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# The Case of Nikko jiken: Occupation, reform, power and conflict

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# ‘The Case of Nikko *jiken*: Occupation, reform, power and conflict’<sup>1</sup>

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## **Introduction**

Many significant industrial disputes occurred during the Allied Occupation of Japan (1945-1952) that contested ‘the balance of power between organized labor and management’.<sup>2</sup> The most famous include the Yomiuri disputes of 1945 and 1946, the Tōhō Motion Pictures conflicts of 1946-50 (the third most famously known for Japanese police and US intervention so visible that the ‘only thing ... lacking were the warships’<sup>3</sup>), and the general strike ban of 1 February 1947. Nikko *jiken*,<sup>4</sup> otherwise known as the ‘Hiroshima Incident’, occurred at the Japan Steel Manufacturing Company in Hiroshima (Nihon Seikoshō) in 1949. It was a smaller but nonetheless contentious and symbolic labour dispute, and occurred in the peripheries rather than centre (Tokyo) of occupation power.<sup>5</sup> Nikko *jiken* symbolises many of the conflicts between the occupation reforms and the exercise of power, and within Japanese society. These include not only the contestable relations between management and workers in defining postwar Japanese labour relations, but also relations between the occupier and worker occupied/management occupied, the conflict between civilian idealistic and military strategic aims of the Occupation, and of the impact of international cold war politics on the

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<sup>2</sup> Kawanishi Hirosuke, *The Human Face of Industrial Conflict in Post-war Japan*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1999, p. ix.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Jiken* can be translated as ‘incident’.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Two lectures’ in Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 96-97, refers to the ‘extremities’ of power, on which I base the use of ‘peripheries’ of power.

Japanese workers at the peripheries of the Occupation. *Nikko jiken* is also unique in that it involved Australian occupation forces, not just American.

Current occupation literature, including that examining industrial disputes during the Occupation era, is dominated by the US experience in the main centres of the Occupation, especially Tokyo.<sup>6</sup> Literature on the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) is smaller in volume, and tends towards painting the broader picture, rarely referring to relations between the occupation troops and the Japanese labour movement.<sup>7</sup> Using government documents from Australia and the United States and Japanese oral testimonies and memoirs, this paper both complements and contests the existing literature by examining, as a case study, a local industrial dispute in the Australian area of Occupation. This case study sheds light on the execution and impact of the Occupation at the subnational level and reveals the oft disparities that existed between the reformist ideals of the occupiers and the exigencies of military occupation.

### **The Background: Australian soldiers and Japanese workers**

Japanese workers were ‘liberated’ by the early Occupation reforms related to labour and political rights. The 1945 Trade Union Law, the 1946 Labor Relations Adjustment Law and the 1947 Labor Standards Law both prescribed rights and proscribed certain behaviours (for example political activities) for workers. The Japanese labour movement vigorously embraced their new role. This alarmed their US overseers, who feared the growing communist influence on trade unions and did not anticipate the level of agency and independence of the Japanese workers. Rather, they had conceived themselves as the tutors of diligent and obedient Japanese ‘student-workers’. The Australian Labor government (under Ben Chifley, 1945-1949) was less alarmed by these developments, indeed believed

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<sup>6</sup> Selected examples include: Theodore Cohen, *Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal*, New York: The Free Press, 1987; John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999; Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; Kawai Kazuo, *Japan's American Interlude*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960; Joe B. Moore, *Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power 1945-1947*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983; Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985; Takemae Eiji, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy*, London: Continuum, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Selected examples include: Peter Bates, *Japan and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force 1946-52*, London: Brassey's (UK), 1993; Carolyne Carter, ‘Between War and Peace: The experience of occupation for members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, 1945-1952, PhD dissertation, University of NSW, 2002; George Davies, *The Occupation of Japan: The Rhetoric and the Reality of Anglo-Australasian Relations 1939-1952*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001; James Wood, *The Forgotten Force: The Australian Military Contribution to the Occupation of Japan 1945-1952*, St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1998.

they had not yet gone far enough, and pursued a little-known policy of promoting an active, politicised labour and trade union movement in Japan.<sup>8</sup>

BCOF officially took over the administration of the Hiroshima prefecture from US forces in March 1946, and the headquarters was established in the former naval base city of Kure. By 1948, the other participating Commonwealth nations (New Zealand, Britain and British India) had left, only to return at the outbreak of the Korean War. Thus Australia was left for several years as the sole representative of BCOF. Australian forces stayed until 1952 (some to 1956 with British Commonwealth Forces Korea (BCFK)), commanded BCOF throughout the Occupation, and left both positive and negative legacies in the area under their administration. At its height, there were 12,000 Australians in BCOF.<sup>9</sup> Australian military policy in Japan was less tolerant and more suspicious of worker militancy than that of the Labor government.

Nihon Seikosho (abbreviated to Nikko), or the Japan Steel Manufacturing Company,<sup>10</sup> was founded in 1907 in Muroran on Hokkaido as a joint venture with British companies W.G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co Ltd and Vickers Sons & Maxim Ltd.<sup>11</sup> From the beginning, the aim of the collaboration was to produce domestic weapons for Japan.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the Asia-Pacific War, Nikko was the largest private weapons manufacturer in Japan, but after the war was forced to convert to production for civilian needs.<sup>13</sup> By 1949, Nikko was in financial trouble.

### **The events/*jiken***

The year 1949 was a highly contentious one in occupied Japan. Detroit banker Joseph Dodge began implementing his 'Nine Point Stabilization Program', or 'Dodge Line', which included measures of retrenchment, tax division, wage stabilisation, cost increases (for example rice, transportation), and funding reduction to education and public services. Dodge and General Douglas MacArthur (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, or SCAP) acknowledged that the program would 'of necessity include measures which will be unpalatable and will

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<sup>8</sup> See C. de Matos, 'Imposing Peace and Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan, 1945-1949', PhD dissertation, University of Western Sydney, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> British Commonwealth Forces National Council, 'Brief History of Australia's Participation in the Occupation of Japan 1945-1952', 5 July 2000, available online: <http://www.bradprint.com.au/bcof/history.html>

<sup>10</sup> Today the company is known in English as Japan Steel Works Ltd.

<sup>11</sup> W.G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co Ltd constructed armaments, ships, cars, planes, trains. Vickers Sons & Maxim Ltd later became the defence wing of Armstrong, and then the two fully merged in 1927 as Vickers-Armstrong.

<sup>12</sup> 'Japan Steel Works', 1995-2003, available online: <http://www.jsw.co.jp/en/guide/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> 'Japan Steel Works', 1995-2003, available online: <http://www.jsw.co.jp/en/guide/product.html>

create temporary hardships'.<sup>14</sup> Anti-communist sentiment was also reaching its zenith in occupied Japan, especially in reaction to the election of 35 communists to the Diet. While SCAP/GHQ<sup>15</sup> did not approve of Yoshida's desire to create an Un-Japanese activities committee, there were no objections to more covert means being used to eradicate the perceived communist influence. These means evolved into two main forms: the 'red purge' to remove communists, sympathisers and other worker activists from government jobs (later extended to the private sector); and the use of 'democratization leagues', or non-communist unions aligned to the employer, to split unions. These developments provided employers with an opportunity to both save money in wages and to get rid of 'troublesome workers' – a retrenchment program justified by the Dodge Line, and one that would target workers whose trade union activities coloured them a shade too reddish. In the case of Nikko, the retrenchment program was euphemistically called an 'enterprise readjustment program'.<sup>16</sup> Nikko announced the retrenchment of 622 of its 2073 workers<sup>17</sup> due to 'financial difficulties' on 2 June 1949.<sup>18</sup> Worker groups quickly moved into action, and the following represents a mere outline of the incident.

The Nikko Labor Union first asked the Council of Labor Unions in the Hiroshima Area for assistance.<sup>19</sup> On 7 June, the Nikko 'problem' was discussed at the Council's Executive Committee (held at the *Chūgoku Shinbun* Newspaper Company). A Standing Committee was appointed in charge of the Nikko 'problem',<sup>20</sup> and Nikko workers began to strike on 10 June. Over the next few days, the intensity of the incident continued to develop. Workers demonstrated to demand collective bargaining, while the Chūgoku District Committee and Hiroshima Prefectural Committee of the JCP formed a Joint Struggle Committee for Protection of Japan Steel Mill (*Nikko kyodo toso iinkai*) and a Struggle HQ of Japan Steel Mill (*Nikko toso honbu*). Union leader and leader of the Hiroshima Prefectural Committee of

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<sup>14</sup> MacArthur Memorial Archives, Norfolk Virginia (MMA): RG-9: Radiograms, Box 156, Fol: Bluebinders: Labor No 54-116, 1 November 1948-6 January 1950, 'SCAP to Department of Army', 5 June 1949, pp. 2-3; Schonberger, p. 263.

<sup>15</sup> SCAP refers to the person of MacArthur, while SCAP/GHQ (General Headquarters) to the operational centre of the Occupation in Tokyo.

<sup>16</sup> National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Maryland USA: NARA 331 Series 1402 (L), Box 2275EE, Fol: Hiroshima Area Committee Incident, 'Hiroshima Area Committee Incident', p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> NARA 331 Series 1402(L), Box 2275EE, Fol: Hiroshima Area Committee Incident, 'Memorandum for Major Napier – Analysis of SIB Report on Recent Activities of Hiroshima Area Committee of the Japan Communist Party', 10 February 1950, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> The statistics relating the number of workers to be retrenched differ in various accounts, ranging from 720-730. See NARA 331 Series 1387(L) Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, 'Memorandum for the Record – Nihon Seikoshō K.K. Hiroshima', 12 July 1949.

<sup>19</sup> NARA 331, Series 1402(L), Box 2275EE, Fol: Hiroshima Area Committee Incident, 'Hiroshima Area Committee Incident', p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

the Japan Communist Party (JCP), Hayashi Haruchi, was placed in charge of tactics (*senjutsu iinkai*) and Matsue Sumi (from the *Chūgoku Shinbun*) made chairman of the Committee.

Also founded was a Young Men's Movement Corps (YMMC or *seinen kodo tai*) made up of 400 young members of the Nikko union.<sup>21</sup>

Nikko notified the discharged workers by certified mail and provided a list to the union.<sup>22</sup> At 1 pm on the 11th, 2000 workers moved 'about within the Company compound, arm in arm'.<sup>23</sup> Hayashi, along with 'several hundred' union members, took Matsuoka (Chief of the Nikko Personnel Affairs Section) to 'an island spot located in a reservoir in front of the Company office' along with the Secretary Ōkubo. They used harassment tactics for seven hours in order to try and convince Matsuoka and Ōkubo to set up an interview between Hayashi and the Nikko president for the following day, which was unsuccessful. They dispersed around 11pm after Matsuoka collapsed from exhaustion.<sup>24</sup>

On the 12th, 30 members of the YMMC forced their way into the company staff conference in the secretariat room, where discussions on dealing with the *jiken* were taking place. There is some confusion in the documents as to what occurred next. One report states the YMMC took acting Nikko chief, Itagaki, and some other company officials to the island/reservoir site. There they held a 'People's Court', and one JCP official, Kurokami, told them they would be held there for 3-4 days unless the retrenchment plan was withdrawn. They were held for 18 hours, during which time four company officials collapsed from exhaustion and one sprained an ankle.<sup>25</sup> Another report states the YMMC demanded collective bargaining, which was refused. Thereafter the union members attempted to trick or induce the executives into coming out, including fake telephone calls at the watchman's box for Itagaki, and telling the other executives that Itagaki had collapsed. One executive was carried out by unionists, chair

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, 'The labour trouble of Nihon Seiko Hiroshima factory', 6 July 1949, p. 2; Australian War Memorial (AWM)114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Trends in Principal Labour Unions – progress of Japan Steel Works Dispute since 11 June', July 1949, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, 'The labour trouble of Nihon Seiko Hiroshima factory', 6 July 1949, p. 2

<sup>24</sup> NARA 331 Series 1402(L), Box 2275EE, Fol: Hiroshima Area Committee Incident, 'Memorandum for Major Napier – Analysis of SIB Report on Recent Activities of Hiroshima Area Committee of the Japan Communist Party', 10 February 1950, p. 1; AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Trends in Principal Labour Unions – progress of Japan Steel Works Dispute since 11 June', July 1949, p. 8. The latter document states that Matsuoka had suffered a heart attack.

<sup>25</sup> NARA 331 Series 1402(L), Box 2275EE, Fol: Hiroshima Area Committee Incident, 'Memorandum for Major Napier – Analysis of SIB Report on Recent Activities of Hiroshima Area Committee of the Japan Communist Party', 10 February 1950, p. 1.

and all.<sup>26</sup> In both versions, the executives refused to speak to the unionists. However, when one unionist, Kitahira, asked Nagato, from the General Affairs Department and on watchman's duty, for a cigarette, Nagato replied: 'I can't give one to a beggar like you.'<sup>27</sup> Nagato was taken to the island in the reservoir and not released until he had read a written apology. In the evening, a Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC)<sup>28</sup> official arrived to observe proceedings, and an unidentified 'Occupation force soldier', in a moment of excitement as executives were running upstairs for a '20 minute recess' and were followed by unionist Kurokami, pointed a gun at the latter's chest. The soldier said that he 'was not supporting the company executives only. As he rushed at me with excited eyes, I pointed the pistol at his breast in self-defence.'<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, a 'Committee for Defense for Common Struggle of Japan Steel Mill'<sup>30</sup> formed, attracting support from the National Railway Workers' Union, workers from the Mitsubishi Shipbuilding Company, workers from the Mihara Rolling Stock Company, the League of Koreans Residing in Japan, the Japan Iron and Steel Union, teachers' unions, and the Electrical Workers' Union.<sup>31</sup> By 13 June, the Hiroshima District Procurations Office began investigations into the *jiken* as negotiations between labour and management began to break down.<sup>32</sup>

Management withdrew from the negotiations and the company closed the factory on the 14<sup>th</sup>, citing loss of confidence in their ability to protect the plant designated for reparations,<sup>33</sup> the possibility of bloodshed, refusal of employees to work rather than engage in union activities, and the role of communists in leading the strike.<sup>34</sup> Signs were posted around the factory stating: 'the Factory is closed and entry into it is prohibited. The people charged with the

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<sup>26</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Trends in Principal Labour Unions – progress of Japan Steel Works Dispute since 11 June', July 1949, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> The CIC was the intelligence arm of the US occupation force.

<sup>29</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Trends in Principal Labour Unions – progress of Japan Steel Works Dispute since 11 June', July 1949, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Also known as the Combined Strike Committee for the Defence of Nippon Steel Workers.

<sup>31</sup> MMA: RG-6, Box 105, Fol: 3 – Spot Intelligence, November 1944-August 1949, 'Labor Disorder in Hiroshima to Chief of Staff', 17 June 1949; *Ibid.*, 16 June 1949 1930hrs; *Ibid.*, 16 June 1949 1300hrs.

<sup>32</sup> NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, 'Memorandum for the record: Nihon Seikoshu K.K. Hiroshima', 12 July 1949; NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, 'The labour trouble of Nihon Seiko Hiroshima factory', 6 July 1949, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> There is further discussion of the reparations issue on p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works', 12 July 1949, p. 1.

maintenance of reparations machinery, however, must work as usual.<sup>35</sup> Workers ignored this notice, and turned up in order to conduct a ‘sit down’ strike. Around 450<sup>36</sup> workers broke down the gates and occupied the factory. Allied Military Government (AMG)<sup>37</sup> officials began to demand police intervention, while representatives of the various participating unions made speeches encouraging the strikers to ‘continue to the bitter end’. Negotiations with Nikko management also continued, and while management agreed to continue future discussions with the union at a place suitable to both parties, they refused the ‘unconditional return’ of the retrenched workers.<sup>38</sup>

Small numbers of police began to arrive at Nikko, and other townspeople began to demonstrate at the Funakoshi police station, asking ‘Why are you oppressing us?’<sup>39</sup> Discussions between police, AMG, the governor of Hiroshima, Kusunose, and other members of local government resulted in a decision to issue an order to union officials on the 15th. The deputy governor made a broadcast over loudspeaker from a hill behind the factory demanding withdrawal, but was drowned out by the sounds of sirens, bells, and singing of the Internationale.<sup>40</sup>

On 15 June, 2000 police were mobilised and they evicted about 1000 workers from the factory, and arrested around another 30 who refused to leave (all were later released). About 22 other workers were injured. Some strikers resisted by lying down to make it more difficult to be arrested.<sup>41</sup> The strikers remained outside of the gates, obstructing the building of barricades, while the Committee for Defense for Common Struggle of Japan Steel Mill held an emergency meeting. Members visited the governor’s office and made the following statement:

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Some accounts put the number at ‘about a thousand’ [NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, ‘Memorandum for the record: Nihon Seikoshu K.K. Hiroshima’, 12 July 1949, pp. 2-3.]

<sup>37</sup> Although there was not a formal military government as in occupied Germany, there was a military government force under the US that was used to enforce occupation reforms and monitor Japanese activities throughout the prefectures of Japan. Australia had limited participation, but did provide military government liaison officials to work with US officials from January 1947.

<sup>38</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, ‘Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works’, 12 July 1949, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* Other reports mention a radio broadcast by Kusunose calling for the workers to disperse by 5am of the 15<sup>th</sup>, else they would be arrested. [NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, ‘Memorandum for the record: Nihon Seikoshu K.K. Hiroshima’, 12 July 1949, pp. 2-3.]

<sup>41</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, ‘Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works’, 12 July 1949, p. 3. Apparently police carried these ‘lie-down’ strikers out of the factory area one by one.



- (a) The Governor was responsible for the unwarranted use of the police force;
- (b) The Governor was requested to show the official document from the AMG;
- (c) The Governor was requested to release the arrested strikers immediately.<sup>42</sup>

Meetings continued at the Matsuishi Dormitory at the Steel Works site, where the unionists made the following resolution:

- (a) The Japan Steel Works strike has already become a national and international problem and will be developed still further;
- (b) Everybody at the meeting would be expected as a matter of principle to remain at their place and carry on the war of nerves;
- (c) On the following day they would leave the dormitory and take up the same position they had occupied after withdrawing from the factory and line up against the police. Their numbers would be increased by the mobilization of 2,000 people from the Hiroshima Seamen's Union and Democratic Youth League;
- (d) The Nippon Express Coy Trade Union, Hiroshima Seamen's Union, Korean League and Democratic Youth League would commence a display of force.<sup>43</sup>

Further 'Anti-Suppression Meetings' called for the re-opening of negotiations, immediate payment of outstanding wages for May, lifting of the factory blockade, withdrawal of the police force, and release of those arrested.<sup>44</sup> In addition to the Japanese police, BCOF provided military police, field security and military government liaison representatives as 'observers', and two troops of BCOF soldiers entered the building on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> 'in view of rumours that workers in large numbers would attempt re-entry'.<sup>45</sup>

In the days that followed, workers continued to demonstrate outside the factory, some throwing stones at police, and others held demonstrations in other areas. Unions visited town offices carrying banners that read 'Discharge of employees will smash local industries' and 'Staple foods must be sold on credit'.<sup>46</sup> Factory re-entry attempts were made by some demonstrators, and others threw objects such as stones and bricks at the factory, resulting in the destruction of 12-foot double doors, four sections of factory fence, 40 panes of glass and

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<sup>42</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works', 12 July 1949, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>45</sup> NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, 'Memorandum for the record: Nihon Seikoso K.K. Hiroshima', 12 July 1949, p. 3; National Archives of Australia (NAA): A1838/280 3103/2/1/1 PT1, 'Cablegram Australian Mission Tokyo to Department of External Affairs', 10 October 1949.

<sup>46</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works', 12 July 1949, p. 5.

four doors of the watchman's office.<sup>47</sup> The Struggle Committee continued to appeal for public support, and the following postcard, while not related to the Nikko dispute but to railway workers, is typical of such tactics:

The rehabilitation of railways has made considerable progress by the hard work of your husband or brothers and sisters. The Management of the National Railways, however, is now planning to discharge one fifth of its personnel and the HIROSHIMA Railway Control Office has already made out the discharge plan. It is said that 3000 people will be discharged in the HIROSHIMA Control Office Area but nothing is known as to who will be dismissed. At present our wages are pitifully small and our living standards very low. If we are sacked, there will be no alternative for us than to become beggars and to starve to death.

In order to prevent this we have set up within the National Railway Workers Union a Campaign Committee and the members are prepared to fight for their lives. If your families will join with us, our fight will be more effective.

We ask all you families to oppose this retrenchment by appealing to the Town and Village Councils and also to send a post-card or a telegram to the Chief of the HIROSHIMA Railway Control Office, Area Chiefs, and station-masters. If this proves unsuccessful, we shall together open up direct negotiations with the Control Office Chief and HIROSHIMA Divisional Chief.

Please participate in this movement to prevent your loved ones being sacked.

(signed) Campaign Committee  
HIROSHIMA Branch of the National Railway Workers Union  
29<sup>th</sup> June 1949.<sup>48</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, an agreement was reached between the Nikko union and management for the payment of outstanding wages. Further, a meeting was held between the union and management in the governor's drawing room with the attendance of the governor and an AMG representative. Recommendations were made for the transference of negotiations to the Local Labour Relations Committee, a body to mediate labour disputes under the postwar labour laws, and police were withdrawn from the Nikko site on the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>49</sup> Three members of the Free Lawyers Society accused the governor with 'excessive use of authority, violence and injuries' at Nikko.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works', 12 July 1949, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> NARA 331, Series 1402(L), Box 2275EE, Fol: Hiroshima Area Committee Incident, 'Hiroshima Area Committee Incident', p. 15; Australian War Memorial (AWM): AWM114 423/10/58, BCOF-CSDIC – translations, 1947 Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Copy of Postcard sent by Hiroshima NRWU Strike Committee to Union Members Families', translated 4 July 1949.

<sup>49</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, 'Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works', 12 July 1949, pp. 8-9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

However, the demonstrations did not dissipate. A large meeting/demonstration was held at the Hiroshima Peace memorial on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, with about 6000 people in attendance.

The following resolutions were made in writing:

- 1) Opposition to oppression;
- 2) Immediate release of arrested Unionists;
- 3) Opposition to Public Security Order;
- 4) Reduction of Police budget;
- 5) Complete enforcement of the 6-3 Education system;
- 6) Opposition to compulsory subscriptions;
- 7) To build the Peace City and protect industry;
- 8) Payment of medical benefits to injured strikers by the City;
- 9) Inquiry into the responsibility of the Mayor, Public Safety Committee Chairman and City Police Chief;
- 10) Dissolution of the City Council;
- 11) Abolition of Yoshida Cabinet;
- 12) Setting up of Democratic People's Government.<sup>51</sup>

This is quite a wide-ranging list, from support of some occupation reforms (education) to aims with a strong political plant – the latter no doubt a worry to the AMG. A speech made by Naitō Chichū of the JCP would have added to this concern, which declared the strike at Nikko to be ‘the forerunner of the people’s revolution’.<sup>52</sup> Demonstrations, meetings with the governor and local officials, and declarations/resolutions continued to pour out at multiple places in the aftermath of Nikko *jiken*. Then on 9 July, Hayashi Haruichi and Takeda Taichi (the latter the Secretary-General of Hiroshima branch of National League of Metal Mine Workers Unions) were arrested and charged with illegal detention.<sup>53</sup> The retrenched workers – the event that ignited the *jiken* – were not reinstated.

## Interpretations and Representations

### *AUSTRALIAN*

Australian occupation forces became involved in Nikko *jiken* at the request of the AMG. However, the references to AMG in some documents are ambiguous and make it difficult to ascertain the exact nature of Australian involvement. While AMG was essentially a US body,

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11; NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, ‘Memorandum for the record: Nihon Seikosho K.K. Hiroshima’, 12 July 1949, p. 3; ‘Hiroshima Unions hold Rally to Protest Govt Action’, *Asahi Shinbun*, 19 June 1949 (translation in NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes).

<sup>52</sup> AWM14 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, ‘Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works’, 12 July 1949, p. 11.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Prosecutors Arrest Two Union Leaders’, *Mainichi Shinbun*, 11 July 1949 (translation in NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes).

the Australian forces attached military liaison officers to AMG from January 1947. Australian documents make reference to the involvement of Australian liaison personnel, but Australia was still subject to the commands of US military government in its area of administration. It is thus difficult to distinguish the exact actions of Australian and US forces. Australian documents are very lean on details, especially considering (or perhaps directly due to) their direct involvement in the incident. A cablegram to the Department of External Affairs states:

A company of B.C.O.F. troops occupied the building on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> in view of rumour that workers in large numbers would attempt re-entry. Troops were withdrawn after several hours when it became apparent that no further trouble would develop.<sup>54</sup>

An article by John Rich of the International News Service reported that ‘an Australian spokesman’ described their involvement as a ‘routine exercise’ which involved a simple ‘inspection’, and outside the building, the Australians found 150 Japanese singing the ‘Internationale’.<sup>55</sup> The tone of these reports is understated – there was no real problem, the troops went in to back up the Japanese police and left again when there was nothing further to be done. It is also interesting to note that the use of BCOF forces is not mentioned in some Japanese reports – or at least the translated versions thereof. One of the most detailed accounts of the *jiken*, a ‘Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section’ as translated by the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (CSDIC), mentions the AMG, the CIC and ‘an Occupation force soldier’, but not specifically BCOF.<sup>56</sup>

#### *UNITED STATES*

CIC spot intelligence reports, as well as detailing the events, place them within the dominant anti-communist discourse. One report called the incident ‘another in the current series of JCP-instigated “guerilla” strikes, designed to culminate in a large-scale labor offensive in August or September 1949’,<sup>57</sup> and another noted that ‘tactics of open defiance of police and governmental authority employed by strikers follow a pattern similar to that utilized by Communist infiltrated unions in other recent strikes’.<sup>58</sup> The US label given to the incident – ‘Hiroshima Area Committee Incident’ – further reveals this discourse: ‘Area Committee’ is a

<sup>54</sup> NAA: A1838/280 3103/2/1/1 PT1, ‘Cablegram Australian Mission Tokyo to Department of External Affairs’, 10 October 1949.

<sup>55</sup> NARA 331, UD1803(L), Box 8571, Fol: 24, John Rich, ‘Aussie troops enter Hiroshima factory’, 16 June 1949.

<sup>56</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, ‘Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works’, 12 July 1949.

<sup>57</sup> MMA: RG-6, Box 105, Fol: 3 – Spot Intelligence November 1947-August 1949, ‘Spot Intelligence to Chief of Staff’, 17 June 1949.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Spot Intelligence to Chief of Staff’, 16 June 1949 1300hrs.

reference to the organisation of the JCP and therefore immediately de-legitimises any worker grievances or actions as the sole product of the JCP. On Australian involvement, one report states that the ‘use of BCOF troops on 15 June appears to have convinced the demonstrators that they will achieve more through orderly negotiations’.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, it seems to be a little more than a ‘routine inspection’ – one CIC report claims the Australian forces entered at 11pm and remained until 2 am, during which strikers dispersed at 12.15am.<sup>60</sup>

### *REPARATIONS PLANT*

The ability of both the Australian and US forces to act as an impartial observer in the dispute was compromised as the factory had been designated as a reparations plant (the idea of extracting reparations from Japan had not yet been entirely dropped, and I am not aware of the final destination of the Nikko machinery). The plant was therefore under military surveillance.<sup>61</sup> The governor, Kusunose, repeatedly apologised to the unionists that it was his duty to protect the reparations plant for the occupation forces. One of the Japanese eyewitnesses to the dispute claimed:

Nikko was taken over as compensation ... its machinery was confiscated and its factories forced to stop operating as production plants. They tried to close Nikko factories in Hiroshima ... Occupation troops took machinery in those factories out to somewhere else. The machine tools were excellent ... Nikko had first-class machine tools in Japan at that time, according to what I heard.<sup>62</sup>

The Nikko management posted notices in the factory stating that those working on reparations machinery had to go back to work, even when the factory had been closed. When workers first violated the notice of the factory closure, two officials, one from the AMG and one from the CIC, met with Hayashi to inform him that the factory was ‘limited to persons charged with the duty of protecting the reparations plant’ and demanded that everyone should leave.<sup>63</sup> The events at Nikko, then, could also be construed as aimed at Nikko employers, local police and authorities, and against the Occupation itself, as reparations would be a contributing cause of Nikko’s financial difficulties and the subsequent loss of employment.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Spot Intelligence to Chief of Staff’, 16 June 1949 19300hrs

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Spot Intelligence to Chief of Staff’, 16 June 1949 1300hrs.

<sup>61</sup> NAA: A1838/280 3103/2/1/1 PT1, ‘Cablegram Australian Mission Tokyo to Department of External Affairs’, 10 October 1949; NARA 331 Series 1387(L), Government Section Central Files Miscellaneous Subject Files, Box 2196, Fol: Hiroshima Labor Disputes, ‘The labour trouble of Nihon Seiko Hiroshima factory’, 6 July 1949, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Kabuto Hitoshi, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> AWM114 417/1/27, CSDIC Translations – Organization and Conditions of Unions, ‘Report by Hiroshima Prefectural Labour Department Administration Section – Events which occurred between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June during strike at Nippon Hiroshima Steel Works’, 12 July 1949, pp. 1-2.

*JAPANESE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS*

There is conflict between the documentary evidence available and oral memory, the latter supporting the idea that Australian involvement may have been a little more than a routine inspection and the US role a little more intense than many documents state. Kabuto Hitoshi worked at the Mitsubishi plant in Hiroshima, and joined the protests at Nikko in sympathy. He spent the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> at Nikko and stayed until ejected in the early morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>. According to Kabuto-san, they were engaged in ‘collective bargaining’ with a Nikko executive at the time. In his words:

While we were collectively bargaining late that night [in the courtyard], an officer of the British Commonwealth troops ... – we could tell [he was BCOF] from his clothes – suddenly pulled out his gun and took the executive, the other party of the collective bargaining. The executive was surrounded by everyone and besides the crowd, there were soldiers including the officer of the British Commonwealth troops. The officer suddenly showed his gun to the trade union members and took the executive out of the place ... This happened at around two or three am. Then, before dawn, everyone left there was ejected by the police.<sup>64</sup>

Kabuto-san also described the process of being ‘ejected’:

When we left in serried formation, we were completely surrounded by the police officers who tried to ... roundup [everyone]. We agreed to leave Nikko in dressing rank formation. A person at the front held a flag, followed by the official representatives of each trade union, then the workers of Nikko and Hiroshima shipyard workers ... then, we [Mitsubishi workers] were at the very rear. I knew at that moment that the people at the back would all be arrested ...

As we were at the back, I was afraid of being arrested. What happened is that the police officers pushed head-on the people going at the back ... they pushed from behind. And experienced and nasty police officers goaded us from further behind – poked us. Then the ranks became disarrayed and the people at the back couldn’t bear it and tried to go forward. As a result, the people in the middle got crowded out. The people at the front could manage to get out ... the gate ... In addition, the people at the back began to struggle as they were being goaded and police officers also tried to arrest them for revolting against the police.<sup>65</sup>

There is certainly nothing in the US or Australian official reports about police treatment of workers, or of involvement in ‘rescuing’ a company official. The *Chūgoku Shinbun* also reported that armed police officers fired warning shots, and that ‘batons were used to beat’ workers.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Kabuto Hitoshi, 2004.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> ‘Chairperson Matsu summoned and accused at House of Councilors, Japan Steel Strike’ in *50 Years of the Chūgoku Newspaper Labour Union*, 1997, p. 5.

*A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE*

On many levels Nikko *jiken* is a struggle of competing masculinities: of occupation soldiers over all the occupied; of Japanese police forging a new/old postwar role over Japanese workers; of police and soldiers working together to defeat dissenting groups engaged in challenging the (re)establishing order; of Japanese workers against all authority, forging an alternative masculine role to that of the soldier-worker – fighting for rights and livelihood rather than nation and emperor. But a view missing from official accounts is the role of women in *jiken*. The dominant post-occupation self-congratulatory discourse of the changes to women's rights in Japan obscures the experiences of women forging an alternative discourse and path<sup>67</sup> – especially working class women activists.

Watanbe Tamiko was a member of the National Railway Workers' Union working in the Shiga Machinery Depot, and joined the strikers at Nikko:

The railway factory dispatched trains, and people who were going to Japan Steel could ride for free. So we all went to Hiroshima Station, flashing Red Flags. We felt so uplifted ... Even when police officers actually came to attack and take us on, we took the officers' hats or nightsticks, saying they were 'war trophies', and showed them to each other. However, the officers came to beg to have them back. We felt sorry for them, so we returned the items. However, what really vexed me was when we were shut out of the factory, and the American [sic] army officers were looking down on us from the top of the fence saying 'hey, hey!' When we peeked inside the factory, we saw the Red Flag being burnt. We were so enraged that we were crying out eyes out.<sup>68</sup>

Shinmi Itoe worked at the Mitsubishi Dockyard in Hiroshima, became an official in the Female Division of the union, and joined the striking workers at Nikko:

We loaded straw rice bags on to the truck from the Hiroshima Mitsubishi Dockyard's Labour Union and lots of Red Flags and went to support [the Nikko workers]. During the strike it felt like a revolution was going to break out as soon as tomorrow. So we decided we should bring more members from the Hiroshima Mitsubishi Dockyard. A few of us went back and walked around and shouted in the company building: 'let's go to Nikko and give our support!'

We were barricading ourselves inside the Nikko factory ... We shut the main gate and were sitting inside the gate. American [sic] soldiers came on a jeep. We thought that they would stop in front of the gate, but they didn't stop, so we ran away in panic. We stayed overnight inside the building, but there were company people and American [sic] soldiers too. We continued to glare at each other for two or three days [sic], but one early

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<sup>67</sup> For a critique of this discourse see the work of Koikari, Mire, eg 'Rethinking gender and power in the US Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952'. *Gender and History*, 11(2), 1999: 313-335 and 'Exporting democracy? American women, "feminist reforms," and politics of imperialism in the U.S Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952'. *Frontiers*, 23(1), 2002: 23-45.

<sup>68</sup> 'Watanabe Tamiko's Story' in Watanbe Rikito, Tagawa Tokihito & Masuoka Toshikazu (eds), *Hiroshima under Occupation: Anti-nuclear – Stories from the Early Hibakusha Movement*, (*Senryōka no Hiroshima: Hankaku – Hibakusha undō sōsōki monogatari*), Tokorozawa: Nichiyosha, 1995, p. 157.

morning when it was still dark, a group of policemen came charging, pushing over the factory fence made out of timber. We were ready for it. We linked each others' arms, establishing lines of human barricades. However, I heard the police say 'break from there, where the women are!' We thought to ourselves, 'we can't let them look down on us'. So we clung to each other and tried [to resist]. I realised the police were already running around behind us as other parts of the barricade had broken ... It was very disappointing, but we were easily thrown outside the gate. There was a pond behind where we were standing. There were many labour union members and police officers being thrown into it. We were chanting slogans from outside the gate. Women were crying so loudly.<sup>69</sup>

From these accounts, it appears the strikers were divided into gendered groups – and the women were determined not to be looked down upon for being women, and participated with enthusiasm. Conversely, the police viewed the group of women as a weakness to be exploited in order to forcibly disperse the workers.

### **The Rhetorical Aftermath**

While most of those arrested were released without charge, the Japanese police and the occupation force accomplished what they had set out to achieve – to break the spirit of those resisting the economic 'reforms' under the Dodge Line and to 'democratise' the labour unions. When the Hiroshima Mitsubishi Dockyards announced their own retrenchment plan in the wake of Nikko, Kabuto Hitoshi remembered that they did not strike: 'we couldn't. Everyone had lost their bravery to fight after seeing the loss of Nikko workers with their own eyes.'<sup>70</sup> Kabuto-san was himself a victim of the 'red purge', as was Shinme Itoe.<sup>71</sup> Kabuto-san reminisced: 'Those who were purged were activists of trade unions and communists. And I'm sorry to tell you this, but sick people and genuinely lazy people were also included. I think it was a sort of purge of the weak by the strong.'<sup>72</sup> But many continued to protest and to strike. In August 1949, the League of Koreans Residing in Japan (who participated at Nikko), writing of a protest that turned violent in Shimonoseki (Shimonoseki *jiken*), invoked the recent memory of Nikko *jiken* as inspiration:

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<sup>69</sup> 'Shinme Itoe's Story' in *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163. It is interesting to note the reference to the soldiers as American in both Shinme and Watanabe's accounts. While some Americans were present, the bulk of the military presence, by all officially recorded accounts, was Australian. Perhaps it demonstrates how memories are influenced by the ubiquitous image of the occupier as American. However this may not be only due to a US dominated occupation discourse, the effects of time and the frailty of memory: a survey conducted in the Hiroshima-ken city of Oura in 1947 'discovered that the townspeople did not know the nationality of the Occupation Force' [AWM52 8/2/33, 'BCOF Monthly Intelligence Review No. 20', November 1947, p. 2 (copy courtesy of Yoshida Takayoshi).]

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Kabuto Hitoshi, 2004. This memory conflicts with the fact many demonstrations continued in the aftermath of Nikko, but demonstrates the level of local symbolism the dispute has collected in the postwar/occupation era.

<sup>71</sup> 'Shinme Itoe's Story' *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Kabuto Hitoshi, 2004.



All democratic forces here in Hiroshima prefecture, after their harsh experience in the Japan Steelworks Incident, are resolutely rising to the task of the decisive elimination of police oppression.

Smash the rest of the terrorists in the Korean Residents Association!

Down with the police regime of the reactionary Yoshida cabinet.<sup>73</sup>

Apparently, the JCP leader Nosaka Sanzo also referred to Nikko *jiken* and other ‘labour riots’ as examples of ‘Fascist Yoshida’s tyrannical oppression’.<sup>74</sup>

The Soviets also found the *jiken* to be useful for political rhetoric. In a potent example of the disparity between civilian and military goals and roles in the Occupation, at the same time Australian troops were used to disperse Japanese workers and aid company officials at Nikko, Australian delegates to the Far Eastern Commission (FEC)<sup>75</sup> were putting forward a policy proposal to save the right to strike and undertake collective bargaining for Japanese public service employees (FEC 318/20).<sup>76</sup> The Soviets opposed the Australian proposal on the grounds that they thought they had a better one, thus Nikko *jiken* was used in an attempt to discredit the Australian proposal. The Soviet representative to the FEC claimed Australia was confusing the debate over labour policy, which could ‘possibly be explained by the fact that it was Austral[ian] Occupation Tr[oops] that had been ordered to Steel Manufacturing plant in Hiroshima when mobbing of workers by Jap[anese] police occurred’.<sup>77</sup> The Soviet *New Times* magazine reported that ‘Australian soldiers were used to suppress the workers in Hiroshima’.<sup>78</sup> Soviet attacks did not have much effect on discrediting the Australian proposal (the US had already done that by claiming it would further the cause of communism in Japan), but the fact the ‘debate’ occurred at all highlights the different approach to labour issues taken by the military and civilian/diplomatic components of Australia’s occupation participation.

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<sup>73</sup> AWM 423/10/56, League of Koreans, ‘Refutation of false reports by commercial press concerning the Shimonoseki Incident’, 22 August 1949, CSDIC translation 2 September 1949.

<sup>74</sup> NARA 331 UD 1803(L), Box 8571, Fol: 24, John Rich, ‘Aussie Troops enter Hiroshima Factory’, 16 June 1949.

<sup>75</sup> This was an 11 (later 13) power body based in Washington DC that ostensibly had the power to make Occupation policy. It was usually overridden by both MacArthur and the US government.

<sup>76</sup> NAA: A1838/278 483/2 Part 5, Cablegram Australian Embassy Washington to External Affairs, 7 April 1949. The right to strike and engage in collective bargaining was to be removed for all government employees with the 1948/49 National Public Service Law.

<sup>77</sup> MMA, Incoming Message ‘DA Washington DC to SCAP’, 23 July 1949.

<sup>78</sup> V. Krylov, ‘Four years after: Tokyo letter’, *New Times*, No 40, 1949, p. 27.

## Conclusions and Postscripts

The case of Nikko *jiken* elucidates a number of contentious aspects of the Occupation, particularly in terms of the so-called ‘reverse course’ of US policy where priorities turned from political reform to economic recovery, and in the conflicting aims of the Occupation. First, Nikko *jiken* attests to the level of worker militancy that existed during the occupation era and provides evidence of its existence outside the main centres of Japan. Moore has extensively documented this militancy in the more central areas of Japan and articulated its potential as an alternative economic and political discourse in postwar Japan.<sup>79</sup>

Second, it demonstrates the disparity that existed between the aims of the Australian civilian government and the Australian military strategic aims of the Occupation, especially over politically contentious or sensitive issues. The government and its diplomatic representatives (that is, through External Affairs) remained reformist in terms of its policy towards the Japanese labour movement until the end of 1949;<sup>80</sup> the military (and Department of Defence) was much more sympathetic to the cold war policies of the United States. Additionally, it demonstrates the conflict between some occupation reforms and aims. On the one hand, the occupation aimed to liberate workers and change the dynamics and relations of power in postwar, vis-à-vis wartime, Japan. A weak workforce was deemed to be one of the problems that had helped lead Japan to war. Yet, on the other, the exaction of reparations as punishment and to contribute to covering Allied war costs was another aim. These two specific aims collided at Nikko *jiken* where the rights of workers had to be measured against the need to protect a reparations plant.

Third, it illustrates the condoning of a militarised masculine power in Japan, despite the peace constitution, although the ‘militarised’ could only be experienced vicariously through the foreign occupiers. Male workers attempted to forge an alternative militant worker masculinity, rather than the militarised masculinity of wartime, through worker action; women workers pursued a more equitable and participatory social place in the role as activist in contrast to the ‘good wife, wise mother’ image, which continued to penetrate Western middle-class-inspired feminist ideas in Japan. Both of these alternatives were challenged in Hiroshima by the combined domination of a male, foreign military force and a male, authoritarian police force.

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<sup>79</sup> Joe B. Moore, *Japanese Workers and the Struggle for Power 1945-1947*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.

<sup>80</sup> Labor lost government in December 1949 to Menzies’ Liberal Party.

Fourth, the *jiken* provides an example of the operation and implementation of occupation policies at the peripheries, and of those occupied who offered resistance to occupation policy, especially those targeting communist and leftwing activities during the ‘reverse course’. For the workers of Hiroshima, Nikko *jiken* was/is a potent local or subnational symbol of the ‘reverse course’. It also demonstrates the relationships between the occupiers. While Australian forces directly participated in dispersing the *jiken* on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup>, representatives of the AMG and CIC were liaising with all Nikko parties before, during, and after that date. Thus, the Australian ability to administrate its own area of responsibility was tempered by the remaining small but more influential US presence.

Fifth, the labour dispute demonstrates the impact of the developing Cold War and its accompanying rhetoric and framework on the workers of Japan. While there certainly was talk of revolution and expressions of anti-government sentiment, there were also legitimate concerns about livelihood and food. Discussion of the latter was submerged beneath the fear of the former.

Finally, it exposes the collaboration between the occupation forces and conservative elements in Japanese society (the police) who together focused not on the ‘rights’ of workers, or whether they had legitimate grievances and what could be done to alleviate them, but on maintaining order, control and, to a certain degree, the prewar *status quo* of power relations. As Carter has noted, when Australian troops first arrived in Japan they were alarmed at the lack of control the Japanese police force had over the population since the end of the war as ‘social stability was an important element in a peaceful occupation’.<sup>81</sup> Australian soldiers, specifically the provosts, helped to train the Japanese police, and general operational cooperation between the two was constant. Such cooperation between Australians and local police forces has continued in Australian operations overseas, for example recently in the Solomon Islands.

Despite ultimate worker defeat at Nikko, the remnants of the divisive labour struggles in late 1940s Japan, between worker-controlled movements and the imperatives of a capital-led economic recovery, subtly remain in Hiroshima today. Many of those workers present at Nikko or similar disputes, often victims of the ‘red purge’ that followed, maintained their stand of resistance throughout their lives, including remaining as members of the JCP and/or

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<sup>81</sup> Carolyn Carter, ‘Between War and Peace: The experience of occupation for members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, 1945-1952, PhD dissertation, University of NSW, 2002, p. 190. See also pp. 170 & 191-193.

being involved in the peace and anti-nuclear movement.<sup>82</sup> As for Nikko, it did not close down due to poor finances. In 1958, *Time Magazine* reported that the Hiroshima plant of ‘Japan’s biggest gunmaker, Nihon Seiko’, in 1957 ‘grossed [US]\$61 million and gave employment to more than 1500 Hiroshima citizens’ – primarily by making howitzers, a practice that continues to this day.<sup>83</sup> War saved Nikko – quite an ironic outcome considering Hiroshima’s postwar status as an icon of peace. Overall, this micro-study of an industrial dispute in occupied Japan reveals the impact of reform policies, occupation and local power, conflict, and change in the peripheries of the Occupation, and continues to raise questions concerning the main beneficiaries of the Occupation and how much was really transformed by the experience.

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<sup>82</sup> This statement is based on interviews conducted with worker participants of Nikko *jiken*.

<sup>83</sup> ‘13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary’, *Time Magazine*, 18 August 1958, available online: <http://time-proxy.yaga.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,810499,00.html?internalid=ACA>