole military representation of the Commonwealth in occupied Japan.

The process of withdrawal clearly revealed the difference between the Australian government and other members of BCOF in their motivation for participation in the occupation. Because of the MacArthur-Northcott agreement of December 1945, the Australian government was in a central position during the process of withdrawal. The Australian government itself, however, became the only member of BCOF to recall its troops without the official agreement of the US. While US authorities wanted Australia to become an active ally in the Cold War confrontation, the Chifley government had no appetite for this role. The US government's new policy to remake Japan as a bulwark against

communism, revising the course of democratisation in key areas such as labour legislation, had already commenced as Australia began withdrawing troops. Shaw's report of August 1949, in which he expressed reservations about the new attitude to Japan, reflected the ambivalence of the Chifley government as SCAP quietly moved to "peace without a peace treaty".

The following chapter will examine the Australian component of BCOF in the last stages of the occupation, focusing on demobilisation and postwar reconstruction. It will return to the story of the soldiers on the ground and examine their experience as their return home drew nearer, together with government policy aiming to help them readjust to civilian life.

CHAPTER SIX

The End of the Wartime Army and the Last Phase of the Occupation, 1948-1952

By the late 1940s, public understanding in Australia of the purpose of BCOF and confidence in its mission had been shaken. The Australian component of BCOF had been publicly criticised because of the drunkenness, the prevalence of black marketing and venereal disease. From the government's point of view, the value of BCOF had lessened with the realisation that a peace treaty with Japan was still some way off.

By the middle of 1948, the Australian government had accepted the reality of emerging Cold War conditions. Though Ball had tried to mediate between the Western powers and the Soviet Union during his time in Japan, there was little room to do so. Liberal internationalism and rational thinking, which had formed the backdrop to the creation of the United Nations Organisation, were powerless to prevent two competing ideologies splitting the world into two domains. By the time Chifley accepted the new US policy on the occupation of Japan, his government, while remaining cautious about the prospect of renewed war, had become increasingly sceptical about deriving any benefit from the resources it had invested in the occupation. After initially denying that it was intent on withdrawing troops, the Chifley government decided to recall the majority of Australian troops from Japan, leaving a small force in case a Japanese peace settlement was eventually concluded.

This chapter examines the later stage of BCOF operations, demonstrating that the experiences of soldiers who arrived in the later years were different from those of their predecessors, and that their motivations for enlisting in BCOF also differed. Later recruits included some who sought to create

opportunities for postwar life, and others who were already disillusioned with postwar life. The transformation of the Australian military from a wartime force to a regular force also meant the arrival of new recruits who had opted for the military as a professional occupation. One consequence of the BCOF operation also began to be evident in Australia, as Australian soldiers tried to bring Japanese wives home with them.

The Later Stages of BCOF

In 1949, BCOF became a tiny task force. Its actual strength in March 1949 was: 2,343 in the Australian Army, 381 in the Royal Australian Air Force, thirty-nine in the Royal Australian Navy, nine in the British Army, seven in the British Navy, seven in the Royal Air Force, and one in the New Zealand Army. The total Australian force of 2,750 troops consisted of one AMF battalion, one RAAF squadron and a naval support unit of one ship.¹ The Australians continued to be stationed in Hiro Camp in Hiroshima prefecture and Iwakuni air base in Yamaguchi prefecture.

In August 1949, fourteen months after his trip to the BCOF area, the diplomat Patrick Shaw suggested in one of his regular departmental dispatches that there should be a final withdrawal of all Australian forces from Japan “unless it is felt that there are overriding political reasons in maintaining token support of the new American policy [the 'Reverse Course'] in Japan”. Shaw reported that General MacArthur had told him during a conversation on 28 July 1949 that “a peace treaty with Japan ‘was not foreseeable’”. Shaw clearly doubted whether the US would ever welcome a peace conference. The official SCAP view was that “changes on a vast scale have taken place in Japan and

¹ Chida Takeshi, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobō, 1997), p. 177.

already the purposes of the Allied Powers have in large part been fulfilled". As Shaw reported, MacArthur had described the Japanese people in July 1949, in an indication of his assessment of the place of Japan in current Western strategy, as "an effective bulwark to stem the communist advance". MacArthur had also stipulated that occupation armies "are no longer to regard themselves as an occupying but as a 'protecting' power". Shaw concluded his dispatch by questioning whether Australia should go along with America's new policy. Australia's fundamental objective in the occupation, he observed, was to contribute to democratic reform so that Japan would not be an aggressor in the region again. The Australian Mission to SCAP had some doubts about the quality of reform in Japan and reservations about giving a former enemy this role as a bulwark against communism. "Peace without a peace treaty" was a highly undesirable extension of such thinking: in Shaw's view it would inevitably lead to the scaling back of the occupation and an undesirable increase in Japanese autonomy.²

Shaw claimed that neither he, as the head of the Australian Mission and the Representative of the British Commonwealth, nor Robertson as the Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, had been informed about the alteration in US policy under which Japan was to become an ally against communism.³ This is hardly surprising, since the "Reverse Course" was not the result of any specific decision, but rather refers to a general tendency in US policy, evident from around the beginning of 1947 onwards.⁴ All the same, Shaw concluded that it would be very difficult to criticise SCAP for its reluctance to seek a peace

² 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)', 18 December 1945, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Canberra, A5954 1699/2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), pp. 268-273.

settlement and request a treaty under which concrete peace terms could be set, given the undeniable cooperation of the Japanese government and people with the occupation and their value as a “bulwark to stem the communist advance”. Pressing any further for a peace treaty against the wishes of the US government might result in accusations that Australia was “playing the game of the USSR”, because a peace conference would allow scope for greater Soviet intervention in the region, given that the Soviet Union had been allied with the U.S. and the British Commonwealth in the war against Japan. It was also unrealistic to think the US government would change a course upon which it had already embarked and for which it alone, among the Allies, was paying.⁵ Shaw’s predecessor, Ball, had already written in his 1948 book, *Enemy or Ally?*, that the US was converting Japan into an ally in the emerging Cold War.⁶

Shaw provided a succinct account of what exactly was happening inside SCAP and in Japan under “peace without a peace treaty”. MacArthur had told Shaw on 28 July 1949 that, within a year, the US Eighth Army would “have exactly the same status and function in Japan as an ordinary army in the United States”; that the role of military government teams, which assisted in the carrying out of SCAP policies locally, would be significantly reduced; and that the US military had been instructed not to interfere in any disturbance unless the incident involved occupation personnel. A “Decontrol Committee” inside SCAP was conducting a review of existing instructions to the Japanese

⁵ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.
⁶ W. Macmahon Ball, *Japan: Enemy or Ally?*, 1st Australian ed. (London and Melbourne: Cassell, 1948).

government and removing those regarded as no longer necessary. The Japanese government had been freed from many of its responsibilities to report to SCAP.⁷

As had been anticipated by Shaw in a previous report,⁸ it was apparent that good relations between the Australian and American occupation authorities had been diminished by the large reduction and reorganisation of BCOF during 1948. Shaw was blunt in pointing out that, if Australia completely withdrew its troops, “[t]here would be not much loss of goodwill from the Americans in Japan because BCOF in its reduced size is probably more of a burden [to SCAP] than any advantage”. He further remarked that, for budgetary reasons, the Japanese government had drastically cut the supply of goods and services to the occupation, which added to the cost to Australia of maintaining troops. From the perspective of the Japanese population, Shaw wrote, BCOF had in any case become effectively invisible in view of the general Americanisation of Japan.⁹ Arguably, BCOF had become a “forgotten force”, even while it was actually stationed in Japan.

Prime Minister Robert Menzies, leader of the liberal-conservative government that had come to power after the December 1949 election, announced the final withdrawal of the entire Australian force in Japan, with the agreement of the US government, in May 1950. However, at the end of June, just as the troops were on the verge of returning home, the Korean War broke out. Menzies announced on 30 June that his government had decided to call a

⁷ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'; Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 38.

⁸ 'Report by the Head of Australian Mission on His Visit to BCOF Area', NAA, Canberra, A816 52/301/273.

⁹ 'BCOF - Withdrawals. Future of Australian Participation (Following Council of Defence Meeting 20/4/48)'.

halt to the troop withdrawal.¹⁰ As the commander of BCOF, Robertson's response to the Korean War was quick. Despite initial opposition from the UK government to redeployment of BCOF for the new conflict, Robertson was able to set up a non-operational forward base area in Korea, under the control of the Commander-in-Chief of BCOF, in order to provide "hospital, signals support, training area and leave and recreation facilities". The component assigned to this non-combat forward base was given the title of British Commonwealth Force Korea (BCFK), and continued to operate until the end of hostilities. Robertson, who already had a good reputation as field commander and educator, showed his administrative skills in his role in the Korean War.¹¹ Robertson resigned from BCOF/BCFK to become the army's Director General of Recruiting in mid-1951. He was succeeded by Lieutenant-General William Bridgeford, then by Lieutenant-General H. Wells, both from the Australian army.¹²

The US government had finally begun serious moves towards a peace settlement in 1949. John Foster Dulles, advisor to the Secretary of State, visited Japan in June to investigate prospects for a settlement; he was in Tokyo when the Korean War broke out. In September 1950, Truman announced that the US government was preparing for the treaty, and a final version of the treaty document was completed in 1951. With forty-eight other countries, Australia signed the treaty in San Francisco in September 1951, during the Korean War. At the same time, the US and Japan signed the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty,

¹⁰ 'BCOF - Plan for Withdrawal', 11 October 1950, NAA, Canberra, A816 52/301/308.

¹¹ Jeffrey Grey, *Australian Brass: The Career of Lieutenant General Sir Horace Robertson* (Cambridge and Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 179-192; Jeffrey Grey, 'General Sir Horace Robertson, BCOF and the Korean War, 1950-1951', *Defence Force Journal*, no. 62 (1987), pp. 17-23.

¹² 'Commander-in-Chief - BCOF Appointment of Lt. Gen Q Bridgeford', 1951-1953, NAA, Canberra, A816 52/301/319.

under which the US government guaranteed Japanese defence. A week before the Japanese peace treaty was signed, Australia also signed the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Pact (ANZUS). The Australian government's aim to secure US power in the southwest Pacific was thereby accomplished.¹³

The Shifting Environment of the Occupation

The language officer Ken Wells was quick to observe the change in US policy for occupied Japan. He wrote to his father in September 1947: "Do the Australian papers contain long accounts of the wickedness of the Russians nowadays? Japanese press does". He continued:

The Asahi [Morning Sun] today had practically the whole of the front page taken up with accounts of the Russians' anti American political front and the quarrels between Yugoslavia and Chile and [the] Russians' intention to wreck the famine relief in Europe. The intention is obviously to bring Japan in on the American side and show the Japanese that Communism is the Evil one.¹⁴

In criticising the shift in US policy towards occupied Japan and the emerging anti-communist discourse, Wells overlooked the fact that BCOF had been undertaking counter-communist operations from the beginning, in the form of information-gathering on the Japan Communist Party, in order to eliminate perceived threats to the safety of the occupation. Nevertheless, Wells was an intelligent and reflective witness to the occupation who evokes the longer liberal tradition of Western scholarship on Asia that extended from the pre-war

¹³ Roger Holdich et al., 'The ANZUS Treaty 1951', in *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy* (Canberra: Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2001), pp. i-xxxiv.

¹⁴ Ken Wells, letter to Father, (late) September 1947, private collection in the possession of Marguerite Wells.

Institute of Pacific Relations, examined in Chapter One, through to critical journalism of the 1970s.

As the occupation of Japan was taken over by Cold War rhetoric, SCAP rapidly began preparing Japan for peace. The environment in which the occupation operated was changing. While postwar inflation skyrocketed, the labour union movement became increasingly politicised. Social conditions were volatile,¹⁵ a situation which was reflected in the experience of some BCOF personnel.

The recollections of one language officer, Les Oates, confirm that the context in which BCOF soldiers worked changed in the later stages of the occupation. His experience reflects the growing dynamism of the occupation, and the need to deal with new issues and new groups of people. During this period, different types of Japanese individuals, groups and organisations, from all sorts of social and political backgrounds, were becoming more visible and assertive than they had been immediately after the defeat. The occupation, and the BCOF intelligence service that Oates worked for, increasingly needed to deal with labour unions, the resident Korean community, nationalist and right-wing politics, and yakuza gangster organisations.

Because of the shortage of Japanese-speaking personnel, Oates and two other language officers had been sent to help the New Zealand component stationed in Yamaguchi prefecture. Oates was stationed from October 1947 to April 1948 in the Field Security Section in the town of Shimonoseki under a Sergeant L. Smith, gathering intelligence. Shimonoseki had historically provided a gateway to Korea, China and Southeast Asia and had a significant Korean population. It was an important area for heavy industry and had a

¹⁵ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 115-116, 271-272.

strong labour movement history as well as being a right-wing nationalist stronghold. According to Oates, the security operation there relied on a variety of sources of information, including a Korean spy and a Japanese interpreter who turned out to be the son of the head of a yakuza house.¹⁶ This was a volatile time for the occupation in Shimonoseki, and the New Zealand detachment was the focus of some tension. A press report at the time of the New Zealand demobilisation observed that “They [NZ forces] have probably seen more action than any other Occupation troops in Japan in a constant series of clashes with Korean, Chinese and Japanese smugglers in which shots were often exchanged”.¹⁷

During the occupation, SCAP undertook to repatriate Koreans in Japan to Korea. When Oates began his work for Field Security in October 1947, the repatriation program was close to concluding, with over one million Koreans having returned to Korea.¹⁸ Koreans returning home were guarded by New Zealand troops while passing through Yamaguchi prefecture, then by US forces in neighbouring Fukuoka prefecture. US ships then took them to Korea from the port of Hakata in Fukuoka. An emerging issue for the occupation and the Japanese government, however, was the number of Koreans simultaneously arriving in Japan, escaping the uncertain postwar situation in Korea. Under Japanese colonial rule, they had been Japanese citizens, but Japan had lost its colonies in August 1945, and these Koreans were now denied entry into Japan as illegal immigrants. If they attempted entry, they were detained and then sent

¹⁶ Les Oates, personal communication, 19 November, 2008.

¹⁷ 'Reduction of BCOF ', 1948-1949, NAA, Canberra, A5104 8/2/1/1.

¹⁸ Miyazaki Akira, 'Senryōshoki ni okeru Beikoku no Zainichi Chōsenjin Seisaku: Nihon Seifu no Taiō to tomoni', *Shisō*, no. 743 (1985), pp. 122-130.

back to Korea by US forces and BCOF.¹⁹ The arrival of the Koreans may have been particularly disturbing to the authorities because they provided a link to the tense situation on the Korean peninsula, which had been divided in 1945 into zones controlled by the US and the Soviet Union.²⁰ The Field Security detachment in Shimonoseki, where Oates served, was not involved in repatriating of Koreans. The spy with whom Oates' unit worked, Ri Masao, travelled between Korea and Japan on smuggling boats and gave information that resulted in the seizure of a boat in early February 1948.²¹

In February 1948, while Oates was serving with Field Security in Shimonoseki, someone shot Sergeant Smith in the leg just outside the warehouse where they were working. The BCOF intelligence report noted that "this is the fourth attempt against the soldier, who, on this occasion, sustained a flesh wound".²² Oates was inside the building and heard the gunshot. The New Zealand military police, however never questioned Oates over the shooting incident despite his presence at the crime scene. This, together with the fact that it was the fourth attempt on Smith, confirms that the shooting was not such an unusual event. It is not clear who shot Smith. Oates reflects that the attacker would have had inside knowledge regarding Smith's movements and that "there were so many rackets and intrigues" that it could have been anybody. He believed that there was a possible political motivation – it may have been a

¹⁹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 'An Act Prejudicial to the Occupation Forces: Migration Controls and Korean Residents in Post-Surrender Japan', *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (2004), pp. 11, 20-25; Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), pp. 23-24.

²⁰ Morris-Suzuki, 'An Act Prejudicial to the Occupation Forces', pp. 15-16; Oates, personal communication, 19 November 2008.

²¹ Oates, personal communication, 19 November 2008.

²² 'British Commonwealth Occupation Forces Daily Intelligence Reports', February 1948, Australian War Memorial (hereafter AWM) Canberra, AWM114 130/1/8 pt 2.

fanatic individual or someone acting on behalf of an organised group. As a result of this incident, the Field Security Section soon moved to the headquarters of the New Zealand component in Chōfu, approximately ten kilometres away, and in April Oates was called back to the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre in Kure.

Oates then served in the legal section of BCOF headquarters in Kure until he was discharged in Japan in 1950, so he could marry a Japanese woman without any difficulties from the BCOF authorities. Oates recalls, however, that his five months in Shimonoseki were “the most dramatic of my BCOF experience”. His recollections demonstrate the increasingly complex social and political environment in which BCOF troops were operating in Japan.

Norm Smith joined BCOF after waiting throughout the war to meet the age requirement for military enlistment. Smith landed in Kure in October 1947 as part of the reinforcement personnel for the Army Transport Service. Smith, who had left school at the age of thirteen, had spent the war doing menial work, including government road construction for the war effort in northern Queensland. He and his fellow workers, who were under the age for military service, jokingly referred to the work and the life it entailed as “[Prime Minister] Curtin’s concentration camp”. In 1946, when he finally enlisted in the midst of the general demobilisation, the only available destination for military service was BCOF in Japan. Smith's unit was stationed in Hiro, Kaiura, and then Kaitaichi before returning to Hiro once more. From the end of 1948 to the beginning of 1949, however, Smith was hospitalised in Kure for three months because of injuries caused by an attack on him by a group of Koreans. After he

was discharged from the hospital in February 1949, he decided to return home.²³

At the end of January 1949, all three battalions of the 34th Brigade made their final public appearance, marching through the city of Kure before they were officially disbanded.²⁴ A majority of Australian troops then returned home. In January-February 1949, four Australian contingents from Japan landed in their homeland.

Postwar Reconstruction

During 1948 the transformation of the Australian military from the wartime force to the regular force was completed. For any government the demobilisation of conscripted soldiers to civilian life and their integration into postwar reconstruction is a huge task. For Western nations, demobilisation was at the core of postwar reconstruction, as it required provision for employment and housing along with universal health care and education. Demobilisation was complex and sometimes controversial. In Chapter Two we noted the discontent and protest on Morotai sparked by the issue of demobilisation. The Minister for Army, too, lost his seat in 1946 after facing criticism about the slow rate of demobilisation.²⁵

The Chifley government inherited postwar reconstruction schemes from Curtin's government.²⁶ It was supported in its endeavours in the Department of

²³ Norm Smith, interview, 27 January 2007 (Townsville).

²⁴ 'March through Kure', *Argus*, 24 January 1949, p. 5.

²⁵ Neil Lloyd and Malcolm Saunders, 'Forde, Francis Michael (Frank) (1890-1983)', (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/forde-francis-michael-frank-12504>, accessed 3 May 2015.

²⁶ On postwar reconstruction in Australia, see Stuart Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2015). On demobilisation, see pp. 314-352.

External Affairs and the new Department of Postwar Reconstruction, where the newer type of nationalists like H.C. Coombs were in positions of power.²⁷ However, in other areas like Treasury, the military and other parts of the bureaucracy, an older Anglo-Australian elite still held sway, and the Chifley government was less secure.²⁸ In the military, postwar reconstruction was presented with an air of paternalism. It was assumed that the welfare of discharged soldiers was a matter of providing retraining and keeping unemployment levels down, rather than taking any more imaginative action. Discharged soldiers were, by and large, to be quietly resettled back into civilian life. Newspapers contained few articles and reports on issues relating to the welfare of the nearly 600,000 demobilised service personnel. The Ministry of Postwar Reconstruction did, however, issue numerous pamphlets on the return of soldiers to civilian life.²⁹

The Chifley government set up a social services section in BCOF from its formation in 1946, comprising three women of lieutenant rank, including Northcott's daughter, as noted previously.³⁰ Coombs, as head of the Ministry of

²⁷ On Coombs as Director-General of Postwar Reconstruction see *ibid.*, pp. 142-152, 315-345.

²⁸ Christopher Waters, *The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995), p. 11.

²⁹ *War to Craftsmanship* (Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, 1946); *Questions and Answers: Questions on Reestablishment Asked by Servicemen and Women and Answered by Dr. H. C. Coombs, Director General of the Ministry of Postwar Reconstruction* (Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, 1945); *Signposts to Reconstruction Training* (Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, 1945); *Reestablishment and the Employer* (Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction); *Professions in Australia* (Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction in collaboration with the Departments of Labour and National Service and Navy, Army and Air, 1948); *The Farmer Was a Fighting Man: The Story of War Service Land Settlement* (Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, 1949); *Return Journey: The Story of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme* (Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, 1949).

³⁰ 'Australian Military Forces - Staff and Command Regimental Lists and Manning Tables of AMF Officers Serving with the British Commonwealth

Postwar Reconstruction, travelled to Japan with Prime Minister Chifley in April 1946, after which he summarised for Chifley in a memo the main complaints that had been drawn to his attention, including matters relating to mail, amenities, food, canteen supplies and leave.³¹ The reform of BCOF in 1947, examined in Chapter Four, also displays not only the government's further commitment to the occupation, but also its intent to provide some measure of welfare for personnel. The government had only limited success, however, in encouraging BCOF to focus on soldiers' welfare. As we shall see, trade training was an important, if belated, measure that looked to the soldiers' postwar life while they were still serving with BCOF, but for the Chifley government, significant rehabilitation for soldiers essentially began upon being discharged and returned home. This approach was quite different from that of the US and New Zealand, where part of the soldiers' rehabilitation was incorporated into the period of military service in Japan.³²

Paul Hasluck describes the rehabilitation scheme that came into operation in the second half of 1943. Each demobilised soldier was interviewed by a rehabilitation officer and then passed on to the employment section of the Manpower Directorate, from where he was placed in employment and issued identity cards and ration entitlements. Under the later Commonwealth

Occupation Force [BCOF] Japan [Box 102]', 14 October 1946, NAA, Sydney, SP1008/1 524/1/2442.

³¹ 'Complaints by Members of Australian Component BCOF ', 1946, NAA, Melbourne, MP742/1 5/1/523.

³² John describes his visit to the US military education centre in Kyoto: Arthur W. John, *Duty Defined, Duty Done: A Memoir by Major John* (Melbourne: Gen Publishers, 2004), pp. 221-222.

Reconstruction Training Scheme, which lasted until mid-1950, former soldiers were accepted into “university, technical and rural training”.³³

Some former BCOF personnel took advantage of government schemes by returning to educational institutions, enrolling in vocational training courses, or applying for agricultural land. A soldier would only apply for a program in the process of being discharged. Among my interviewees, Les Burton returned to university and completed a degree in economics,³⁴ Foster Barton entered teachers' college to become a science and maths teacher for the Australian army,³⁵ and George Martin enrolled in university but later decided not to continue.³⁶ Basil Archer went to technical college and studied pure chemistry, receiving an allowance from the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme.³⁷ In addition to educational support, other schemes provided loans to buy farmland or start a business. One of my interviewees, Alan Hodgeman, was given a loan to start a sheep farm.³⁸

Continuing the Tasks of the Occupation

Unlike in the immediate aftermath of war, the new recruits who came from 1947 onwards had often been discharged from the military after the war and then returned to military life after finding it difficult to readjust to civilian life

³³ Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), pp. 621-622; Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment*, pp. 326-333.

³⁴ Les Burton, interview, 20 September 2000 (Perth).

³⁵ Foster Barton, interview, 30 January 2007 (Townsville).

³⁶ George Martin, interview, 12 May 1999 (Melbourne).

³⁷ Basil Archer, 'Foreword', in Basil Archer, *Interpreting Occupied Japan: The Diary of an Australian Soldier, 1945-46*, ed. and with an introduction by Sandra Wilson (Carlisle, WA: Hesperian Press, 2009), p. xiv; Basil Archer, interviewed by Sandra Wilson, 27 November 2007 (Perth).

³⁸ Alan Hodgeman, interview, 29 January 2007 (Townsville).

back in Australia. Some others had been too young to enlist in wartime, but now joined BCOF to see Japan and the world.

BCOF had changed since its early days and new arrivals experienced little difficulty in the provision of accommodation and amenities. Occupation tasks such as supervising the arrival of repatriated Japanese soldiers and the disposal of explosives were tailing off. The dangerous work of bomb disposal and supervision of repatriates from the Pacific region concluded around the end of 1947.³⁹ The busiest period of the occupation was now over, and boredom began to affect the occupiers.

A journalist and former prisoner-of-war who joined BCOF in its later stages, Keith Flanagan, worked on the enlarged daily newspaper, *BCON*. When he enlisted during the war he had been a cadet writer for the *Daily News* in Perth. He then became one of the 8th AIF soldiers captured by Japanese forces in Java in 1942. After working on the Thailand-Burma Railway, he and some other prisoners-of-war were transferred to Japan in 1943. He spent a year working as a coal-miner in Hiroshima prefecture until the Japanese surrender. Although Flanagan no longer recalls the exact date of his arrival in Japan as part of BCOF, he explained that he wanted to work at *BCON* in order to experience a changing Japan. He also admitted, however, that after six and half years of war service he had found himself restless on his return to his former job. It is not difficult to imagine how experience as a soldier and a prisoner-of-war could have made adjusting to postwar life difficult. Flanagan worked in Kure as a correspondent

³⁹ 'These Men Are Living in Constant Danger', *BCON*, 6 December 1947, p. 1; Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine: Australia and the Occupation of Japan* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), pp. 83-85.

for *BCON*. He occasionally sent updated news regarding occupied Japan to the *Daily News*, helped by his Japanese-speaking Korean assistant.⁴⁰

Personnel who had studied the Japanese language at the RAAF Language School also continuously arrived in Japan during 1947-1948. Murray Bowels studied at the School from October 1946 to March 1947 prior to commencing work as a language officer. Like Flanagan, Bowels had been a soldier, and had had some difficulties in returning to civilian life prior to enlisting in BCOF. After he was discharged from the army in 1945, his marriage collapsed. Marriage breakdown was common after the war. Flanagan and Bowles both joined BCOF because they possessed skills BCOF needed. While Flanagan had skills as a journalist, Bowels had undertaken some tertiary study, which satisfied the criteria for entrance to the language course. The majority of BCOF personnel went on to new lives after leaving BCOF, with no connection to their work in Japan. Bowels, however, became a professional photographer. He was inspired by and used what he had learned at the BCOF Photography Club, where he had been instructed by a language officer from the RAAF Language School, Max Friedberg, from the New Zealand Air Force, who had been a recognised photographer in New Zealand.⁴¹

Another BCOF member, Ron Clark, arrived in Kure in February or March 1948.⁴² Clark had started working as a film projectionist in South Australia just prior to the war and continued working in this capacity during the war as part of a protected industry. In the final year of the war he joined the army and served in the Italian prisoner-of-war Camp at Cowra, NSW. He was then sent to New Guinea and New Britain to show films to the Australian

⁴⁰ Keith Flanagan, interview, 13 December 2003 (Perth).

⁴¹ Murray Bowels, interview, 15 November 2001 (Adelaide).

⁴² Clark no longer remembers the exact date. Ron Clark, interview, 17 November 2001 (Adelaide).

troops guarding Japanese prisoners-of-war there. Clark returned to Australia by the same ship that carried BCOF soldiers coming home from Japan towards the end of 1947. After spending Christmas with his family, he went to the Reinforcement Depot in Greta, NSW, joining BCOF at the beginning of 1948. Clark's decision to volunteer for further service in Japan was the result of his direct encounter with Australian personnel during the return trip from New Guinea, rather than the wide newspaper coverage of BCOF and their dependants leaving for Japan, but the family reunion program was a factor in his decision. Clark's wife and son had gone to live at his wife's parents' place in Adelaide. He was attracted by the BCOF program for dependents, which would allow him to bring his family to Japan, where the family could live independently.⁴³

In Kure, Clark signed up for a further six years' service in the Australian Regular Army. From the outset, he was active in making contact with the staff members at the family quarters at Nijimura in preparation for the arrival of his family. However, the government's scheme for the further intake of BCOF dependents was suddenly terminated due to the reduction of Australian troops in 1948.⁴⁴ Faced with the option of continuing to serve in Japan without his family or applying for immediate discharge, he decided on the latter. His discharge was granted in June 1948 while he was working in Tottori prefecture mending damage caused by a recent earthquake in Fukui.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ While the Chifley Government announced, at the end of November 1947, that it would cease the BCOF family reunion program by the end the year, this information does not appear to have been well circulated: see Peter Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 175.

⁴⁵ Clark, interview, 17 November 2001.

Although Clark only served with BCOF for three months, his story illustrates the attraction of the occupation for many soldiers at this time. As he later emphasised, the fact that BCOF was the first and only Australian military service that had family quarters had been appealing. Many Australian soldiers would have shared his desire to provide for a wife and child in the aftermath of the war, even if his decision to apply for military service in BCOF in order to do this was not everybody's first option. Clark fell into the gap between the Australian government's decision to improve the appearance and resourcing of the Australian component of BCOF and its decision to reduce the number of troops. More than half a century after the event, however, Clark firmly believed that the program was terminated because of the emergence of Cold War conditions that might have placed the families of Allied personnel in danger.⁴⁶

Army Education

The Australian Army Education Service (AAES) was set up in 1941. It was intended to provide facilities and resources that would allow both intellectual stimulation and recreation, in order to sustain troop morale and prevent boredom. It also aimed to prepare servicemen and servicewomen for reintegration into civilian life.⁴⁷ It gave access to a range of correspondence courses already existing in the different state education secondary school systems. Assignments and tasks were marked and commented on by the correspondence teachers and sent back to the soldiers via the AAES. The AAES also provided talks and lectures, films, current affairs discussion groups, concerts, classroom activities, vocational training, debates and panel

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ 'Army Education in Australia', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, no. 2 (1942), pp. 42-43.

discussions, and produced a range of publications including the *Current Affairs Bulletin*, which provided material for the discussion groups, and *Salt*, which was distributed through all the ranks.⁴⁸ The AAES formed part of the BCOF Education Corps. Northcott had signalled early in the occupation his intention to achieve integration of education services across the different national components, and to set up a joint Education Centre in Kure.⁴⁹ However, the differences among the British, Indian, New Zealand and Australian contingents made integration difficult to achieve.

Major Arthur John was Deputy Assistant Director of the Australian Army Education Service and head of Australian Army Education Services in Japan, which was based in Kure. John had previously worked in adult education before enlisting at the age of thirty-nine. He had quickly become a sergeant within the AAES in New Guinea. In Kure, John was responsible for education and cultural programs. He also became the director of the dependents' school attended by the children of personnel who had come to Japan under the family reunification program. John edited the *Gen*, which was produced by the Education Service and began as a weekly magazine intended to give information to service members on educational programs.⁵⁰

The *Gen* was part of a broader attempt to implement a systematic program of adult education in the Occupation forces. The magazine first appeared in August 1941 and later became a fortnightly and then a monthly publication, lasting until 1952. The *Gen* presented a broadly liberal, egalitarian and reforming perspective on a people and culture alien to its readers. In

⁴⁸ W.G.K. Duncan, 'Australian Education and the Australian Public', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. XV, no. 2 (1943), p. 35.

⁴⁹ Arthur W. John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown: A History of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan* (Melbourne: Gen Publishers, 1987), p. 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

addition to information about educational activities it published a series of articles that appeared in most issues entitled "Know Japan". These articles cover a range of topics on Japan and Japanese people: geography, local festivals, history, ceremonies and traditions. One piece in the series discusses the racial prejudice suffered by Japanese Americans and their internment during the war, in what must be a very early discussion of an issue that was largely ignored in the early postwar Australia.⁵¹ It failed to discuss, however, the Australian government's own internment of people from Japanese family backgrounds.⁵² Not surprisingly, conceptions of the Japanese people in the 'Know Japan' series were often framed by the idea of "race" and concerned to define some essential "Japaneseness". The implication was that reform would be brought from the outside: if modernisation had gone awry in Japan, producing militarism and war, the West would bring the necessary educational, economic, and political corrections via the occupation.

The educational programs and extensive cultural activities that the Education Service provided during the occupation were well represented in the pages of the *Gen*. The program of activities for one week in January 1947 lists classes in Japanese, life drawing, leatherwork classes, veneer and French polishing, a music class, a photography class, Shakespearean play-reading group, tourers' club and documentary film show. There were also classes to prepare soldiers for the preliminary examination for promotion in English, French, Science Mathematics and History.⁵³ The occupation force provided an extended course in the Japanese language, with a course of twenty-four lessons

⁵¹ Ajax [pseud.], 'Know Japan: The Nisei - Triumph over Race Prejudice', *Gen*, 10 February 1947, pp. 5-6.

⁵² See Yuriko Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1996).

⁵³ 'The British Commonwealth Base Combined Army/Navy Education Centre: Activities - Mon 13 Jan to Sun 19 Jan 1947', *Gen*, 20 January 1947, p. 2.

in spoken Japanese.⁵⁴ John recalled that the language classes had more than 250 enrolments by April 1946.⁵⁵ Cultural activities also included performances by Japanese musicians and exhibitions of Japanese paintings.

Cultural and educational activities assumed more importance in the later stages of the operation of BCOF, stimulated by the family reunion program and the arrival of female BCOF members. Rose O'Brien recalled that boredom was a problem for the wives of occupation personnel. In order to avoid it, she and other women organised all sorts of functions and parties, including events for the dependents' school at Nijimura, which her two older sons attended.⁵⁶ Off-duty activities involving theatre and choir performances, photography and travel flourished. The Tourist Club was particularly active in organising tours through the Japan Travel Bureau in Hiroshima. Accompanied by a guide from the bureau, club members travelled to tourist points around the BCOF area. Some members climbed Mt Fuji.⁵⁷

BCOF and the Trades Training Centre

Welfare measures were not only a matter of direction from the Australian government, but were also a concern for leaders of the Australian component of BCOF. Just prior to Chambers' visit to Japan in December 1946, leaders of the Australian contingent had decided to establish the Trades Training Centre. The centre was built as part of the headquarters of the 34th Brigade, under the direction of Brigadier R. L. N. Hopkins. It was conceived as a practical form of assistance for Australian personnel who would begin civilian life in the near future. The centre opened in March 1947, commencing with intensive four-

⁵⁴ John, *Duty Defined, Duty Done*, p. 188.

⁵⁵ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, p. 232.

⁵⁶ Rose O'Brien, interview, 22 February 2000 (Melbourne).

⁵⁷ John, *Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears a Crown*, pp. 48, 101-107.

week courses in “woodwork, sheet metal work, fitting and turning, mechanical drawing and building drawing”.⁵⁸ The school could handle fifty-six trainees, and was run by five NCO instructors who had specialised in the relevant subjects in civilian life. If spaces were available, older boys from the dependents’ school at Nijimura were allowed to take a course along with BCOF personnel. The Trades Training Centre was scaled back significantly in October 1948 due to the uncertain situation caused by impending large-scale repatriation of Australian troops.⁵⁹

The New Zealand component of BCOF and the US occupation force provided models of technical training schools from which the Australian 34th Brigade could learn. As we saw in Chapter Two, the New Zealand technical training school in Yuda in Yamaguchi prefecture was recognised as one of the best organised. As *BCON*, reported: “From Yuda, on the outskirts of Yamaguchi, the NZ AES headquarters sends out to members of 2 NZEF [2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force] study courses covering some 150 subjects. ... At least once a month each pupil is visited personally by a tutor in his particular subject”.⁶⁰ John pointed out that the Australian and New Zealand military had similar policy and programs within their respective education services, which were based on study by correspondence. In the Australian Education Corps, however, there was no real leadership that could develop an approach like that of the New Zealand Education Service. The Director of the Army Education Service,

⁵⁸ John, *Duty Defined, Duty Done*, pp. 295, 300.

⁵⁹ ‘Australian Army Education Service -- Headquarters British Commonwealth Base -- Monthly Reports on Army Education Service, 1946-48’, 1946-1948, AWM, AWM114 52/5/1.

⁶⁰ ‘On the Road to Civvie Street’, *BCON*, 26 December 1947, pp. 4-5; John, *Duty Defined, Duty Done*, p. 192.

Lt-Colonel Lascelles Wilson, refused any reform from home on the grounds that he had already decided and authorised the program.⁶¹

The scale of the education service associated with the US occupation, which operated under the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, popularly known as the GI Bill, was larger than any other. The Central Service of the Army Educational Program in the Tokyo area was set up on the campus of Kēiō University in September 1945. In Yokohama a school started in April 1946 with sixteen new courses, including English grammar, American history, chemistry, animal sanitation, shorthand and bookkeeping.⁶² In his memoir, John recalled his astonishment when he visited the US army's education corps in the Osaka area in 1946, particularly the Kyoto Central School. A confiscated Japanese high school had been refurbished as a technical training school with capacity to teach 450 students and hold twenty-nine classes. Facilities included chemical, aeronautical and photographic laboratories; a mechanics workshop; and a music conservatorium. The schoolyard had been turned into land for agricultural training. The school was run by six officers and nine service personnel, along with employees from Kyoto University and elsewhere.⁶³

John witnessed here a very small example of measures resulting from the GI Bill, which shaped postwar reconstruction in America. Lee Edwards has described the impact of the Bill:

Change was everywhere. Enrolment in colleges and universities doubled as ex-servicemen took advantage of the GI Bill. With government help,

⁶¹ John, *Duty Defined, Duty Done*, p. 173.

⁶² United States Army Forces General Headquarters, Pacific, Public Relations Office, 'Press Release: Army Education Expanded for Troops', 1 May 1946, Rengōgun no hondo shinchū narabini gunsei kankei ikken (PRESS RELEASE) tsuzuri, Gaikō shiryōkan (Diplomatic Records Office) Tokyo, A'1 0 0 2-6.

⁶³ John, *Duty Defined, Duty Done*, p. 222.

home-hungry veterans were able to move into the new suburbs that sprang up outside cities.⁶⁴

While serving, soldiers were also able to undertake US high school and college courses, which gave them appropriate credit within the US education system. Indeed, the twelve million returning soldiers for whom the GI Bill provided contributed to the transformation of American society into a postwar economic giant and helped provide the basis of its large market for houses, cars and various domestic appliances.⁶⁵

The US government insisted, in a handout entitled 'Going Back to Civilian Life: Official Information about the Privileges, Opportunities, and Rights of Returning Soldiers', that discharged soldiers were legally entitled to return to their former employment or to obtain new employment. Soldiers were informed that legislation secured employment for them in both public and private sectors. Military personnel were also entitled to a number of benefits such as emergency relief, education credit, hospital treatment, educational opportunities, and loans for homes, farms and businesses. The handout included a copy of the GI Bill of Rights, informing discharged service personnel that they had every right to these privileges and opportunities, which had been provided by the government in gratitude for their war service.⁶⁶ US occupation soldiers were thus well provided for prior to actual discharge under the GI Bill, which cemented the position of those mobilised in the Second World War in postwar American nation-building.

⁶⁴ Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement that Remade America* (New York: Free Press, 1999), p. 5. See also chapter one of Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington: Brassey's, 1996).

⁶⁵ Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution*, p. 5.

⁶⁶ 'Going Back to Civilian Life' (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1944), pp. 17-26.

By contrast, as mentioned earlier, an Australian BCOF soldier would only apply for a training program in the process of being discharged. Until the opening of the Trades Training Centre, there was apparently no provision within the Australian component of BCOF to prepare currently serving personnel for civilian life. The commencement of the Trades Training Centre was not only too little investment in training; it was also too late to capture the interest and involvement of most Australian occupation soldiers. A serviceman could complete a four-week intensive course at the centre while also carrying out military duties only if his personal effort were combined with the luck of serving not too far from Kure during the right period.

Overall, soldiers of the Australian component seemed somewhat disadvantaged in their preparation for civilian life, certainly when compared with the situation for the New Zealand contingent or US military personnel. In the end, however, the Chifley government's re-establishment scheme worked well in the crucial period in which the mass of soldiers returned to civilian life. Australian society enjoyed an economic boom during the 1950s. George Martin went to university thanks to the soldiers' rehabilitation scheme. After he completed the first year, he deferred and did not return to university, explaining to me many years later that he lived through a period of "full employment" when no-one could be bothered to obtain a university degree.⁶⁷

Postwar White Australia

The non-fraternisation policy of BCOF has become well known, if somewhat mythologised, in postwar Australian history because of the experience of BCOF personnel (and Korean War personnel) who fought against the odds to bring

⁶⁷ Martin, interview, 12 May 1999.

their Japanese (or Korean) wives home. First, BCOF personnel needed permission from the military authority to marry Japanese women, and then they had to win their campaign against the Australian immigration legislation that severely restricted the entry of people from non-white family backgrounds. Around 650 so-called “Japanese war brides” came to Australia to be reunited with their husbands from 1954 onwards. “Japanese war brides”, signifying both love and Australian liberalism, became icons of Australian postwar history. Since the young personnel in question were assumed to be from lower ranks of the military hierarchy, struggling against apparently irrational authorities, their stories represented a perfect picture of perceived Australian egalitarianism, foreshadowing also the multiculturalism of later years.⁶⁸

BCOF made it very difficult for Australian personnel and Japanese women to marry. Although it is not easy for a modern state to ban a legal form of marriage, the legal union of BCOF personnel with Japanese women was considered highly undesirable. The Australian Department of Defence insisted from the beginning that Japanese women would not be allowed to enter Australia. In September 1946, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Australia suggested setting up a number of bureaucratic hurdles designed to clarify the eligibility of the male applicant as well as the potential of the woman to adjust to Western culture.⁶⁹ Shinto weddings were classed as a breach of discipline. Australian chaplains could not perform the marriage because the Foreign Marriage Act, which provided for Australian recognition of marriages contracted overseas, would not be passed until 1961. It was possible for the British consul to perform

⁶⁸ Isabel Carter, *Alien Blossom: A Japanese-Australian Love Story* (Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1965); Keiko Tamura, *Michi's Memories: The Story of a Japanese War Bride* (Canberra, A.C.T.: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2001).

⁶⁹ Chida, *Eirenpōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, pp. 419-422.

a marriage under British law, but this required the permission of a commanding officer.⁷⁰ Despite the negative attitude of BCOF leaders and many Australian-based officials, however, applications for permission to marry had become frequent by 1948.⁷¹

John Henderson married a young university graduate, with whom he was having a child, in a Shinto ceremony and then sought permission to be married by the battalion chaplain. Henderson had been a prisoner-of-war on the Thailand-Burma Railway and later in the Japanese coal mines. His Japanese wife was the sister of one of his guards, whom he had befriended. The Australian military command decided to make an example of Henderson, and he was sent back to Australia without his wife. Henderson opted not to return to Japan and some years later it was discovered that his wife had become a prostitute in order to make ends meet.⁷² In a local newspaper interview soon after he returned to Australia in 1948, Henderson said he had no intention of continuing his relationship with his Japanese wife, claiming that he had been “shanghaied” into the marriage.⁷³

In early 1948, facing the imminent necessity to make a public announcement of the government’s decision to call the majority of occupation troops home, the Chifley government expressed its strong opposition to the entry of Japanese women to Australia. In March the Minister of Immigration, Arthur Calwell, asserted that Australians who married Japanese women would not be allowed to bring their wives or children home. Calwell stated that the

⁷⁰ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, p. 224.

⁷¹ Keiko Tamura, 'Home Away from Home: The Entry of Japanese War Brides into Australia', in *Relationships: Japan and Australia, 1870s-1950s*, ed. Paul Jones and Vera Mackie (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 2001), p. 248.

⁷² Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, pp. 224-225.

⁷³ 'Former Soldier Says Shanghaied', *Barrier Daily Truth*, 11 March 1948, p. 1.

Australian husbands could live with their Japanese wives in Japan and would be issued with an Australian passport to allow them to do this. The issuing of passports would be necessary because they would no longer be part of the Australian army presence in Japan. A newspaper report notes:

Mr Calwell said that while relatives remain of the men who suffered at the hands of the Japanese, it would be the grossest act of public indecency to permit a Japanese of either sex to pollute Australian or Australian-controlled shores.⁷⁴

Calwell not only refused to allow the entry of Japanese women, but also condemned those Australian occupation soldiers who intended to make a life-long liaison with a Japanese woman as insensitive to Australian public feelings, implying they were disloyal to Australia. Thus, the government was ready to cut off these servicemen from their homeland.

Some male occupation personnel were discharged in Japan and did take up the offer of the Australian passport in order to live with Japanese women. Such soldiers had to sign a waiver of repatriation rights.⁷⁵ An archival document dated December 1949 indicates that the first group of five Australian personnel had been granted a discharge in Japan, and three further personnel were awaiting discharge.⁷⁶ Les Oates quit the army, continuing to work in the occupation in a civilian capacity, in order to avoid complications arising from marrying a Japanese woman.⁷⁷ Oates' fellow language officer, Jim McCurley, was also discharged because of a serious relationship with a Japanese woman.

⁷⁴ 'Cannot Bring Jap Wives Here', *Argus*, 10 March 1948, p. 1.

⁷⁵ '[Discharges - General:] BCOF. Discharges of AMF Personnel in Japan. Discharge Abroad and Transportation of Members of AMF Desiring Repatriation to Home Countries. Clearances to Remain in Japan of BCOF Applying for Discharge in Japan, June 1950', 29 October 1946-1954, AWM, AWM114 261/1/11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Les Oates, interview, 14 October 1998 (Melbourne).

He went to work for a resort hotel, but his relationship later broke down and he did not marry the Japanese woman.⁷⁸ The obstacles to marriage caused some personnel and their Japanese wives considerable distress, and according to Gerster, contributing to at least two suicides. In 1952, with the end of the occupation approaching and in response to a public campaign, the Menzies government allowed entry into Australia for Japanese wives.⁷⁹ Oates and his wife Tsuneko were among those who returned.⁸⁰

The Chifley government's plans for postwar reconstruction were based on a significant increase in the Australian population, and the Australian government sought in particular to facilitate the immigration of Europeans. British migrants were given passage to Australia for a very nominal fee, while British ex-servicemen and their families came for free. Displaced Europeans also came to Australia under a 1947 agreement with the International Refugee Organisation. Altogether, half a million immigrants had arrived in Australia between 1947 and 1949. Calwell simultaneously upheld the White Australian Policy, which saw him, as Minister for Immigration, deport Indonesians and Malayans, including some married to Australians.⁸¹

By 1949 the US had lifted restrictions on fraternisation and on the entry to the USA of Japanese women who had married US personnel.⁸² The Australian government, on the other hand, maintained its anti-fraternisation policy and was opposed to Australian soldiers bringing Japanese women back home. Australian servicemen had been sent to Japan to change Japan into a Western-style liberal democracy. In the course of their duties some servicemen

⁷⁸ Jim McCurley, interview, 30 January 2007 (Townsville).

⁷⁹ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, p. 226.

⁸⁰ Oates, interview, 14 October 1998.

⁸¹ Geoffrey Bolton, '1939-51', in *A New History of Australia*, ed. Frank Crowley (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1974), pp. 482-483.

⁸² Chida, *Eirenpoōgun no Nihon Shinchū to Tenkai*, p. 427.

made lasting connections with Japanese people, including some who married Japanese women and had children. In returning to Australia they faced the extreme racism of the White Australia Policy, which was reinforced by animosity created by the experience of Australian POWs of the Japanese military. The POW experience had no straightforward consequences, however. Some former POWs, like Henderson, made close connections with Japanese people. My interviewee, Jack Thorpe, discussed in Chapter Three, also became a good friend of a Japanese employee whose work he supervised. Calwell's statement constituted a warning to Australian soldiers who may have wanted to marry Japanese women. We cannot know how many soldiers changed their minds and gave up on existing relationships.

The further impact of "white Australia" was evident when the Japanese Anti-Discrimination Citizens' League wrote to Chifley in 1949, objecting that Japanese-American service personnel were allegedly being excluded from facilities in Australian-controlled areas in Japan. According to the complaint:

Forty American scientists and technicians of Japanese ancestry stationed within the BCOF zone are barred from Australian operated clubs, canteens, hotels and other recreational facilities, although they are available to American Caucasian scientists. Yet all are doing research work on the effect of the atomic bombings which, eventually, will be utilised by Australia too.⁸³

BCOF reached its greatest strength as a combined force in 1947 and thereafter declined to a small force of 2200, comprising only Australian troops, in 1949. The motivations of the recruits who arrived in BCOF's later stages reflected a

⁸³ 'BCOF Policy', 1949, NAA, Canberra, A5104 8/2/1 PART 2.

range of experiences in civilian and military life as recruits had tried to readjust to Australian society in the aftermath of the war. Meanwhile, the intensifying Cold War conditions frustrated the prospect of an early Japanese peace settlement as well as the Chifley government's desire to see the United Nations Organisation provide a framework for collective security. In the middle of 1948 the Chifley government accepted the US government's new occupation policy, which prioritised economic recovery over social reform. By this time, people who had been marginalised by postwar conditions in Japan, like Korean residents, had become more rebellious. Some BCOF personnel had to deal with these shifting occupation conditions. From the end of January 1949 the majority of Australians returned home with little fanfare or official recognition, and without much concrete preparation for civilian life. The experience of the occupation was thereafter quietly absorbed into Australian society.

Conclusion

This study has examined Australian engagement with the occupation of Japan, discussing the setting up of BCOF, the ways in which it functioned, and its significance for postwar Australian governments. It analyses the shifting political and diplomatic circumstances of the occupation, what the postwar ALP government wanted to achieve, and what BCOF meant for Australian diplomacy and for Australia's place in the world. Studies of the occupation of Japan usually focus on the West's role in reconstructing Japan as one of the liberal democratic nation-states. There is little doubt that the occupation was an important influence on the formation of postwar Japan. The immediate postwar years were also, however, a time of reconstruction and transformation for Western countries. The occupation of Japan coincided with the ending of European colonialism in Southeast Asia. Western soldiers, moreover, were returning home from war and occupation with significant expectations.

Australia was a white settler nation located in the southern Pacific region where key battles in the Pacific War occurred, notably those in New Guinea. Australians felt exposed to Japanese military advance during the war. When the conflict ended, Chifley's government, with H.V. Evatt as Minister for External Affairs, was active in seeking a strong role for Australia within the occupation of Japan, with the aim of strengthening Australia's security through postwar international relations. Chifley and Evatt approached this goal through an emphasis on postwar reconstruction and the rights of small nations, which were protected by the UN charter that Australia helped establish in June 1945. From the beginning, however, Evatt's efforts to ensure Australia's participation as a

smaller nation in decisions about the occupation of Japan were circumscribed by the agendas and the strength of the larger powers. Nevertheless, Australia took a leading role in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF). Indeed it was the first time Australian commanders had led a British force, though they operated under the authority of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur. . I have analysed the Australian experience of the occupation from the perspective of the government and its officials, from the perspective of intellectuals who informed the approaches of officials and sometimes served in the occupation, and from the perspective of the military and the rank-and-file soldiers.

The importance of the geopolitical relation between Japan and Australia came to public attention during the interwar era. Expansion of imperial Japan was a constant source of anxiety for Australians. However, the need for primary resources that went along with that imperial expansion was an irresistible attraction for those concerned to improve the Australian trade position. In the 1930s, against a backdrop of expanding trade between Japan and Australia, officials and intellectuals began to identify Australia's future with the Pacific region, and "Pacific consciousness" grew. In particular, a group of liberal internationalist intellectuals who were interested in reducing dependence on Britain in favour of a greater degree of nationalist sovereignty, including Frederic Eggleston, sought an increasingly independent position for Australia within the Asia-Pacific region. Participation in the Institute for Pacific Relations (IPR) was one means by which such intellectuals worked towards greater integration of Australia with the Pacific region. In the 1930s, the experience of the Great Depression stimulated interest in social reform and adult education. Liberal internationalist intellectuals influenced and were

drawn into the wartime and postwar Curtin and Chifley Labor governments, and were active both in the occupation of Japan and in postwar reconstruction more generally.

In the Pacific War, Australia's interests had been sidelined by Churchill's "Europe first" focus, and overshadowed by the preponderant role of the US forces. Australia was left out of the major battles that concluded the Pacific War and the earlier contributions made by its military forces went largely unrecognised when the US to all intents and purposes claimed sole victory in the region. The initial post-surrender terms for Japan publicised as the Potsdam Declaration also excluded Australia. The virtual invisibility of Australia in the final stages of war and the early post-conflict period prompted the Chifley government assertively to claim a significant role in the occupation of Japan. By contrast, Britain was not an enthusiastic participant, but joined the occupation as an expression of its prerogative as a major geopolitical power. Australia took a leading role in the occupation not just militarily but also within civil realms: William Webb was President of the International Military Tribunal for Far East and Macmahon Ball was the British Commonwealth Representative on the Allied Council for Japan.

Australian BCOF soldiers embarked for Japan from Morotai. One they landed in Japan they worked hard, along with their counterparts from other nations, on the diverse tasks of the occupation. For the Australian component much of this work initially concerned demilitarisation, and specifically, dealing with the stockpiles of armaments around Kure and Hiroshima. They also supervised the return of expatriate Japanese soldiers and civilians from China, Pacific islands and Southeast Asia. BCOF soldiers commonly felt frustration at being sidelined from the military government responsibilities exercised by US

forces, and, in the case of those of higher rank, at not being able to issue directives to the local Japanese population. Subordination to US forces probably resulted in a sense of inferiority and to confusion about BCOF's role. Moreover, BCOF was stationed far from Japan's political and business centres, and some contingents, particularly the forces from the UK and BRINDIV, in which Australians also served from time to time, were located in relatively remote rural areas. BCOF's formal emphasis on "non-fraternisation" represented a further attempt to limit contacts between soldiers and the local Japanese population. Although Northcott espoused non-fraternisation as a general policy, however, soldiers on the ground found it impractical for the everyday tasks of the occupation, and it was also impossible to prevent sexual contact with Japanese women, as the high rate of venereal disease demonstrated.

By the end of 1946, the initial Australian contingent had returned home, so Australia's work in the occupation became more visible to the public at home. The return of this contingent, mostly on leave from military service, represented the first actual physical encounter between BCOF soldiers and the Australian public, since most of the soldiers had begun their BCOF service without first returning from the war. By this time, however, the Australian public had already seen many reports and images of Australian boys serving in Japan, through newspaper accounts and photographs sent by correspondents of the Australian media. Indeed, the media coverage of BCOF determined the nature of the relationship between BCOF and the Australian public. In the initial period of the occupation, Australians were keen to hear about their boys in Japan. They were critical of the government and military authorities and sympathetic to soldiers after learning of the poor condition of their accommodation and the physical devastation that surrounded them. Australian

media reports of BCOF allowed the Australian public to indulge in a sentimental celebration of the common soldier.¹

After a busy and demanding period of several months, BCOF began a period of reflection on its own work. BCOF Headquarters collected reports from all units, including medical and criminal reports. These reports reveal that the Australian component had the highest rate of venereal disease infection and committed more crimes, including murder and rape, than their counterparts from other BCOF contingents. Reports and warnings reached the government and military authorities at home. In early December 1946, behavioural issues relating to Australian soldiers became the subject of questioning in parliament after a report was published in a US newspaper. The new Minister for Army, Cyril Chambers, went to Japan on a scheduled trip which inevitably turned into an investigation of the Australian contingent of BCOF. In early January 1947, Chambers reported to the Prime Minister and military board, suggesting a number of reforms to BCOF, including improvements to the living conditions of the soldiers and the building of churches and chapels in the BCOF zone. Religious organisations were offered financial help to expand their activities in the Australian BCOF areas. The Chifley government did increase its commitment to the occupation, in the belief that a peace treaty would soon be concluded and the occupation would therefore end before too long.

The government also decided on a program of family reunion for soldiers, and from April 1947 onwards, wives and children of Australian soldiers began travelling to Japan. The media coverage of the family members and their reunions with husbands and fathers, including many photographs, stimulated sympathy in Australia for BCOF. The media accompanied the

¹ Prue Torney, "'Renegades to Their Country': The Australian Press and the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1946-1950', *War & Society*, Vol. 25, no. 1 (2006), p. 70.

families to Japan, sending enthusiastic reports on their new lives in the BCOF areas. Subsequently, however, negative reports also began to appear frequently, as details emerged of racial conflict among occupation soldiers, crime, venereal disease, and prostitution.

The UK government expressed its wish to withdraw from Japan as early as 1946. Shortage of manpower and the need to deploy its forces elsewhere led to withdrawal of British forces by April 1947. At the end of 1946 the New Zealand government had also expressed some dissatisfaction about its participation in BCOF, but nevertheless the New Zealand contingent stayed for another two years. India became independent of Britain in January 1947 and the government had withdrawn its forces by October. Withdrawal of the Indian force coincided with reconstruction and renewal of the Australian contingent.

Emerging Cold War conditions had an important impact on the occupation. In January 1948 when US Army Secretary Kenneth Royall announced a re-orientation of the occupation there emerged a stress on the need for Japanese self-reliance and economic recovery in order to enlist Japan as a stable ally of the democratic side in the Cold War. The Australian government by this time had modified its original approach to the occupation, giving up its demands for reparations, for example. It now also decided on a large reduction of Australian troops and the withdrawal of a majority of troops, against the opposition of the US authorities.

At home in Australia, BCOF faced a second investigation in 1948, following public criticism of BCOF leadership, which had originated with discharged BCOF soldiers, over excessive drinking, black marketing and crime. The Chifley government sent two public figures to Japan to investigate. Meanwhile, criticisms and frustrations expressed by BCOF soldiers were

politicised by two newspapers with strong connections with the federal Opposition, and BCOF once again became caught up in adversarial politics in the lead-up to the 1949 federal election.

In Japan, US authorities were shifting the occupation to “peace without a peace treaty”, largely without consulting their allies. Many occupation tasks were transferred to the Japanese side and the role of US forces was downgraded, despite the shock of the outbreak of war in Korea. By the end of 1949, the Chifley government maintained only a small force in Kure; the government was unwilling to withdraw completely, just in case a peace conference did eventuate. Though the occupation was essentially calm and stable by this point, Japanese society was also becoming more assertive and dynamic, prompting MacArthur’s ban on strike activity and collective bargaining in the public sectors. Such social restlessness affected the work of some BCOF soldiers, as shown in the shooting incident in Shimonoseki recounted by my informant Les Oates.

By this time, the occupation troops had become part of the Australian regular army, and general demobilisation and preparation for civilian life was well under way. Throughout the occupation, the Australian Army Education Service had provided some basic education for soldiers, especially for those looking for promotion, and had extended its program to include a range of Japanese language course, cultural and travel activities. The Trades Training Centre had opened in 1947. This program of activities, however, was too little and came too late, particularly for those who left BCOF after one term of service, and many soldiers returned to civilian life with little effective preparation.

The final controversy associated with the Australian component of BCOF centred on relationships between the soldiers and Japanese women. Despite the

high hurdles placed in the way of marriage to Japanese women, applications from soldiers for permission to marry had steadily increased by 1948. An important part of the Chifley government's postwar reconstruction program was the aim of increasing the Australian population by inviting dislocated peoples from Europe to settle in Australia, but Japanese wives of BCOF personnel breached the essential White Australia aspect of this postwar policy. Some personnel were discharged in Japan in order to marry Japanese women. There is little doubt that the wider group of BCOF soldiers perceived the unfairness of this issue and felt it to be a denial of their experience and service.

Australia's determined participation in BCOF should be recognised as a significant moment in the history of Australia's politics and international affairs. The relationship with Japan raised some significant issues with regard to its relationship with Britain and the region. This was registered most clearly by a group of liberal internationalist intellectuals who would later have significant roles both in government and the occupation. The postwar world posed these issues very starkly and provided an immediate point of engagement with them in the US-led occupation of Japan. Australia took a significant leadership role in the occupation while constantly reminded of its small nation status within the international arena.

Australia provided the core of Commonwealth forces, including officials, military leadership and 20,000 soldiers. This was a wide-ranging experience in early postwar Australia, hitherto not really taken account of in Australian history, involving not only the soldiers but the Australian public who took an active interest in the occupation and what the soldiers and later their families were doing. The actual experience of BCOF ran up against its own failings and the realities of the agendas of the larger powers. Only in retrospect can we

recognise that this was an important moment in the Australian relationship with Japan and the region.

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