Dissenting Japan: A History of Japanese Radicalism and Counterculture from 1945 to Fukushima

William Andrews
DISSENTING JAPAN
WILLIAM ANDREWS

Dissenting Japan

A History of Japanese Radicalism and Counterculture, from 1945 to Fukushima

HURST & COMPANY, LONDON
To know and not to act is the same as not knowing at all.

Wang Yangming

Revolutionary events generally take place in the street.

Henri Lefebvre, The Urban Revolution
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to: the Japan Foundation for its library facilities in Tokyo; Patricia G. Steinhoff for being extremely generous with providing unpublished examples of her work and answering my many questions; the staff at the Narita Airport and Community Historical Museum; Jun Nakamura and the Nihon University veterans for being so welcoming; Gasworks for generously supplying the Eric Baudelaire exhibition materials; Marilyn Ivy for her encouragement; Shane O’Sullivan (E2 Films); Damon Coulter; Ben Stubbings; David W. Plath; the Hoshino Defence Committee and others involved in campaigning for Fumiaki Hoshino’s retrial; Kyūen Renraku Sentā; Michael Dwyer and Hurst; and the numerous people interviewed and consulted in the process of writing this book.

Research was also carried out at the Kōji Takazawa Collection at the University of Hawai‘i and I thank the staff for their assistance during my stay.
ACRONYMS

JCP    Japanese Communist Party
JRA    Japanese Red Army
JSP    Japan Socialist Party
LDP    Liberal Democratic Party
SDF    Self-Defence Forces

Original Japanese names have been used for the most part, not least because their translated forms risk confusion with overseas groups with similar names. Those lending themselves better to acronyms or translation, or otherwise widely discussed with English names, appear mostly in those forms.

Japanese names follow Western order: first names first, surnames last. For clarity’s sake, italics have been employed with Japanese or other non-English words, except for names or words now popularly used in English. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are the author’s own.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role and Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adachi, Masao</td>
<td>filmmaker and member of the Japanese Red Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akao, Bin/Satoshi</td>
<td>leading ultra-nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akasegawa, Genpei</td>
<td>artist and writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akita, Akehiro</td>
<td>leader of Nihon University student movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asahara, Shōkō</td>
<td>leader of Aum Shinrikyō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandō, Kunio</td>
<td>Rengō Sekigun and Japanese Red Army activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daidōji, Masashi</td>
<td>leader of Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himori, Kōyū</td>
<td>activist in Lebanon prior to founding of JRA, who later killed himself by self-immolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honda, Nobuyoshi</td>
<td>leader of Chūkaku-ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishihara, Shintarō</td>
<td>novelist and right-wing politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanba, Michiko</td>
<td>student killed during 1960 Anpo protests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kawashima, Tsuyoshi</td>
<td>leader of Kakumei Saha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodama, Yoshio</td>
<td>major figure in Japanese ultra-nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuroda, Kanichi</td>
<td>co-founder of Kakukyōdō, Kakumaru-ha ideologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maruoka, Osamu</td>
<td>senior member of Japanese Red Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mishima, Yukio</td>
<td>writer and ultra-nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mori, Tsuneo</td>
<td>Rengō Sekigun co-founder and leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagata, Hiroko</td>
<td>Rengō Sekigun co-founder and senior member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oda, Makoto</td>
<td>writer, leader of Beheiren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ōe, Kenzaburō</td>
<td>novelist and Nobel Prize laureate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okamoto, Közō</td>
<td>participant in Lod Airport attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okudaira, Tsuyoshi</td>
<td>participant in Lod Airport attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ōshima, Nagisa</td>
<td>leading leftist filmmaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ōta, Ryū</td>
<td>co-founder of Kakukyōdō, leader of Fourth International Japan, advocate of Ainu separatism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kurihara, Tōichi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAJOR FIGURES

Sasaki, Norio  member of Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen and Japanese Red Army
Shigenobu, Fusako  Japanese Red Army leader
Shiomi, Takaya  founder of Sekigun-ha
Suzuki, Kunio  New Right movement leader
Takita, Osamu  influential New Left thinker
(Takemoto, Nobuhiro)
Terayama, Shūji  playwright, poet, theatre director, filmmaker
Tomura, Issaku  Narita Airport protest movement leader
Yamamoto, Yoshitaka  University of Tokyo protest leader
Yoshimoto, Takaaki  major post-war philosopher
Wakamatsu, Kōji  New Left sympathiser and filmmaker
This is an immensely simplified chart showing the main New Left groups. It is not definitive. There are dozens more factions, and many other further connections and mergers are not shown. See the Glossary for details of abbreviated and full names.
GLOSSARY

Ainu  indigenous minority from northern Japan
ajito  a covert base
angura  ‘underground’ arts, especially alternative theatre movement
Anpo  Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan
Beheiren  anti-Vietnam War activist group
bōsōzoku  motorcycle gangs
Bund  nickname for Kyōsandō (Communist League)
Buraku, Burakumin  historical lower caste
Chūkaku-ha  organisation left after the schism of Kakukyōdō, formally known as Kakumeiteki Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei Zenkoku linkai (Revolutionary Communist League—National Committee)
cosplay  ‘costume play’, dressing up, typically as a character from anime or manga
ee janai ka  literally meaning ‘How about it?’, a series of social disturbances (1867–8)
Fourth International Japan (Daiyon Intānashonaru Nihon Shibu)  branch of the international Trotskyist movement, formed by a splinter group after the second split of Kakukyōdō
freeter  class of underemployed people or precariat
**GLOSSARY**

*fūtenzoku*  
Japanese hippies, literally meaning ‘insane’ or ‘vagabond tribe’

*gebabō*  
a type of stave carried as a weapon by New Left radicals

*hannichibōkokuron*  
‘anti-Japanese’ theory advocating the destruction of Japan

Hansen Seinen Iinkai (Anti-War Youth Committee)  
young workers’ group founded in 1965 by JSP and Sōhyō that became radicalised and militant through affiliation with New Left factions

Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen (East Asia Anti-Japan Armed Front)  
group militantly opposed to Japanese imperialism

*hōganbiiki*  
love of (being) the underdog

Japanese Red Army (Nihon Sekigun)  
international breakaway wing of the Sekigun-ha, originally called the Arab Sekigun

*jichikai*  
autonomous student council

*jiguzagu*  
‘zigzag’ snake dance performed by activists linked together one behind the other, often in rows several demonstrators along

*kagekiha*  
radical or extremist group

Kakumaru-ha (Revolutionary Marxist Faction)  
Kanichi Kuroda’s breakaway group from Kakukyōdō, formally known as Nihon Kakumeiteki Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei

Kakumeiteki Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Kakkukyōdō, also Kakkyōdō) (Revolutionary Communist League)  
New Left Marxist group, formed in 1957 by Kanichi Kuroda, Ryū Ōta et al. as alternative to the Japanese Communist Party; originally called Japanese Trotskyist League

Kakumeiteki Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Revolutionary Marxist Faction)  
second version of Kakukyōdō, formed in 1959 by Kanichi Kuroda and Nobuyoshi Honda; it
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zenkoku Iinkai</td>
<td>later split into two branches, Kakumaru-ha and Chûkaku-ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kakukyōdō, also Kakkyōdō) (Revolutionary Communist League—National Committee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanpa</td>
<td>fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keihin Anpo Kyōtō (Keihin Anpo Joint Struggle)</td>
<td>see Nihon Kyōsantō Kakumei Saha Kanagawa-ken Jōnin Iinkai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidōtai</td>
<td>elite mobile police unit for dealing with riots and protests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokusai konkyochiron</td>
<td>Sekigun-ha’s ‘international base theory’ of setting up linked armed sites of dissent around the world to foster global revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kyōsanshugika</td>
<td>‘Communisation’, a goal of Rengō Sekigun, to be achieved through sōkatsu and self-criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Kyōsandō) (Communist League) (Bund)</td>
<td>New Left group opposed to the Japanese Communist Party; its Zengakuren student arm was Shagakudō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kyūminkakumeiron</td>
<td>theory of revolution coming from the oppressed and dispossessed, the Japanese Lumpenproletariat such as the Ainu, Koreans, Okinawans or day labourer underclass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marugakudō (Marxist Student League)</td>
<td>student organisation of Kakukyōdō, it eventually split as its parent divided into Chûkaku-ha and Kakumaru-ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minsei Dōmei (Nihon Minshu Seinen Dōmei) (Democratic Youth League)</td>
<td>JCP youth group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nihonjinron, nihonron</td>
<td>‘theory of the Japanese’, a popular academic discourse emphasising Japan’s uniqueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nihon Kyōsantō Kakumei Saha Kanagawa-ken Jōnin Iinkai (Japan Communist</td>
<td>militant New Left Maoist group; its public organisation was Keihin Anpo Kyōtō (Keihin Anpo Joint Struggle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

Revolutionary Left Faction Kanagawa Prefecture Permanent Committee

nonpori non-political person (or non-sectarian activist)

PBM sakusen Sekigun-ha’s kidnapping, bombings and bank robbery operations

Rengō Sekigun (United Red Army) alliance of Sekigun-ha and Kakumei Saha

Sanpa Zengakuren coalition of Marugakudō Chūkaku-ha, Shaseidō Kaihō-ha and Shagakudō, the first of many such alliances

Sekieigun (Red Guards) fringe militant group in the 1970s

Sekigun-ha (Red Army Faction) or Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei Sekigun-ha (Communist League Red Army Faction) militant New Left group

Senki-ha (Banner Faction) emerged from the breakup of the Second Bund and split in the 1970s; another unrelated faction with the same name emerged from the original Bund

Shakaishugi Gakusei Dōmei (Shagakudō) (Socialist Student League) student group for the original Bund, which was subsequently reformed (and renamed) later in the 1960s, eventually uniting again as the Second Bund

Shaseidō Kaihō-ha (Socialist Youth Union Liberation Faction) New Left group formed in 1965, originally Japan Socialist Party-affiliated; it later formed Hantei Gakuhyō (Anti-Imperialist Student Council) and Kakurōkyō (Revolutionary Workers), which then split into Hazama-ha and Sekisaisha-ha

shigaigeki ‘city theatre’, a type of street drama

shimin citizen
GLOSSARY

shin-sayoku  New Left
shin-shūkyō  ‘new religion’
shutaisei  self-hood or agency
sōkatsu  process of ideological evaluation, discussion and conflict leading towards consensus; it took on a new destructive form within Rengō Sekigun

taishū dankō  ‘mass bargaining’ sessions where activists would submit someone to a group interrogation

taiyōzoku  the ‘Sun Tribe’, 1950s delinquents

tenkō  recanting

uchi-geba  internal conflict, specifically infighting between New Left groups

uyoku  right wing

yajiuma  an onlooker

yonaoshi  ‘world rectification’, a form of peasant revolt

zendankai busōhōkiron  Sekigun-ha’s ‘early stage armed uprising theory’ of fomenting revolution through armed insurrection

Zengakuren (Zen Nihon Gakusei Jichikai Sōrengō)  league of student groups, founded in 1948
(All-Japan League of Student Self-Governments)

Zenkyōtō (Zengaku Kyōtō Kaigi)  the all-campus student movements
(All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee)
CHRONOLOGY

1946  Shibuya Incident
1947  Aborted general strike
1948  Zengakuren founded
1952  American Occupation ends

Bloody May Day riot
1954  Daigo Fukuryū Maru exposed to radiation from an H-bomb test
1955  Protests against American bases, including at Sunagawa
1957  Japanese Trotskyist League formed in January by Kanichi Kuroda, Ryū Ōta et al. In December it is renamed Kakumeiteki Kyōsan-shugisha Dōmei (Kakukyōdō) (Revolutionary Communist League)
1958  First split of Kakukyōdō, with Ryū Ōta breaking away
Bund (Kyōsandyō) (Communist League) formed by breakaway faction of JCP
1959  Kakukyōdō splits again, with Kanichi Kuroda and Nobuyoshi Honda forming Kakumeiteki Kyōsanhugisha Dōmei Zenkoku Iinkai (Revolutionary Communist League—National Committee)
1960  Death of Michiko Kanba at height of Anpo protests
Miike mine strike ends
Inejirō Asanuma assassinated by Otoya Yamaguchi
1961  Shimanaka Incident
1963  Kakumeiteki Kyōsanhugisha Dōmei Zenkoku Iinkai splits into Chūkaku-ha (Central Core Faction) and Kakumaru-ha (Revolutionary Marxist) factions
1964  Summer Olympics in Tokyo
1965  Beheiren founded
1966  Narita International Airport protests begin
1967  Death of Hiroaki Yamazaki at first Haneda Airport clash
Beheiren announces desertion of Intrepid Four
1968  Violent protests at Sasebo in Kyushu over docking of USS Enterprise
Protests at American war hospital in Ōji
University of Tokyo and Nihon University Zenkyōtō campus movements begin
21 October International Anti-War Day riot in Shinjuku
1969  University of Tokyo campus siege ends at Yasuda Hall
Okinawa Day
Folk guerrilla rallies in Shinjuku
1970  World Exposition in Osaka
Yodogō hijacking
Death of Yukio Mishima in apparent coup at Self-Defence Forces headquarters
Koza Riot in Okinawa
1971  Fusako Shigenobu leaves Japan for Beirut
Asaka Japan Self-Defence Forces Base Incident
Three riot police officers killed during Narita protests
Rengō Sekigun formed by merger of Sekigun-ha and Kakumei Saha
Shibuya Riot Incident
Bomb attack on home of Police Superintendent General Kuniyasu Tsuchida
1972  Asama-sansō siege
Lod Airport massacre
Restoration of Okinawan sovereignty to Japan
1973  Dubai Incident (JAL Flight 404 hijacking)
1974  Mitsubishi Heavy Industries headquarters bombing
Singapore Incident
French embassy seized in The Hague
Japanese Red Army formally comes into existence
1975  Members of Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen arrested
JRA storms embassies in Kuala Lumpur
Himeyuri no Tō incident in Okinawa
Peak of uchi-geba inter-factional fighting
1977  Dhaka Incident (JAL Flight 472 hijacking)
Keidanren attack by far-right group
1986  Mortar attack on Tokyo G7 summit
1987  Attacks on Asahi Shimbun offices
Osamu Maruoka arrested in Japan

xxiv
CHRONOLOGY

1988  Yasuhiro Shibata arrested in Japan
       Yū Kikumura arrested in America
1989  Death of Emperor Hirohito (Shōwa emperor)
1990  Attempted assassination of Hitoshi Motoshima, mayor of Nagasaki
1995  Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake
       Aum cult launches attacks on Tokyo subway
2000  Fusako Shigenobu arrested in Osaka
2002  Self-immolation of Kōyū Himori
2011  Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami
       Fukushima crisis
       New anti-nuclear power movement starts
This is a little-known history of radical people and radical ideas. That it has been ignored for so long—except for the diligent efforts of a few—is due to that most pervasive of fallacies, the stereotype. The stereotype is a tenacious mistress, but she tempts the refuter.

We are always guilty of characterising nations. Japan invariably finds itself defined by its homogeneity and unity. Western commentary rarely fails to make much of the strong Japanese family core and work ethos that translates into long hours and personal sacrifice for the company. Japan, we are led to believe, is a land of factory workers, uniformed yet stripped of personalities, performing calisthenics exercises each morning before the day’s assiduous shift. Suited, stoic salarymen risk the crush that is the Tokyo rush hour to make daily voyages to an unforgiving office. Schools encourage codified mass thinking and group activities over individual achievement. From the giant former zaibatsu corporations like Mitsubishi to tiny workshops in the backwaters, communities and businesses alike strive to ensure that workers and residents form part of the collective above and beyond any personal singularity.

The diplomat and Japan scholar Edwin O. Reischauer goes so far as to suggest that the key Japanese value is harmony, which is sought out by a ‘subtle process of mutual understanding’, part second nature, and contrary to a Western sense of analysis, logic or decisiveness.¹

This utopian Japan is exotic. It has a ‘cult of tranquillity’, an ability to preserve inner calm amid life’s babel.² Despite the hubbub of contemporary Japan, everything just sort of works itself out, the invisible hand of cohesion somewhere directing all the various urban tribes to get along together.
This coherence is underwritten by hierarchy, order and social responsibility. Japan assigns authority, superiority and deference a strong place in a vertical system, far more so than Western culture, wrote Ruth Benedict in the 1940s. Not going beyond your station is paramount. The motto is: ‘Everything in its place.’

Stifling under all these implicit codes of obligation, is it any wonder the Japanese seek out anonymity? Roleplaying is a conspicuous form of escapism in Japan, from cosplay (‘costume play’, dressing up as comic-book characters) to the infinite pleasure realms of the sex industry, which allows people to act out any fantasy they can imagine.

But things in life are never black and white. It is particularly problematic because the locals are also complicit participants in this facile interpretation. Clichés about Japan are inevitable, as both Japanese and foreigners seem to be comfortable using them. Japan’s highly photogenic nature, all flashy motifs and striking phenomena, makes it easy to generalise. When Roland Barthes described Japan so trenchantly as an ‘empire of signs’ in the 1960s, it is not only remarkable how his pithy label remains relevant, but also how much more pertinent it has become.

Yes, Japan is a comparatively homogeneous country. It is not my mission to deny that groupthink is often evident in Japan, as in many Confucian cultures. Quite a lot of the people and events surveyed in these pages will reinforce notions that the Japanese are attracted to group movements, that they seek to define themselves not as individuals but as elements of a certain social environment (albeit one that is not always national or mainstream). The core argument asserted in this book, though, is that those environments can also be dissenting and can work to conflict with society, and hopefully change it.

Our stereotype of Japan as an utterly holistic culture was solidified during the 1970s by journalists and academics through the publication of a number of popular science books. This subgenre was called nihonron or nihonjinron—Japan theory or Japanese theory—and English translations of the work of Takeo Doi and Chie Nakane, among others, created broad acceptance for the ‘unique’ groupism we still associate with Japan. The concept of Japanese society as vertically organised (for example, as oyabun–kobun, ‘parent–child’ relationships between a leader and follower) can be traced back to 1943 and sociologist Kizaemon Aruga, who said that the reason why class struggle theories had emerged in the West yet lacked popularity in Japan was that they were not ‘required’ in Japan. Nakane especially popularised the idea of a vertical society structured around class-
INTRODUCTION

less frames or groups that align people. The task here is not one of categorically denying that Japan is a group-oriented society, but arguing that these formations are inherently nebulous and often work horizontally. Protest and disturbance is a common facilitator of this, bringing disparate people together for a common cause.

It is said that Japan’s rapid industrialisation meant it developed too quickly for chronic social problems to arise. The Japanese are self-effacing, polite and with carefully designated relationships between superiors and subordinates that cultivate loyalty to the group above the individual. This creates a more harmonious country with few strikes and a people acutely aware of their own uniqueness.

The myth continued with the truculent ‘Japan, Inc.’ trope, part a manifestation of admiration for Japan’s Economic Miracle, and, inversely, part fear of the Yellow Peril. Its advocates sought to offer lessons for why Japan was doing so well; it could surely only be due to special cultural contexts. Most notably, Ezra Vogel’s Japan as Number One (1979) promoted the ‘rising’ dimensions of the Japanese sun. This is when the mystique of Japanese industry set in, when systems like the seniority salary system (nenkō-chingin) and lifetime employment (shūshin koyō) created buzzwords for salesmen to learn before business trips.

A key concept in the culture is wa, written with a character that can often stand for Japan or Japanese-ness itself, as well as its literal meaning of ‘harmony’. The inexorable goal of synthesis and concord has deep roots. Prince Shōtoku (573–621), the ancient regent who left an indelible mark on the governing framework of nascent Japan, is said to have created the first piece of legislation in the land. ‘Harmony should be valued and quarrels should be avoided,’ the constitution begins,

Everyone has his biases, and few men are far-sighted. Therefore some disobey their lords and fathers and keep up feuds with their neighbours. But when the superiors are in harmony with each other and the inferiors are friendly, then affairs are discussed quietly and the right view of matters prevails.  

Many Western observers still consider this to be fundamentally true to how the Japanese do business and government.

While Japan’s economic slide since the 1990s may have lessened stereotypes of salarymen slaves, Japan-as-number-three still comes across as politically apathetic. After all, this is the timid nation which has been governed, almost without interruption, by one party since 1955. Needless to say, it is a conservative party. Foreign minds brought up on diets of anime
and manga might be familiar with alienated post-Bubble Japanese youngsters, but are unlikely to expect them to attend demonstrations. Withdrawn geeks? Yes. Engaged votes? No. If passion does break out on the streets, the results are like the 2008 Akihabara massacre when seven people were killed in a random attack on shoppers in Tokyo.

As the subtitle of this book makes plain, we will be looking at the post-war period, in particular the 1960s and 1970s, when radicalism and counter-culture—political and artistic—emerged and clashed so spectacularly with the mainstream. This is not a history of all modern protest and activism in Japan; it is about the ideas and movements that challenged the social fabric in radical and extreme ways.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that dissent was unknown prior to 1945. Far from it: Japanese history is littered with rebellions, both isolated rural uprisings and large-scale revolts. At times, these were religiously motivated, at others their springboards were corvée and privation, or labour strife.

Perhaps never was Japan at its most ‘harmonious’ as when cocooned in a state of near seclusion from the rest of the world during the sakoku (literally, ‘closed country’) period between 1633 and 1853. But harmony comes at a price. The Tokugawa Shōgunate imposed a strict feudal system maintaining a grip on the various classes that it defined. At the bottom of the pile were the untouchables, the Burakumin (or Buraku) outcastes, who dealt with tanning and other taboo employments.

And yet even during this time there was rural discontent aplenty, at times locally tolerated, at others brutally suppressed by the Shōgun. The peasants were not resigned to their lot, as chronicles show frequent risings called ikki. Historical Japan was highly contentious, with rioters periodically calling for yonaoshi, ‘world rectification’. If we are to believe the Japanese are inherently geared towards consensus, why would the authorities need to impose such harsh strictures and laws? Rather than being anything innate, perhaps it is more realistic to suggest the Japanese have been moulded into ‘harmony’ by the policies of regimes, as is their wont anywhere.

Japanese rebels are often not so much heroes as victims of circumstance, caught in the vice of this mould, and they remain victims even after they rebel. Pathos goes hand in hand with revolt. Many traditions have a cult of death, but perhaps only Japan marries this with sympathy for the underdog. British popular consciousness, for example, also likes to make much of plucky underdogs facing overwhelming odds—but it is still preferred that they win or at least force a respectable draw, like at Rorke’s Drift. Losing is ultimately just rather sad. But Japanese heroes are frequently heroes through their
defeat, which, rather than an honourable defeat accepted like gentlemen, very often ends in a fiery catastrophe where they take their own life.

The first record of this phenomenon is Yorozu, who killed himself in 587 after losing a power struggle between the Mononobe and Soga clans. In Japanese, the partiality for Yorozu and his ilk is known as hōganbiiki and is exemplified most of all by the loyal Benkei, who died defending his medieval overlord from their enemies. It is from Benkei’s master, Minamoto no Yoshitsune, that the term hōganbiiki is derived, literally meaning ‘liking for the lieutenant’ (a reference to Yoshitsune’s rank). In the same way, Yukio Mishima knew he was doomed to fail in his risible Tokyo ‘coup’ in 1970 but he was seeking something other than victory. The cult of death can be melodramatic, as in the love suicides of the dramatist Chikamatsu, or it can be inhuman, as in the ‘beauty’ of the Kamikaze pilots. A hero is often made heroic by abject yet glorious failure.

This applies equally to rebels; there are no more famous heroes in Japanese culture than the forty-seven loyal retainers, the rōnin (wandering samurai) of the Chūshingura. In fact, these heroes were law-breakers defying the authorities to take revenge their own way. And though he eventually turned on the emperor he had helped re-instate, the inconvenient disobedience of the samurai Saigō Takamori is omitted for a bizarre cartoonish statue of him and his dog in Ueno, Tokyo. A photo opportunity is preferred to the complexities of expedience, ambition and rebellion.

Failure is a reoccurring leitmotif in the narrative of Japanese dissidence. Heroes who perished trying are eulogised by popular culture, from Benkei and Yoshitsune to Saigō, Sanada Yukimura and Sakamoto Ryōma. And as we shall see, for assessing their invested place in the tapestry, defeat is as important to understanding Anpo, Narita and Asama-sansō, as the ideologies of the participants.

Japan does have plenty of success stories and even heroes who died without ‘failing’. But the predilection for sincerity over triumph leads to what Ivan Morris memorably labels the ‘nobility of failure’. It is the trying that counts. The greatest modern exemplum of this tradition is Yukio Mishima, a case of life imitating art, or at least aesthetics, manifesting sympathy for the courageous loser.

Hōganbiiki can also be fortifying for the state. Temporary bursts of rebellion might in fact have the opposite intended effect, merely shoring up the status quo through brief releases of disobedient energy. So much is sanctioned, just as long as you only go so far. It is true that the Japanese have a knack for carrying on in the face of adversity—earthquakes, tsunami, volca-
DISSENTING JAPAN

noes—if not quite with a stiff upper lip, then with an attitude of shō ga nai (‘nothing to be done’). Though frequently praised as resilience and strength at times of catastrophe, this flair for re-normalising immediately after a disturbance can also lead to amnesia. Few would not admire the tenacity of a people who can pick themselves up right away following both the Kobe disaster and a domestic terrorist attack in 1995, but after 1960 was the anger of Anpo really so quickly forgotten? We will ask this question many times. Like Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque, these transient flare-ups of topsy-turvy violence are necessary in order to maintain prolonged social harmony for the people and the authorities. Hierarchies are attacked and taboos broken, but in the end everyone returns to their working lives. In the same way, a fondness for failed heroes and rebels need not be profane; such aficionados still go out and vote for conservative regimes come polling day. However, the corollary is that the core sickness does not disappear and society remains in a state of denial. Perhaps rebels in Japan know what they are up against and head towards sacrifice, cognisant their role is not for a revolutionary cause but one of propping up the national polity.

It is the essential thrust of this book that though Japan might appear to outsiders to be peaceful, and indeed may even put on such a performance for the benefit of its internal audience, much like any other culture it has fractures and splinters, both from individuals and smaller groups, who behave and react often very radically, perhaps precisely because they are acting against a very homogenous, monolithic central culture. These subcultures are often unknown or ignored, and yet they arguably reveal some of the most fascinating elements about Japan. Post-war arts were never more vibrant and thrilling than during the peak counterculture period, nor have the youth ever been as galvanised and cogent as during the Anpo security treaty demonstrations and later university occupations. Likewise, the riots against the construction of Narita International Airport turned into bloody battles that pitched the establishment against farmers.

Challenging ‘harmony’ as a germaine label for Japanese culture is not a rejection of the stereotype outright. But it is to look anew at the lessons and see a hotbed of dissent which, when unleashed, displays extraordinary potential. This is never truer than in the post-war radicalism we will survey.

The nihonjinron writers belittled conflict over their theories of cohesion, often built around sociological ideas expanded from single concepts (amae, tatemae and all that jazz). The authors disregarded social conflict, positing that the Japanese were bound vertically together and thus free of class
INTRODUCTION

frictions. Outbreaks of riots and demonstrations were merely mass hysteria, to be cast aside as brief aberrations from the real ‘Japanese’ narrative. Emphasising revolt and disturbance—from the Left and Right—need not limit us to the contrary assertion that Japan is particularly rebellious, but that Japan shares post-war traits and situations with other non-communist industrialised societies, and that the idea of Japanese ‘uniqueness’ and ‘harmony’ is just that, an idea. We can have ideas about Japan—even myths—but they should be plastic.

I started this book in the fallout from the triple catastrophe of the Tōhoku-Kantō earthquake and tsunami of 11 March 2011, and the subsequent Fukushima nuclear crisis. Japan was crippled, facing a crisis even graver than the 1995 Hanshin earthquake and not experienced by any generation since the war. And yet the government failed miserably to react with the deft or even the sensitivity demanded by the circumstances. While the establishment trundles on with business almost as usual, the seeds of malcontent that were already growing beforehand have started to rise up from the soil with an alacrity born out of disaster. Anti-nuclear power and anti-government demonstrations suddenly abound and there has been anger on the streets on a scale not seen for decades. It would be hasty to surmise that Japan is returning to its radicalised recent past, but unmistakably there has been a burst of activism that is cathartic. After a lull, the spirit of the Anpo and Beheiren protests may be back with a vengeance and it is uncertain how things will develop.

This book sets out to document and introduce the key incidents, movements and ideas behind Japan’s tangle of post-war radicalism, from the major episodes of domestic tumult to the extraordinary people who led international terrorist attacks across the globe, and bringing it up to the post-Fukushima present. In the process, hopefully we can challenge the perennial Orientalist preoccupation with Japan’s ‘tranquillity’, and substitute it with an image more myriad, more diverse.

In this respect, my book belongs to the ‘small tradition’ paradigm of conflict theory as outlined in the 1980s by Ross Mouer and Yoshio Sugimoto. As opposed to the standard view of scholars and non-fiction writers that Japan is a coherent and integrated place, stressing its ‘Japaneseness’ not found elsewhere, this alternative model emphasises social tensions and looks at Marxist case studies of conflict.10 Despite the hegemony of the consensus mode on the popular mindset, the narrative of disharmony and conflict is actually a path fairly well trodden by Japan specialists and historians.

This book is a call to arms to remember what has been forgotten, that Japan has a radical recent past belying its quotidian image as merely har-
monised and homogenous. By returning to investigate this little-told history of activism and agitprop we can gain a renewed understanding of the truth behind Japan’s semblance of unity and calm, as well as the context for the new generation of protestors now heading to the demos.

Nostalgia aside, the radicalism of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s is not simply a role model for the new zeitgeist of post-Fukushima Japan. It offers valuable lessons in what can drive a culture and population to extremes of terrorism, assassination, rebellion, dissent—and also wild creativity. Counterculture can give insights into how the Japanese occasionally defy their ‘innate’ harmony and, for a time, grasp the necessary spark of leadership. The sclerotic Japanese government’s inept reaction to the 2011 crisis exposes the gaping hole in its ability to rise to the challenge at the moment of truth. When faced with an emergency, an emphasis on consensus is not what is required, but rather inspiring leadership, something Prince Shōtoku actually said was the best way to achieve harmony in a nation. However, a wise leader only comes ‘once in a thousand years’, so the next best thing was consensus. During the period of post-war counterculture, many of the radicals and their leaders were not wise, but they sought to define themselves in utterly new ways that at the very least present counsel for the incompetence and inertia of the current administration.
When the first blue-eyed, blonde-haired foreign troops touched down on Japanese soil a few days after the surrender was signed, to the vanquished locals it was soon apparent that they were not the monsters so feared during the long years of war with America, and to the occupiers, that the Japanese were going to be cooperative, even docile. As Ruth Benedict recounts, soldiers might land in the morning fingering their weapons but by noon they were merely shopping for trinkets.¹

The resistance that did flare up understandably came from those who had most to lose, the ultra-nationalists in the military. There were sporadic incidents during that monumental August in 1945, though the most serious were attempts to prevent the emperor’s official pronouncement of defeat from being broadcast. Once the Living God had spoken, the vast majority complied immediately with his request to lay down their arms. Knowing how powerful the recording of the emperor’s voice would be, young officers unsuccessfully attempted to seize the tapes before they could reach the studio. Others then tried to break in to the studio itself to disrupt the broadcast; failing, they committed suicide in front of the Imperial Palace. There were similar displays of self-murdering gusto from civilian and student groups too, with cliques staging mass seppuku or suicides by poison at the Palace.

Some of the Imperial Guards Division attempted a more strategic coup d’état on 15 August, while other soldiers joined rightist students to attack the residencies of the prime minister and other leaders. Yet another doomed
essay was made to resist the occupation from the imperial HQ in rural Nagano. All ended feebly and with the prerequisite suicides. The government was desperate for operations to move smoothly until the Americans arrived and the last thing they wanted were upstart zealots spoiling Japan’s greatest defeat in its history. If the minor attempts at revolt were mostly confined to lower ranks, the top brass also knew their number was up. The minister of war, the naval vice chief of staff and General Gen Sugiyama all committed suicide, as did others when they heard they had been designated for arrest as war criminals. General Tōjō was unsuccessful in his suicide bid, surviving a while longer to play his role as the main scapegoat in the forthcoming trials.²

However, the emperor’s ‘jewel voice’ (gyokuon) was paramount. It was the first time the general population had heard his voice, speaking though it did in archaic and impenetrable vocabulary. He asked his subjects to ‘endure the unendurable’, though, ironically, it cannot have failed to permeate even his ivory tower that they had already been doing precisely this. There had been fifteen years of war, of which only a part had been with America and her allies. Three million were dead and another 3 million scattered around Asia at the time of the broadcast. Those who were left had seen all major cities virtually wiped out by bombings. Just before the emperor spoke, the Osaka authorities had been recommending that residents should eat sawdust and vermin to stay alive. The unendurable, particularly in terms of the availability of food, would continue until at least 1949 for the majority of people.

The announcement was followed later by a second immense proclamation, whereby the emperor officially renounced his status as a deity, perhaps the fastest single act of self-demotion in history, the Chrysanthemum leader somewhat gracefully descending from god to human in one radio speech. It turned out there would also be no bump upon landing, as General MacArthur and the American occupiers were content to retain Hirohito as a constitutional monarch and for him to escape the ignominy of a war crimes trial.

While the distance of time and the fact that post-war history is written by victors may lend us a rose-tinted view that the Allies ‘liberated’ the Japanese suffering under the imperial yoke, the reality was less obvious. Mass rebellions did not take place, but the occupation was anything but a peaceful transition to modern democracy.

The Americans were simultaneously and ambiguously both occupiers and conquerors, liberators and reformers, regulators and governors, customers and employers. The ambivalence was captured by film critic and long-time
ENDURING THE UNENDURABLE

Japan observer Donald Richie, who was part of the early occupying forces. He compares the treatment of the local Japanese to the blacks of the American South or the Indians in Forster’s *A Passage to India*. And yet, despite his fellow soldiers calling their Japanese janitor a ‘gook’, the relationship between the two sides was curiously organic and reciprocal, almost symbiotic. He describes how the troops had to be wormed every three months due to their salads being grown with ‘night soil’, a fertiliser made from the excrement of the vanquished locals. In effect, the Americans were eating whatever the Japanese were having—which, for the most part, was not very much in terms of volume or nutrition—and likewise, the Japanese were also swallowing, not always happily, whatever the Americans fed them: civil rights, female enfranchisement and democracy.

In many ways, there was little change in the daily running of the country, other than now there were hundreds of thousands of Yank soldiers stationed there. The Japanese government continued to administer the laws, watched over and nudged in the right places by the Americans. Of course, the ultra-nationalists were purged immediately from the army, civil service and other institutions of state, though the replacements were often right-wingers themselves, but just not known as such.

MacArthur was content to rule as quasi-éminence grise, asserting a firm hand when necessary but essentially letting the Japanese rebuild themselves. The Americans brought in emergency food supplies to alleviate the starving, winning the admiration of the population. They dismantled State Shintō and the *zaibatsu* conglomerates, and arrested token war criminals.

The post-war period, from the first days of the occupation through to the early 1950s, was a semi-lawless one, an era of a country and people in transition. Black markets reigned; the only way for most people to get enough was to pay exorbitant prices to the illegal traders. In essence, everyone in Japan became a criminal for some years until victual and other supplies stabilised. It was literally the only way to stay alive. One guilt-ridden young judge tried to set an example and live only by the rations. His subsequent painful death from malnutrition shocked the establishment when it was reported in the media.

Loyal soldiers went from being the emperor’s diehard representatives one day to looters and spivs the next. Government officials were fundamentally venal, living on good foods ill-got while the majority fought off slow deaths. Disabled war veterans were shunned, their afflictions profane in a culture that held purity and cleanliness as sacred. Normal people struggled to find sustenance, work and the will to live. This was the so-
DISSENTING JAPAN
called *kyodatsu* malaise that affected Japanese society after the war, a sense of exhaustion and defeat, but also a carnival of disorder and freedom. Historian John Dower describes it as a ‘new space’ opening up in Japanese society, one where people’s behaviour was different, their thoughts new, and circumstances and experiences novel. It was a time of flux, where the next form of authority and social mindset were still very much in the process of taking shape, and for a while a period flowered of uncertain but vivid liberty. Everyone was highly aware that they had been handed the task of reinventing themselves and their nation.5

In this decline and defeat there was a strange sort of beauty, much like the morbid beauty that had reached its apotheosis with the Kamikaze pilots during the dying stages of the war. Now the advocates were writers like Ango Sakaguchi and Osamu Dazai. Dazai committed suicide after chronicling the alluring decay of the upper class. There was carnality aplenty too, in the *panpan* girls (prostitutes) and promiscuity catering both to cynical Japanese and American GIs armed with dollars and chocolate. After so much death, what else was there but to smile wryly and slip on to a futon with a new lover? From this *joie de vivre* the so-called *kasutori* culture emerged, with its eponymous alcoholic drink, the mandatory tonic for assuaging the pain and humiliation of daily life. The first counterculture movement in post-war Japan, it saw pulp magazines proffering an eroticised world that was an inversion of the *panpan* Orientalism in which the Americans indulged. Here the Occident was turned into a sexual space that the occupation authorities could not enter: sensual succour for an oppressed male class.

Though MacArthur defiantly chose to take Emperor Hirohito into his bosom, he unwittingly presented an image both absurd and lèse-majesté in that infamous photograph of the general and monarch posing side by side. MacArthur stands casually in military slacks, his hands almost resting in his pockets, while the Shōwa emperor appears tiny and conspicuous in formal attire, as if he had tried to impress a nonchalant warlord with superfluous vestments that held no power anymore. It was a very real case of the emperor’s new clothes.

If that notorious photograph delivered an unforeseen criticism of monarchy, there were also more direct challenges to the Chrysanthemum Throne. The passionate loyalty to the emperor displayed consistently throughout the war was revealed largely to be a mere facade for many of the Japanese, as *tatemae* (public face) peeled away and exposed the *honne* (private feelings) of a people indifferent or apathetic to their monarch. The world had
collapsed around them and the emperor was the least of their concerns. Even children were indulging in games that mocked the emperor both prior to and after the surrender. Police files and secret reports record numerous incidents such as kids singing songs that foresaw the Imperial Palace being bombed in the Allied air raids over the capital. Though we tend to dwell on how MacArthur opted to protect the emperor from prosecution and abdication, the local authorities were worried that the Japanese people themselves would seek his removal, to go the way of so many other royal families in the twentieth century. They did not accept that Hirohito had no responsibility for Japan’s destruction. (That amnesia came later.)

Examples of emperor-mocking included a nickname, Mr Ah So, a pun on the Japanese exclamation ‘I see’, which Hirohito was said to employ frequently during his post-war tours around Japan. He had graciously admitted his humanity to the populace in December 1945, but people were more concerned with food and shelter. His presence in the polity of the nation was immaterial to daily life. Rumours of his death or imminent demise continued, and he even became the butt of cruel jokes. Why was General MacArthur the belly button of Japan? Because, went the retort, he was above the prick—a play on the word chin, slang for penis but also with the same sound as the Japanese equivalent of the royal ‘we’.

Genuinely verifiable challengers to the throne even appeared, including those who claimed Hirohito’s line was descended from India, and another man, Hiromichi Kumazawa, who had serious grounds for arguing his genealogy linked to the losing side of the imperial schism centuries ago was actually more legitimate than the Shōwa’s. The middle-aged pretender courted both celebrity and controversy with his statements that Hirohito was a war criminal.

However, there was no usurpation, abdication or revolt. It would be a mistake to overplay anti-imperial sentiment. Hirohito’s tours of the country were met with welcoming crowds and eventually were even stopped by the occupation forces because of their popularity, over fears that they might lead to a renewed upsurge in nationalism.

‘In the moment of a match-strike, with fog thick on the sea—how could any homeland be worth throwing away my life?’ This is the most famous tanka poem by Shūji Terayama, the immensely prolific and provocative poet, playwright, novelist and director. It was written in 1956 and elliptically captures the dilemma of intellectuals and artists in the chaos after the war.

The occupation forces were liberators. They immediately set about enfranchising women, releasing left-wing and religious political prisoners,
DISSENTING JAPAN

and establishing a swag bag of freedoms—of speech, faith and the media. Workers were allowed to strike. All the repressive laws of the 1920s were overturned in one generous sweep of Yankee human rights. The democratic demands two months into the occupation were so profound that the entire Cabinet resigned, unable to bring itself to fulfil the stipulations.

The intellectuals who would dominate post-war Japanese academia called for social democratic revolution. The advent of liberalism literally brought a whole new lexicon into public play, with words like *kokumin* (citizen) and *minshū* (democracy) introduced in the 1947 Constitution. Philosopher Shunsuke Tsurumi even wrote a treatise arguing that *kana* ideographs should be abandoned so that schoolchildren could take full linguistic advantage of the new liberating nature of the talismanic slogans these words represented.  

For leading liberal intellectual Masao Maruyama, who served unhappily in the army on the Korean Peninsula and witnessed first-hand the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the emperor system needed to be dismantled if Japan was to be free of the psychological baggage of authoritarianism (the ‘undue preponderance of authority’ in the words of Yukichi Fukuzawa), which had plagued Japan since early times. The emperor and Japanese government were to blame for the war and its crimes, and only a Japan without its emperor would be capable of rising morally again with a renewed, independent identity.

The essential crux of the intellectual dilemma was the conflict between rejecting what had gone ‘wrong’ in Japan and embracing democracy and Western liberalism, while also staying clear of American influence: to adopt the ideas and scholarship from the West, and simultaneously research into ‘true’ Japanese folk values and cultural roots in order to build the new Japan.

The intelligentsia was highly uncertain. This democratic transition was yet another ‘revolution’ like the 1868 Meiji one; top-down, imposed, and only sketching in the semblance of democracy. You need only look to the state of contemporary politics, dominated by senior men from political dynasties in cahoots with corporations, to see that the unease was laced with foresight.

In the end, it did not take long for the Americans to demonstrate their schizophrenia. Remember these were the same occupiers who had made prostitution illegal while also setting up ‘comfort women’ for their troops. With the Soviets developing atomic capabilities, Mao’s victory in China, the fall of Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade all in quick succession during
the late 1940s, the menace in Japan and, by extension, to American interests in Asia, was now decidedly leftist. And it needed to be purged, and fast. All this effort to get rid of Japanese nationalists was one thing, but it mattered naught if the Japanese Left was then allowed to blossom into a threat.

Censorship had already become one of the *modus operandi* for the occupation and it was indiscriminate. No matter your fame, no one was safe: Tanizaki and even Tolstoy were censored. Right-wing or nationalist symbols were expunged, such as images of Mount Fuji, and the ancient text *Kojiki*; notoriously, a Kabuki performance was even halted halfway through by zealous authorities. No painter was punished for wartime propaganda, but the playwright Kunio Kishida was penalised as a leftist. Nor was it just native culture either; Steinbeck and *Citizen Kane* were also banned. Censorship was absolute, covering all the media and entertainment culture, but the new police state also spot-checked some 330 million pieces of mail and 800,000 private telephone calls. It worked, though. By the late 1940s, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) sought to make itself more electable and moderate, announcing caveats that it did not seek to remove capitalism altogether and would not overthrow the system through dictatorship. It called itself *aisareru kyōsanshugi*, a Yankee-friendly ‘lovable communism’.

But this was not enough to ease the minds of the Americans, who were literally seeing Red. General MacArthur ordered a purge of left-leaning government workers—over 11,000 teachers and civil servants were dismissed for belonging to leftist groups—and later extended this to the private sector, such as the media and film industry. Tens of thousands lost their jobs. Lovable or not, the JCP was not safe and its newspaper, *Akahata* (The Red Flag), was purged. JCP leaders, freed of their previous shackles a short time after the occupation began, were now forced back underground by their one-time liberators while some fled into exile abroad.

Of the thousands of former political prisoners, some had been imprisoned arguably for good causes, such as one who tortured a police informant to death. Their status, though, guaranteed their release in the American windfall after the defeat. Many had then set about earnestly rallying workers and implementing aggressive leftist initiatives. Labour action increased, with 1946 seeing as many as twenty factories being taken over by militant workers every month. From a few thousand in 1945, union membership was more than 6 million by December 1947, and strikes, take-overs and other actions numbered a remarkable 200,000 in October 1946 alone. With strikes and demonstrations rising during the late 1940s and the looming Korean conflict, MacArthur and the Shigeru Yoshida government became vigilant against labour discontent.
At the time, average wages were often covering only a quarter of a family’s expenses and workers were in an acute bind. Unions—neutral, anti-communist and pro-communist—representing some 3 million called a general strike for February 1947, but at the midnight hour American pressure caused the leaders to cancel the action. Harmony was preserved, even if people had to starve. The quashing of the strike is still discussed with pain by older activists today; it was a trauma—the crushing of Japan’s labour movement at its height, voiding any chance of a worker-led rebellion again—and it was the first step along the path towards the creation of the Japanese New Left, the disparate movements that reacted to the established left-wing groups.

Not all discord was so official or legal. Wandering the neon streets of Shibuya today, Tokyo’s most swarming shopping district, it is impossible to imagine that where banal boutiques and towering chain stores now stand, over one day in the summer of 1946 a virtual pitched battle reigned. The Shibuya Incident was notable not only for the scale of the disturbance and its brazenness but also its cosmopolitan nature. It was a black market riot in which opposing gangs vied for control of contraband but highly lucrative trade. The contenders were hundreds of Formosan (Taiwanese) hoodlums and a thousand thugs from the Matsuda-gumi Yakuza gang. It climaxed, rather conveniently, in front of Shibuya police station, and after the hours of shooting and fighting had finally subsided, seven Formosans were dead, plus a policeman, and dozens on either side were injured. The Japanese had won and it would mark the beginning of the end of the involvement of the so-called ‘third country people’ (Koreans, Taiwanese, Manchurian Chinese) in the post-war period.

The black markets were an unlicensed site of cultural interchange. The leftovers from Japan’s experiment in empire-building, originally brought over essentially as slave labour and not repatriated when the war ended, the immigrants were free to do commerce with the criminal world, each eager to rip off ordinary citizens in this desperate, uninhibited time. By October 1945 there were estimated to have been 17,000 open-air markets across Japan, and it was not long before the local gangsters started to resent foreign participation. Friction boiled over when the head of the Matsuda-gumi was assassinated in June, and the Shibuya Incident followed the next month. Police cracked down on the ex-colonials, who made up a sizable portion of the black marketers, and the turf battle led to harsher treatment of foreigners (Asians, not Westerners, of course), and deportation.
Leitmotifs of lawlessness would not go away as the occupation matured, or even after it had ended. Around the same time as the gangs were fighting it out in central Tokyo, three incidents involving Japanese National Railways indicated that the Yakuza were not the only ones unafraid to get their hands dirty. With tens of thousands of rail workers about to lose their jobs, the person responsible for the cutbacks, company president Sadanori Shimoyama, mysteriously vanished during an innocent shopping errand in Ginza. His body was soon discovered near some train tracks, severed after coming into contact with a locomotive, but with the post-mortem revealing he was most likely murdered beforehand. Days later a train derailment in Mitaka, a Tokyo suburb, killed half a dozen people. It was seemingly caused by collusion between staff and local police. The following month another derailment at Matsukawa, Fukushima Prefecture, resulted in three deaths among the crew. Again, leftist sabotage was declared but all suspects were acquitted. The complicity of the unions and JCP—many of the defendants in the cases were card-carrying members—has never been fully proved or disproved.

It is not disputed, though, that the JCP had gone from ‘lovable’ posturing to more militant measures. In early 1952 it despatched students to Ogouchi, a mountain village about to be erased by the local government to make way for a dam. They were the Sanson Kōsakutai (Mountain Village Operation Corps), part of the last attempt by the JCP to initiate a revolution by adventurist armed struggle, before it finally ceded its commitment to this in 1955. The students that went to Ogouchi formed a paramilitary cell which tried to rally villagers against the planned construction work in the area and organise a kind of rural guerrilla army. Receiving an initially warm welcome, they spent a month in the village giving out handbills and attempting to recruit locals before police descended and arrested twenty-three members. Those who got away lived with the sincerity of guerrillas ready for revolution, sleeping with their training gear on and eventually discovering they had mould growing on their genitals. They next turned to mobilising the construction workers to strike for unpaid wages, though again their futile efforts were thwarted by police. Ogouchi village was submerged in 1957, and with it, memories of the student soldiers’ endeavour to launch a rural revolution.14

Public support for the JCP fell in reaction to the Sanson Kōsakutai, and for a period it lost all its seats in the Diet, the Japanese parliament. Along with other sporadic paramilitary activities in the early 1950s, the campaign was the last time the JCP would be formally involved with violent
activism. It embraced the peaceful path to revolution from the Sixth Japanese Communist Party Congress in July 1955. As we will see, its renouncing of militant means, though, would lead to a series of breakaway factions, or *tōha*.

Dangerous unionists, communists and saboteurs are common enough, perhaps. What worried the Americans and the authorities even more were mass demonstrations. In the twilight days of the occupation, what had been strangled in 1947 came back to haunt MacArthur with a vengeance. Three days after the peace treaty and independence went into effect in 1952, a million people took part in May Day rallies around Japan, some 330 gatherings of highly non-uniform citizens coming out to declare, as their English placards said, ‘Go home, Yankee’. There had been May Day demonstrations in previous years but typically involving only a few thousand from the fringe Left. Communist groups had rallied in 1950 and attacked US military personnel, which led directly to the American purge of the JCP. Now in 1952, with the occupation formally ending, the Japanese as a whole were regaining their confidence.

The biggest demonstration in Tokyo happened at Meiji Shrine, the sacred site of the Imperial Family, where 400,000 people amassed to call for better working conditions, and to oppose the US military bases and continued occupation of Okinawa. Enthusiastic Communist unionists, Koreans and students led a breakaway group of some 10,000 on to the Imperial Palace’s Outer Garden plaza, a frequent location for protests in the post-war period. It was here that food demos had been held on May Day in 1946, which the benevolent MacArthur answered with generous supplies of comestibles. But now the Yoshida government had decreed there were to be no more demonstrations at the plaza. The police clashed with the surging crowds; two protestors were killed, a municipal civil servant and a student, and 759 police were injured; casualties among the demonstrators were at least as many, often their injuries inflicted as they tried to flee the carnage. Hundreds of arrests were made amid scenes of chaos. Three thousand Japanese police used tear gas and handguns against unarmed demonstrators. The angry and frightened mob vented their rage on that symbol of the political and commercial alliance between the United States and Japan, the automobile. The anti-Americanism was blatant and rampant; twenty American cars were set on fire. Three unfortunate GIs who got caught up in the frenzy were thrown into the Imperial Palace moat and narrowly escaped a lynching.

By far the largest civil disturbance since the war, not
for nothing was the incident called Bloody May Day. Even the old capital of Kyoto saw violent protests, with a motley mob armed with bamboo spears, beer bottles and rocks fighting police for five hours around the city. (Intriguingly, Kyoto, despite its elegance, had the highest magnitude of popular disturbance per capita in the immediate post-occupation period).17

As a political demonstration, the May Day event was unmatched in scale until the Anpo protests eight years later, which would also feature police employing possibly deliberate lethal force against civilians exercising constitutional rights. However, one lesson was learnt: firearms would never be used to control riots or violent demonstrations ever again.

As opposed to the previous black market territorial conflicts or labour disputes, Bloody May Day is clearly a case of the Japanese turning against American influence. Anti-American demonstrators also clashed with police in Osaka in June 1952, and then in Nagoya in July Molotov cocktails were thrown at police and US army facilities, resulting in a protestor’s death and dozens of injuries.

Despite MacArthur’s ignominious dismissal by President Truman, he had been given a decent send-off from the country which had hosted him for six years, with happy crowds lining his farewell route in 1951. But his notorious comment soon after that the Japanese were like a twelve-year-old boy compared to the ‘mature’ forty-five years of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ succeeded only in alienating his former wards.

And further ire was earned by his government and Japan’s in their duplicity in drawing up a security pact that sacrificed Okinawan freedom. It is expressed mordantly by Takashi Kōno’s superb 1953 poster Sheltered Weaklings—Japan, depicting a large shark-like fish in the American stars and stripes with a gaping toothy mouth and oafish expression. In similarly geometric simplicity is a shoal of much smaller fish, swimming along obediently behind, all coloured in the Japanese flag. In the top right, two sleeker, suspicious red fish head in the opposite direction, no doubt off to cause mischief.

The sheltered weaklings had been lumbered with a gaggle of US military bases around the country—some 2,824 facilities, excluding Okinawa’s—many of which remain to the present. The first public protest against them was in Ishikawa, a peninsula on the west coast of Japan, where Uchinada, Japan’s second largest sand dune complex, had been appropriated for a missile test base. Locals organised demos and strikes from 1952 to 1953 when the practice range went into operation. The anti-base movement properly started when Tokyo residents opposed a facility in Setagaya, and
more demos followed at the Nagano Asamayama base in 1953 and at the Kita-Fuji base at Mount Fuji in 1955. The latter is regarded as a pioneering struggle of the anti-base movements, led largely by women angered at the deprivation of forest land around the mountain and the corruption of their community by the base, especially the young women. The locals reacted to the American presence by building a fort inside the artillery range, ‘manned’ by teams of female occupants daily. It went on to become a model for the later Hantai Dōmei farmers’ movement opposed to the development of Narita International Airport.

Another major clash occurred in Tachikawa, on the outskirts of Tokyo, in 1955, where over 1,000 people protested the expansion of an air base runway, and some seventy were injured during a sit-in to prevent land surveying near Sunagawa. Due to Tachikawa’s proximity to Tokyo it was far easier for leftist groups to mobilise demonstrators. The expansion of the runway, it was argued, would accommodate larger US jet bombers and be seen as an act of aggression by Japan’s neighbours, China and Russia. Sunagawa farmers also lost land, the Japanese and American governments cast in the role of robber barons. Zengakuren, the league of student organisations, chartered buses directly from campuses to the site, continuing to clash with police in 1956. It climaxed in 1957, when some 300 labour unionists and students got through the barbed wire fence and invaded the runway. The arrested leaders later had their verdicts initially quashed by a Tokyo District Court judge who ruled that the presence of US troops in Japan violated the Constitution, since they represented a facility of war potential, which was forbidden in Japan except for self-defence.

The persistent disregard that many American servicemen showed for locals sparked more protests, such as the repeated raping and killings in Okinawa, and the callous manslaughter by Specialist 3rd Class William S. Girard of a Japanese housewife collecting expended cartridge cases on the Sōmagahara firing-range in Gunma. The Girard case inspired heartfelt and angry political paintings by the artist Hiroshi Nakamura. He also portrays the Sunagawa campaign in *Sunagawa Goban* (1955), a melee of clamouring rural women being kept back by loutish police. In 1958, a music student was shot by an airman while on his way to take part in a concert at a US base (the Longpre case), and then in 1959 a drunken soldier burned a Japanese flag on a train. When a Japanese tuna fishing vessel, the *Daigo Fukuryū Maru*, suffered fallout from being close to an American hydrogen bomb test in 1954, it aroused bitter protests not least because the Japanese had now become victims of yet another nuclear bomb just a few years on
from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also for epitomising the indifference of the American servicemen on a national level.

Though frequently characterised as meek and shy, analysis has shown that the rate of violent group disturbances, mostly of course unrelated to the American issue, was higher in Japan in the 1950s than in, say, France. There were 945 cases of collective coercion between 1952 and June 1960, of which 385 involved violence—and this is excluding Tokyo, where the largest Anpo protests occurred in May and June 1960.19 Many of these incidents were labour-related, as well as disputes over the behaviour of profit-hungry corporations, such as the anger from fishermen at Minamata towards the Shin Nihon Chisso Corporation that had poisoned their community. A visible percentage of protests also featured the involvement of Korean Japanese. These disturbances led to some 3,400 arrests.20

The uneasy marriage between the former enemies could not have been more awkward, or more invidious. The sociologist Shunya Yoshimi once wrote that in the immediate post-war period, ‘America’ manifested for the Japanese in two diverging simulacra: one a sanitised model for lifestyle consumption, such as in the burgeoning rock and jazz scenes, or the new shops; the other was one of violence—rape, censorship and protest. These began to be marginalised to geographical spheres in Japan, with the America-as-liberator trope taking precedence in mainstream Japan and major commercial parts of Tokyo, while the America-as-conqueror interpretation was taken up in those parts of the country near to US military bases.21

For the less politicised elements of society, there were always films and books to get passionate about instead. One beloved example was Season of the Sun, first published in 1955, followed by a film adaptation soon after. The book sold hundreds of thousands of copies, won a major fiction prize for up-and-coming writers, and launched the career of its author and his brother. The former was Shintarō Ishihara and the latter, Yujirō, the actor and star of the movie version. After dashing off Season of the Sun in just a handful of days, Shintarō went on to have a varied professional life of sailing, writing and as a controversial Tokyo governor, adored and detested in seemingly equal measure.

Season of the Sun introduces readers to the shallow life of a young boxer in the beach communities of Shōnan, a peninsula near Tokyo, and his friends, who spend their days chasing after girls. The protagonist, Tatsuya, finally meets his match in the feisty Eiko. Needless to say, there is plenty of strife, plus the requisite romantically tragic climax. Its most memorable
scene, and perhaps the most shocking and titillating for contemporary audiences, comes when Tatsuya’s erection pierces a sliding paper door. Ishihara was saying the post-war generation should put their cocks anywhere they wanted.

The one-dimensional novella depicts, via the misogynistic eyes of an arrogant male writer, a kind of pseudo-rebellious new youth movement, akin to the teen delinquents in America during the 1950s, though these kids, like the Ishiharas themselves, hail from affluent backgrounds and their mischief is as much posturing as genuinely anti-social. Coming off the back of the American occupation, still continuing in parts of the country, locals looked to Yujirō and Shintarō as their handsome heroes. Look at them, they get the girls! They just do what they want! It might seem strange with the passage of time that two wealthy playboys could become anti-establishment role models for young Japanese at the time, even for leftists. And yet they were, for a while, and their ilk were christened the Sun Tribe (taiyōzoku), a pun on the title of the book and film, and the shayōzoku, or ‘setting sun tribe’, the decaying Japanese aristocracy famously rendered in the work of Osamu Dazai.

The Sun Tribe had no interest in despair; they only had time for themselves. ‘This group of young men,’ as Ishihara wrote, ‘was mixed up in all sorts of sleazy doings—with women, questionable businesses, fights, and even blackmail … The young unconsciously tried to destroy the morals of their elders—morals which always judged against the new generation.’

If the Ishihara brothers and the ‘new generation’ they heralded were ‘broad and fresh’, they certainly were not the only men in the 1950s and 1960s oozing sexual energy on celluloid. Ken Takakura is the star who dominates the post-war period, especially the 1960s, most famously for his portrayals of tortured Yakuza gangster heroes. But whereas Shintarō and Yujirō were self-centred, wanton and profligate, Takakura’s roles saw him as yet another example of the classic Japanese loner—pure and righteous, always choosing sacrifice over personal happiness. The Takakura type was a mother-loving, deeply loyal hero, an individual who stood out from the group, but still faithful to his extended family, the gang. His causes were lost ones and he did not get the girl (in the case of Season of the Sun, neither does that hero either, though we can safely assume he moved on to the next bit of skirt fairly soon). The salaryman tasked with his own unenviable role of building up Japan again could look to Takakura and draw parallels between his corporate microspheres and Takakura’s more violent Yakuza world. It’s okay to fail just as long as try your hardest. It’s fine, and still
macho, even to cry at the poignant moments, since Takakura’s hero was often an emotional one. Like the Sun Tribe, he too was an outcast. And yet he was a puritanically loyal one, choosing his own fate as a sentimental defender of his fellow mobsters, typically ending in a fatal clash with the rival gang. Trapped and tormented by the strictures of the duty in the Confucian society, he ultimately upholds it by his loner’s sacrifice. More than rebel admiration, Takakura’s popularity was samurai hōganbiiki, that perennial love for the underdog.

Despite the best efforts of the Americans, the debate over Emperor Hirohito’s war guilt never went away during or after the occupation, and continues to be argued over today. If the emperor was unpleasantly tainted, his son, the crown prince, had no such hindrances. Presented as an ambassador for Japan’s modern post-war democracy, he attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of his father, an enlightened future sovereign witnessing the crowning of another young monarch who would preside over her own nation’s transition from guilty imperial power to liberal democracy. And when Prince Akihito married commoner Michiko Shōda in 1959, it was a glorious event marking a new beginning in a Japan where the war now seemed long, long ago. But the happy occasion was spoilt by an act that dared to break the sacred ‘Chrysanthemum taboo’.

As the parade was making its way through Tokyo, one young man ran out from the crowd. Enraged at the cost of the royal wedding and wanting to vent his anger at the emperor system by dragging the bride and groom from their horse-drawn carriage, Kensetsu Nakayama lobbed a baseball-sized stone at the couple and attempted to clamber on to their vehicle. Police and guards inevitably grabbed him and the parade continued on without further interruption. The event was captured on film and none other than Shintarō Ishihara later interviewed the ‘stone-thrower boy’ to provide him with a Sun Tribe-tinted opportunity to explain himself. Unfortunately for Nakayama, he was declared insane and locked away in the madhouse, his extraordinary lèse-majesté in the face of a buoyant and triumphant nation soon forgotten.
VOICES OF THE VOICELESS

Japan and the United States of America,
Desiring to strengthen the bonds of peace and friendship traditionally existing between them, and to uphold the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law,
Desiring further to encourage closer economic cooperation between them and to promote conditions of economic stability and well-being in their countries,
Reaffirming their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments,
Recognizing that they have the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense as affirmed in the Charter of the United Nations,
Considering that they have a common concern in the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East,
Having resolved to conclude a treaty of mutual cooperation and security,
Therefore agree as follows.

Thus, seemingly innocuously, begins the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, probably the most controversial law ever passed through the Diet. Its official name in Japanese is Nippon-koku to amerika-gasshūkoku to no aida no sōgō kyōryoku oyobi anzen hoshō jōyaku. The Japanese, though, have long liked to abbreviate, and for the facility of the media and, as it turned out, the populace at large seeking quick labels for an ever-expanding movement, they took the ‘an’
DISSENTING JAPAN

from *anzen* and the ‘ho’ from *hoshō*, welded them together and in the process transmuted the ‘ho’ to the easier-to-pronounce ‘po’. Anpo.

The word is talismanic. It signifies protest, government arrogance—and also defeat. And yet its rather clipped and gentle two syllables are actually something of a misnomer. We really mean ‘anti-Anpo’, the struggle against the security treaty (*Anpo tōsō*). According to different systems of Romanisation, we may write Anpo, Ampo, or, more starkly, ANPO. Quiddity aside, names for events with such legacies generate extra investigative labour that needs to be negotiated.

How could a security treaty have been so problematic? After all, the 1960 treaty was merely a revision of the earlier pact that had been signed in 1951 during the formal peace proceedings between America and Japan that officially ended the occupation. Surely any security treaty of mutual protection should have engendered confidence, perhaps complacency, or even gratitude.

Far from it, the Anpo movement represents the first, possibly only time in Japanese post-war history when a complete spectrum of society rallied to a cause and protested against what was seen as a bulldozing of parliamentary democracy. That the proposed renewal of the security treaty ran contrary to the wishes of most of the population is not as easy to prove as that the Japanese were appalled and exasperated by the behaviour of Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi. Never before had Japanese people demonstrated in such numbers and in such diversity. Not only hardened political radicals, mainstream leftists and labour unions, but housewives, shopkeepers, students, poets, singers, lecturers and taxi drivers all felt compelled to strike, to distribute leaflets and to come out on to the streets with placards.

Being so disparate and widespread, by definition each protestor’s reasons for protesting varied. At the least, it is factually proximate that the anti-Anpo movement galvanised and broadened immensely after Kishi gerrymandered the workings of the Diet to force through the bill, showing contempt for his opponents and a cynical denial of democracy. In the hands of a more adroit and sensitive premier the treaty could almost certainly have been signed, passed and ratified with less conflict.

By the police’s official tallies, Tokyo saw 223 demos involving 961,000 people on its streets between April 1959 and July 1960, and there were many others in cities around Japan, and certainly countless more gatherings and protests that were not recorded. At its peak in May and June 1960, there were demos every day in the capital, ranging from a few thousand protestors to perhaps as many as 330,000. It was not a peaceful protest.
movement. In its most fervent stages over one week of June, more than 800 policemen were injured. In total, official numbers state there were 1,782 police injuries, and 620 among demonstrating students and unionists, though it is almost certain the numbers for the protestors, being only the reported casualties, are too modest. One young person died in circumstances that today remain unclear. However, unlike Bloody May Day, no shots were fired by police at any time.¹

The Anpo movement was significant for being so large and diverse. But it was spearheaded by a handful of highly organised and experienced groups, married in an uneasy, sporadically effective left-wing alliance: the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), the Japanese Communist Party, the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (known as Sōhyō), and Zengakuren, the student league.

The JCP, suffering from the taint of its abortive enterprises in the 1950s, witnessed its finest hour yet during the anti-Anpo movement, though it also ended up alienating many younger activists. The JSP was already a mainstream political party with a sizable number of parliamentary seats. The role it played in the theatrics inside the Diet building remain perhaps the most extraordinary that typically austere political vessel has ever hosted.

The black sheep in the motley family was Zengakuren (Zen Nihon Gakusei Jichikai Sōrengō, or All-Japan League of Student Self-Governments). If Anpo saw the Left marrying despite their differences to fight for a common cause, then Zengakuren was the disobedient child at the wedding who consistently refused to behave. Founded in 1948 as a federation of 300,000 students from 145 universities, depending on your perspective, Zengakuren was either a band of revolutionaries, a group of patriots or a coterie of provocateurs. Pledged to opposing fascism and imperialism, as well as championing freedom for student life, its vision was both on and off the campus. It had been indelibly split into two factions ever since 1958: the ‘anti-mainstream’ student councils siding with the JCP’s Minsei Dōmei (Democratic Youth League), versus the more numerous Shagakudō (Socialist Student League) groups affiliated with the Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Communist League). Kyōsandō, as it was abbreviated, was also known by a mock-German nickname, Bund (strictly speaking, in Japanese, Bunto), and would come to be the most aggressive in the events of 1959 and 1960. It was a tōha, a faction, formed by radical Zengakuren members expelled from the JCP after criticising the party, and who then usurped control of the Zengakuren league. It sought to take communism back to true Marxism–Leninism and return to the militant revolutionary tactics the
JCP had abandoned in 1955. Along with the formation in 1957 of Kakukyōdō (Revolutionary Communist League), Kyōsandō’s arrival in 1958 marked the birth of the New Left in Japan.

At the time, though, Zengakuren was recovering from a slump. Following a rapid high soon after it was born, the organisation had been disgraced by the sanguinary events of May Day 1952, which led to a drop in membership, caused partly by students becoming savvy to how joining Zengakuren might hurt their future prospects. Employers had begun to ask at interviews if job candidates had ever been members. The league’s decline continued until the Sunagawa clash gave it a renewed impetus, when it successfully mobilised hundreds, sometimes thousands of students a day to join the air base protests. Anpo marked its full renaissance and its various groups would roar on into the rest of the 1960s. As for many organisations, the security treaty protest was an opportunity to recapture both political clout and media limelight.

Importantly, it was loose, by far the loosest of the main drivers of the Anpo movement. (To its ostensible allies, Zengakuren was more than just loose; it was a loose cannon.) Various student groups slipped unpredictably in and out of the Zengakuren umbrella. There were at the time something like 300,000 members, though only 2,000 were truly active ones. It had a hard-core and powerful Central Executive Committee that controlled decision-making across the different university groups, and major institutions with zealous members included the University of Tokyo and Meiji University. The average age of Bund leadership was under twenty-one. One of the most visible Zengakuren figureheads was Kentarō Karouji, a popular and stoic existentialist raised in poverty in Hokkaido.

The government hike on tuition fees in state universities likely did much to provide a generation’s worth of Zengakuren activists. A majority of students at the time were forced to work to support themselves, often eight or more hours a day, and in poorly paid and lower-class jobs such as delivery boys or night watchmen. The students were fed-up and hard-up, and their economic status naturally gave them a sense of resentment and anger. It also sounds rather facile in the light of the militant actions perpetrated by the non-JCP sections of league, but joining Zengakuren was a welcome opportunity to meet and interact with the opposite sex, in an age less free and permissive. Being poor, many of the students could not afford the kind of social activities that Ishihara’s Sun Tribe could indulge in every day. Zengakuren was ersatz entertainment for the young scholars unable to buy tickets to the cinemas or clubs. From 1954, Zengakuren also adopted group-
singing activities, which proved very popular with the students, not least perhaps because many of the songs were apolitical and actually pretty good too.4

Bund believed Japan was already in a condition of state monopoly capitalism. For them, the Kishi Cabinet was the true adversary and had to be stopped at all costs. Zengakuren hoped to use the Anpo protest to spark a global one-step revolution, lighting the timber through strategic violent actions.

The original 1952 security treaty had essentially been signed and ratified without real hiccups, though full details of the military bases it guaranteed were not revealed until afterwards. A poll by the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper in the autumn of 1951 found 80 per cent of people in favour of the new security treaty, before the particulars of the US military bases emerged.5 These would prove a thorny topic and lead to impassioned, if localised, anti-American protests.

The new treaty was opposed as it reinforced Japanese servility to America, turning Okinawa into a territory still occupied by a foreign power, to be used as a facility for their overseas adventures. Importantly, the Cold War was cranking up the tension and Anpo placed an obsequious Japan firmly in the American camp, despite its proximity to Russia and China. Needless to say, neither of the two main Communist powers was anything less than declamatory about the security treaty, which was viewed as a direct threat. Japan was seen locally, and by the Soviets and Chinese, as a base from which spy planes would take off. In effect, the United States was exploiting Japan as a hub for its Cold War campaign and be damned if Japan was attacked as a consequence. Though denied by the authorities, the JSP in particular publicly accused the United States of flying reconnaissance missions from Japanese air bases. The spying crisis remained in the background as the Anpo protests multiplied, becoming more urgent when the USSR announced in May 1960 that it would strike back at any base that launched a US spy plane, even if it were only a US ally. Anpo made Japan a target.

Of course, Kishi and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) argued that far from it, the treaty obliged mutual protection. America would defend Japan in the event of any war and in return would use Japanese soil to bolster its campaign against global communism. Obviously Japan, with its limited Self-Defence Forces, could not ‘defend’ America, so the ‘mutuality’ of the treaty lay primarily only in the resources of land. The Socialists
disagreed and wrangled over the wording of the treaty. They said that it implied US collective defence; in the event of an attack on Japan and US bases in Japan, the assault might be met by a US counterattack not from Japan or to help Japan, but from a different front, and with Japan abandoned to its fate as collateral damage.

After the occupation, any special affiliation with the United States was assumed to be temporary by almost all sides of the political spectrum. The relationship was, as CIA observer Tim Weiner has caustically observed, something akin to the one between prostitute and pimp.6 However, the Anpo protests were mostly free of anti-Americanism, especially compared to the local US base protests.7 Instead, more and more the placards, songs and slogans came to be coloured by anger at Kishi himself. On Bloody May Day it had been life-threatening for GIs to be near the protestors. But during the Anpo struggle, aside from one infamous incident involving a visiting American dignitary, ordinary Americans in Tokyo were free to watch the marches and protests from the sidelines without fear of abuse.

The Japan of 1952 and the first security treaty was not the same as the Japan of 1959. An economic white paper in 1956 famously began with the sentence: ‘The post-war is over.’ When the new treaty was being prepared, the country was experiencing economic growth and the dividends were paying off for many ordinary consumers. Between 1952 and 1958, GNP grew at an average rate of 7 per cent and things were even better during 1959 and 1961.8 Exports also tripled during the 1950s. Armed with prosperity, the population was purchasing cars and household appliances, with 48.5 per cent of households owning a television set by 1962.9 Though small enterprises were being left behind, income per capita increased by 80 per cent between 1955 and 1960.10 The Japanese had the highest incomes in Asia and the birth rate was not outstripping the steadily rising economy, leading to better standards of living.

Times were so good for many that they did not think much about the new treaty being discussed in 1959. Though newspapers devoted column inches aplenty to its dissection, protests and anger were not exceptional or successful. After all, Japan was buoyant and the issue of American militarism was less and less in the public eye, at least for Tokyoites. Relatively few bases were now left in the Tokyo area, other than Yokota, Tachikawa, Yokosuka and Zama. The total number of troops had also been halved to some 50,000 by 1960.11 In 1957, President Eisenhower and Kishi had agreed to decrease the numbers of US military facilities in the vicinity of large Japanese cities, and that the Japanese flag would be flown alongside the American one.
VOICES OF THE VOICELESS

But these developments had side effects. It was the confidence they engendered that led to a people who felt able at last to challenge their masters. There was also an upsurge in nationalism, for long a suppressed dirty word, reclaimed from the far Right by a new wave of post-war intellectuals. The general population expressed this re-birth of nationalism by visiting Shintō shrines in steadily increasing numbers throughout the 1950s. Support for the emperor also rose among normal Japanese, who enthusiastically attended his appearances to the crowds at the Imperial Palace on New Year’s Day.12

This vocal and confident liberal movement corresponded to a rising tide of industrial problems and local environment controversies, the unspoken truth behind Japan’s booming economy. In 1959, some 2,000 fishermen held a demo in Minamata City to protest negligent pollution that had caused the terrible eponymous disease whose impact is still felt in present-day Japan. And most conspicuously, during 1960 there was a drawn-out ten-month strike at Japan’s largest coal mine. Located in Kyushu, Miike had originally employed convict labour, Burakumin (outcaste), Koreans and prisoners-of-war to mine the coal. The owner of the mine, Mitsui, was trying to reorganise its assets in the face of a global shift from coal to oil (which would backfire spectacularly during the oil crisis of 1973–4). Their plans involved laying off over 1,000 workers, particularly union activists and members of the JSP and JCP—deliberately attempting to crush the mine’s union, which they felt was too powerful. Sōhyō supported the local union financially and a 312-day lockdown began in January. The bitter opposition that ensued became more acrimonious as the workers’ union split, at one point clashing in their hundreds among themselves on the picket line. In March, one striking miner died of knife wounds inflicted by a rightist goon employed by Mitsui. The Miike strike would ultimately collapse and Mitsui’s original plan prevail, though for much of 1960 it lurked in the background as an acrid southern parallel to the anger exploding on the streets of Tokyo.

The man who came to be the centre of the protest movement’s ire, Nobusuke Kishi, hailed from samurai stock. As a student, he had been influenced by ultra-nationalist philosopher Ikki Kita and visited the house of the ideologue behind the attempted military coup on 26 February 1936. Kishi was also a co-signer of the declaration of war on America and had been held without trial for three and a half years at Sugamo Prison as a Class-A war criminal. Released in 1948, he was rehabilitated and made his comeback into politics in 1952. Incredibly, it took him just five years to become prime minister, a mere thirteen after he had been a member of
Tōjō’s belligerent cabinet. It is truly an offensive irony that the instigator of the revised treaty that so flagrantly paid lip service to America over popular Japanese wishes would be a man whom the Americans had labelled a war criminal less than two decades previously. Here we see the duplicity of Japan’s supposed ‘post-war rebirth’—in fact, a virtual return to the imperial past in a half-baked disguise. Kishi was also unelected by the people; he had become prime minister through an internal party leadership contest triggered by the resignation of Tanzan Ishibashi in February 1957.

Commentators are rarely kind to Kishi. To many he was a chameleon, a cold opportunist. He was nicknamed ‘Ryōgishi’—‘both sides of the river’, a pun on his surname—since he always seemed to be on both banks at once. His reputation abroad, though, was good and he had been featured on cover of Time magazine in January 1960, hailed as the leader of a resurgent Japan. In an instance of rather cheap symbolism, a phoenix stood on the burning ruins of Tokyo (not so much ‘rising’ from the ashes as perching and looking proud of itself), while Kishi stared on with a statesmanlike, Mount Rushmore profile. At home, meanwhile, the press was characterising Kishi as arrogant and evasive, as throughout 1959 he continued to obfuscate the JSP’s enquiries in the Diet about the precise details and wording of the treaty.

The JSP, JCP, Sōhyō, Zengakuren and several other left-wing groups banded together to form the People’s Council for Preventing the Revision of the Security Treaty. A rudimentary collective, it was even without a leader for its first six months. The council mushroomed; by March 1960 it included 1,633 discrete organisations. This ingrained a key factor about the Anpo protest movement; it would remain divided into highly diverse groupings, at times working together but with only a general common ideology or banner. There was no single individual spokesman who stood out and is remembered today as a significant opponent of Anpo. People instead recall the opposition as originating from groups.

By the end of its tumultuous ride, the Anpo rollercoaster would come to signify the struggle for democracy itself. But initially in 1959 the demos, parades and sit-ins emphasised the peace movement; they were protesting militarism and the growing nuclear threat. On 25 June 1959, some 100,000 demonstrators marched across the country, though it was still a movement essentially relegated to hard-core political campaigners. Anti-treaty movements were being formed by groups of professionals—lawyers, intellectuals, teachers—and unionists, and it dominated the newspapers. The Japanese public knew a revision to the security treaty was approaching but did not yet have a grasp on the technical details, or why it mattered.
It burst into the consciousness of the mainstream following the 27 November 1959 protest, the culmination of seven united actions throughout the year. Half a million people nationwide were said to have joined in the marches, including 80,000 in Tokyo alone. JSP, JCP and Sōhyō leaders led the crowds at the Diet, where 5,000 police were barricading the grounds. People threw rocks at the police but the rallies progressed according to the plan. Hundreds of Zengakuren students from Hōsei, Meiji, Rikkyō, Keiō and other colleges had other ideas, however. Just at the moment that JSP politicians were at the gates of the Diet to present their petitions, the Zengakuren foot soldiers seized the opportunity of the gates being opened in order to charge into the Diet grounds. Later there was much gnashing of teeth and varying accusations over who led the charge, but, at any rate, there was a stampede of around 5,000 protestors rushing into the sacred grounds of Japanese democracy. The police were overwhelmed and eventually some 12,000 demonstrators were inside the compound.

While the mainstream political party leaders argued over what to do, the crowds were happy to sing, dance and shout slogans right outside the Diet. Though the people were peaceful and never threatening, some cheeky students even urinated on the walls of the parliament. Ultimately there was no serious violence, though over 400 protestors and 200 police officers were injured. The politicians and other leaders eventually encouraged the demonstrators to leave the compound, but thousands of unruly workers and students stubbornly remained until night.

The incident was greeted without enthusiasm by the public and it created only infighting among the anti-treaty groups. The ruling LDP accused the JSP of colluding with Zengakuren in the Diet incursion, and it likely did damage to the Anpo movement. Zengakuren, far from being deterred by criticism from outsiders and their fellow People’s Council members, were emboldened yet further. Their flippancy extended not only to the JSP and JCP, but to the police as well. The leaders hid out on university campuses to avoid arrest and on 30 November a police officer was also held hostage by other students for five hours at Waseda University.

The public mood was certainly against Zengakuren. With the movement irreparably beginning to split, attention now shifted towards a very practical tactic: preventing the prime minister from leaving the country to sign the treaty. Kishi was meant to depart from Haneda Airport, on the outskirts of Tokyo, to fly to Washington. It became a battle waged solely by Zengakuren, since they were by now isolated from the other main anti-Anpo forces. The police kept details of the departure secret, fearing a seri-
ous terrorist threat from the student radicals. But word slipped out, and they could not prevent some 700 to 800 arriving by bus and train after 7 p.m. on 15 January and then occupying the international departures lobby.\(^\text{17}\) By 10 p.m. the airport terminal had turned into a full-blown Zengakuren rally, complete with orations and singing of *The Internationale*.

Some unionists were also present to support the students, as well as right-wing opponents, keen to fight with the protestors. More students arrived, swelling the rally numbers even further, and then after midnight the army set about making a barricade with chairs and tables from the airport restaurants. The police were reinforced and at around 3 a.m. began to evict the occupiers, picking them up one by one and carrying them outside. Seventy-six were arrested, including many high-ranking activists.\(^\text{18}\) The police were proud that their actions at Haneda meant they were able to arrest almost all of Zengakuren’s top brass, including Kentarō Karouji. One of the arrested also included a female student called Michiko Kanba, later the single most-remembered name from the Anpo movement, though for all the wrong reasons.

Kishi was, of course, able to depart. His car convoy took him from his residence in the early hours straight to the runway. His plane took off, watched dismally in the rain by some 2,000 demonstrators. The Haneda battle had been an abject failure but garnered plenty of publicity for the movement. Zengakuren students were even criticised by the left-leaning *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper; the only thing they shared were ‘oily hair and putting on the airs of heroes’.\(^\text{19}\) They were the delinquents of the Left, nicknamed the Red Sun Tribe (*akai taiyōzoku*) or the Red Thunder Tribe (*akai kaminarizoku*). The radicals themselves boasted that their efforts had caused agitation against the world bourgeoisie.

Worldwide or not, agitation or not, the failure at Haneda did not deter the anti-Anpo movement but pushed it into further actions. Bund radicals again turned a protest violent in mid-April, clashing with police outside the Diet, while on 26 April, as many as 4,000 Bund students charged the Diet gates in a riot that involved a fracas with 600 rightists. More leaders were arrested and eighty-three police and forty-one students injured.\(^\text{20}\) The students were deeply inspired by the student riots in Korea in March, which had led to the overthrow of Syngman Rhee, as well as the 1956 Hungarian revolution. They believed that they could force Kishi to resign by their bold and violent methods.

Other more conventional demonstrations and tactics continued. The JSP organised a national petition, which had 13.5 million signatories by May.
On May Day, some 600,000 protestors rallied peacefully. Though it was far from the case that the population was all either indifferent or opposed to the treaty—there were vocal supporters, for example—the clamour now attracted the attention of three former prime ministers as well as nationalists on the right. When even an ex-imperial general warns publicly of the dangers Japan faces if it makes enemies of China and Russia through ratifying the agreement, a conservative premier should listen—but Kishi’s ears remained stubbornly deaf.

The prime minister was pressing ahead to get the treaty through parliament. On the morning of 19 May, he and his party formally proposed an extension to the Diet term to accommodate the debates that were delaying ratification. The JSP opposed the extension and literally barricaded House Speaker Ichirō Kiyose in his office, who, in another of the historical ironies that occur throughout the Anpo episode, had been Tōjō’s defence lawyer at his trial for war crimes and had himself been purged from public office after the war. (Another example is that the US ambassador to Japan was Douglas MacArthur III, nephew of the supreme commander.) Kishi had also been trapped in his office to prevent him from getting back to the main chamber to participate in the session. There were brawls between LDP and JSP politicians’ staff in the corridors of power. After the People’s Council called for an emergency mobilisation in the afternoon, some 15,000 demonstrators were protesting at the Diet by early evening, met by 5,000 police guards.

The Socialists were still engaged in a mass sit-down, along with their secretaries. When the bells for the session rang, Kiyose could not reach the rostrum to start the proceedings. Infamously, he then ordered police into the Diet at 11 p.m. Some 500 officers came in and forcibly carried out the JSP members. ‘LDP, shame on you!’ the JSP parliamentarians cried. Five suffered injuries as they were expelled. Amid scenes of chaos, Kiyose made his way to the dais and started the session, with only the ruling LDP present to vote properly.

In fact, unbeknown to the Socialists and even Kishi’s enemies in the LDP, the session was not only voting for the Diet extension but for approving the treaty itself. Since there was no one now to oppose the extension, it passed unanimously—though, importantly, while JSP members and their secretaries were still being evicted by the police and thus arguably prevented from taking part. And then, after a notional interval of fifteen minutes, just after midnight, the treaty was approved. It was a sneaky coup d’état.

The newspapers were immediately indignant at Kishi’s manipulation of parliamentary procedure, and also criticised Kiyose for agreeing to hold the
second vote. The photograph of the Diet members approving the treaty and then celebrating with banzai cheers, in contrast to the rows of conspicuously empty JSP seats next to them, became a glaring image of how democratic practice had collapsed. The treaty was now set for automatic ratification and legal approval on 19 June, the same day that President Eisenhower was also scheduled to visit. The JSP and other opposition parties boycotted parliament and called for a general election to take place. They claimed the Diet extension was invalid and that Kishi must resign. Factions in the LDP itself blocked Kishi’s bill in the Upper House, as his own party plotted how to manoeuvre their unpopular leader’s exit after the crisis was over. It was from this point that the public mood notably turned against Kishi, and even moderates or the politically uninitiated joined demos.

The radicals were inflamed and hundreds of Zengakuren activists attacked the prime minister’s official residence on 20 May, scaling the walls and breaking down the gate. Sixty-six students and 149 police were injured.23 Kishi had to escape temporarily to his nearby office while the Zengakuren foot soldiers invaded his home.

Following the forced vote on Anpo, Kishi did not hold any press conferences for over a week on the tenuous excuse that the ‘political situation is tricky’.24 Upon finally facing journalists on 28 May, he answered a question over the scale of the opposition to the treaty with a revealing choice of language: ‘If we yield now, Japan will fall into a grave crisis. It is perhaps only a difference in perception, but I think we must turn our ears to the “voiceless voices”. Now all we have are those “voices with voices”.’25 The phrase betrays Kishi’s total disconnect from reality and his own behaviour. Far from listening to the voices of the voiceless, Kishi had used dubious tactics to pass a controversial treaty that was still being debated in parliament. The voices of the voiceless were the members of the public who were now realising they were opposed to the treaty and had not until then vocalised their opinions. This would change over the next few weeks in June. The famous words would even become the name of a small demonstration group started by intellectual-activist Shunsuke Tsurumi.

It has been argued that the crisis of the next two months was primarily a Tokyo experience. With the opposition parties’ boycott lasting until 18 July, the Diet, despite its hard-fought extension, did not function for two months. Meanwhile, Kishi had crowds haranguing him nightly outside his residence. We need to be careful not to overstate the crisis. The country operated; people still went to work and took part in leisure activities. In
late May there were even tours of US air and naval bases that continued uneventfully. The demonstrations that grew more fevered, numerous and frequent in June were, with the exception of some high-profile occupations and nationwide strikes, located largely at several key central Tokyo sites: the Diet, the American embassy and Kishi’s official residence. Much of the rest of the city and especially other parts of Japan were quiet, and you could likely often find few or no signs of the political situation. Nonetheless, Anpo was not a solely metropolitan experience. Demos happened in other cities and strikes were widespread. Protestors travelled to the capital from the regions, and Zengakuren mobilised students from provincial universities to come up to Tokyo and join the melee. Even back in January, at the Haneda Airport incident, a group of students had journeyed up from Kyoto just for the purpose of protesting and trying to prevent Kishi’s departure.

Tokyo was the centre of the struggle but it was not alone. A general strike on 4 June, which Sōhyō claimed 5.6 million unionists participated in, affected taxis, trains and more. Zengakuren Bund students and labourers occupied the tracks of Shinagawa Station in Tokyo, along with other stations. These few hundred protestors caused delays and issues with over 900 trains. However, they drew the ire from the railway workers’ union, who berated them publicly in the station and urged them to leave. From 2 p.m. until the end of the day, small businesses and 20,000 shops in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and other regional cities put up anti-Anpo signs and closed. Tokyo alone saw 8,000 shops join this strike and 30,000 small business employees stage a protest. Over 135,000 rallied at the Diet.26

The Anpo movement was at its most wide-reaching now, involving cooks, nurses, fishermen, high-school students, taxi drivers—all wearing their respective uniforms and protesting in unison. The strikes and protests stretched across social groups and classes, professionals and workers, housewives, students, radicals, the rich and the poor. Tadanori Yokoo captures the fervour of the times when he talks of how the young people would go out to the demos wearing their most stylish clothes, and bystanders for a moment might have thought they were off to attend the opening of a fashionable new coffee shop.27 There was Anpo criticism in the newspapers from sports players; entertainers and singers gave out flyers and leaflets. Major cultural figures such as Shūji Terayama, Shintarō Ishihara (a right-winger), novelist Kenzaburō Ōe and the poet Shuntarō Tanikawa all voiced their opinions at public events. The Right were not resting on their nationalist laurels either; Anpo led to unprecedented amounts of flyers and leaflets from right-wing groups.
To do groundwork for the upcoming presidential visit, Eisenhower’s press secretary, James C. Hagerty, came to Japan on 10 June. Any arriving dignitary expects a welcoming party but Hagerty saw none of the famous Japanese hospitality at Haneda. A medley of different opposition groups turned up to greet the foreigner, including non-mainstream Zengakuren, some unions, and JCP and JSP delegations. (Ironically, this was one dramatic Anpo moment where Bund was not involved.) Alighting from his airplane to a waiting Cadillac, Hagerty and his American companions fatefully decided not to take a nearby US helicopter, but tried to leave in their vehicle. The 10,000 demonstrators mobbed the car, shaking it, chanting and shouting at the occupants to go back home. People got on to the top of the car and others flourished a communist red flag. The Socialists and JCP officials stood to the sidelines, deferential but powerless. Police managed to race in and form a human shield around the Cadillac, but were then pelted with stones and placards by the demonstrators. It was an hour before a helicopter could land safely and take the visitors away. Hagerty and the other occupants of the car, including the American ambassador to Japan, were in no real danger. But after this face-to-face and ugly episode, there were now serious doubts on the American side about the wisdom of letting Eisenhower continue his planned trip.

It remains controversial how spontaneous this mobbing had been and whether Hagerty was being used as a guinea pig to test the mood, though it seems unlikely that Hagerty was expected to use a car. Nevertheless, the non-Bund Zengakuren members were accused of plotting an attack in advance.

Despite the explosion of anger at the Eisenhower scouting party, Kishi did not cancel the trip. Public opinion was against such a display of leftist extremism and the scenes of the Cadillac almost swallowed by the sea of protestors worried ordinary businessmen, who had their eyes on the effect on international trade. The perennial squabbling and power struggle between the People’s Council affiliates was also in danger of stalling the opposition movement. The struggle was always over tone: was the protest anti-government or anti-American?

Bund had effectively been decapitated by the police, with most of its leaders languishing in prison. The young radicals had reserve commanders, though, who now began planning their new stunt, to coincide with a strike and demo by Sōhyō on 15 June and regain the publicity they had lost to the JCP-affiliated Zengakuren after the Hagerty Incident. Nationwide, some 5.8 million people joined in the general strike. The demo surrounding the Diet
swelled to over 100,000. Into this, Zengakuren entered with well-prepared tactics. They targeted the Diet gates, guarded by 5,000 police. While battling with right-wingers present at the event and throwing stones at the police, other radicals used wire-cutters to infiltrate the gates in the late afternoon. The police hosed the invaders with water cannons but were being pushed back into the compound. By the evening, some 1,500 protestors were inside the Diet grounds.

A group of 200 rightists had at some point driven a truck into the demonstrators, aggravating the situation. During the ensuing police counterattack to drive out the Zengakuren students with clubs, Michiko Kanba was killed in circumstances which are still uncertain. The autopsy report later recorded that she likely died from suffocation, though there was also evidence that she had been strangled. Her death did nothing to abate the turmoil and violence. Thousands of students remained in the Diet grounds until late at night and Zengakuren leader Satoshi Kitakoji called for a respite to offer a silent prayer for their martyr. Seven police trucks were overturned and the police were forced to use tear gas and clubs to eject the protestors. They even attacked members of the media, including one unlucky radio journalist who was dragged off by his throat while he was giving a live broadcast. ‘There’s no law here, no order or anything,’ he told listeners. ‘Only suffering. Only the rampage of the police and the suffering of the students.’

Inside the Diet, JSP politicians berated Kishi in his office. Even after they had been finally expelled from the parliament grounds, the rampage did not stop, as 8,000 demonstrators continued their battle with the police, throwing stones and calling them ‘murderers’ and ‘pigs’. In the early hours of the morning, they sacked a police substation (kōban, sometimes called a ‘police box’). In total, eighteen police vehicles were set alight or damaged. Nearly 200 were arrested, including members of the rightist gang that escalated the chaos that day. The brutality was shocking for everyone. Many of the casualties were laid out in front of the Diet to wait for ambulances. Others were carried to hospital by passing cars, which were soon bloodied from the wounds of their passengers.

Michiko Kanba was just twenty-two years old and a fourth-year student at the University of Tokyo. She suffered from asthma but had been a committed activist ever since the founding of Bund. The rumours that the police had murdered her persisted—for some time, it was even believed that more had died that night and the police were concealing the bodies. At her subsequent memorial service, her father accused the police of killing his young daughter.
Her death was likely the incident that finally tipped the balance. Not only had a young woman died, she was a student at Japan’s top university and a senior member of Zengakuren—both male-dominated institutions. In other words, she was the very stuff martyrs are made of, appealing to ordinary citizens and fellow student protestors. The Eisenhower trip was cancelled on 16 June, despite the extraordinary hand extended to the government by the Yakuza, offering to provide protection for the visitor. A demo on 16 June saw 100,000 people participate in the rain, with the buildings around the Diet now graffitied not with ‘Topple Kishi’ but the rather more chilling ‘Kill Kishi’. The outpouring spread to regional universities over the two days after Kanba’s death. According to police records, there were sixty-eight school head meetings, with 3,108 participants, and demos in fifty-three schools involving 29,470 people. The so-called Big Seven—the baker’s half-dozen of the country’s leading newspapers—issued a joint statement urging the government to ‘wipe out violence’ and ‘preserve parliamentary democracy’:

Quite apart from whatever may have been the causes, the bloody incidents on the night of June 15th inside and outside the Diet were utterly deplorable and threw parliamentary democracy into a crisis. Never before have we been so deeply disturbed as we are now about the future of Japan.

At a press conference, however, Kishi played down the claims of social instability, stating that there were more people in the capital’s cinemas and baseball stadia than protesting on the streets; that Ginza’s shopping boulevards were as calm as normal, that the demos were only around his official residence and the Diet. To proffer arguments that sports facilities were full when a young female university student had been crushed to death in murky circumstances once again exposed Kishi’s intractable detachment from the mood in the media and the public, not to mention remarkable insensitivity.

Further strikes followed on 15 and 22 June, with Sōhyō claiming the participation of 5.1 and 6.2 million workers respectively. Meanwhile, protests continued at the Diet in the tens of thousands, with Zengakuren joined by ‘office ladies’, businessmen and housewives. And still Kishi would not relent. With the treaty set to receive automatic final ratification at midnight on 18 June, a 330,000-strong protest began in the afternoon at the Diet and turned into a sit-down. The protestors, many wearing black mourning ribbons, became angry that, despite their immense numbers, Bund and the People’s Council had ultimately proven impotent. They shouted at each
other in their frustration. At midnight, some students wept. The Anpo struggle had failed and the treaty was law. Demonstrations continued but the movement was essentially over. Beset by opponents in the LDP and nation at large, Kishi resigned on 23 June, effectively wiping the slate clean.

Anpo signalled the rise of the New Left and the decline of elements of the Old Left. Later in the 1960s, when student activism reached its apogee, the parliamentary failure of the mainstream left-wing parties informed radicals’ decisions to take matters into their own hands on the streets, since direct action now seemed the only effective means of protest.

In the aftermath, Zengakuren, the JSP and the JCP all scrapped to take credit for the movement and for the rights to interpret the struggle in their own way. However, there was no true beneficiary. The JCP saw a modest immediate rise in membership and in the readership of Akahata. Zengakuren was praised by the Soviets and Chinese as heroes, but became even more disunited. The People’s Council spent ¥6.5 million ($18,055) promoting and executing the campaign over 1959 and 1960, and the sources of the funds were predictably questioned, with accusations that support had come from the Communist Bloc or China.39 There was no way to prove this, although it is known that Bund received some ¥5 million from a right-wing businessman, Seigen Tanaka, seemingly in an attempt to make the Left self-destruct.40

Kishi’s successor, Hayato Ikeda, proved a very popular prime minister, thanks especially to his income-doubling scheme in the early 1960s. Just as statesmen are fungible, replaced and soon forgotten, people now had money to take their minds off their previous anger. Anpo proved to be an incongruous prelude to a period of remarkable political calm, and economic and social prosperity. The Ikeda administration also quickly moved to diffuse and successfully end the protracted Miike mine strike, the last major labour movement in the post-war period.41 It was a shrewd act and helped the LDP shed the nasty taste that Kishi had left in the voters’ mouths. In the general election of November 1960, the leftist parties made minor gains, but the conservative LDP still achieved a solid victory.

Were the Japanese people really so fickle that they would allow affluence to induce collective amnesia on an issue millions of them had protested about just months before? Had Anpo been just a fad? That was the conclusion of Edwin O. Reischauer, admittedly a mouthpiece of officialdom who became the American ambassador to Japan in 1961. He compared Anpo to other examples of mass participation national events such as the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and 1970 Osaka World Exposition.42
Certainly the mass media in Japan has long been obsessed with buzzwords and making self-fulfilling proclamations on current ‘trends’. This is very much the case today—the end of the year customarily sees a list of key words and kanji characters chosen to represent moods and fashions, and television and magazines are constantly pegged down with analysis of ad agency-coined ‘booms’. Interestingly, this preoccupation with trends has a very long history. Even in the Heian period, 1,000 years ago, the word imamekashi (literally, ‘now-ish’) was used to praise someone as modern, chic and up-to-date.

But while Anpo did not become the Rubicon it at one point augured, it is also not accurate to say that emotions disappeared overnight. Large demos continued into July, as did the boycott on the Diet by the political opponents of the treaty. Many of the participants went on to become lifelong peace campaigners. But with Kishi gone from the scene, the movement lost its target. So much of the rage had been focused on the insensitive prime minister; particularly after 20 and 21 May the placards notably turned from declaring anti-Anpo messages to anti-Kishi ones. Kishi effigies had even been hanged at demos. While the JSP, JCP and Zengakuren remained committed to their larger battles, the general population who participated were suddenly without a convenient unifying symbol, and now, most people having vented their fury, the very loose and broad nature of the movement likely proved its undoing. It was also a problem of timing. Kishi resigned in June, after which the university students had their summer holidays, when many left Tokyo to go back to their hometowns. The calendar effectively demobbed the troops.

Demonstrations were required to be registered with the Tokyo Metropolitan Public Safety Commission in advance. This system remains today. It is one reason why protests in Japan can appear to look like dress rehearsals for rallies, sometimes with more police than protestors, the authorities marshalling the demonstrators along, closing off roads and hustling around the marching group like overly protective babysitters. It is significant that in the case of Anpo, faced with a Commission that would frequently block rallies near the Diet, the People’s Council, despite its leaders being respected political entities, simply stopped applying and registering demos after 20 May.43 The Anpo struggle thus became by its very presence on the streets an illegal act of defiance.

The huddled and escorted order broke down and was replaced by a series of carnivalesque demos, including the ‘snake dance’ or ‘zigzag’ (jiguzagu), where long columns of protestors would link arms. Those in the first row
VOICES OF THE VOICELESS

would hold on to a pole or stave to stay in line and steer the others behind. This serpentine horde would then career around, knocking into whatever or whoever was in their path. It was a destructive but liberating motion. The leader would blow a whistle while the others jogged in rhythm, chanting as the mass twisted around the streets. Several protestors wide, it was athletic, mesmeric and very, very effective. It would become a fixture of student and New Left demos in the years to come.

An interesting yet coincidental parallel can be drawn with native Japanese Shintō and the matsuri festivals that take place seasonally at shrines. They centre on the shrine tutelary deity being carried around by local men in a shoulder-borne ark, the omikoshi, followed by a parade of drummers and fellow celebrants. This ritual can often become a frenzy of sounds and speed, with the bearers particularly vocal, chanting ‘Wasshoi! Wasshoi!’ while pitching the omikoshi from side to side in rhythm to the music. Though the link to the Shintō matsuri is not a direct one, the Anpo movement witnessed similar behaviour among the throng, the reverie of the carnival where the population was intent on expressing its anger at the authorities and, despite their growing individual prosperity, in losing themselves, in wallowing in disobedience. Like a drug, Anpo was an excuse to liberate people from their inhibitions and was often a fun experience, though the outrage was genuine.

Otherwise, the theatre of Anpo took the form of sit-downs and marches, sometimes jogging, frequently accompanied by talks, speeches and songs. Fraternity was shown through so-called ‘French-style’ demos, where participants would hold hands walking down boulevards in long horizontal lines. There were leaders for every small unit of demonstrators and, except for those violent conflagrations, the protests were typically highly organised affairs. This was necessary, since for many it was their first taste of taking part in a protest. Their reasons for participating were manifold but likely it was an emotive response to Kishi that spurred most of the virginal demonstrators, as well as curiosity at the political delirium: Anpo was undeniably an exciting time to live through, rich in characters and drama.

And yet, for all the hubbub of dissent it offers, Anpo effectively supports the arguments that Japan is a homogenised and unified culture, one that favours the collective unit over the individual. In the structure of the protests, the group was predominantly the most important unit. Yes, the struggle saw a wide spectrum of society protest together, but they did so largely as groups and subgroups, with their clan leaders channelling them towards the demo grounds or committing their contribution to the cause in some other form. It
was organisations and unions of the various occupations that ensured their people were striking or marching on the various days. We find very few examples of masses of people volunteering to demonstrate on their own accord. Even the individual students were co-opted into the demos by the clubs and organisations they were affiliated with at university.

It could be argued that this modus operandi prevented many individuals from participating, since they did not have the permission of their supervisors or the safety net of a band of associates willing to accompany them. This may have been the case for many male businessmen, who could not take the time off work or risk the ire of employers or colleagues. We can see their sympathy when Zengakuren collected donations in Tokyo and Kyoto for the medical costs for students injured in the bloody encounters with police and received plenty of donations, including ¥1,000 alms from salarymen, no small amount at the time.

Surveys during the protest movement reveal a general feeling of anger in the population as a whole. One conducted by the Asahi Shimbun recorded that 50 per cent of respondents thought the government and the LDP’s handling of the Anpo bill had been poor, while 56 per cent felt that the Diet was no longer operating for the population. The same survey also had 58 per cent of respondents say that the Kishi Cabinet should resign. The overall consensus is likely indisputable. However, the actual participation in dissent was fundamentally achieved within the framework of the group, and the whole episode arguably conciliated the Diet as the centre of power in the country, and the faction as the unifying force behind a social movement, and not an individual effort. That being said, Satoshi Kitakōji has described the student protestors as nascent intellectuals taking part in a search for personal selfhood (shutaisei): ‘It is therefore extremely important,’ claimed the Zengakuren leader, ‘to recognise the student movement as a process of that formation of selfhood which might solve this universal problem of intelligentsia, at the same time that it exists as a political movement.’

If Anpo in many ways proved, then, a very Japanese revolution, one directed from above, there were more organic results. Kishi had been unseated but Ikeda was merely carrying on with the LDP programme. Anpo did have a lasting impact, though, on the intellectual fabric of Japan. The post-war progressive intelligentsia was drawn into the struggle in a way like never before, cementing their growing trumpeting of a new Japanese nationalism for the common people and free of the taint of emperor worship.

At the forefront were Masao Maruyama and Shunsuke Tsurumi. The latter would form the famous, though not especially effective, Koe Naki Koe
no Kai (Voiceless Voices Association), taking its name from Kishi’s blundering phrase. Tsurumi would also resign from his position at the Tokyo Institute of Technology in late May 1960, on the premise that it technically made him a public servant and thus a member of the same establishment as Kishi. Maruyama drew passionate attention to what was at stake—democracy itself—when he addressed a crowd of 2,500 academics, critics and students at a rally on 24 May.

The rally was followed by a demonstration at the Diet by the scholars, while Maruyama and forty-nine others staged a sit-down for five hours in the reception of the prime minister’s official residence to demand a meeting with Kishi. Although not a natural leader and largely encouraged to speak at the behest of others, Maruyama was seen as a popular champion of democracy, which would contrast to how he and other academics responded to the student movement eight years later.

Intellectuals were now activists, defenders of democracy and spokespersons for the common man. The philosopher Takaaki Yoshimoto was also involved in the protests and was even arrested. More notoriously, it was a group of academics that suffered one of the most overt cases of police brutality during the Anpo protests, when on the fateful night of 15 June, sixty-five placard-carrying professors found themselves beaten by police as they tried to intervene peacefully in the battle. The group pressed charges and many of the professors were awarded large damages.

But this newly invigorated wave of intellectuals was not simply seeking its own agenda of self-aggrandising. They sincerely aimed to inspire and animate ordinary Japanese into becoming citizen activists. They called this new capacity the shimin. Translating directly as ‘citizen’ (or ‘city people’), from the mid-1950s the intelligentsia each promoted their own varying nuances in the meaning of shimin, but it was clearly intended as a civic role for people who were self-aware of the responsibility of democracy and actively fought for it in their daily lives. It cannot simply be lumbered in with ‘the people’ (kokumin) or ‘the masses’ (taishū). It is a far more astute and radical concept, and with Anpo it progressed from academic idea to exemplum to be seized in the public sphere. Moving away from the notion of a ‘citizen’ being just someone in a town or city, or even, especially in communist lexicon, the petite bourgeoisie, being a shimin was now progressive. Normal people could be the agents of serious social change, defending their daily lives against the incursions of the nation state. It was simultaneously subjective and private, but also active, social, spontaneous and anti-authoritarian.
DISSENTING JAPAN

While the technical implications of the security treaty were likely far beyond the comprehension or scope of interest of most people, the reason for the breadth of participation in the protests was likely achieved because Anpo witnessed the culmination of proto-shimin groups forming and organising ordinary citizens, especially housewives and the non-politicised. Housewives, always a social stratum much maligned, had already demonstrated their shimin worth in the years before Anpo. It was educated middle-class housewives in Suginami in Tokyo who initiated Japan’s first real Ban-the-Bomb campaign after the tuna vessel Daigo Fukuryū Maru sailed into a radiation shower from an American hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll in 1954. The assiduous housewives who were members of Sugi no Ko-kai (Children of the Cedars), ostensibly a reading club, started an anti-nuclear petition and had collected 32.3 million signatures within a year, around a third of the population. 48 Though we should be careful not to overplay the participation of these new shimin in Anpo—something like 70 per cent of the demonstrators were actually organised workers49—the hubs from which they originated, including associations like the Koe Naki Koe no Kai, and the energy they represented, would fuel continued civic activism in Japan for the next decades, the pioneers for the mature grassroots activism that has taken off in Japan since the 1990s.

It is important to note that, unlike the protestor, being a shimin was not anonymous. You had to volunteer yourself, declare yourself. If it is easy in hindsight to accuse the masses of seizing the opportunity presented by Anpo to lose themselves in the crowd, in the fervour of the moment, then being a shimin offered no such reward. It demanded you stand up and take on an active, identified role.50 Arguably, Anpo lacked spontaneity, except for its moments of extraordinary violence, since the protests were so well organised by the groups. Shimin groups were also organised but they were done so by individual and impromptu actions. The energy came from the participants, not from above.

Wealth and new household appliances kept the population busy. Mass demonstrations took place when the next security treaty renewal rolled round in 1970 but were not as singular as in 1960, being less about asserting ‘Japanese’ independence from American influence as Okinawa and the Vietnam War. Despite the watershed rallies and Kishi’s toppling, the main and most serious issue in 1960 had foundered. Perhaps the real legacy of Anpo, then, was the cementing of the grassroots civic movements around the country under the shimin ideal. Anpo provided many of the nascent shimin with new political opportunities, and later in the decade these associations would proliferate.
Inejirō Asanuma, chairman of the Japan Socialist Party, was giving an innocuous speech in Hibiya, central Tokyo, when a young zealot rushed on to the podium and charged him. In front of the nation’s television cameras, the youth drove a sword deep into Asanuma’s side as he collided with the sixty-one-year-old politician, knocking him to the ground. The boy was immediately seized and pulled away by a crowd and the stage was a scene of chaos.

Asanuma’s assassination by ultra-nationalist Otoya Yamaguchi was captured on film, though it is a single image that has become famous. Something absurd lingers over the photograph by Yasushi Nagao, which captured the exact moment Asanuma was stabbed and made Nagao the first Japanese photographer to win the Pulitzer Prize. The victim’s glasses appear to balance ridiculously, impossibly, on the tip of his nose, defying gravity. He looks like the hapless recipient of a slapstick stunt. Meanwhile, Yamaguchi is poised in a frozen moment of violent attack; the incongruity with Asanuma’s apparent bumbling buffoonery is profane. Likewise, on the footage, there is no fountain of spraying blood, no theatrics. Where is the death? It is only with the aid of the imagination can you venture what a shard of razor-sharp steel will do to your organs as it plunges right through your body.

Asanuma was a visible figure during the Anpo struggle, which preceded his murder in October 1960. He was a high-profile socialist but not a particularly famous or dynamic leader. He was perhaps a strange target for a
young fascist, yet no doubt an easy one. Claiming that Asanuma was a traitor to his country for making friendly overtures to China and the USSR, Yamaguchi also planned to kill the head of the JSP. His violence was not a new development; he had been steadily evolving towards it since the year before. He was a member of Bin Akao’s Dai Nihon Aikoku-tō (Great Japan Patriotic Party), one of the right-wing groups that had often clashed with Anpo demonstrators, and had a colourful criminal record: disrupting radio broadcasts about the security treaty, throwing smoke bombs, trespassing, injuring police officers, destroying a sign giving information on an anti-Anpo petition and wielding violence. However, because of his age, he had only received probationary sentences for his previous offences. Three weeks after being dragged to the ground and apprehended at the scene of his crime, Yamaguchi committed suicide in prison, though not before writing on the wall: ‘Service for my country seven lives over. Long Live His Majesty the Emperor.’ Despite his hubris, however, all Yamaguchi truly achieved in concrete terms was the pulling from cinemas of Night and Fog in Japan, the Anpo-themed film by leftist director (and one-time senior Zengakuren member) Nagisa Ōshima.

Yamaguchi was seventeen, a child soldier of the far Right. Nobel Prize-winner Kenzaburō Ōe brilliantly understood the lonely nature of such extremist youths. In his novella Seventeen, published just after the Asanuma incident in January 1961, he charts the seduction and rise of a boy ultranationalist, and draws the lines of his political awakening not to economic or social circumstances but to a core of personality hang-ups. His narrator is narcissistic and self-obsessive; his complex is both a supreme form of egoism—his world is everything—and masochism—you are nothing compared to your leader, the ultimate example of which is the emperor. From this character it is an easy transition into murder. Seventeen’s nationalist is also, of course, the same age as Yamaguchi, but there is nothing glamorous about him. Quite the opposite; his narcissism manifests itself as autoeroticism—he is a chronic masturbator. This also yields permanent shame and a sense of physical self-hatred and deficiency. His nadir comes in an episode where he wets himself in front of his fellow students.

Following his humiliation, he tags along with another classmate to see a well-known rightist give a speech at Shinbashi in Tokyo. He finds himself inspired by the malice and hatred of the oration, which seems to talk to him directly. He joins the rightist’s group and then progresses from being an outcast at school to becoming fearfully respected by students and teachers. His new affiliation even serves as a gateway for losing his virginity in
THE CLOWN’S COUP

a brothel; rightist sociality is linked to co-existing with self-loathing and sexual dysfunction. His mentor finally christens him by writing on his karate uniform the same words as Yamaguchi’s valediction. He is by then a hardened ultra-nationalist thug, despite of—or precisely because of—his age. He declares his ‘individual I’ to be dead, along with all selfishness. Throwing himself into the street battles of the Anpo conflict, when Michiko Kanba dies he feels the ‘orgasm of a rapist’.2

Ôe, a left-wing writer and anti-imperialist, received threatening letters for his portrayal and his publisher was forced to apologise. A sequel novella was never been reprinted for fear of reprisals.

Anpo exposed something new in Japan—united public political anger that was largely left-wing in tone—but also stirred up and brought to the fore what many had hoped had died in 1945: ultra-nationalism. As demos and rallies descended into melees, at the frontline of the battles between police and protestor were the thugs of a new generation of Japanese rightists. The resurgent rightist (uyoku) movement, like a perennial contagion, was present in Tokyo during Anpo, as well as the scuffles at the Miike mine protests. Its ugly interference serves as a reminder that radicalism in post-war Japan does not belong only to the Left.

For all their violent bravado, the Right also knew how to lurk behind the scenes and attempt to control proceedings. And so we find Kentarō Karouji and Zengakuren being funded by Seigen Tanaka, a bizarre right-wing figure who was a secretary of the Communist Party in the 1920s. He was arrested in 1933 during a government crackdown, armed with a machine gun and wearing a bulletproof vest.3 He spent eleven years in jail but then converted to ultra-nationalism, using his money from the construction industry (American bases in Okinawa were among his portfolio) to finance leftist students in the hope that it would advance them towards self-destruction. A dapper and well-dressed businessman, he is said to have given $15,000 to Zengakuren during Anpo, have had close ties with the CIA and even to have assisted in the fall of Sukarno in 1966.4 Likewise, during the Anpo crisis, Yoshio Kodama, the elder statesman of the Right who Kishi knew from his spell in prison, offered the government to use his contacts to mobilise thousands of Yakuza gangsters and right-wing heavies to provide security corps for Eisenhower.

These did not make the headlines in the same way as the flamboyant charges of the student radicals, and remained cloaked in the penumbral habitat where the establishment co-exists with the criminal world. And yet, before we rush to highlight Kodama’s mooted cooperation with police, it
should be noted that the authorities and conservative establishment were also themselves within reach of the right-wing knife. Even wily Kishi, so loathed for his political expediency by the Left, found himself a target. In July 1960, he was stabbed in the thigh six times by Taisuke Aramaki. A JSP politician had also been stabbed in June while collecting signatures, and Asanuma had already had a bottle of ammonia thrown at him near the Diet in May. A gangster had hit a senior JSP politician in the groin while two others were also beaten up in 1959. In 1961 two separate bills were proposed to counter the rising instances of terrorism and coercion, ostensibly from the Right. Ironically, it was leftists who prevented them from passing because of fears that they would suppress individual liberties.

These events, though shocking, were sporadic, yet were clearly the handiwork of thugs. More unsettling was the growing trend in the post-war period for former military men to be rehabilitated into political life and run for elections, or to form organisations and veteran groups that campaigned against communist influence. The backbone of their efforts was the desire to create a strong army once again. This revival of militarism culminated in late December 1961 in an abortive coup, known as the Sanmu Incident. Police managed to arrest the thirteen ringleaders, who had amassed a cache of weapons and uniforms as part of a plot to assassinate Prime Minister Ikeda and others. The details of the intrigue and its motivation—preventing a communist revolution—are not nearly as chilling as the fact that the plotters had been drawn from the ranks of pre-1945 ultra-nationalism and that they had approached the Self-Defence Forces to sound out interest. Ultra-nationalism has proved to be Japan’s political zombie, unable to be killed off even if buried in soil dug by American tillers.

Shortly after Asanuma was assassinated, the far Right demonstrated that the literary world could also taste their blades. The novelist Shichirō Fukazawa, best known for the rural tale of senicide Narayama bushikō (filmed twice as The Ballad of Narayama), had written a twelve-page dream story, Fūryū mutan, which portrays a visit by the narrator to the Imperial Palace where the crown prince and Princess Michiko are executed as part of a people’s revolution. The emperor and his consort are also beheaded. In the ensuing fury when it appeared in a magazine in December 1960, the publisher of the sensationalist fantasy was singled out for attack. Representatives from rightist groups visited the Chūō Kōronsha offices and demanded that President Hōji Shimanaka apologise in national newspapers and that Fukazawa be ‘expelled’ from the country. The tension escalated in December and January; leaflets with death threats were dropped by heli-
copter on to the publisher’s building, and 1,000 young ultra-nationalists gathered at a public hate rally. Men led by Bin Akao stormed the offices to demand an apology. Finally, on the night of 1 February 1961, Kazutaka Komori broke into Shimanaka’s house. The president was away, so Komori made do instead with stabbing his maid to death and injuring his wife. Demonstrating Ōe’s prophetic insight once again, Komori was also a mere seventeen years old.

Shimanaka, like Ōe’s publisher, backed down. He announced publicly that Chūō Kōronsha had been wrong to publish the story and that the editor responsible had been removed. The so-called Shimanaka Incident was the first major case of its kind—previously the Matsuba-kai rightist group had poured sand in the presses of the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper in revenge for a perceived slander in April 1960—but following this there would be periodical right-wing attacks or threats made against publishers to retract or apologise for any offence, typically a personal insult to a rightist or, more gravely, any hint of defamation directed towards the Imperial Family. As such, the media is very cautious about violating the so-called Chrysanthemum taboo, which prohibits criticism of the emperor.

Much more than the Left, the rightist groups exemplified the predominance of the Japanese oyabun–kobun vertical hierarchy, with ranks of younger acolytes gathered below an all-powerful older leader. Ultra-nationalism rose at the end of the nineteenth century during the Meiji period, as Japan was starting to crank up its emulation of the West to include colonialism and foreign adventurism. The newly restored monarch Meiji was frequently depicted in official iconography in stark military uniform. The concept of the Japanese polity, kokutai, was emphatic for the ultra-nationalists, breeding emperor worship as a system and ideology, but maintained in enough of an ambiguous and organic state that meant the political elite could still make their own radical changes and pursue their own agenda. Though we tend to tar the losers of a war with the reductive brush of evil, Japan’s war criminals and wartime leaders cannot be described as ultra-nationalists. The true ultra-nationalists were not Tōjō’s ilk; like the Left, the extreme Right was not tolerated during the period of Japanese militarism, and was a suppressed and underground clique. Much as today, the ultra-nationalists and the far Right were heretics and dissidents, and a nuisance to the establishment.

Confined to the fringes, in the pre-war period the hydra of ultra-nationalism would occasionally erupt spectacularly and interfere with the government’s plans. These kinds of incidents could be merely individual acts
of agitation and attack, or a full-blown coup d’etat. The most ambitious was the failed army uprising in 1936, the 26 February Incident, though factions of the military were involved in numerous others throughout the 1930s. Some never got off the ground, while others succeeded in striking at the heart of government and business. The police recorded at least twenty-nine rightist incidents between 1930 and 1945, plotted or carried out by disaffected army men and civilian zealots hoping to cleanse Japan of corrupt elements. Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai was assassinated by naval officers in 1932. Agrarian radicals managed to murder the finance minister, as well as Baron Takuma Dan of the Mitsui zaibatsu in the same year. Terrorists acting alone also succeeded in reaching high-profile targets, including another prime minister, Osachi Hamaguchi, in 1930. For members of the establishment, these were the years of living dangerously.

With the occupation arrived a raft of new and lofty democratic ideals which put paid to mainstream government militarism and nationalism. Understandably, the Americans began banning the fringe rightist movements as well. However, it was not long before the pre-surrender groups re-emerged in the early occupation period under fresh names and innocent guises. The foreigners were vigilant and by the end of 1949 had purged most of the groups, along with the military. And so former generals suffered the ignominy of seeing out their twilight days as warehouse watchmen and dying in obscurity.

Blocked from reforming in Tokyo, the ultra-nationalist fringe shifted to the rural areas. At this point conditions were still acute for the majority and so the need for agricultural development and better crops in Japan was felt at all levels of society except for the elite, who remained well fed. Rightist groups were influenced by Kanji Ishiwara, the general who had pronounced in 1940 that by 1960 there would be a vast clash between two superpower blocs, seemingly predicting the Cold War. Japan, to avoid being caught in the middle, must incubate its own stable food supply; the country has long suffered from a lack of resources that make self-sufficiency for its crowded populace a flight of fancy. The rightists were now thinking small in order to act big. Rather than trying to make sweeping changes to government, they focused on campaigning for more small-scale industry scattered around a de-urbanised Japan. Others called for a return of the tera-koya temple education system, a staple of feudal Japan, to build up strong individuals in society, as well as restore the links between secular society and Shintō shrines that were lost when State Shintō was dismantled by the American occupiers. With some notable exceptions (Shōzō Tanaka,
THE CLOWN’S COUP

Sanshirō Ishikawa), pre-war agrarian radicalism in Japan was also usually permeated by rightist thought.

The active memberships of most of these post-war organisations were modest, around 1,000, though they frequently claimed their ranks were larger. They boasted outlandish and extravagant names such as the Golden Pheasant Academy (Kinkei Gakuin) or Peerless Poetry Association (Fuji Kadō-kai). Embellishment is typical of the far Right in Japan. The grandiose gives the group its authentic ‘Japanese’ identity. (And as we will see, attitudes towards language and names are equally bizarre and idiosyncratic in the New Left as well.) However, despite the rococo gimmicks, contemporary rightists have difficulty reading the scripts written by their ideologues.\textsuperscript{11}

With the Right out of official play, the Left was also rising to fill the void, which resulted in the fringe ultra-nationalists subsequently working harder to combat the ascent of the labour unions, JSP and JCP. Some 180 new groups were established to fight the Red threat,\textsuperscript{12} though they seemed powerless to stop the mercurial Communists, who won 10 per cent of the total vote and thirty-five seats in the 1949 election. The JCP now had connections to half of organised labour in Japan.

Fortunately for the rightists, the Americans also noticed and the tide of censorship swung left. As the Communist suppression began, the ultra-nationalists found themselves ignored by default. The danger of Russia and China was looming over the occupation’s dream of transforming Japan into a ‘Switzerland of the Far East’—a land only of art and peace—and pragmatism overruled hypocrisy. In defiance of the Constitution it had ghost-written, and to the delight of the rightists, the Americans began to re-arm Japan. The \textit{zaibatsu} corporations were allowed to reform and the emperor’s position was secured. All efforts were now on purging Communist Party influence from public and business spheres, though they stopped short of banning the JCP outright. It is the saddest form of cynicism that the 1952 Subversive Activities Prevention Law was as draconian as the repressions of the militarist period. It was employed by the Japanese government to curb strike action in 1953 and 1954.

The post-war rightist groups, though disparate and insular, shared a number of conceptual traits. They were against the Americans, such as the presence of the US military bases in Japan. However, more than the Western foreigners, they were universally opposed to the Communists and the perpetrators of the failed general strike. The bureaucrats earned their ire for using the emperor to shore up their own status and interests, while the government was guilty of exploiting ordinary workers and peasants.
DISSENTING JAPAN

Democracy was tolerated but the rightists saw it being abused by those in power in their quest to take Japan down the path of globalised modernity, which would lead to a spiritually alienated and corrupt Japan. Many groups professed National Socialist maxims, and argued for collectivisation and de-urbanised agricultural autonomy. Japan was weak, politically and economically—dependent on America, which had placed shackles on the country with the San Francisco Peace Treaty and security pact. Rather than befriending the Americans, many of the ultra-nationalists wanted an ‘Asia for Asians’, a pan-Asian ideal which nonetheless stopped short of returning to the country’s prior imperialist aspirations. The 1945 defeat had destroyed faith in Japan’s military supremacy and so comparatively, post-war nationalism was much more inward. Now it was all about building up national values to protect the country and restore traditional cores, the most important of which was revering the emperor.

Despite their differences, there are clear instances of overlap with the anti-American Left too, making drawing straight dichotomies and binaries problematic. However, the Right was united at least in its hatred of socialism and communism, which it viewed as rampant internationalism abhorrent to Japan. In particular, they wanted to destroy the JCP. This millenialism was especially prevalent for the first decade and a half up to Anpo, dominated by a sense of a coming crisis—as opposed to the Left’s much more proactive desire to ignite revolution—and world war, where Japan would be trapped between fighting global superpowers.

To meet the challenge of the approaching reckoning, young people in their twenties formed anti-communist groups. But beyond any discussion of the attraction of their beliefs to the post-war population, two factors dictated why the rightists never, even to this day, grew beyond a mildly freakish subculture. First, the right-wing organisations frequently overlapped with the Yakuza gangster world, the protection rackets and the black markets. This served some businessmen well and mining companies were happy to use right-wing groups to root out Communist elements among their workers, rewarding them richly for their strong-arm services. However, for the common man or small business owner, they were shady groups to be avoided.

Second, unlike the JCP, JSP or Zengakuren, the post-war ultra-nationalists were content to remain as hundreds of shambolic cliques. They did not seek to become genuine political movements—although the occasional leader might well stand for election—and they certainly did not believe they were helping to create a revolution. Their aim was to disturb, disrupt and raise
awareness of what they saw as corrupt. They were haphazard campaigners rather than genuine agitators. Each group was amassed fervently around a central Führer who exerted strong control over the coterie and commanded total loyalty. They thus became highly personalised and idiosyncratic groups, and also then targets for barbs and satire from the media.

The battle with the Left kicked off proper in July 1948, with the attempted assassination of the leader of the JCP. Secretary-General Kyūichi Tokuda was addressing a public meeting at Saga Town Hall in Kyushu when he found himself sharing the stage with a stick of dynamite. Tokuda was hospitalised for a week from his wounds. The bomb had been thrown by a member of the Ōzuru Seinenbu (Ōzuru Youth Branch), a wing of the Zen Nihon Kankyō Renmei (All-Japan Anti-Communist League), which was disbanded by the authorities shortly afterwards. JCP leaders were earmarked for assassination again in August 1949 when another minor rightist tried to bomb them in Tokyo. Twice he went to the headquarters of the JCP but, in a touch of the absurdity that haunts Japanese radicalism, on both occasions his targets were absent. He eventually gave himself up to the police.

Aggression continued through the 1950s. Tōru Higo desecrated a Union Jack and sent it to Queen Elizabeth in 1953 in protest after two British sailors assaulted a taxi driver in Kobe. Higo also once broke into the US embassy and urinated on the floor. His actions appear even more infantile when we consider how fringe a figure he was. He stood in elections but was always ignored. Once he even achieved a grand total of zero votes. Again in 1953, another group attacked the welcoming committee for labour leader Ikuo Oyama. The group’s successor then attacked the JCP leader Yoshio Shiga in the following year.

Alongside the Communists, LDP prime ministers were also hated: Yoshida for his friendship with the Americans, and Hatoyama for the overtures he made to the Soviets. Several groups made amateurish attempts to assassinate Yoshida for his cosy relationship with the United States, and May 1954 even saw the premier on trial, albeit a mock one conducted in a public park in Tokyo and presided over by rightist judiciaries. Tried in absentia, Yoshida naturally had no voices to defend him and was sentenced to banishment by the coven of ageing ultra-nationalists. Hatoyama, meanwhile, made the grave error of attempting to open up trade with the USSR and rightist opposition culminated in an invasion of the Soviet mission in Tokyo and, in a parallel of what happened to Kishi, an attempt to prevent him from getting to Haneda Airport in 1956.13

The twenty-five rightists who staged their ineffective sit-down outside Hatoyama’s residence were again led by Bin Akao, a prominent ultra-
nationalist who would also make appearances in the subsequent Anpo struggle.\textsuperscript{14} In the latter, Akao and other rightists supported Kishi, not because they agreed with Japan siding with America in the Cold War—but because they wanted to oppose the Left at all costs and not having a security treaty with America would leave the nation defenceless against the Soviets. Akao was one of the most visible and outspoken of Japanese ultranationalists and stood in thirty different elections (losing every time). He and his followers were very belligerent, supplying the sop to Zengakuren and the Left when they protested the arrival of Ambassador MacArthur in 1957. May Day of the same year inspired Akao to host an anti-Red demo, which climaxed with an invasion of the Sōhyō headquarters.

The police kept a close eye on Akao, and for good reasons. As we saw, Asanuma’s assassin was a former member of his group and his shadow lurks over several post-war incidents, including the Shimanaka episode. He could boast a police record of twenty-five arrests, and at his apogee his organisation had hundreds of members across Japan, and some 3,000 subscribers to its newsletter. He was a vociferous leader and popular with easily swayed young right-wingers, Yamaguchi being a case in point. He famously would bivouac his brand of nationalism in Ginza and deliver harangues to helpless shoppers. Unlike other \emph{uyoku} who restrained themselves while the Shōwa emperor was dying, even the passing of the monarch did not lead Akao to curb his activities. Come wind or rain, he could always be relied upon to be at his regular spot, railing against the political mainstream and the latest corruption scandal. His last public address, topping a career of some 30,000 oratories, was delivered at the ripe old age of ninety, and his funeral in 1990—he did not outlive the monarch by much—drew wide media attention, and attendees included Shintarō Ishihara.\textsuperscript{15}

Bin Akao and his ilk were renegades, obstinately stuck in the mould of the lone wolf, the permanent thorn in the side of mainstream society. But such figures had followers, typically admirers from a younger generation. These youth gangs were the inverse of the Sun Tribe hedonists. No films or books glamorised them but they were numerous nonetheless. Some 10,000 criminal hooligans (\emph{gurentai}) and delinquents were arrested in 1954, fodder for both the Yakuza and \emph{uyoku} worlds. These thugs held anti-Left demos and carried out the heavy work of threatening film production and publishing companies whenever they strayed over a certain nationalist line. By 1960 the Right was sizable and diverse, with some 1,000 different groups and estimates of membership on par or even higher than JCP official members and sympathisers.\textsuperscript{16}
THE CLOWN’S COUP

But unlike the JCP and post-war Left, even as the decades went on, the right wing never managed or attempted to unite and achieve real solidarity, nor even to pool resources or cooperate. In contrast, admittedly uneasily at times, the JCP, JSP, Sōhyō and many others worked together during Anpo. And, as we will see, during the student movement of the later 1960s, though there was explosive factional infighting, student groups under the Zengakuren umbrella frequently banded together as part of the university campus struggles and anti-war cause. The JSP and JCP more and more sought out identities not as revolutionary movements but as authentic, positive and respectable brands within the context of a political and legal entity. The far Right stayed intertwined in the public eye with the mafia, a reputation not unjustified and which hampered any of the zany political aspirations certain leaders had, despite espousing beliefs and ideals no doubt sympathetic to large swaths of the populace.

No discussion of the Japanese post-war right wing can be complete without attempting to navigate the reefs that surround its most complex figure. He was a writer, playwright, poet, actor and militarist. He was Yukio Mishima. Perhaps with the exception of that more recent grandee of hype, Haruki Murakami, no other Japanese man of letters is so famous across the world. Inevitably, because of this and also the dubious masks Mishima wore throughout his life, writing about him is both exciting and Sisyphean.

There is no need to pen a profile of his life here—several biographies are available in English alone—nor to contribute to the canon of appreciation of his work. The events of that fateful day in late 1970 are also well known, though can be viewed and interpreted in grossly differing ways even while the facts themselves stay the same. One morning in November Mishima used his vast network and influence to arrange a meeting with a senior commandant at the Ichigaya base of the Self-Defence Forces, now home to the Ministry of Defence in central Tokyo. He entered the base with members of his private army, proceeding to kidnap the unfortunate officer he was meeting as part of a meticulous and bravado plan that went both perfectly and incorrectly. Mishima was ostensibly attempting to inspire the SDF to rise up and restore an imperialist regime, and to combat the conflict that would surely appear with the Left with the renewal of the security treaty that year. The debacle resulted in seven injured and two dead by suicide, including of course the famous writer himself. On that day, and by his actions up to it, he became someone impossible to tie down comfortably in any category—and for that reason we will only examine him from the context of dissent: was Mishima the ultimate post-war rebel?
In the last decade of his life, Mishima underwent a process of politicisation that his circle presumed was primarily aesthetic, not one that would culminate in an attempted coup. He was already a very popular and acclaimed novelist by 1960; in terms of his career, there was almost nothing he could not do. He wrote books and plays; he directed opera and acted in films. He was being translated and regularly tipped for the Nobel Prize. But witnessing the Anpo protests affected and steered him on to a path towards reactionary militarism, fascism and emperor worship, tropes which admittedly had always preoccupied him but never manifested themselves as concrete aims.

He became very interested in the 26 February Incident and fascinated with the quixotic failed heroes of Japanese history, in the truth of a sincere act of self-sacrifice. His models became Ŭshio Heihachirō, the learned nineteenth-century Osaka bureaucrat whom Mishima would imitate in having his own private school and cabal, and Shinpuren (League of the Divine Wind), who staged a suicidal charge against the Westernised government in 1876, as well as the 1936 rebels and Wang Yangmeng.

He wrote a short story, Yūkoku (Patriotism), in 1960, which featured a 1936 army lieutenant choosing suicide over betraying his comrades. It was filmed in 1966, with Mishima himself playing the role of the officer. The result is a bizarre thirty minutes of celluloid, ridiculously solemn and formal—with handwritten scrolls standing in for screen titles—and with the seppuku scene extremely drawn-out and bloody, jarring with camp and overblown frequent close-ups of eyes. It is like a stilted, silent porno. It is only with knowledge of how it foreshadowed Mishima’s own end that it can be viewed without distaste.

He was making ripples, though. Otoya Yamaguchi was apparently inspired by Yūkoku and even Mishima said he admired the way the youth remained faithful to the very end in true ‘Japanese’ style. Mishima’s text The Voice of the Hero Spirits depicts a séance in which the spirits of the 1936 officers come back along with the pilots of the Kamikaze sorties to criticise the emperor for becoming human.

Mishima was now on a trajectory that after November 1970 could clearly be drawn. At the time, he was still so busy as a socialite and with his other ventures that people may not have noticed, let alone taken seriously, how he enlisted in the army and underwent training. Or how he supported the journal of a small band of neo-nationalists. Or even how he formed his own private civilian army, Tate no Kai (Shield Society), and used his contacts to get it drilled by the SDF. The group was said to be rather amateurish and ill
THE CLOWN’S COUP

trained. Composed of a few dozen young men who looked up to Mishima, it was dismissed by some as a gay club or another example of Mishima’s infamous self-exhibitionism (this is the man who posed as Saint Sebastian for photographer Kishin Shinoyama, and who organised a show of his portraits at the Tōbu department store just before his death). It was merely an excuse for him to play soldiers and no newspapers covered its activities except The Times in London.

Tate no Kai had no formal political affiliation but was a standby civilian army, in the manner of the Swiss, and pledged to protect the emperor. It was funded solely by Mishima, who preached that the emperor was the source of all Japanese culture—though this need not necessarily only be interpreted as meaning the Shōwa emperor himself. Mishima saw the court and body of the emperor as the foundation of the nation’s aesthetics, exemplified in concepts such as *miyabi* (elegance) and *yūgen* (profundity). In contrast, international movements like communism were abhorrent to Japanese culture and had to be opposed. Japan already had a defensive army but Mishima saw it as inadequate, lacking the spirit of the samurai and too divorced from its rightful role as the personal guard of the emperor. Although he wanted to expel Western consumerism and the ugly post-war changes wrought on his country that had seduced its people, charges of racism cannot be easily levelled at Mishima, since he spoke English well and socialised with many foreigners. Indeed, many aspects of his lifestyle were highly Westernised, including the architecture of his own house, and he himself acknowledged and joked about his hypocrisy.

During all this roleplaying and political capering, it is hard to work out when he decided exactly on his final act. It is certain, though, that he had always been motivated by a cult of death and masochism—see Shinoyama’s famous photographs of Mishima acting out ritual disembowelment—as well as heroism (he even played such a role in a gangster film in 1960). Mishima was fascinated by death and had long fantasised about it. For him it was organically but obliquely intertwined with eroticism, emperor worship and ideals of beauty and heroism. His character and well-known homosexuality can likely be defined by three influences: Saint Sebastian, whose image inspired Mishima’s first experience of ejaculation; the emperor, who greatly affected Mishima when he gave him a silver watch as a gift in a graduation ceremony at the age of nineteen; and his mother, who alone of his family and circle was sympathetic to his coup and suicide. This potent concoction has given years of ammunition to hungry psychologists and scholars, and for the layman may go some way at least to explaining Mishima’s enormous drive in his pursuits.
Mishima and his army watched with growing panic the rising belligerence of the New Left in 1968 and 1969. As the university campuses roared in anger and the barricades spilled out into battles on the streets, Mishima was convinced that with the 1970 renewal of the security treaty, a full and final reckoning was inevitable. The police would be overwhelmed and it would be left to people like him to protect the centre of the nation, that is, the emperor. In one bizarre twist, however, Mishima engaged directly and quite amicably with his nemesis in a famous and long debate with the University of Tokyo student radicals. He went alone and unarmed into the lions’ den, though less the fiery confrontation it promised, the resulting discussion was respectful. They were at intellectual loggerheads and Mishima, as surely expected, could not make the leftists understand his ideals, but there was none of the violence the students were showing their professors in the famous mass inquisitions happening at colleges at the time. The debate was recorded and published as a book, becoming a best-seller. Mishima generously gave half the proceeds to the student group.

Mishima was wrong, probably about a lot of things, but in particular about 1970. As we will see, the police were more than a match for the student activists, and in their frequent incursions into the campuses and on the streets they were able to handle the riots. Law and order were preserved, with the exception of some further incidents, the most explosive of which happened later. Tate no Kai and, by extension, Mishima as man of arms, was redundant. Mishima, though, was convinced otherwise. He began to close up his accounts, visiting friends and resigning from the numerous associations he worked on. He was still working hard, writing and directing, but in among all this he found time to complete a manifesto and bid farewells throughout 1970. However, no one knew what was approaching except himself and the other four core Tate no Kai members.

He was a man of the pen but did not want to be. He had conquered the literary world but, with his mentor Yasunari Kawabata’s win of the Nobel Prize, he had nowhere further to go since another Japanese recipient in his lifetime was highly unlikely. He idealised the realm of the sword and saw his place in literature being passed to a younger generation, especially his arch rival, Kenzaburō Ōe, who was leftist and anti-imperialist.

The eventual ‘coup’ that he attempted with Tate no Kai was an act of terrorism but it was an empty act, a sign; a formal gesture expressing beauty, sincerity and heroism. They were both aware that inspiring the SDF to launch a real coup to restore the emperor was impossible. His companion in ritual suicide was Masakatsu Morita, a much younger man said to be
in awe of Mishima. The relationship between Morita and Mishima was homoerotic, though probably not consummated and possibly even unre- quited. Mishima saw their final act as a kind of lovers’ suicide—double suicides are a common trope in Kabuki, and to Mishima, life was theatre. Interpretations of the stunning incident at Ichigaya on that morning vary: it was an act by the writer seeking to express what he most loved, an act of closure completing his career—he had just sent off the final instalment of *The Sea of Fertility* tetralogy—or rather, just an indecent example of extreme self-exhibition, simple madness (as Prime Minister Eisaku Satō remarked), totally delusional ultra-nationalism, or, most sentimentally, an attempt to achieve the very pinnacle of beauty. All the theories have some validity. His biographers in English have their own preferences. John Nathan emphasises Mishima’s erotic lifelong obsession with death as the main motivation, while Henry Scott-Stokes opts for homosexuality, that indeed the incident was a lovers’ suicide (*shinjū*) with Morita.18

Mishima chose to die by what is perhaps the most Japanese death of all, *seppuku* (or *hara-kiri*)—ritual disembowelment. It is also one of the most painful of deaths imaginable, plunging a blade deep into your belly and then cutting right across, literally ripping yourself open. In traditional Japanese thinking, the soul is said to reside in the stomach, so we might think of *seppuku* as akin to stabbing yourself in the heart. The person performing the act, though, enters into a bargain with a second, who is supposed to behead you with a single clean stroke of a sword. Needless to say, this is done as quickly as possible in order to end the pain of the person.

If we take Mishima’s invasion of the SDF and subsequent suicide as primarily a romantic act with Morita, as opposed to something ideological or political, then we can reason that it further follows that Mishima would choose *seppuku*, which is undoubtedly sexual, a supreme act of masturbation. As your partner watches, you spill your seed on to the floor; you engage in a mutual spectacle of sanguinary ejaculation, viewed by another. The story and film of *Patriotism* clearly mirror this. Certainly, Mishima’s acceptance of the futility of his act frames him in the *hōganbiiki* school, and the fact that the incident was planned as being totally final, with instructions left for Tate no Kai to disband after his death, seems to present a wholly apolitical facade.

But the best laid plans of mice and men will always go awry. After kidnapping the commander and demanding the forces be assembled, Mishima went to the balcony to make a prepared speech. What he had not realised was that the base was largely empty of men; 900 were away training, leaving only a
much smaller contingent in Tokyo. His audience, then, was not the hard-core warriors Mishima had hoped for but mostly people attached to communications and supplies. And they were ill-mannered and disrespectful, despite Mishima’s pompous condition that he be heard in silence. They jeered him and a police helicopter hovering overhead all conspired to mean his impassioned words exhorting them to rise up were lost in the din. He cut it much shorter than his planned thirty minutes and walked back into the office through the window, muttering, ‘I don’t think they even heard me.’ He then proceeded with his seppuku, with Morita to perform the kaishaku, or beheading. And yet, even here Mishima was again cheated. He had planned to write a final Japanese character while disembowelling himself, but the pain from the blade was too much and he could not manage it.

And then the absurdity grows less black and more squeamish. Morita raised the sword for the kaishaku but he was not skilled enough to do it properly. He struck twice at Mishima but still failed to take off the head of his leader. Meanwhile, the latter was writhing in excruciating agony on the floor, his own blade sunk several inches into his bowels. Morita passed the sword to Koga, one of the other rebels in the room, who finished Mishima off immediately. Morita then went through the motions of his own seppuku, though he hardly pierced his flesh, and his incompetence was hidden by the ever-reliable Koga, who swiftly despatched him, again with a single stroke. The surviving three Tate no Kai soldiers were by now in tears. They untied the prisoner, who had watched aghast as two men killed themselves right in front of him, and were then immediately arrested.

To be fair, the planning was meticulous. Mishima had been like a theatre director coordinating his pageant, like Prospero saying adieu to the stage with elaborate fireworks. He even arranged for two reporters to be nearby on the day in case the authorities tried to cover it up. He and Morita were also sure to plug their anus with cotton to ward against a humiliating voiding of the bowels during the seppuku.

The three surviving Tate no Kai members were put on trial in 1971. Their defence was financed by Mishima’s widow. In the same year there was a public funeral service for the writer, attended by 10,000 people. There was at least one direct political corollary: Kawabata was inspired by Mishima’s act to run as a conservative in an election, though any political aspirations the elderly novelist had finished with his own suicide in 1972.

Regardless of how politically seriously we take Mishima’s final act and its manifesto, he always remains probably the most distinctive rebel Japan has ever produced. He was a man of contradictions and many masks:
THE CLOWN’S COUP

dandy, zany prankster, charmer, superb and entertaining host, re-inventor of himself, socialite, writer, actor, director, ideologue—and even UFO enthusiast. Perhaps more than domestically, he has an enduring appeal to Westerners—or is it only the men?—as the most famous Japanese writer of the century. He has biographies in English, numerous translated works in print, and even a biopic produced by Francis Ford Coppola. (Undoubtedly his fame is disproportionate in the West, though that is not to say he is ignored in Japan. There are plenty of books about Mishima in Japanese, plus a 2012 biopic directed by Kōji Wakamatsu.) Despite his nationalism he was never xenophobic; his foreign friends included Donald Keene, John Nathan, Henry Scott-Stokes, Meredith Weatherby and Donald Richie. He sought out the most Japanese of deaths and yet foreigners always remarked on how un-Japanese Mishima was in his speech and charisma. Richie also noted that he was a harlequin, clowning and larking around, joking at parties that he was a dangerous rightist bent on committing suicide. But Richie felt Mishima lacked genuine humour; there never appeared to be any spontaneity in what he did.22

The Japanese imperial court—which Mishima looked to as the pinnacle of Japanese culture—did not have jesters or fools, so even here Mishima was an outsider, trying desperately to enter the realm sacred to him, yet always closed. To sacrifice yourself for the good of your country and your emperor, to destroy your own life for an ideal, whether aesthetic, sexual or political, is to smother your ego. However, in the case of Mishima it throws up a terrible paradox. His death merely amplified his stature and individuality even more, and it is precisely for his actions in November 1970 that he is remembered most.
In 1970, Japan had the third largest GDP in the world. Its economy was growing at a rate three times higher than America or Britain’s. Leisure industries boomed and mass production was generating consumption and wealth. Following the Olympics in 1964, the 1970 World Exposition in Osaka well and truly sealed the country’s place as a global power.

There was a cost for the mainstream Left. At its height possessing a third of the electorate, the vestigial JSP was losing the liberal vote. The party had become more divided; a splinter group left and formed a new union federation to challenge the hegemony of Sōhyō. And the corollary of the post-Anpo disenchantment was that former demonstrators gradually turned away from the JSP and JCP as potent political players that could make a difference. The ruling LDP had not, though, necessarily gained more voters; instead, these recently emboldened citizens poured their energies into starting families and the Economic Miracle. In the fallout from Anpo, the JCP made moderate parliamentary gains and gradual grassroots dividends throughout the next decade. Between 1960 and 1970, the JCP went from a single seat in the Diet to fourteen, while the JSP fell from 122 to ninety. Akahata readership rose from 74,000 to 400,000 and JCP membership jumped from 78,000 to 300,000. The JSP’s members, on the other hand, dropped from 50,000 to 30,000, and continuing the ebb in power, Sōhyō also saw its control of organised labour fall from around half to just 4.25 million workers, or 37.8 per cent.¹

By the late 1960s we have a Japan that is stronger and bullish, but whose Left, especially among the young, is in part alienated from the major par-
ties. For something like three years this disparity came to an explosive head among disaffected students. Arguably, the connection between the radicalism of the university campus movements and the fracturing of the leftist political mainstream was arbitrary; protests and strikes would have broken out at colleges anyway, especially as some had very pragmatic causes. But workers also participated in the street battles and, as we shall see, the student movement was intertwined with that other major left-wing cause célèbre of the time, the Vietnam War—and by extension, continued opposition to the US military presence in Japan and the run-up to Anpo’s renewal in 1970.

It is tricky to talk about 1968 and avoid clichés. The period we need to consider more accurately lies not just in one calendar year but between 1966 and 1971, and yet it is ‘Sixty-Eight’ that has become enshrined in the collective memory as some kind of fulcrum. We love these labels. The most comprehensive text on the era in Japanese is by the sociologist Eiji Oguma, an epic two-tome doorstopper simply called 1968.2 Ryū Murakami’s novel ’69 focuses rather on the following year and the exploits of regional school children trying to imitate the cool cats at the University of Tokyo. The name of Mark Kurlansky’s bestseller also perpetuates the reductionist myth: 1968: The Year that Rocked the World. However, despite its claims to all-inclusiveness, Japan merits a mention only three or four times in passing, and at least twice the citations are erroneous.3

To think of ‘1968’ is to spin a popular zoetrope of familiar images: the Tet offensive, the Prague Spring, My Lai, Charles de Gaulle fleeing a France in tumult, the death of Martin Luther King, and so on. This stream of motifs, floating on the nebulous ‘spirit of ’68’ that seemed to waft around somewhere in the haze of pot at Woodstock (actually held in 1969) and in the muzzle smoke of marines battling the Viet Cong. America and Europe—in particular, France—dominate. If Asia figures at all, it is inevitably the tragedy of Vietnam. Japan remains a relative cipher or a total unknown. And yet into the global tapestry of ‘1968’ we need to weave what happened at Haneda, at Yasuda Hall, at Sasebo.

The year 1968 marked the one-hundredth anniversary of the Meiji Restoration, one of the most top-down revolutions in history. Was the new one better? ‘Revolution’ is a barbed word that can derail discussion with the scoffing it induces in our more cynical age. But let’s be clear: the majority of Japanese participants in the adventure of 1968 and all that were not aiming for revolution. Whereas the American movement was defined perhaps most of all by the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War crusades, and in
France by the fury of students trying to tear down the Gaullist reactionary systems, Japan straddles a melange of both. Only a minority of the radicals became violent revolutionaries and largely after the campus movements had dissipated.

In the play *Zō (The Elephant)* (1962) by Minoru Betsuyaku, the Japanese Samuel Beckett, we are presented with both the trauma of the A-bomb and also the dilemma facing post-Anpo Japan. In a hospital ward, two anonymous victims of the nuclear holocaust (*hibakusha*) debate the process of moving on from their ordeal. One, the uncle, is dying and trapped in a cycle of spectacle playing on his experience for pacifist protestors, to whom he ceremonially displays his keloid scar like a stigmata. His nephew seeks passivity, amnesia, in stark contrast to the older survivor, who practises his ritual of posing for Ban-the-Bomb rallies, perfecting the way he exhibits his scar like a saint moving a medieval rabble to ecstasy through signs of miracles. The elephant of the title is both the texture of the keloid scar itself, as well as the ‘elephant in the room’—namely *hibakusha*, Anpo and war.

While the uncle is doomed to death by radiation sickness, at least he is active, albeit in a flawed way. His participation in politics is ritualistic rather than from the heart—but it gives him a role in society. He believes that even with his deformity he can be accepted; the citizens require his existence as a survivor. ‘That’s why everybody’s smiling. It’s as if they were in love with us.’

But he is exposing the narcissism of the Left; incestuous, perpetuating itself by preaching only to the converted. It is as if Betsuyaku was looking ahead to decades of self-satisfied champagne socialism.

His nephew urges him not to leave the hospital. ‘We mustn’t do anything anymore ... We’ve got to lie here patiently and keep our mouths shut. It’s not because we’re sick ... We are incapable of doing anything except being persecuted, hated, and destroyed ... There’s nothing left for us but to wait.’

Following the 1960 crucible of Anpo, activists either had to wait for the mainstream Left to change society, to continue protesting at the grassroots level—or to move on and surrender to the system. That the latter inevitably was the choice of most led to conclusions that Anpo was just a fad. It also conjures up the much-lamented plastic nature of Japanese leftists. The Japanese call this *tenkō*, meaning literally a rotation. *Tenkō* is a recanting, a conversion or a turnabout in thinking. It has been applied to everyone from the nineteenth-century intellectual rediscovering Japanese culture to the former student activist changing tracks to walk the straight and narrow with a regular desk job.
DISSENTING JAPAN

Tenkō especially refers to the Communists who renounced their ideologies under pressure while being imprisoned in the early 1930s. Between 1928 and 1934, the state arrested nearly 60,000 JCP violators of the 1925 Peace Preservation Law, which made it illegal to support or belong to any group that sought to overthrow the state. Tenkō seems to stem from a Chinese law and a custom for rewarding repentant criminals with lighter sentences. This continues today in how the Japanese police expect arrestees to confess under the tacit agreement that they will be given a shorter prison sentence if they do.

In 1933, certain Communists publicly retracted their beliefs. Manabu Sano and Sadachika Nabeyama, two JCP leaders, committed ideological self-immolation by penning a document professing their apostasy. Ostensibly, this was a ‘change of direction’; they were frustrated with Moscow’s control over the party in Japan. In this sense, tenkō was an act of defection. Though not a renunciation of revolution in Japan, it was a withdrawal from the current international communist movement.

The Ministry of Justice was delighted, printing the statement of tenkō and circulating it to almost 1,800 other JCP members they held in custody at the time. They arranged for Sano and Nabeyama to meet malleable prisoners to discuss their grievances. Within a month, a further 548 had renounced the party line and in the next few years, over two thirds of the JCP members arrested for violating the Peace Preservation Law would commit tenkō.

After the war and political emancipation, some swiftly returned to the fold while others, starting a trend that would be repeated in the 1960s, chose to stay apostate and be apolitical. A minority of the tenkō Communists even switched to the Right, such as Seigen Tanaka.

The case studies of the pre-war Communists who renounced their ideologies were analysed in a 1957 book by philosopher Takaaki Yoshimoto, the doyen of the student movement in the following decade, and whose own relationship with the Left was also uneasy, especially after Anpo. (Yoshimoto defined himself as New-New Left). The reasons for the tenkō of the 1930s are complex. Sometimes it is put down to nihonjinron ideas about the pressures of Japanese society which values consensus. Personal loyalty to Sano, Nabeyama and other apostates played a strong part, along with family ties. Tenkō was as emotional as it was political. While Sano and Nabeyama gave detailed ideological reasons for their conversion, others were venting their frustrations at a simpler level. Even without the thought police, tenkō may still have happened. The 1930s tenkō—and arguably, the tenkō beyond—can be seen not so much as an ideological failing or moral hypocrisy, but as a
manifestation of distinctly Japanese filial loyalties and a preference for the small group over the international movement. When the radical is isolated—for example, due to imprisonment—he or she loses touch with his ideology. The value of the beliefs is diminished and becomes fungible if the zealot is suddenly demoted to being just an individual without the context of the group to make the philosophy human and worthwhile. Anpo protests reoccurred in the run-up to the treaty’s renewal in 1970. The new protests figured as a subdivision of the wider struggle, with the pact seen as part of the war machine that was channelling bombs and soldiers to Vietnam. The participants were by and large not the same as in 1960, who had moved on—or committed tenkō. One of the most public leaders, Kentarō Karouji, had a parenthetic life as a fisherman, labourer and regular businessman. Many of the fully active students went into teaching and university professions. Some of the most passionate and radical activists were so disillusioned by the failure of Anpo that they suffered breakdowns or committed suicide. The students who had participated less enthusiastically in the 1960 protests worked in enterprise, though small firms were as popular as larger corporations. Some even went into government. A distrust of the state remained like a bad taste in the mouth. Ten years on, the former protestors continued to associate government with corruption and power first and foremost. That being said, only the most active former radical students still identified themselves as Marxists in 1970 and only a minority of the less active ex-radicals felt compelled to take part in the new protests, which were arguably less unified than their 1960 counterparts. The new generation of activists were understandably estranged from their senior peers. In the words of Fusako Shigenobu, despite an age difference of only a few years, the students of 1968 regarded the Anpo veterans as ‘old geezers’. Has-beens or turncoats, Anpo had a lasting impact on their lives. One Zengakuren leader from the 1960 campaign, high-ranking enough to represent the student league at Michiko Kanba’s funeral, worked as a sales engineer for two years after he graduated. But then his employers found out about his past activism and he spent four years without a job. His plight was not uncommon. Even in the 1950s, students were realising it was a problem to be a member of a self-governing student council, known as jichikai, affiliated with Zengakuren. Membership had declined because employers viewed résumés associated with such an ‘anti-social’ group in a negative light. As Zengakuren’s ferocity increased, being a student activist meant automatic exclusion from full-time recruitment rounds.
for major corporations by the late 1960s, a trend that continued into the next decade. For a certain time, though, former members of Zengakuren were proactively sought out by certain companies looking for aggressive personalities to be strong salesmen and managers. This was only if you were lucky, however, and it could be a serious stigma on your life, especially if you got yourself arrested. (Another former protestor successfully sued Mitsubishi Plastics, Inc., after his offer of employment was withdrawn when his student activism during Anpo came to light.)

Eventually, the ex-Zengakuren leader started working for a publishing company, editing a magazine about labour issues. Though he had drifted away from Marxist ideology, his experiences and earlier beliefs still greatly informed his work and worldview. His description of his attitude when young is also revealing. ‘I studied [Marxism] for ten years,’ he said. ‘In the prime of my youth, I didn’t go with girls; I didn’t go to the mountains; I didn’t go the beach. I committed myself thoroughly to the study of Marxism and became completely familiar with it.’

As true for Anpo 1960 as it was even more so for the later student and New Left activists, these young people had an innate seriousness and asceticism. While in America and elsewhere we readily associate 1960s and 1970s activism with other elements of counterculture such as drugs, music and sex, the Japanese radicals had much less time for this. Though not immune to tenkō, their commitment was by and large pure and devout.

The 1960s student movement and the campus organisations (Zenkyōtō), through direct political struggle, were an internal process and exploration for the actors involved. Continuing the intellectual search that had been a part of the student radical mindset in 1960, the final years of the decade were a period of intense existentialism. Young people sought out their individual identification of reality and how they fitted into it. It was a struggle for personal selfhood (what they called shutaisei) and social commitment, of joining forces with like-minded people to act in ways that can further historical, revolutionary goals— and simultaneously express yourself through epic acts of physicality. ‘To go now implies your submission to power,’ one wavering student was exhorted to join peers in a campus struggle, ‘which, in turn, means your abandonment of living. The question is whether or not you will live as a human being.’

Though various groups and factions played a dominant role in the coming events, for many participants the movement was more personal than ideological. ‘The sects [factions] were finished. Now we felt that you could only
fight as an individual,’ said one.\textsuperscript{18} Even the leaders of the campus movements professed individualism above the radicalism of different factions, let alone revolutionary thinking. ‘For our fight, what was important was, more than political reflection, the intellectual springhead of just utterly fighting ... After all this, I want to go back to being a physics student,’ said Yoshitaka Yamamoto, the leader of the University of Tokyo strike.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{Shutaisei}, a slippery term often translated as ‘agency’, comes in 1968 to resemble something like Sartre’s concept of good and bad faith: personal conviction must be a formidable part of implementing ideology—more than the principles of the ideology itself—rather than just blindly following it. Whereas traditional communism always took the overall authority of the party over the validity of an individual act, protest in Japan in 1968 equated political or ideological participation with self-expression and emancipation.\textsuperscript{20} It is no surprise that the Zenkyōtō movement could never be truly conducive with either the JCP or the anti-JCP factions. Student activism emphasised agency and subjectivity, which ran counter to the belief in the Marxist historical inevitability of revolution. To reach this stage of individual revolutionary activism you had to go through a process of self-negation and criticism (\textit{jikohihan}) to become more aware of your part in the system of society. Zenkyōtō was, then, as self-reflexive as it was active. It is no literary coincidence that of the top four books which students said had influenced them, two were by Dostoyevsky (\textit{Crime and Punishment}, \textit{The Brothers Karamazov}) and one by Camus (\textit{The Outsider}).\textsuperscript{21}

The student movement was engaged in a campaign to dismantle the university system and its ingratiation with the imperial establishment, with 60 per cent of students at the University of Tokyo saying that they ‘respect no politician’.\textsuperscript{22} The students were also rejecting the Old Left of the JCP and JSP, who had proved their impotence during the Anpo crisis. But it was also about the individual, about self-liberation and self-transformation, about taking things into your own hands. There was much self-reflection and gnashing of teeth, while the violence and rebellion was far from being just a youthful whimsy; some said that they were attempting to go beyond the ‘everyday’ itself.\textsuperscript{23}

Every movement must have sages and theoreticians. The poet and philosopher Takaaki Yoshimoto was the Herbert Marcuse of Japan’s Generation ’68. The most influential thinker of his time, his writings were indispensable in debates. ‘Especially with Takaaki Yoshimoto’s books, there was this climate, to the extent you could call them a vogue, whereby unless you read them you couldn’t be New Left,’ remembers one participant from
Yoshimoto’s intellectual sway over the young was not always popular, however, and he was once chastised at the funeral of a radical student by a mourning relative: ‘If he hadn’t read books by the likes of you, he would have studied properly and it wouldn’t have turned out like this.’

A true public intellectual, Yoshimoto was widely read by students alongside Marx and the other usual suspects.

Disillusioned by 1960, Yoshimoto promoted an apolitical style of human autonomy in action and knowledge—rebelling against what is established and rejecting the bourgeois. Responsible citizens have to seize their own selfhood. ‘It was after the Anpo struggle and the Miike strike that I determined to part with the classical Marxism of the post-war period and its satellites of progressivism,’ he said. He witnessed the JCP and other arms of the Old Left stopping protestors from joining Zengakuren students engaged in physical (and bloody) conflict with police and he knew then that he had to develop a new concept, what he later termed ‘standing on your own feet’-ism (jiritsu-shugi).

It meant self-assertion for the everyman, taking responsibility for mass society and becoming an instrument of change, independent of leadership. It was an ideal theory for the new generation of growing shimin active citizens, as you did not need abstract ideals or models like nationality, parliamentary democracy or the worker.

Yoshimoto was not a champion of traditional ideologies, despite his credentials and credibility as a working-class thinker (his father was a carpenter, and he had worked in factories and organised unions after the war). For possibly his most important work, The Common Illusion, published in 1968, he traced the Japanese nation through the emperor system and commons, seeing what are usually disregarded in orthodox Marxist theory—folklore and culture—as integral local examples of state hegemony. The pre-state’s shackles remained part of the collective chimera.

His vision of autonomy and a move away from factions and parties, even if read enthusiastically and diligently by the campus strikers, was ultimately not followed. Sectarianism became more intense and entrenched, and the signature phenomenon of the next years. It had become another common illusion.

Between 1968 and 1969, the university system in Japan was largely paralysed, with many institutions unable to hold entrance exams or official graduation ceremonies. Barricades were up at around seventy colleges, and something like 80 per cent of the nation’s universities were involved in
conflicts in 1968. Over 10 per cent of freshmen were not attending classes in 1969 because of the crisis. Two police officers were killed in incidents on campuses in 1968 and 1969. Presidents at seventy-five student universities had resigned by 1969. In 1968, out of the roughly 377 four-year universities in Japan, 107 had major disputes and only forty-seven of these were solved by the end of the year.

The campus issues had been growing since the Anpo movement. While there had been only six major disputes in 1961, the numbers grew annually until there were fifty conflicts in 1965. There were sixty-four in 1966 and ninety-four disputes in 1967, affecting prestigious colleges such as Waseda, Meiji and Hōsei. By 1969, the figures had risen to 165 colleges, with half barricaded. The situation mushroomed so much that in July 1969 the police estimated there were 26,000 student activists, and that 259,000 student foot soldiers could be mobilised by the anti-JCP sects alone. But it was divisive; while a sizable minority of the public felt the students had some justification to their causes and did not support the casual deployment of riot police on campuses, only a tiny fraction of ordinary citizens approved of what the students were doing.

Large sections of the student body were also nonpori, a ‘non-political’ or someone not yet political. This was especially the case at Nihon University, where Zengakuren groups did not have much of a foothold. The all-campus movements were often focused on direct and practical problems that the students could relate to and understand on a daily basis. The nonpori were integral to the success of a campus conflict; the feminist scholar Chizuko Ueno, a participant in the Kyoto University movement, once commented that Zenkyōtō, including sympathisers, only made up some 20 per cent of a student body, with a further 20 per cent made up of anti-Zenkyōtō students. The rest, still a majority, were the non-politicised students—political disciples in waiting.

They were also seduced by the physicality of the movement, surrounded by thousands of peers engaged in the conflict within a closed campus environment. The passion was trapped in the walls of the college and it resonated among the bodies of the hundreds of students at rallies and demos. It swept nonpori students up in the fervour of the period. A famous Zenkyōtō novel, Boku tte nani (What am I?) (1977) by Masahiro Mita, features a Camus-esque narrator who understands nothing of the ideologies of the sects, and makes no secret of his ignorance of social or political problems. But the outsider is affected by the Zenkyōtō gatherings: the
sweat of fellow students as they link arms, the warmth of human bodies, the slogans being screamed, the ‘pressure of physicality’.

It was also fun. Like many parts of the world, it was an exciting and exhilarating time to be young in Japan. Manabu Miyazaki, a notorious free-roaming Yakuza, was in his early days a member of one of the toughest sects and active in the Waseda University conflict. In his autobiography, he claims that in his five years as an extreme leftist he attended class only a handful of times. Ryū Murakami in ‘69 also writes about the intangible energy for students at the time, the ‘something that was part of the very air we breathed in the late 1960s … It made us free. It saved us from being bound to a single set of values.’

The appeal of joining both a Zengakuren faction and a campus strike was its honesty and accessibility. You did not necessarily have to read all the difficult texts to be part of a radical movement. They had plenty of bright and easy songs that you could sing with your friends. Minsei was particularly adept at this, organising hikes, choirs, dances and other events to appeal to students. (Though the JCP and Minsei was much mocked for its emphasis on singing and folk dances, it worked: Minsei membership increased tenfold between 1958 and 1963). One song used by Shagakudō particularly makes it all seem very easy to be a radical: ‘Take up your stave, Japan’s number one dream is a big world revolution. No doctrine, with a happy smiling face, ally with the proletariat. Do your best, we’re strong, us, the red-helmeted Shagakudō.’ You could meet new people, even—or especially—members of the opposite sex. It was essentially like an extracurricular club, which was perfect for these kinds of students: the more social you were, the more likely you were to get involved in student activism.

Language was also changing, and like any vital social movement, Zenkyōtō gave birth to new names and phrases. And if a lot of the ideologies spouted by the Zengakuren zealots were of foreign origin, so were the words. From the German Gewalt (‘force’ or ‘authority’) came gebaruto, which was then shortened to geba. Like a soundtrack to the alien air of the times, such English or German derivations abounded. Suto was ‘strike’. The German ‘theory’ produced tēze. Agi was ‘agitation’ and orugu was ‘organise’, while ‘barricade’ became barikēdo and kanpa was ‘campaign’, in particular, a fundraiser, such as collecting money on the street. The tōha factions that fought for control of the student councils were often called
The word for shouting slogans at rallies was *shupurehikōru*, from the German word *Sprechchor*, literally a ‘speaking choir’. Often these loanwords were glued unceremoniously and curiously to Japanese words. The long staves that many Zengakuren radicals carried as weapons were nicknamed *gebabō*, combining the Japanese word for ‘stick’ with *geba*.

The most suspect linguistic creation is the portmanteau *uchi-geba*, ‘infighting’, and an unsettling marriage of the neologism *geba* with the supposedly highly Japanese concept of the ‘inner’ (*uchi*). Since the ‘inner’ is the most impenetrable core group—the family unit, the company, the immediate circle—to apply conflict to this is an oxymoron. The suggestion is that conflict is foreign; it is a bad influence on Japanese harmony. Whether *uchi-geba* was first coined by the activists themselves, neutral commentators in the media or disapproving establishment figures is unclear. But etymologically at least it helps give further credence to the *nihonjinron* myth that group accord is innately Japanese while internal conflict is alien.44

The graffiti slogans written on the walls of occupied university buildings and the canon of leaflets and flyers handwritten and printed by the students also contributed to a flowering of new language and modes of communication. The handbills were printed manually on cheap paper using black or blue ink, typically decorated with an abundance of exclamation marks for emphasis, occasional English words among the Japanese text, and even small manga illustrations (such cute drawings remain a distinctly Japanese feature of political communication even today).

‘Zenkyōtō’ itself has come to be a stand-in word for the whole student movement. In the typical Japanese style of soubriquet, it is actually an abbreviated form of Zengaku Kyōtō Kaigi, or All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee. These committees were behind the united campus actions—strikes, struggles with police and rightist students attempting to break the barricades, and disputes with college authorities—but since Zengakuren ‘sect’ members were active in the strikes as well as the more violent off-campus struggles, the two Zen-words have somewhat become superimposed over each other in the branding of the era.

The end of the 1960s witnessed the peak of the student movement in Japan, with 6,000 students being arrested for protest activities in 1968. By way of contrast, only a few hundred had been arrested in 1960.45 Similar numbers of radical students had been arrested in the 1930s, but over five years. While in the 1960s the most radical core of Zengakuren was only estimated to be 2 per cent of the total male university population, or some-
thing like 15,000, by 1969 two-thirds of the student body in Japan were involved with *jichikai* councils—and thus with the student movement in some way.\(^46\) The total number of students arrested more than doubled in 1969 to over 13,000.\(^47\) High-school students participated too, though their contribution garnered fewer headlines. The memorialisation of the movement has been for the most part limited to the four-year universities.\(^48\)

The campus actions and protests varied across the multifarious sects and colleges. It was not a unified movement, though the various Zenkyōtō steering committees did make efforts to form a national organisation. Each student was working out his or her own enquiry or struggle in the context of their college and its problems. In America, the students were united by universal issues like race or war. In Japan, hard-core radicals aside, the ordinary individual students owned the struggle; it was theirs to interpret as they wanted. All that mattered was exertion. ‘I feel solidarity with anyone who actually struggles hard to do something,’ said one leading University of Tokyo Zenkyōtō participant.\(^49\)

In cultural memory, two student leaders crop up regularly: Yoshitaka Yamamoto, from the University of Tokyo conflict, and Akehiro Akita, from the Nihon University struggle. But the Zenkyōtō generation is also the Baby Boomer generation, who would later in life go on to become lawmakers, corporate leaders and celebrities.

The students were a subculture, and like any serious subculture they had their own costume. The stock uniform of the students was the helmet and the stave, with towels over the face (to protect against tear gas and preserve anonymity). The helmets were different colours and marked with characters as per the faction of Zengakuren the students belonged to—particularly useful no doubt when they were fighting each other, rather than easily discernible riot police. All dolled up in these now iconic costumes, the various gear was like the accoutrements of what the Japanese call *kata* (literally, a ‘way’), something both theatrical—a prop to display their ritual of existential performance in an age of rebellion—and semiotic. Roland Barthes dedicated a short section in *Empire of Signs* to Zengakuren, in which he identifies the helmets as a ‘paradigm of colours’, part of the other ‘scenario of signs’ like the slogans and the violence.\(^50\) The more pat observation is that the paraphernalia of the radicals was merely cosplay for the 1960s generation.

The helmets were cheap plastic, of the kind a day labourer might wear, and afforded little protection from police truncheons. The *gebabō* staves were plain timber, though the more inventive students would lace the
sticks with iron tips or even nails. With the rainbow of bedizened helmets (yellow, white, red, blue, green—and with symbols, lines and the faction name) and the gebabō standing to the height of a man, there was something of the matsuri festival when the students gathered together. Rallies and street battles with police were mass spectacles, carnivals. In the riots that spilled out into the locales around the campuses and especially in the anti-Vietnam War skirmishes, pedestrians and residents became like audiences in a piece of avant-garde participatory drama.

Up until the first Haneda Airport conflict in October 1967, helmets and staves were only employed for private inter-factional clashes. But now the violence was public, deliberately so, and clearly planned (even the sense of spontaneity was, in Barthes’s view, organised). The staves were not just for defensive purposes but also formed instruments to help the students overcome the natural fear they felt while facing a massively superior police force. Fighting with staves—against the riot police, the right-wing student gangs and against rival radical sects—was an initiation rite, a crucible of pain and inevitable defeat that the students of 1968 and 1969 felt they needed to complete in order to attain a sense of selfhood.

It is easy to disparage the students with the argument that they were ‘playing’ at violence and rarely went too far. The riot police, for all their battalions and armour, were not actually armed. Between 1969 and 1972, the radicals got serious; there were 191 incidents involving some kind of explosive, including 102 actual bombs. During the campus movements, though, the majority of students ‘restrained’ themselves to throwing stones, keeping police back with staves and throwing the occasional Molotov cocktail. However, they faced tear gas, water cannons and gas shells. With the vastly better-equipped police at the opposite end of the street or campus, there was never any question that they could win. The struggle was performative, a public display of their anger.

That is not to say the police did not suffer. Some 4,000 officers were injured in clashes with students in 1968, three times the numbers for the previous year. This is equivalent to a tenth of the ranks of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department. Ever present at campuses, demos and riots, the Kidōtai (‘mobile unit’, effectively the riot police) was as much a symbol of the era as the stave-carrying, helmet-wearing student radical. A ruthlessly logical result developed by the state over the 1960s to deal with the upsurge in violence, this crack police brigade continued to increase in number throughout the period. By 1971, there were 5,200 in Tokyo and thousands more around the rest of the nation. Heavily fitted with protec-
tive gear, the Kidōtai have helmets with visors, truncheons and Duralumin shields, though unlike regular officers do not carry guns. Surprisingly, despite the 10,000 injuries the elite troops sustained in the final two years of the 1960s, it was oversubscribed with applicants from other police departments wanting to transfer.54

Confronted by the might of the police, it is a wonder the students did not simply give up. They were a tenacious lot, made more passionate in character by the harsh entrance exam gauntlet they had to pass in order to enter the top colleges (and it was often at the best universities that the conflicts were most intense). The system bred staunch individuals who had to work very hard to get where they were. They were usually quite poor and lived in tiny abodes, without the televisions and other appliances the rest of the population was now enjoying. They felt resentful and were raring to get on to the streets to express it.

Those who emerged as leaders were, as in 1960, frequently from more permissive and privileged families where politics had been discussed in the home. However, unlike 1960, this time it was not just undergraduates who were protesting furiously but also graduate students, teaching assistants and sometimes even younger faculty members.

Like in France, Japan’s GDP had been steadily rising along with the university population, creating a powerful mechanism for youthful anger and rebellion. Attendance at universities had been increasing since 1950, and after 1960 had gone up yet further as the nation switched to a predominantly white-collar economy. By 1969, there was a student population of 1,525,000, or 19.4 per cent of its age group in Japan.55 This was the second highest ratio in the world, behind only America’s, and double that of France and Britain.56 In Tokyo, the ratio of high-school students graduating and going on to further tertiary university was over 90 per cent in 1968. While the transformation of the university student from being an elite of 10 per cent in the mid-1950s to nearly 40 per cent in the mid-1970s is monumental, it was nonetheless still tough to get in to the best colleges. More college entrants also meant more competition for the good places. A survey in 1965 found that 28 per cent of students spent their Sundays doing mock tests. In 1966 that had gone up to 44 per cent. These students were hardened by the pressures being put on them to learn all the time.57

And once again we come to Zengakuren. As we have seen, the student league, born in 1948 from the earlier Gakusei Rengō, had already been painfully split when the JCP renounced their previous militant revolution-
ary methods in the 1950s. From this reasonably neat schism of anti-JCP Kyōsandō (Bund) Zengakuren and pro-JCP Zengakuren, after 1960 it spiralled into a series of further fractures.

The continued presence of Zengakuren in Japan in the 1960s as a force of rebellion led it into a peculiarly symbiotic relationship with the social mainstream. Sociologists call this the ‘labelling theory’, where the dominant group tries to manage a threat and conflict by discrediting its much smaller enemy. It does this by labelling it as a deviant and by removing social rights, arresting its participants and putting pressure on them. But the smaller group also takes an active and conscious role in this process, accepting the label and cooperating with it by assuming it as part of its identity—and appeal to new members. The Japanese government dealt with the threat of Zengakuren by strengthening police power and developing the formidable Kidōtai corps to manage and combat the newly labelled rebels. As societies since time immemorial have discovered, though, by labelling something as illegitimate or ‘bad’, it usually has the adverse effect of making people, especially the young, keen to be a part of it.58

Zengakuren had established its reputation before Anpo, including at the anti-US base campaigns of the late 1950s. Even earlier, the chief of police had tried to get Zengakuren banned in the ebullient period following the passing of the 1952 Subversive Activities Prevention Law, which re-introduced many of the harsh measures from before the war. But this was a step too far for the time. Police also tried to infiltrate campuses. The Poporo Incident saw undercover officers beaten up by University of Tokyo students in February 1952 after being rumbled in the audience at a performance of a leftist play on the grounds of the college. A long court battle ensued but the police incursion was initially ruled illegal. A line had been drawn; police were not supposed to enter public university campuses, though private colleges were not bound by the same rules.

Its achievements at Anpo further cemented Zengakuren’s reputation, as did its efforts to help force the politicians to shelve the controversial Police Duties Performance Bill, which would have increased police powers yet further. Zengakuren mobilised 10,000 demonstrators at the Diet and for other strikes and protests, foreshadowing their fiery contribution to Anpo. By the late 1960s, the authorities had built up elite forces of thousands of officers to combat the student radicals, including 29,000 Kidōtai special mobile riot police.59 It was no secret where the police priorities lay; half of the 5,000 officers recruited in 1969 were assigned to the riot squad and another 1,000 to the security police.60
‘Zengakuren’ had become much harder to define, though, like a transmuting hydra always sprouting new splinters and faces. A diagram of the New Left groups in Japan in the 1960s is like the genealogical map of the most traumatised family in history, skewered by divorces and countless stepchildren. In the wake of Anpo, Bund (Kyōsandō) began to break down into new offshoots. While Zengakuren existed, it was largely in name only since the splinter groups were disunited or only grouped in limited coalitions. The single national umbrella collapsed and the federation ultimately descended into several separate ‘Zengakuren’ entities, each of which controlled dozens of student councils at different universities.

Bund’s command of Zengakuren was initially usurped by Marugakudō (Marxist Student League), a fiercely anti-Stalinist group that had also been active during Anpo. When Marugakudō was invited to a 1962 Communist Party international youth conference in the Eastern Bloc, the students proved themselves remarkably bold. Stopping en route in Moscow, they heard about a USSR H-bomb test and began handing out handbills in Red Square produced from a portable press they had brought along. They even got out their flag and started marching. Needless to say, the police soon rounded them up and the stunt led to Zengakuren’s ostracism from the official Communist sphere.\(^{61}\)

Bolstered by defections from Bund’s student arm Shagakudō in the wake of the 1960 failure (including Zengakuren leader Satoshi Kitakōji), Marugakudō was nonetheless just one of several main post-Anpo claimants to the throne of ‘Zengakuren’. There was also the Second Bund, formed in 1966 from a union of the many remnants of Kyōsandō/Shagakudō. A radical faction of the Socialist Party’s group, Shaseidō (Socialist Youth Union), had produced Shaseidō Kaihō-ha (Socialist Youth Union Liberation Faction) in 1965. The same year saw the founding of another incarnation of Fourth International Japan (Daiyon Intānashonaru Nihon Shibu).

Finally, there was also still the presence of the ‘anti-mainstream’ Zengakuren, the JCP-affiliated Minsei Dōmei, though radical members of the faction had also formed an alternative, Zenjiren, in July 1960.

Marugakudō and its parent organisation would split bitterly in 1963 into two further pretenders to the crown, Chūkaku-ha (Central Core Faction) and Kakumaru-ha (Revolutionary Marxist Faction). Later in the decade, Marugakudō Chūkaku-ha, Shaseidō Kaihō-ha and Shagakudō would form a triumvirate, Sanpa (‘three faction’) Zengakuren, one of many such alliances over the next few years that brought back a national unity to Zengakuren, albeit briefly.\(^{62}\)
These names are also by and large abbreviated forms of much longer titles and themselves curious jumbles of Japanese and loanwords: the very lexicon of Zengakuren and the student radicals was vibrant, but also faintly toxic, like a kind of overly concocted potion.

As with the helmets, each -ha (faction) had its own ideological nuances. There were three major strains: some were Structural Reformists in the Palmiro Togliatti mode, while others were Maoist (such as the rather inappropriately named Marx–Leninist-ha and its student group, the Gakusei Kaihō Sensen). Most of the main anti-JCP splinter groups, however, could actually be defined as Trotskyist in some form, though the minor differences would be enough to prevent unions and cause protracted, bloody conflicts.

A corollary of the infighting was that jichikai councils might switch wholesale to another faction of Zengakuren, meaning individual students then found themselves aligned to a completely new group and its issues and causes. Due to the umbrella-like structure of the myriad Zengakuren alliances, non-radical students could be enrolled in a sect because of the club they belonged to and its affiliation with a council, which was in turn linked to the Zengakuren splinter group. In a similar way, non-political students could also become enveloped in a sect due to their peers and surroundings. Masahiro Mita’s narrator feels this social pressure to belong to a faction:

I was invited by Yamada. Suddenly I took part in a demo, put on a helmet … Faction B or Faction C—I couldn’t understand the differences between all these sects … It was just that I made a few acquaintances in Faction B and, because I was doing things within the connections to these people, I suddenly couldn’t get out of Faction B. 63

The jichikai were financially secure because the students paid membership dues out of their tuition fees. It meant an incubated system of ever-increasing student council numbers and power. By 1969, two-thirds of Japan’s 1.5 million students belonged to a student council association of some kind, of which there were 830. Of these, 519 were tied to one of the main four Zengakuren groups, with 65 per cent controlled by the pro-JCP forces. 64

The all-campus struggles were distinct in allaying the trend towards separatism and extremism, unifying differences and bringing the various radicals and sects—and plenty of non-sectarian students—all together for localised causes. The committees were rare cases of horizontal organisations, consolidating diverse faculties, departments and campuses—frequently the Tokyo universities had separate campuses scattered around the city—and could even at times count on the support of the pro-JCP
Zengakuren. ‘Through Zenkyōtō the boundary between non-sect and sect did indeed disappear,’ as a student participant put it. ‘If we were to talk about the number one characteristic, that would be it.’ The non-aligned students then were vital not just to the larger numbers of the Zenkyōtō movement compared to the previous campaigns and efforts of Zengakuren but also to the adhesion of the overall mass and even communication. ‘Each sect thought it had its own right to leadership … The different sect members could not talk directly to each other and so using the nonsectarian guys was what Zenkyōtō was all about.’ It was a delicate position to be in, however. ‘They had the feeling that they were caught between the sects and would be crushed.’

Compared to their more impulsive and impromptu counterparts in other countries, the Japanese students did not organise so spontaneously. Their participation came out of prior social bonds, such as the jichikai student councils or the decisions of their departments and faculties. Though often dominated by the highly local contexts of each campus struggle, a common factor across the different collegiate movements was that students recognised the need for reform to university structures. The university authorities did not take the students seriously and the student councils had no real powers. The jichikai were mostly occupied with campaigning for incremental improvements in student facilities, even as trivial as increases in the amount of toilet paper (the issue of toilet paper actually formed one of Minsei’s slogans). Zengakuren was frustrated by this situation even during its early years. It wanted to play a role in both universities and national politics that went beyond requesting schools to increase rubbish bins, or for the student council room to get some needle and thread.

Students were also exasperated by the quality of their education. It was a widespread practice for private universities to use part-time teachers to keep budgets down, resulting in erratic and arbitrary schedules and curriculum cuts. One social scientist found that at the time over 75 per cent of students interviewed were dissatisfied with the state of their education, though only a minority supported the violent tactics of the radicals. They did not seek wanton destruction or even worldwide revolution. They just wanted real control of their councils and the democratic participation in the campus administration that the ivory-towered university chancellors denied them.

The precedent were the university conflicts on campuses first at Keiō in 1964, and then between 1965 and 1967 at universities like Waseda, Kinki, Meiji and Chūō, and many other regional colleges. The disputes were about
control of student facilities and protests against sudden hikes in fees. Students were even at this early stage desperate to reform the conservative university administration and budgetary systems that were endemic in both public and private colleges. Though they were more like loose unions of various clubs, groups and student councils, 1965 and 1966 saw the emergence of the first organisations named Zenkyōtō to direct the strikes, with thousands participating. One rally is said to have involved half of Waseda’s student body and demonstrators once had a sit-in to prevent staff from leaving the main Waseda University offices. They broke into the offices and the riot police were called to evict them. In what would become symptomatic of much of the later events, the university authorities at Waseda conducted themselves in a haughty and uncompromising manner, which did nothing to win concessions from the rioting students.

In 1966, baton-armed riot police—3,000 of them—were brought in to break down barricades on the Waseda campus, and 203 students were arrested. After this, police were stationed at the campus. The 150-day Waseda conflict served as a prototype for many of the main campus disputes; non-striking and striking students debated with each other, fights erupted between factions and with the sports students, who tended to be right wing. It ended in April with the president of Waseda University and the directors resigning, and dozens of students were suspended or expelled. Things calmed down—but only until 1968. Student groups were also among those who fought against the Korea–Japan treaty in 1965, which had resulted in the death of a protestor.

Each of the campus movements was unique in cause, structure and resolution. Especially in cities like Tokyo, the diffuse topography of the campuses ensured that every dispute had its own flavour and locale. However, shared tropes can be discerned. Common tactics involved petitions, hunger strikes and sit-in protests. Faculty buildings were occupied and elaborate barricades erected. Teachers were detained and often forced to stand before whole halls of students to answer questions and justify themselves. These mass bargaining sessions (taishū dankō) frequently descended into intense interrogations and denunciations, with shouting students bullying the senior teachers with catcalls and clamour. They seem savage to us now but at the time they marked the students’ first chance to communicate with faculty staff and voice their anger. Despite the large increase in student enrolment, facilities at colleges had not improved or changed much since the 1950s, when only a small section of the elite attended university. As such, students usually never spoke to their professors, who gave aloof lectures to their charges in crowded halls.

1968 AND ALL THAT
Some of the mechanisms of the student activists play into archetypes of Japanese organisations and psychology. Consensus decision-making was the norm, leading to long debates on the campuses until the early hours. (One former participant told me that, rather than having the best arguments, it was those who were loudest and with the most stamina that would win.) Likewise, activities such as self-criticism and the mass bargaining ‘trials’ fit notions of Japan as a ‘shame’ culture.

Students boycotted classes and exams, and made attempts to interfere with the operations of the university, especially entrance and graduation examinations and ceremonies. They created reams of handbills that they printed and distributed by hand. They graffitied the insides of faculty buildings. They held mass rallies for departments or across multiple faculties. They performed careening snake dances on campuses.

The universities mobilised ultra-nationalists and sports students, even from other universities, to do the rough work of breaking up the barricades. The violent and illicit actions attracted certain kinds of students, such as Manabu Miyazaki, who was drawn to the aggressive JCP-affiliated faction because of the ‘awesome resolve of an organisation prepared to use illegal means to accomplish its goal of overturning society. I felt that being a Communist was a lot cooler than being a Yakuza.’ The aphorism says that breaking the rules is glamorous to the young. But we should be wary of judging the violence of the students by Western standards. Barthes warns against this in relation to criteria of effectiveness. Zengakuren’s goals and actions were not practical, he notes, they were transitive. ‘The violence of Zengakuren does not precede its own regulation, but is born simultaneously with it: it is immediately a sign: expressing nothing.’

The University of Tokyo is the most prestigious college in Japan, its entrance examinations the most difficult and international ranking the highest of any Japanese university. In 1968, this was even truer than it is today. It received 10 per cent of the entire national budget for public universities. The top echelons of government, civil service, industry and the arts were invariably drawn from the university’s alumni.

But this august institution was crippled by a dispute with its students for a whole year, with large swaths of its campuses occupied during that time, and violent battles and riot police invasions all taking place on its hallowed grounds of learning. At times febrile, frequently recalcitrant, the University of Tokyo struggle is representative of many of the campus movements in Japan: it started from an internal and local issue within faculties and esca-
lated into something much broader involving the entire university, and which attempted to reform the college as a whole or even dismantle it completely. It began administratively before turning ideological and violent, descending at times into internecine anarchy.

At the end of 1967, the university decided to reform the unpopular internship system for medical students, a system akin to six years of free labour. However, the proposed alternative was viewed as little better and medical students protested to their department in January 1968. They chose to strike indefinitely. A meeting in February with a senior tutor somehow became a scuffle; it is still uncertain who was the aggressive party and both sides blamed the other. The university, however, was very clear on the repercussions. They punished seventeen ‘troublemakers’, four of whom were expelled.

The obdurate attitude of the faculty yielded only more opposition and anger from the medical students. Their ruling was absurd; one of the penalised students had not even been in Tokyo on the day of the fight, but in distant Kyushu. The medical students took action, disrupting graduation ceremonies at the end of March. After riot police were first called on to the main campus in April to allow the ceremonies to go ahead without further incident, medical students then occupied Yasuda Hall in June. This was criticised by most of the other students, especially Minsei, but the decision by the university to call in riot police to clear the Yasuda barricade was calamitous.

The university had shot itself in the foot and students began congregating in their thousands to protest. Yasuda Hall was occupied again, and there they stayed. The faculties united and it was decided to call a general strike of the whole student body. A Zenkyōtō council was formed in July, with the non-sectarian Yoshitaka Yamamoto, a twenty-six-year-old postgrad student, elected as leader. They presented reasonable demands to the university, which attempted, all too late, to assuage the damage by announcing the resignation of senior medical faculty staff.

When negotiations broke down in August, the strike got underway again with even more vigour. The summer holidays ended but none of the university departments were operating. Most offices and buildings on the two main campuses, Hongō and Komaba, were barricaded and blockaded. The shibboleth ‘University of Tokyo within ourselves’ (uchi naru tōdai) became a popular catchphrase for the rebelling students.

But it was from this point that Zenkyōtō also started to lose control of the situation. The various anti-JCP factions took over and sought to hijack the struggle as a platform for implementing broader social change. For
these groups, the University of Tokyo not only represented the establishment (its former name was Tokyo Imperial University) but also wider elitism, capitalism and industry (especially in its collusion with corporations in research), and the bourgeoisie. Kakumaru-ha radicals seized the initiative and held nine professors hostage in November in order to impose *taishū dankō* inquisitions. One unfortunate academic was held for nine days of constant interrogation. During the course of the various university struggles, numerous faculty members were cornered and tried in this way by gangs of students. Often it happened in large halls in front of hundreds. One dean had to face 170 hours of grilling and verbal abuse. The crucibles of questioning and criticism inevitably led to serious health issues and at least four professors committed suicide.\(^7^2\)

Minsei joined the fracas. A total of 2,000 students battled with staves and stones for the library, leaving seventy casualties.\(^7^3\) Many such clashes took place on the two campuses, often dissipated by non-sect Zenkyōtō students, who would literally come between the two opposing armies to stop them fighting. When brutal battles could not be prevented, neutral students wore white armbands and gave first aid to the countless wounded.

Kakumaru-ha and Shaseidō Kaihō-ha became the two dominant Zengakuren factions fighting each other on the campuses. They controlled different buildings and areas of the Komaba campus, with the strongholds heavily fortified with barbed wire, wooden poles, sharp bamboo stakes and even broken glass. They used loud speakers to amplify the abuse they shouted at each other, as well as engaging in physical battles with projectiles and sticks. Dozens were injured, though non-sect students did their best to prevent the clashes. Minsei weighed in too, creating a chaotic three-way conflict. The university was under siege from within.

The university president, who had spent much of the strike in hospital following a disastrous mass meeting with the students, resigned and a more amenable, younger man, Ichirō Katō, replaced him. In November, Katō was presented with the demands of Yamamoto’s Zenkyōtō: void the punishments of the medical students and other faculties, and recognise it had been wrong to bring riot police on to the campus and promise never to do so again. Katō, who appeared conciliatory, bravely submitted himself to a mass bargaining session in front of 3,000 students squeezed into Yasuda Hall. Unfortunately, Katō would not commit to the students’ demands, and instead tried to play the sides off against each other by negotiating separately with Minsei. Some individual faculty student councils also broke away from the Zenkyōtō movement.
A final open-air meeting with Katō and 10,000 students collapsed into a melee and it seemed more and more likely that only a violent showdown could end the dispute. It appeared Minsei was winning, with several departments voting to end the strike. Fighting on the campus continued and the government was now convinced that holding the spring entrance examinations in 1969 would be inappropriate. January saw little improvement, with Zenkyōtō calling on a ‘foreign legion’ of troops from Nihon University and Chūō University to battle Minsei on the campus, leaving over 100 injured. Police came in to break it up, though they did not attempt to dismantle the barricades. While large blocks of students were voting to leave the strike action, hundreds of hard-core radicals were shuttling between Hongō and Komaba to fight their pro-JCP peers. Eventually, the students still committed to the strike only held Yasuda Hall and a handful of other buildings on the Hongō campus, and they were stockpiling stones and weapons in readiness for the final showdown.

Yasuda Hall, an old 40-metre clock tower, was a natural citadel. It was also a symbol of the university and the image of it besieged by riot police for two days in January, broadcast live on television to record audiences, did much to damage the reputation of the elite college. The erection of Yasuda Hall had actually been funded by the founder of the eponymous banking and insurance zaibatsu. Not just an emblem of the university, it was a monumental albatross signifying the cosy link between corporations and academia. And one that was now covered in slogans, red flags and a portrait of Mao Zedong.

Police moved in for a final reckoning on 18 January—8,500 riot police and hundreds of armoured vehicles and even bulldozers. In the early hours the defenders were rallied by a battle cry broadcast over loudspeakers. ‘This is the Clock Tower Defence Headquarters. The riot police have now appeared in full force. All students take your battle positions. Ours is a historical, people’s struggle.’ Despite the rhetoric, the various groups retained their differences right to the end, with each faction manning a separate building or section of the main hall. The youths were fighting a battle of almost medieval proportions. They knew their struggle that weekend was impossible. But they wanted to keep fighting at all costs, armed with their crude and unsophisticated weapons: stones, staves, Molotov cocktails, pipes, hatchets, fire-bombs, even a home-made flame-thrower. Meanwhile, helicopters circled overhead and police fired tear gas and water cannons into the tower.

Yamamoto himself was not present. An arrest warrant had been issued and he was in hiding. ‘This means I’m now a total Lumpen intellectual,’ he
quipped. One by one the other buildings fell until only Yasuda held out, each floor, each doorway, each staircase blockaded and grittily defended. Facing the thousands of police were some 500 students. These included representatives from each sect in the struggle as well as students from other universities. They were hardened veterans with injuries from past clashes. They scrawled graffiti on to the walls, grand slogans of solidarity and defiance. (But mixed with some more sentimental or romantic efforts. One student wrote poems to his girlfriend on the walls). The siege dragged out until the next day as the tower stubbornly resisted the police inching their way upwards. Meanwhile, students from other colleges clashed with police in the streets of Kanda, a short distance from the campus, in efforts to draw away manpower and resources. The students were broadcasting from the tower throughout, with their final announcement defiant despite the futility of their struggle. 'Our fight has been a triumph ... It has by no means ended ... We are temporarily halting these clock tower broadcasts until the day when we can truly commence broadcasting them once again from a liberated lecture hall.'

By the evening of the Sunday, the police had broken through to the roof, where the last radicals had been singing songs and dancing for the benefit of the TV crews in their helicopters. The red flag was taken down by the police at 5.44 p.m. The University of Tokyo student movement was over, but at what cost. Yasuda Hall was trashed, inside and out. Across the thirty-five-hour siege over 650 police were injured, plus more than 100 students and several bystanders.

Yukio Mishima had been so concerned as he watched his alma mater descending into chaos that he personally telephoned a message for the police chief on the scene, telling him to be careful not to let the students jump out of the tower. The events inspired other students throughout the country. Dozens more colleges went on strike in 1969, on top of the many still in the midst of disputes from the previous year.

In front of clicking cameras the prime minister and Katō wiped away tears induced by the air still heavy with gas as they inspected the battlefield the next day. Some 800 students were arrested and over 600 put on trial; the majority were not actually students from the University of Tokyo. Many refused to take part in the proceedings and were tried in absentia. Others were held without trial for long periods—a tactic the police would hone over the years as they dealt with the New Left threat—and some 120 were still confined at the end of 1969. Typically tried together, defendants’ court cases dragged on for years. The victory of the
authorities was pyrrhic as the entrance examinations were still cancelled. Katō was dismissive of the students: ‘One could say that there is really no point in debating abstractly whether the strike was given recognition or not.’82 In a very real way, though, with the detriment done to the reputation of the college—attendance dropped after entrance exams were held again in 1970—and with a whole academic year thrown away, along with the hundreds of millions of yen of damage to the campus, it was not the students who were the vanquished.

For those tried, it generally meant that any chance of a successful career was forsaken. But intriguingly a kind of elitism characteristic of the college continued even in the later attitudes of the former activists. Relatively few spoke out about their involvement, with activists from Nihon University or other movements generally being much more vocal and open in subsequent decades. Yamamoto in particular, despite his prominent role in the affair, never wrote a memoir or gave an interview on the subject. Whether his taciturnity was due to disillusionment or renunciation is a matter of debate.

A clear evolution can be traced from the first student movements in 1965 and 1966, which were not looking to overthrow the entire system but rather wanted the university to revert to its ‘original’ form as the seat for enquiry and enlightenment. By 1968, though, ambitions had grown.83

The University of Tokyo conflict is perhaps easy to see as the most representative or famous of the campus struggles. But the sense of student outrage and betrayal by their elders is more apparent in the concurrent Nihon University movement. A private university, it boasted the largest student body in Japan (a total of some 90,000, around 10 per cent of the overall student population in Japan) and had a reputation as a more conservative institution. The various factions of Zengakuren had barely made a dent on the student councils at the university—a fact the administration was proud of, though contrarily this lack of sectarianism led to an unusually strong, united student force when it did rebel.

Whereas students at other universities felt they were fighting the government and the whole post-war system, the Nihon University conflict was more about the integrity of their institution itself. The issue was relatively clear-cut and the party in the wrong was obvious from the start, so much so that parents even supported students who took part.84 The controversy involved money, lots of it. The university was known for its ties with commerce and often purchased land as investments, leading to a nickname, ‘Nihon Real Estate Inc.’85 And yet, despite its wealth, the facilities and conditions for students at the college were very poor. The students
were taken for granted; in 1968, applicants for courses at the university were double the number of students accepted for places. In February 1968, the Tokyo Tax Office began investigating the university’s accounts. It then made the shocking announcement that the books had been cooked; over ¥2 billion was unaccounted for, something like $5.5 million at the time. One member of the accounting department hanged herself, leaving a note professing her innocence. Another disappeared for months, eventually to be found and arrested.

As the investigation dragged on, in May some students felt aggrieved enough to protest by putting up a notice. The university authorities proved themselves indifferent, taking down the notice and foolishly calling on right-wing sports students to attack demonstrators. Protesting students were shut out of the campus. Riot police were called in to evict protesting students. The university thought it had unleashed its kraken in calling in the kendō sword-wielding rightists, but in fact all it had done was summon up a new, profound sense of identity in the student body. When they met this first violent opposition in May and June, one of the students, Akehiro Akita, described it as ‘the bud of solidarity with the truth of suffering … At this moment the students felt for the first time that they were Nihon University students. It was a deep feeling that they might as well die.’

A Zenkyōtō committee was formed and Akita was elected leader. It was not hard to see why; he had already emerged as de facto spokesman due to his skill with words. He had spelt out the scale of the transgression and negligence of the university in a way that all the students could understand, telling them at one demonstration that the money divided between the students equated to ¥30,000 each. This hit home in an era when curry rice meals in the college canteen cost ¥10, while a twenty-four-hour night-and-day shift as a construction worker yielded a mere ¥1,000. Nihon University was known as the institution that produced the lower ranks of white-collar workers, and the students felt very indignant about the university’s misappropriation of their fees.

In June, a rally was held with 10,000 students. By early July most of the campuses and departments were on strike and making barricades. While Akita badgered University Chairman Jūjirō Furuta to submit to a mass bargaining session and listen to their demands, students spent months fighting the police and right-wing students. Scores and scores were arrested; barricades were pulled down by police, to be replaced by the zealous students with better ones. By September all the faculties had joined the strike. But Furuta kept going back on his word. On 30 September, he finally faced the students—around 35,000 of them—inside a dangerously over-packed hall, and
after some twelve hours of negotiations agreed to their charges that the college funds had been misused, and that the administration had been wrong to call in the police. All the board of the college signed a document agreeing to disclose the accounts, establish an autonomous student body, and resign. They had capitulated to the baying students.

But what seemed like a significant victory was just another ploy to buy time. It was a ritual of apology and formally accepting responsibility—as opposed to rectifying wrong actions. The riot police kept up their attacks and furious fighting with masses of stone-throwing students continued until December on the campuses (Nihon University, like most Tokyo colleges, had several sites, including outside the capital) and in the streets nearby. The students were very savvy and used radios on the campuses to communicate with each other about enemy movements.

The battles were fierce. In May, at one of the first rallies, rightist students and staff from the student administration office threw metal and rubbish at them, as well as chairs, tables and lockers from the fourth floor. The student demos were continually met with reprisals by their right-wing peers. These rightist sports students had swords, golf clubs, iron pipes and ski poles. The street skirmishes with police were virtually pitched battles, with students smashing up pavements to make ammunition to throw. One police officer was killed in September when the police tried to clear the barricades, for which the students expressed remorse. The Nihon University students, though, became so hardened and adept that they could send contingents to assist their allies at the University of Tokyo. But Prime Minister Satō had decided to deal with the two university disputes as ‘political problems’ and threw the full weight of the state police machine at them.

In the end, Furuta did not resign and reneged on all his promises and admissions of culpability. Strikes and demos carried on into 1969 but the Zenkyōtō struggle was essentially a failure, defeated by the obstinacy of authority. Warrants went out for Akita and the other leaders of the movement in November 1968 (Akita was eventually arrested the following March). The final barricades were smashed by police in 1969 and classes restarted for the new school year. In all, some 1,700 Nihon University students were arrested and hundreds prosecuted. Nihon University’s policy towards its student movement remains the same: disdain. It is hardly mentioned in the university’s official chronicle; they have attempted to expunge its very existence.

Other key campus strikes and major student movements took place in 1968–9 at Kyoto, Meiji, Waseda, Keiō and Chūō universities, and scores
more around the country. Some participants at the time, though, ques-
tioned if the other conflicts were ‘true’ Zenkyōtō in the Tokyo or Nihon University mode. It reached a peak in late 1969 in the run-up to the auto-
matic renewal of Anpo, with Okuma Auditorium at Waseda occupied and a National Zenkyōtō rally at Hibiya Park on 5 September. That event was well attended with students from universities across Japan, but for the most part the movements remained essentially isolated. When seen in parallel with the riots and street battles in the 1967–71 period in protest mainly against Anpo and the Vietnam War, they did at the time appear to form a kind of revolutionary momentum. But the National Zenkyōtō rally in many ways makes a neat symbol of the closing chapter. Representatives from the various factions as well as campus movements at the University of Tokyo, Nihon University, Kyoto University and 175 other colleges around Japan joined together for an immense rally of 26,000 student activists. Around 5,000 riot police formed a 100-metre human tunnel, face-checking each entering student against photos of wanted radicals. They finally got their man: Yoshitaka Yamamoto was recognised and arrested trying to get into the event.

The National Zenkyōtō had previously selected him as its head and Akita as deputy, both key leaders and prominent non-sect activists. In truth, though, the membership was largely made up of members of the Zengakuren groups. In trying to take Zenkyōtō off-campus, it was much harder to attract the nonpori students, who were less likely to remain politicised and interested in general social or university reform outside of their local contexts. Likewise, the sectarians themselves were also depleted in number by arrests and were graduating on to headline-grabbing public unrest as part of the anti-government, anti-Vietnam and anti-Anpo 1970 movements. It was around September 1969 that the mass media began to use the term ‘New Left’ widely. And it was at the National Zenkyōtō rally that some eighty members from the newly formed Sekigun-ha (Red Army Faction) made their first full public appearance. Radicalism had come to the fore but the non-sectarian, horizontal Zenkyōtō dissipated and its national incarnation collapsed.

The weeks, sometimes months, the students spent behind the barricades were an understandably formative experience which changed the lives of many of them. There was drinking and debating until the early hours. The cooking was often left to the female students—how conservative protest movements can still seem—though the fare was simple: whatever could be smuggled in. Sentries were placed at the makeshift entry points in the
1968 AND ALL THAT

barricades, checking anyone coming in or out. It was often safer to stay inside. There was a constant fear of police, right-wing student gangs and other factions attacking the barricade day or night. For all that, they were solid and intricate affairs, constructed out of lockers, tables, logs and wire. The Nihon University barricade even had a reception—staffed by girls, naturally—as well as a pet cat nonchalantly roaming among the occupiers. Certainly the private college students were less austere than their torrid peers at the University of Tokyo, and had plenty of singing and music. Couples could hook up and privacy could be found in certain cubbyholes. It was like camping, one participant said.90

Nonpori scholars set up a large tent outside the barricaded Yasuda Hall to show solidarity with their more passionate co-students. In a way, they were like refugees stuck in their own university. But they kept busy, with rooms divided per Zengakure faction for study sessions on the political ramifications of what they were doing. There would always be a crude press, where they would create mountains of flyers, all written and then printed by hand, to be hawked and handed out to other students and members of the public. Visitors to the University of Tokyo were greeted by banners, flags and signs. Inside the buildings, the students left large and proud graffiti all over the walls. (Like in Paris, student graffiti became an icon of the era.) Throughout 1969, the leading students and groups published at least ten major books about their beliefs and activities. Zenkyōtō was not just about defiance, reform and protest—it was about communication itself.

Surveys by major newspapers at the time revealed that the public was mostly sympathetic to the students’ view but opposed their violence.91 Internal strife had been a serious feature of radicalism in Japan from the start. Factions fought before and during Anpo, and through the early 1960s. Campuses became battlefields; fighting broke out between Kakumaru-ha and Chūkaku-ha at Waseda University in July 1964. (Waseda acquired a reputation as a ‘department store of factions’, and it was so torn by sectarianism that it came to be compared to the Three Kingdoms of Chinese history.) In 1968–75, police recorded 1,776 violent internal factional disputes. There were 4,848 injuries, forty-four deaths and 3,438 arrests.92 Analogies with Yakuza gangs or warlords from Japanese feudal history need not be as specious as they sound. The corrosive infighting was self-defeating, though the conflicts were not mere thuggery; they were cannibalistic, yes, yet also passionate.

They fought over turf and territory, both geographical and ideological. Nuances of ideas led to blows, ‘betrayals’ in the past to brutal recrimina-
The situation worsened as more and more factions seceded from each other and proliferated. The original Zengakuren spawned at least thirty-two different inner groups, and Bund alone had procreated fifty-four further factions by the late 1970s.

Sometimes the students were more intent on fighting each other than the establishment. Minsei brought in a ‘foreign legion’ of action corps from Waseda and other colleges in November 1968 to oppose the University of Tokyo blockade and occupation of the campuses by Zenkyōtō. Minsei were better equipped, with stone-throwing machines and bigger staves. They even had nicer lunches than their rivals. As the final siege raged, the factions continued to fight, devoting valuable resources and manpower to battle other students when they were facing much larger and more dangerous numbers of riot police. Faculty members had to mediate ‘prisoner of war’ exchanges of injured, captured students between the sides in January 1969, mere days before the fall of the citadel. ‘Ultimately,’ a member of Minsei headquarters recalled, ‘at some point in time it became so that we would respond “flexibly” to situations. When there was imminent and unlawful violence threatening you, then it was permitted to use “appropriate defence”. This was a big turning point.’

There were 2,460 street battles in 1969, mobilising some 740,000 people (of whom 470,000 were students), resulting in 14,748 related arrests, though no fatalities. This year, not 1968, was the peak of the whole cycle of radicalism, with perhaps as many as 53,500 extremists active in some way.

And yet, despite the violence, farce appeared once again to cast a different tone. In 1966 the pro- and anti-JCP factions fought for control of student dormitories at an assembly for Zenryōren, the All-Japan Dormitory Self-Government Federation. The meeting disintegrated as people produced staves, pipes and stones, though the most dramatic weaponry was surely the massive tree trunk that required five people to carry it, used to charge the stage. And in the last gasps of the student movement, a graduation ceremony at Waseda was interrupted by black-helmeted students—non-sectarians or anarchists, free radicals in the real sense of the word—who burst into the auditorium throwing firecrackers, smoke bombs, eggs—and even live chickens, which flapped through the air of bedlam.

Things started to return to normal on the campuses in 1970, but not for everyone. It was a season of breakdowns; students who were expelled for their actions might well commit suicide or disappear without trace. ‘The brightest people of my generation were … nearly wrecked,’ one veteran of the University of Tokyo struggle said. ‘I lost a sense of reality … There were many activists who almost went crazy.’
Needless to say, many parents did not approve of their children joining in the frays on campus or in the anti-war protests. One student activist recalls that he changed his clothes and went to a bathhouse after a clash with police to wash the smell of tear gas off his body before returning home.98

If students were living apart from their parents and got arrested, it might be the first time their parents heard about their politicisation. Anpo having normalised protest for the nation, parents were not necessarily unsympathetic to the campus strikes, though, especially if they were union members themselves. Arrests were typically for misdemeanours and, barring a real injury, the students might not even need to worry their parents, since a professor could act as a guarantor if required. On the whole, students who apologised would be released after a short time and there might not be serious consequences.

The committed radicals, though, said nothing, refusing to give their name or break during the long interrogations. As protests escalated, arrested activists found themselves facing the full brunt of the state and a support network developed to help them. In 1969, the non-partisan volunteer legal network Kyūen Renraku Sentā (Relief Liaison Centre) set up a twenty-four-hour telephone line that could be reached if detained protestors needed help. Leftist students memorised the number—using the mnemonic saa goku iri, imi ōi (‘Going to jail has much meaning’), or 3591–1301—and were educated by the group to request that the support agency be contacted immediately, and after which maintain silence. The centre would then despatch a lawyer to act as the interface between the arrested student and the outside world, and supporters would step in to help the family of the student before the police got to them.99

Japanese résumés are always very detailed and adhere to a fixed format, where job candidates even have to put down all the schools they attended. Students who had been expelled or, even worse, arrested and charged, had trouble converting this into something more innocuous on an application. Any gap in your biography was frowned upon and ambiguous wording that tried to cover up the precise reason for ‘leaving’ a college course halfway through would have worried any potential employer. Many students were thus forced into unconventional careers and could not land full-time or secure employment for some time.

Those in the middle, politicised and angry but not extremists, were often destined to fall between the cracks. One told me that after being thrown out of Nihon University it was like he was ‘stamped’ with the branding of Zenkyōtō all his working life—but for all that, he was still happy to have played his part.
The non-aligned students had been awakened by the spirit of the age, but it was simplest and most painless for them just to knuckle down and graduate, ideally without anything on their record. This has led to remarks that the turnover of student activists was four years, the time it took to complete a degree in Japan, and frequent dismissals that the protests were just flurries of youth on a generational cycle. Did it all end up as tenkō, leaving the dreams behind in order to graduate and get jobs, and more practical futures? Some called it shūshoku tenkō, job-hunting conversion.

Akehiro Akita was eventually given a sentence of just over a year in prison, though it took until 1977 for his verdict to arrive.100 He returned traumatised to his home region of Hiroshima and worked in an automobile factory. Yoshitaka Yamamoto became a physics teacher at a prominent cram school.101 A more unusual path was forged by people like Manabu Miyazaki, who went on to be a reporter and then an underworld figure dabbling in shady land speculations at the height of the Bubble, and even a suspect in the famously unsolved Glico–Morinaga extortion case in the 1980s.

The campuses did change; things became better for the students and subsequent generations have viewed university life as a time just for having fun. Ideologies and grand narratives declined. In compensation, though, one endowment from the apogee of the student councils was the profusion of sports and other clubs, as well as the bolstering of certain new religions that had sprung up after the war, many of them part business and part cult. One, Sōka Gakkai, had already been gaining tens of thousands of students in the early 1960s, at one point adding 200,000 new youth members in nine months between October 1962 and July 1963.102

The government responded with a special university management bill, which became law in 1969 after being forced through by the LDP without an Upper House debate. One reason for the protraction of the campus disputes had been the lack of coherence between faculties and the absence of a clear chain of command, as well as uncertainty between the government and public universities as to who had the ultimate say. Control of colleges was made more centralised, with the authority and scope of the government and minister of education more distinct. Now governments had the power to shut down universities that failed to settle student disputes after a certain time. And, more sinisterly, the Diet gave police the power to intervene in campus disputes.

As opposed to the 1960 Anpo protests, which saw university professors heavily involved on the streets, and the concurrent Vietnam campaign,
many of whose leaders were academics, the student movement and campus struggles exposed a serious rift with mainstream intelligentsia. While alternative figures like Takaaki Yoshimoto championed the students, others such as the liberals Masao Maruyama and Shunsuke Tsurumi were distrustful. The students saw this lack of support as proof of their complicity. They set up kangaroo courts during the strikes, interrogating their teachers for days on end, leading to hospitalisation and even suicide in some cases.

Maruyama in particular became a figure of antipathy and was force-marched to a lecture hall to be subjected to a two-hour cross-examination by 100 students. During the occupation of the University of Tokyo campus, Maruyama himself protected the archive of Meiji-era newspapers against the intruders. Ironically, the University of Tokyo students achieved something more substantial and productive when debating an intellectual who was their political polar opposite, Yukio Mishima.

The dismissive attitude towards the students prevalent at the time has continued in the years since the campus struggles ebbed away. Takeo Doi assessed the student movement as a fad that spread like hysteria and then died down rapidly, another example of the Japanese group or mob psychology, and their penchant for trends. He notes a university professor’s story that the students who had walked out of classes in protest were back a year later, all attending obediently and earnestly. For thinkers like Doi, the students were just trying to get attention in an extreme way, and even revolt and collective action is merely a manifestation of his idea of *amae*. He points to the example of Momotarō, the self-appointed hero who is essentially a spoilt child. The student radical is blindly following the crowd and dependent on the reaction of their audience, the onlookers among the public, the university authorities, the press and the police.

While there were true radicals, the majority of young Japanese valued their own lives too much. They preferred to watch screen idol Ken Takakura do all the rebelling and violence for them in celluloid fiction. In Murakami’s ‘69 the high-school students barricade their school, quote the hip books, films and philosophers, and even organise an ‘avant-garde’ culture festival—yet they do this not for ideological reasons but so that they can attract girls.

Some went further and mocked Zengakuren with the nickname Zenpakuuren, the National Federation of Fools. The critic Jun Etō was coruscating, in one essay calling the activism *kakumei-gokko*, ‘playing at revolution’. This label also appears in literature from former radical activists, who in hindsight—or even at the time—realised that they were pretender revolutionaries, led by mountebanks and surrounded by the naïve.
From a global perspective, Zenkyōtō initially achieved some notoriety but has been supplanted by other European or American ‘memories’ of the 1968 era. And yet, far from being yet another by-product of international ‘student power’, Zengakuren was founded years before the Students for a Democratic Society in America. The Japanese students were certainly influenced by foreign ideas and methods. The Latin Quarter barricades that their French peers had erected served as a good model for when they were making their own liberated zones in Kanda and elsewhere on the streets of Tokyo. But the Japanese students cannot just be shrugged off as imitators or wannabes: the University of Tokyo movement began prior to the events in Paris. And at the Democratic Convention in Chicago in August 1968, New Leftists adopted the snake dance of the Japanese students, while in the Days of Rage riots in Chicago in 1969 the Weathermen also took to wearing helmets. The Japanese students were arguably pioneers of some forms of radicalism in the period. Their causes were contextual but much was universal.

A new law went into effect in 2004 turning national universities into corporations. Today, in neoliberal Japan, student activism is alive, but filleted. In the past twenty years colleges have destroyed the bases of the once powerful radical factions and banned them from the premises. Jichikai student councils at universities are shadows of their former selves; colleges, especially Hōsei and Waseda, have repackaged or phased them out to reclaim control of the student body from the sects. Likewise, there remains no single Zengakuren umbrella organisation, only separate sectarian federations of student groups. All of these are small and only the Chūkaku-ha Zengakuren is truly active. You might still see some young enthusiasts wearing helmets as their peers did in past decades, but the snake dance is gone. Until quite recently, campuses featured large signboards with political slogans; now these have been banished, replaced by gentrified commercial spaces. The campus has been sanitised.
The Japanese opposition to the American misadventure in Vietnam was rooted in a sensibility both political and moral. The gut feeling was pacifist; 1945 was a mere twenty years in the past and American involvement in another Asian conflict rubbed very close to the bone. The Japanese population was also fully aware of their nation’s own complicity in the bombing of Vietnamese citizens: American planes were taking off from bases ostensibly on Japanese soil, and men, armaments and fuel were being supplied from their shores. In effect, Japan was a silent partner in the company—but the Japanese pacifists, at any rate, were anything but mute. Frequently they were violent.

The anti-war movement ran parallel with the campus struggles, beginning roughly at the same time in 1965 and similarly somewhat losing steam after 1970, although the tragic war of course continued for some years more. These two defining social upheavals in the period are linked by their participants—many students, both nonpori and hardened Zengakuren sect radicals, took part in both—and their tone, with the ‘peace’ movement at times turning to extreme behaviour to try to achieve its aims.

For the Japanese, there had been no major conflict until then—or since—that hit as near to home as what was going on in Vietnam. Here was another Asian country torn by ideology and whose strife was aggravated by the intervention of other larger nations. The Japanese anti-war movement served as ersatz atonement, since Vietnam was part of the pantheon of places that had suffered at Japan’s hands just two decades prior. The wartime legacy was
also apparent on a daily basis for the Japanese, with Okinawa occupied and still technically ‘foreign’ territory, and with America controlling or operating nearly 150 sites or facilities around the country. Some 500 Japanese people were killed between 1952 and 1977 in incidents and accidents as a result of on- or off-duty US military forces in Japan.¹

Most people were against the war; a newspaper survey in 1965 found that 75 per cent of the population opposed the bombing of North Vietnam by American and South Vietnamese planes.² The anti-Vietnam War campaign was by default an anti-American one and the growth of the Japanese economy gave the locals the chutzpah to oppose their former vanquishers (by contrast, the 1960 Anpo movement had largely been more anti-government in tone, although by implication was also opposed to America). In the two decades after 1968, the Japanese would come to realise their exports, in particular their electronics, were the best in the world, and they were learning their strongest ally was not as politically savoury as they would hope. In 1964, an average of 49 per cent of the public said that America was their favourite foreign country, compared with just 4 per cent who said they disliked it. As the Vietnam War continued, its popularity plunged. By 1973, another survey found now that a mere 18 per cent of respondents liked America, ranking third (behind Switzerland and France), and with 13 per cent answering that they ‘disliked’ the nation.³

The movement was led by Beheiren (Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō), which translates as the Citizens’ Federation for Peace in Vietnam (the official English name was the Peace in Vietnam Committee). It was set up in 1965 and involved some of the same intellectuals as the Anpo movement, such as Shunsuke Tsurumi and Masao Maruyama, and former Zengakuren activists. However, at the helm was a newcomer, the popular younger novelist Makoto Oda, who was a superb public speaker but not known for political activism. (At one point, Shintarō Ishihara was also considered to lead the movement. Ishihara instead went on to be elected to the Upper House in 1968 with 3 million votes.) Other participants included Shūji Terayama, Kenzaburō Ōe and the painter Tarō Okamoto.

Whereas Koe Naki Koe no Kai, formed partly by Shunsuke Tsurumi, had ironically been drowned out by the hubbub of the other protestors during Anpo five years previously, its model of *shimin* civic activism reached an apotheosis in Beheiren. Initially, though, Beheiren resembled more a gathering of celebrity intellectuals. It courted famed thinkers from overseas, in August 1965 putting together the first twenty-four-hour teach-in about the Vietnam War, attended by Carl Oglesby. It held a joint US–Japan peace
conference in 1966 and organised a trip to Tokyo by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in October of the same year. It brought left-wing darling Howard Zinn over to Japan for a lecture tour. But beneath the inevitable schmoozing, there was a savvy utilisation of the media going on. It purchased advertising in *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times*—such anti-war newspaper ads in Japan were hard to pull off—and gained publicity through its teach-ins.

Impressively, it also achieved all this without centralising. It did not even settle on a name for a year. This was not an organisation; it was a movement. And precisely because of this, it was stronger and free of the ideology and factionalism that consumed many Japanese political groups, both the radicals and mainstream parties. (It also makes a nice foil to *nihonjinron* advocates who argue that the Japanese are inexorably drawn to tightly controlled factions.) Anyone was allowed to start a local chapter as long as they adhered to three basic tenets: ‘Peace for Vietnam’, ‘Vietnam for the Vietnamese’ and ‘Stop the Government of Japan from Co-operating in the Vietnam War’. It had no affiliations and relied on no dues from members, only donations. It raised money by street collections and received funds from a broad social spectrum, everyone from housewives to company employees, school students and even policemen. Especially at its early stages, it consciously tried to avoid being perceived as overtly left wing (leadership candidate Ishihara was hardly a man of the Left by any stretch of the imagination). Oda was an unconventional leader who divided people, denounced by the JCP for being soft on America but equally criticised for his pro-Vietnam slant by the conservatives. Beheiren did not seek to recruit leaders or revolutionaries; it was a movement for ordinary people. ‘Beheiren,’ Oda said, ‘assumes from the beginning that it does not have the “great people” and that everyone is at once in the middle and on the edge of the movements without distinction between vanguards and rearguards.’ In stark contrast to the ideological posturing and fierce debates about minutiae of slogans among the New Left factions, Oda called on the anti-war movement to forget dogma and prioritise action: ‘Let’s junk radicalism based on words.’ ‘This is a very complicated movement,’ the thirty-something leader also admitted. ‘You can’t define it. I myself don’t know exactly what it is.’

Most political movements, though, have to start small and Beheiren was no exception. Its first demo in April 1965 attracted a modest 1,500 people. While its leaders were predominantly young writers, artists and academics, the emphasis in its statements and identity was very much on everyone in
Beheiren being an ‘average citizen’. As the American bombing campaign began in 1965, the public mood swung heavily against the United States, and not merely for humanitarian reasons. There was a real practical danger for the Japanese if nuclear China came in on Hanoi’s side, since their missiles might be aimed at American bases in Japan. Though panic over Chinese involvement subsided, the public remained obdurately opposed to what America was getting mired in. Would Japan get dragged into a new war, in defiance of its constitutional pacifism? This was an almost daily, exigent question for the Japanese population during the Vietnam conflict.

From its unpretentious genesis, Beheiren remained steadfast, holding protests in Tokyo every first Saturday of every month from September 1965 through to October 1973. (Though easy to forget in the digital age, holding weekly or other regularly scheduled rallies was a sure way to achieve participant numbers without costly communication; people always knew where and when the next event would be.) A pacifist rally by Sōhyō, the JSP and JCP also drew 108,000 people nationwide in 1965, but this translated into few political issues for the ruling LDP in the election later that year. Even the LDP, though, and Prime Minister Satō were inflamed when B-52s were taking off from Okinawa to attack Vietnam. Without being asked for consent, Japan had become America’s most reliable tacit partner in the war, in the face of the pacifist Constitution that the United States had itself drafted after the 1945 defeat.

The truth of the matter is that Japan benefited from the Vietnam War. Procurements from Japanese suppliers to the US military greatly increased. These supply contracts lubricated the Japanese economy; general exports to America also shot up. Between 1966 and 1971, Japanese firms earned at least an extra $1 billion per year as a result of the conflict. The martial emporium included everything from beer to lettuce, clothing, propaganda leaflets, vehicles, toilet paper—and even blood. All were ‘made in Japan’ and either directly assisted the war effort, or otherwise filled gaps in the American economic machine due to local manufacturers being busy supplying the troops.

Much of this material gain may not have been noticeable to the casual observer. However, workers were aware of what they were doing—sometimes literally making the instruments of war. There were some minor industrial disputes and demos in 1965–6 involving workers suffering from pangs of conscience. More public attention was gained, though, by the anti-war concerts in Osaka and Tokyo in 1966 and 1967. Not everyone was happy with this: Beheiren’s demos met opposition from rightists and Bin Akao’s thugs would disrupt rallies.
AN ANGRY ELEPHANT

In 1966, unions held strikes on 21 October (later known as International Anti-War Day), in what the organisers claimed was the world’s first anti-war strike in the world. The estimated number of workers involved was 2 million; some claims put it at even double that or more. But any hubris was derailed by the participants themselves. In their minds at any rate they were striking not against war but for better wages, and journalists who interviewed them found that some did not even know who the Viet Cong were.12

Beheiren needed a galvanising moment and they got it on 8 August 1967. Most of the American bombers were taking off far from Tokyo, but the jet fumes nonetheless reached the city in the some 4.84 million litres of aviation fuel being transported through its railway lines every day.13 The hazards of the sheer volume of dangerous fuel—along with just how much the country had become an unwitting vessel for the facility of the American war machine—was brought home to the population that August when a freight train and tanker car loaded with jet fuel collided, causing a massive conflagration in central Tokyo. The furious flames lit a beacon for all the students, nonpori and ordinary shimin citizens to gather for the fight.

A full-page advert had appeared in The Washington Post in April, placed by Beheiren in English. The Japanese characters by Tarō Okamoto, korosu na (do not kill), splayed across half the sheet as if they had been dashed out in large splashes of calligraphic blood. Below it ran several columns of text, beginning with a powerful metaphor:

An angry elephant, the most enormous ever seen, is rampaging through the Southeast Asian Jungle. Contemptuous of all other life, he tramples all underfoot, smashing down the trees, vines and flowers, crushing beneath his ponderous feet the nests of birds and the homes of his weaker neighbours. By the law of the jungle, Might is Right. By the same law, he too will be destroyed by his natural enemies and the creatures he has outraged. Such is the bitter truth of this Vietnam war.14

The angry elephant marauded first most noticeably at Haneda Airport. Japanese dissent time and time again returns to the same locations; Haneda had already figured on several occasions in the past ten years as a site of protest and riots, and it would continue to be a geographical crucible during the late 1960s. The first major violent incident in the anti-war movement took place on 8 October 1967, the first fiery passionate peg in a skein of rallies and protests that drew 18,730,000 participants over the next two and a half years.15

The prime minister was about to leave for an Asian tour, and just like in 1960 and 1956, opponents tried to stop him from departing. (The cyclical
nature of Japanese radicalism is even more glaring when we consider that Satō was Kishi’s younger brother.) The anti-Vietnam movement was seen by radical students as part of the struggle against Anpo (the security treaty was due for renewal in 1970), Okinawan occupation and American imperialism. As such, Zengakuren groups united under the anti-war banner of Sanpa Zengakuren: Marugakudō Chūkaku-ha, Shaseidō Kaihō-ha and Shagakudō. Around 1,000 Chūkaku-ha students armed with the staves and helmets that would become trademarks of the movement got on trains and headed towards Haneda. This was the first time the students had carried their iconic gear in public (until then the helmets and sticks had been employed for sectarian fighting only). They were met by 4,000 riot police, who blocked three road bridges leading into the airport.

Chūkaku-ha’s students were reinforced by about 900 members of Shagakudō and Shaseidō Kaihō-ha (plus some 400 Kakumaru-ha students from Waseda University, though they were not part of the Sanpa alliance). Haneda became a battlefield with thousands of riot police and numerous vehicles keeping the students back from entering the airport over the bridges. For three hours the armies clashed, the students throwing rocks and setting police vehicles on fire. The police hosed the students with water cannons, beat them back with nets and batons, and shot tear gas for the first time since Anpo 1960. Somewhere in the midst of all this, the prime minister’s motorcade arrived by the expressway and his plane took off without hindrance.

The students were not ones to give up lightly, however, and continued to push against the overwhelming police forces at Bentenbashi Bridge. Inevitably, tragedy struck. An eighteen-year-old Kyoto University student and Chūkaku-ha activist, Hiroaki Yamazaki, died in circumstances that remain murky, either killed by riot police or accidentally run over by a vehicle hijacked by fellow protestors. As the students held a minute’s silence for their fallen comrade, the police fired tear gas into the crowd to disperse them. The day was done. Some 600 were injured and fifty-eight arrested.

But what came after was even more important. Yamazaki’s diary was discovered following his funeral. It reveals hints of the religiosity with which these activists interpreted their struggle:

In order for a man to free his spirit from all encumbrances, he must have the capacity to analyse his own spirit and that capacity is called self-consciousness. But there exists one thing which, clouding our self-consciousness, restrains our spirit: and that restraint is called material. What should we do to free our spirit from material? I know very well that I have little courage ... I am not qualified to
AN ANGRY ELEPHANT

live. I am a weak human ... It is man’s fate that to live is to sin. But man becomes more guilty by choosing not to live. Our life has meaning only insofar as it functions to purify sin.18

Martyrs like Yamazaki, as with Michiko Kanba, had a powerful effect on students at the time. Death was transformative, producing awe, hōganbiiki and bathos. Notes from Chūkaku-ha student activists published in 1968 contained one example by a young man who wrote under the name Tetsu Sakaide. ‘The life that was lost at Bentenbashi, Hiroaki Yamazaki, was identical to my own. At the very least, it is evident that Hiroaki Yamazaki was probably Tetsu Sakaide. Chance had simply replaced Tetsu Sakaide with Hiroaki Yamazaki.’19 The activists did not merely identify with their fallen comrades; they transmuted into them.

Images in the media showed the graphic scene at Bentenbashi with hundreds of foot soldiers battling in the bottleneck. The war-like vista was unprecedented, and the press and the public both condemned the students for their violence. However, the police aggression actually escalated after the prime minister had left safely, including attacking protestors peacefully holding a sit-in on one of the bridges or doing the snake dance.20 It is a matter of debate who was the more provocative and violent party.

The demonstrators arrived at an epiphany that would define their actions for the next two years. ‘We had put up with insults for seven years. Finally on October 8th we were swept away by a mass explosion,’ remarked the secretary-general of Chūkaku-ha, Nobuyoshi Honda. ‘For the first time it felt like the ... clouds had parted and we could see a blue sky.’21

Despite the total failure of the Haneda protest on a practical level—Satō departed without issue—the students succeeded in forcing the police to retreat temporarily on several occasions. The sense of victory this awarded the activists in this first sustained battle of its kind proved an important stimulus for later events and tactics. It then formed a chemical reaction with the martyrdom of Yamazaki, which, while not the first case of an activist dying in a protest since Michiko Kanba (a demonstrator had been killed in the protests over the Korea–Japan treaty in 1965), became another potent paragon for young acolytes of the New Left. The accidental tragedy of Yamazaki, far from being a deterrent or warning of the dangers of violent protest, became an inspiration to others. It was even instrumental in the political baptism of future members of the Japanese Red Army.22

Meanwhile, the JCP held an alternative protest event at the same time, a peaceful ‘Red Flag Festival’ by Lake Tama, far from Haneda Airport where the radicals were rioting. The anti-JCP Zengakuren called the lakeside rally
‘games for those revisionists who have forgotten the revolution’. Just as in 1960, a gaping rift opened between New and Old Left in their responses to the issues of the day.

People now began to put their money where their mouths were. International Anti-War Day on 21 October saw a massive strike of 255,000 workers, and this time with an overtly pacifist agenda. Civic activists found themselves caught in the middle of the turmoil of the day’s protests, with 2,500 unarmed and un-helmeted demonstrators from some forty citizen, student and cultural groups assaulted by riot police. Half of the protestors were reported as female students wearing skirts.

And then, on 11 November, Chūnoshin Yui, a seventy-three-year-old campaigner for internationalism and Esperanto, committed suicide by self-immolation in front of the prime minister’s residence in opposition to Satō’s support for American belligerence in Vietnam. Suicide haunts Japanese radicalism. A student activist killed himself during the Sanrizuka struggle and the twenty-one-year-old Chūkaku-ha activist Kōhei Oku also took his own life after leaving hospital following a futile clash with riot police while protesting the visit of the Japanese foreign minister to South Korea in 1965. Yui left behind a message to Japan, which was reprinted in many major newspapers:

There is no path to sparing the suffering of the people of Vietnam other than first the United States ceasing to bomb the North ... And yet that the Prime Minister of Japan, far from putting such pressure [on America], supports the bombing of North Vietnam fills me with deep indignation ... While my self-immolation may well be derided as I am not someone directly involved [tōjisha] like the people of Vietnam and America, I feel strongly that my death will not be futile for the people who cherish true world peace and an early resolution to the problems in Vietnam.

The following day, 12 November, Satō was due to fly to America, sparking yet another conflagration at Haneda, in which 7,000 riot police, backed up with helicopters and boats, battled 3,000 students armed with staves and stones. The result, predictably, was hundreds of injuries and arrests. Beheiren and the JSP held a peaceful demo outside the airport entrance. An impervious Satō left without obstruction.

But it was the next day that Beheiren pulled off its biggest coup. They called a press conference where they unveiled film footage of four American naval airmen. These unlikely heroes became the Intrepid Four. The naming derived from their vessel, though seemingly from their plucky gumption as well. In late October, they had been sitting at a café in Ginza when they decided not to return to the USS Intrepid, which was moored at Yokosuka, an American base near Yokohama. US soldiers and sailors going
AN ANGRY ELEPHANT

AWOL was not unusual, but by chance these four met a University of Tokyo student, often described as a hippie, who took them to an underground café in Shinjuku.

It was pure fluke they had bumped into this semi-English-speaking youngster. They had almost no money and had never even seen a Beheiren flyer before; they had no idea who would be sympathetic to their plight. It had also been the day of the funeral of former prime minister Shigeru Yoshida, meaning the police were preoccupied with manning the service. Beheiren got involved and assisted in moving the men from house to house, and, with typical foresight, they brought in camera equipment to film the foreigners for their dramatic press conference in November.

Beheiren also prepared an English press release, personal statements from the four and a joint statement:

You are now looking at four deserters. Four patriotic deserters from the United States Armed Forces. Throughout history, the name deserter has applied to cowards, traitors and misfits. We are not concerned with categories and labels. We have reached the point where we must stand up for what we believe to be the truth ... This overshadows the consequences imposed by the categories.28

The footage and announcement that the four had deserted in protest against the Vietnam conflict caused a media storm, and took the government and press by surprise. Beheiren here showed their capacity for milking publicity and the tools of modern communication (they also had a very active newsletter system). Up to the airmen stunt, the movement had typically achieved around 1,000 people at their demos and distributed some 5,000 leaflets. Now their phones ran off the hook. In a week, they collected some 2,000 letters of support.29

The Intrepid Four were eventually helped to reach Sweden via Russia, smuggled out of Japan by boat. The police placed spies in Beheiren and tried to undermine them, though there were no legal consequences for their actions in helping the deserters. Much later, before the International Anti-War Day demonstrations on 21 October 1969, a gun was found at the Beheiren offices. It was possibly planted to discredit the movement. A far-right group also attempted to attack the Beheiren offices in December 1967.

Between 1967 and 1971, about fifty American soldiers contacted Beheiren for help in deserting. Around half were accepted and given assistance in escaping. It was a hard process much of the time. Funds were tight, since the men would often have to stay in Japan for twelve months before they could sneak on a Russia-bound ship, or reach the coasts of Hokkaido to cross over to the Kuril Islands, which are Russian territory. Despite housing
and succouring the soldiers, there were frequent cultural clashes with the Americans, who were not always content with their shelter. A sympathetic hippie harboured three deserters in a commune on Suwanosejima, an island south of Kyushu, but found them intolerable. ‘They were an awful bunch,’ he complained. ‘They had nothing to do with hippies or communes. Staying at a detention centre would have been better for them. If they got hungry, they’d mooch around the kitchen, and if they wanted to eat meat they’d just take a knife and chase after a chicken.’

In February 1969, a Beheiren volunteer was also arrested for trying to help a deserter leave on a fishing boat from Hokkaido. Another fellow would-be deserter had actually been an American spy masquerading to break up the Beheiren cell. In the end, the volunteer was only charged with minor offences, but the deserting American was captured and returned to his nation’s forces.

However, despite the risks and the inconvenience, there was no shortage of people who wanted to help the soldiers; it is hōganbiiki, sympathy for the underdog, again, which also seemed to fuel Beheiren in general—sympathy for the weaker North Vietnamese being oppressed by the big guns of America. That said, Beheiren was not without its detractors. Jane Fonda criticised it as ‘male chauvinist’ when she visited Japan for an anti-war tour in 1971.

Ryū Murakami’s alter ego was also unconvinced: ‘I didn’t like the Peace for Vietnam Committee, either. Living in a town with an American military base made you realise just how rich and powerful America was … [Beheiren] made about as much difference as farting.’

The town where Murakami was born and his Bildungsroman is set is Sasebo, a small city in Kyushu and the site of an intense struggle in January 1968 to prevent the American nuclear aircraft carrier USS Enterprise from docking at its harbour. Japanese protest has frequently seen, along with the spectacles in the streets of cities like Tokyo, much smaller communities become crucibles of anger, where a local contretemps unexpectedly takes on a national scale: Sanrizuka in Chiba against the Narita Airport development, the regional US base protests in the 1950s, Miike in 1960, Minamata.

The 75,000-ton Enterprise was a nuclear-powered vessel about to arrive in Japan, a nuclear-free state. Needless to say, being nuclear-powered is not the same as nuclear-armed—and yet, in a bizarre Catch-22, the American authorities had a policy of neither confirming nor denying when a vessel with nuclear weapons was entering bases in Japan. It was an open but official secret that they did, and yet the Americans claimed to be honouring the terms of the mutual security treaty. The Enterprise was a delicate case
AN ANGRY ELEPHANT

study; it was coming into Sasebo, which was in Nagasaki Prefecture, and it would also be used as an aircraft carrier against Hanoi just as the anti-war movement was gaining momentum.

There was a precedent. In June 1967, the nuclear submarine USS Barb had visited Yokohama, protested by non-JCP Zengakuren activists. There had been other visits as far back as 1964; nineteen nuclear-armed and/or nuclear-powered ships had come into Japanese waters during the previous three years. And yet Prime Minister Satō had issued his much-applauded three nuclear principles: Japan would never manufacture nuclear weapons; it would never possess them; and it would never permit them to be brought into Japan by others.

Conventionally powered aircraft carriers were actually docking at harbours in Japan during the Vietnam War without fanfare let alone large-scale protests, even though they too had the capability to carry nuclear arms. The fuss and intensity surrounding Sasebo and the Enterprise, then, must be laid at the door of Japan’s understandable nuclear allergy—an aversion that would reoccur in the wake of the Fukushima crisis, when many people transliterated the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the very different controversy of nuclear power. The Enterprise was tainted like a leper ship and was also a symbol of the sheer brazen military capacity of the United States. The general population was concerned and newspapers received record numbers of letters from citizens. Zengakuren students also raised large amounts of money doing kanpa in Fukuoka and Sasebo to fund the logistical costs of organising and mobilising student demos against the visiting ship (students had to pay their own transport costs).

On the day of the docking, Beheiren tried to charter a plane to fly over the harbour and its foreign visitor. Despite having printed 10,000 English flyers to drop on to the ship, the airplane company refused to rent them an aircraft for spurious reasons. Instead, they wrote on a large board: ‘FOLLOW THE INTREPID FOUR. WE WILL HELP YOU. BEHEIREN’. They later followed this up with another message displayed from a small boat in the harbour: ‘STOP THE KILLING! FOLLOW THE INTREPID FOUR! BEHEIREN’.

However, it was the violent protests that had the most impact. On 15 January, police in Tokyo intercepted and skirmished with around 200 Chūkaku-ha students making their way from Hōsei University to board trains for Sasebo. Armed with the customary paraphernalia of student radicals, 131 were arrested under the Assembly in Possession of Dangerous Weapons Law, an ordinance normally deployed against the Yakuza. A march on the prime minister’s office on 18 January also met a similar police
response; 108 were arrested. The police deliberately increased authoritarian measures and utilised obscure, draconian laws to keep anti-

Enterprise sentiment suppressed.

Local businesses (set to benefit to the tune of $2.2 million from the visit) and uyoku groups, including Bin Akao, held pro-

Enterprise demos, trying to stymie the fetid wave of public opinion, regionally and nationally. However, they were very much behind the curve. There were some thirty-nine rallies and sixty-one demonstrations in Kansai alone during January at American consulates. The docking was delayed by a day, with protests peaking on 18 January, when the Enterprise was originally to arrive. At the Sasebo municipal baseball stadium a massive rally was held by the JSP, JCP and Sōhyō against American aggression in Vietnam and calling for the immediate return of Okinawan sovereignty. It drew 27,000 people. Other rallies were held by religious groups and fringe political parties. Police estimates tallied the total demonstrators at some 46,000.

In the small port city of Sasebo, hundreds of reporters and photographers from the national media had mustered, anticipating a battle. They did not leave disappointed. On 17 January, fighting commenced between 800 allied Zengakuren (Chūkaku-ha, Marx–Leninist-ha, Shagakudō, Kaibō-ha, Fourth International) student radicals and the heavily armed police. In the morning, the station at Sasebo was transformed into a sea of student soldiers. They were wearing their battle gear and, to avoid detention, had loaded their staves en route. Now they picked up their weapons and assembled in pre-arranged ranks. The leader made a short speech: 'Let us fight with our lives to prevent the entry of the Enterprise into Sasebo Port, to prevent Japan becoming a nuclear base!' And then they raced to the bridge where the police were waiting with a barricade. The assiduous students had anticipated this, though, and wire-cutters and hammers had been brought along.

But it was a trap. A thousand police had come around the rear of the students while they were busy with the barricade, and they set to work tackling the invaders. The police on the other side then came over the barricade. There was tear gas, concussion grenades, water cannons laced with eye irritant, and a healthy dosage of police truncheons. They hardly bothered to make arrests, so intent were they on the fighting. The zealous riot police were prone even to beating up unfortunate members of the press caught in the melee. The students treated gassed eyes with lemons before returning to the fray.

Dozens of bystanders (yajiuma), both local citizens and journalists, found themselves gassed and injured. These thousands of onlookers in Sasebo
became politicised, as did others around Japan looking at the images of police brutality on their TV screens or in their newspapers. Until now, the Zengakuren students had been regarded as rioters or alien elements in society. Now people witnessed police violence against youngsters and responded emotionally; this being Japan, we have *hōganbiiki*. Locals encouraged, aided and treated the wounded students. Sometimes they even physically protected them. Many objected directly to the police over their tactics, such as dragging injured students from a hospital to inflict further beatings. The students found themselves receiving meals from their new sympathisers and even having their wounds treated by sex workers whose services were normally employed by the Americans. Other locals gave socks and other clothes—much appreciated by the students wet from the water cannons in the freezing January cold.

Much like the *Enterprise* and the students, the riot police were also outsiders newly arrived in Sasebo on a mission of belligerence. Skirmishes continued during the days after, though the attitudes towards the students had fundamentally changed. The students did *kanpa* in front of Sasebo Station and witnessed this first-hand; residents queued up to donate what were often large sums, with one group collecting ¥700,000 (almost $2,000 at the time) in a day.\(^39\)

In the week-long struggle, it is estimated that a total of nearly 65,000 people joined the protests in the small port city, including 4,000 from Sanpa Zengakuren, with over 500 injuries—nearly half of whom were students—and sixty-nine arrests.\(^40\) Needless to say, the *Enterprise* still berthed. There were no American injuries throughout the controversy. But no nuclear-powered aircraft carrier docked in Japan again until March 1983.

Another month, another conflict: 1968 was that kind of year. The American military hospital in Ōji sparked a new dispute as American casualties straight from Vietnam were being sent to the clinic in the suburbs of Tokyo. Chūkaku-ha, Marx–Leninist-ha, Shagakudō, Kaihō-ha and Fourth International faction activists and workers from the radical Hansen Seinen Iinkai anti-war youth labour group had previously protested the hospital, but their ranks swelled in February and March. The riot police soon descended to deal with the growing numbers of protestors, who included Beheiren. Through the next two months there followed a series of nine demos with violent flashes where activists torched police cars. Around fifty Chūkaku-ha activists broke into the grounds at one point. A bystander was killed by a flying stone on 1 April. Between February and April, there
were 600 arrests and 1,500 injuries. Eventually the local courts banned further protests.\textsuperscript{41}

Its application in the escalating Vietnam conflict had similarly reignited the controversy of the Sunagawa base, and fresh protests were held there in 1967. However, these demonstrations were not populated only by radical and pacifist outsiders. Stones were also being thrown by many irate locals, angered at the rise in helicopter noise and the risk of contagion from tropical diseases potentially introduced by arriving patients. The whole question of the air bases like Tachikawa, essentially on the doorstep of major residential areas, was exacerbated by the Vietnam War, as take-offs and landings naturally increased (though bombers flying directly to Vietnam were only leaving from occupied Okinawa), which all meant more sound pollution for locals. There was a fresh bout of demos in 1967 and 1968, culminating in the decision by the United States to return or relocate around a third of their military facilities in Japan. The changes did not cause any impediment to the country’s ability to wage war in Vietnam, though the Ōji campaign did at least force the US army to consider moving their field hospital to another location and it was soon closed.

The Zengakuren alliance started to deteriorate and squabble. The violence had had a grave impact on its strength, in terms of manpower and finances. Over the ‘seven violent months’ between the autumn of 1967 and the spring of 1968, 3,000 were injured and more than 1,000 arrested. Bail fees had amounted to around ¥10 million; medical costs were double this. While they had been raising some 100,000 per day—a very large sum—after Sasebo, only a few months later, those times seemed a distant past. Depleted and weary, Chūkaku-ha could ultimately only muster around 100 hard-core activists for the Ōji campaign.\textsuperscript{42}

The summer of 1968 was a rehearsal for the anticipated free-for-all on 21 October, International Anti-War Day. First came the prerequisite uchi-geba, as Chūkaku-ha fought with Kakumaru-ha on 15 June. And then on 21 June Zengakuren attempted to occupy Kanda, in central Tokyo. A demonstration by 4,000 Sanpa foot soldiers in Shinjuku on 26 June was a dry run for October, causing a spectacle in the station with the police and railway staff. On 8 October, around 4,000 activists once again set their sights on Shinjuku, disrupting the transport of military fuel by occupying the station. The police used tear gas to expel the invaders and arrested 150.\textsuperscript{43} Earlier in June, Beheiren also organised a march of 11,000 middle-class demonstrators who conducted a peaceful sit-in at Sukiyabashi, near Ginza.\textsuperscript{44}

In the final days of the Second World War, the Japanese had been expecting to fight the approaching foreigners tooth and claw, district by district,
building by building. In the end this was not necessary as the immensity of the Americans’ technology proved shatteringly superior. It must count as one of history’s ironies that when street warfare did come to Tokyo, it was at least ostensibly directed against America (and the Japanese administration complicit with Washington) but involved only Japanese warriors on either side. That day was 21 October 1968 (one of many), and culminated in the police unleashing the Riotous Assembly Crime Act, dormant since the unrest of 1952.

Thousands rallied at Meiji Park and Hibiya Park in Tokyo, students, workers and more. Sixty-six universities nationwide stopped teaching. Police estimates for overall attendance were at around 170,000, actually down from the figures in 1967, though the violence made up for numbers. Many of the protests were peaceful; the JSP, JCP and Sōhyō organised tens of thousands of demonstrators in dozens of places around Japan. The pro-JCP Minsei mobilised some 12,000 students for a snake dance demo and sit-in. But these were matched by other Zengakuren factions who brought out 55,100 students for rallies and demos in 151 places, erecting barricades and running strikes in sixty-one colleges. Few were learning from textbooks on that October day.

Police deployed 25,000 officers in the capital, of which half mustered in Shinjuku, where they used water cannons and tear gas to combat the thousands turning the city’s busiest station area into a ‘liberated quarter’. Hansen Seinen Līnkai workers and assorted radical students wrecked trains and burnt police substations for two hours. The train station was occupied from around 5 p.m. One reporter estimated there were 20,000 people inside the station, which was in time trashed, stopping all trains for the evening (including American military cargo carriages); 60,000 commuters then became the shocked audience to a street battle as the riot police tried to bring the situation under control by force.

Department stores had to close and over 700 trains were cancelled, disrupting 350,000 passengers. Financial losses were in the realm of $18 million; 1,157 police were injured. Police arrested 364 for rioting and dozens more for other offences. From Shinjuku to Kōjimachi and the Diet, Tokyo was burning with the fires of urban warfare. There was also a clash at Roppongi at the headquarters of the self-defence agency, and in Aoyama the grave of former prime minister Yoshida was desecrated.

The trials against the arrestees lasted until the early 1980s in some cases. The police were unforgiving in their response but the rioters had been as destructive. Whereas after Sasebo students had collected money from sym-
Dissenting Japan

pathetic locals amounting to thousands of dollars and been portrayed by the media as heroic resisters against state violence, the tables turned on 21 October. The anti-war movement as a whole—epitomised by Beheiren—was non-violent, but the fringe groups were showing themselves to be extremely bullish and aggressive, and to have no qualms about damaging civilian property. (To be fair, there were also many workers joining in, pleased for a chance to cause mayhem.) The police repression was accepted as legitimate given the scale of what had occurred. Even the left-leaning Asahi Shimbun’s response the day after the riot was unfavourable: ‘Shinjuku Station at Night—Just like a Ruin’ and ‘A Feckless Mob’ were two of its headlines.50

The disorder on 21 October came at the height of the campus conflicts. As 1969 dawned and the last remaining besieged students at the University of Tokyo reached their day of reckoning, Beheiren had managed to escape the bad odour of the autumn riot, and continued raising awareness against the war through exhibitions and concerts. Now all eyes were on Okinawa, the central altar for the Left in their long campaign to end American occupation of the island. With Anpo’s 1970 renewal just around the corner, the push focused on compelling the government to make the restoration of Okinawan sovereignty a stipulation of any new security treaty. Okinawa’s forced collusion in the Vietnam War brought the anti-war, anti-Anpo, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist crusades all into one neat, unifying symbol for multiple parties.

A beacon for the campaign became Okinawa Day on 28 April 1969, when a series of large rallies was planned. The date was chosen as it was the day on which the Okinawans had been ‘betrayed’ when the original security treaty had gone into effect and US occupation of mainland Japan ended. The police, however, were understandably wary of the students by this time, and refused permits for them to join the main protests. Their caution was justified: Shagakudō, Chūkaku-ha, ML-ha and Fourth International had reunited and planned to occupy the prime minister’s official residence and even ‘liberate’ the Kasumigaseki Building, Japan’s first skyscraper and then tallest tower. The police were tipped off and reinforced the areas with riot police, water cannons and fortifications. Paving stones were ripped up from the streets, as they had been around universities during the height of the campus movements, to prevent them being turned into projectiles for marauding students.

A total of 200,000 people demonstrated for the return of Okinawa and against Anpo in 449 public parks and other places around the country,
though this was offset by the smaller, but still sizeable, numbers of Zengakuren extremists and worker radicals who clashed with police and turned central Tokyo into a veritable street theatre of revolution.\textsuperscript{51} The railway tracks of Tokyo Station were occupied; students burned cars, and attacked police substations and stations. Barricades were then erected in Ginza—a stately shopping district famed for its long boulevards—and a model of the Paris ‘liberated’ Latin Quarter was established for five hours by a roaming mass of radicals, teasing the angry cops to catch them. As the riot police attempted to regain control of one of Tokyo’s prime commercial zones, a maelstrom ensued of tear gas, stone-throwing, police charges, Molotov cocktails and hand-to-hand fighting. This was an epic street battle involving some 8,800 student radicals.\textsuperscript{52}

After the pandemonium had died away, 938 had been arrested, until then the most in a single day since 1945.\textsuperscript{53} There was also a curiously notable increase of female students among the arrested hundreds, up to 14 per cent from just 8 for the previous year’s riots in Shinjuku.\textsuperscript{54} The response was bewilderment from Tokyo residents and condemnation from the mainstream Left.

However, 15 June brought proof that Zengakuren groups could be peaceful, when its members joined as many as 70,000 people rallied in Hibiya Park to oppose the ongoing war, the upcoming security treaty and the continued occupation of Okinawa. The day was a union of Beheiren, Hansen Seinen Iinkai, Zenkyōtō, the JSP, JCP and Kōmeitō (Sōka Gakkai’s political wing). It was also the anniversary of Michiko Kanba’s death and at the head of the demo they carried her black-framed portrait. Beheiren campaigners marched through Tokyo holding hands in the ‘French-style’ demo that had also been popular nine years earlier.\textsuperscript{55}

June 1969 was the peak of multiple strikes, demos and outbursts of Molotov cocktail-laced violence. Hundreds were arrested in clashes with the riot police in Tokyo. But the summer was perhaps defined by a more unlikely occurrence, albeit one that was very much steeped in the atmosphere of the late 1960s.

Beheiren had a long association with folk music; guitars could often be seen at their demos and rallies, and they had organised many concerts and performances in their campaigns. They had even invited Joan Baez to Japan in 1967. However, at the time, guitars were still expensive and something of a luxury in Japan. Yamaha had only started making guitars with steel strings in 1966 and they sold for around ¥18,000, over half the monthly
salary for a new college graduate. Imported American models could sell for up to ¥300,000; most American guitars in circulation would have been second-hand instruments. Although by 1969 acoustic guitars had already become fairly common, it was still relatively rare to hear one being played, let alone own one yourself. This in part explains some of the appeal of folk music, especially for the young with less liquid income.56

In February 1969, Beheiren-affiliated folk musicians began to play at Shinjuku Station West Exit Plaza, an area that was mainly an underground arcade serving as a passage for moving between train lines operated by different railway companies. The subterranean thoroughfare was already a popular spot at the time for the young to gather and engage in debates and recreation. The ‘folk guerrillas’, as they came to be dubbed, were soon a hit. Concerts were held there every Saturday evening and by May thousands were gathering to listen, dance and converse. Thus began Japan’s Summer of Love.

Perhaps the most famous protest song from the time is Tomo yo (Friend!) and its urgent peacenik lyrics: ‘Friends in the darkness before the dawn, friends, let’s light the flames of the struggle, the dawn is near.’ Through the spring, the weekly throngs grew. The evening concerts were all free and therefore anti-commercial, adding to their popularity. Naturally, given the political tone of the congregations and the obvious obstruction being caused to train passengers and shoppers, the police were alert. In today’s parlance, the gatherings might be labelled flash mobs, but for the authorities they were dangerous agitating rabble.

The mood at the guerrilla concerts was spontaneous and infectious. The folk songs were accompanied by snake dances and refrains of The Internationale. The genesis for the movement was music but there were plenty of speeches and debates. The youngsters, sectarian and nonpori alike, were also joined by Koreans, Taiwanese and Chinese protestors on hunger strikes for their own political campaigns against immigration bureau strictures.57

When riot officers dispersed the occupiers by force in May, the crowd merely moved temporarily to the east side of the station. Singing was banned, but then being illegal simply increased the glamour; the following week there were around 5,000 people at the plaza to take part in the fun.58 By June, the figure peaked at something like 7,000.

Enough was enough for the police, who certainly did not want another October 1968 on their hands. In June, participants clashed with police; tear gas was fired, rocks were thrown. In July, the ‘plaza’ was renamed a ‘pas-
sageway’, thus prohibiting people from stopping there; 2,000 riot police then moved in and broke up the concerts. The leading musicians were arrested and officers placed in the space to prevent further gatherings.

Two musicians were put on trial, where, despite their prior vogue, only handfuls of fans came to support them. Folk music rallies were held elsewhere and protest songs continued to have a presence at Beheiren demos, though never again was there a series of ‘guerrilla’ concerts quite like Shinjuku’s.

For all the flashes of passion and *Sturm und Drang*, absurd episodes appear across the spectrum of Japanese radicalism. In July 1969, the American Secretary of State William Rogers was visiting Japan when he was attacked by a young student radical. However, the student chose not only a bizarre weapon with which to despatch the foreign dignitary—a sharpened pencil—but also managed to fail in his assassination bid by going for completely the wrong person. Rogers was left not only unharmed; he was untouched.

On 8 October, thousands of students attempted to stop the shipments of jet fuel passing through Shinjuku Station again. They were tackled by police with water cannons and tear gas, though restraint was shown this time, which cast police in a better light in the media. However, they were much more heavy-handed two days later when they decided to suppress a peaceful demo of ordinary citizens, one which featured something like the numbers of the 15 June rally. The police’s maladroit rigour suggested that now even genuine *shimin* activism was no longer sanctioned.

The weather on 21 October 1969 was wet and cold, and with the lugubrious weather came another International Anti-War Day. Beheiren mobilised 10,000 followers for a rally, while the Old Left organised protests for the return of Okinawa in 600 places. The JSP and JCP brought out 60,000 demonstrators at Yoyogi Park. The two political parties marched with unionists from Sōhyō, claiming some 860,000 participants.59

The real spectacle of course was provided by the radicals, whose tactics had now started to escalate—Molotov cocktails and explosives—and take on the harsher character that would later lead some to terrorism. The police mobilised 25,000 officers in Tokyo alone and scared local businesses into closing for the day. The streets of the city were a ghost town of radicals versus riot police. Police substations were attacked and burnt down in twenty-one places. The armies battled over four hours in the avenues of Shinjuku, Kanda, Marunouchi, Ryōgoku and Waseda, the state against thousands of activists from Chūkaku-ha, ML-ha, Shagakudō, and other
factions. The student ranks included many from regional universities who had come to Tokyo especially for the anti-war demos. Some 5,000 demonstrators did a zigzagging snake dance and occupied the main thoroughfare in Osaka. Others rallied across the regions, from Nagoya to Shizuoka and Hokkaido; the chaos was nationwide. There were fewer injuries than in 1968 but more damage, especially to private businesses and houses and cars. Over 1,500 people were arrested, including 1,212 in Tokyo.

The fury continued unabated in November ahead of Satō’s trip to America. Beheiren held a 5,000-strong rally on 13 November, while Sōhyō called for strikes involving 850,000 workers. In the same month, the national rail workers, followed by 4 million industrial workers in sixty-seven unions, organised a twenty-four hour strike. On 13 November, 325 anti-JCP sect radicals were arrested for guerrilla attacks around Ginza that injured sixteen.

Although it was clear now that Okinawan sovereignty would be restored to Japan, it was at a price—American military bases would remain and the United States could still use the islands for the purposes of waging warfare in Southeast Asia. Satō was set to leave for America to make the final arrangements for Okinawa and Anpo on the morning of 17 November. The sporadic violence, demos and strikes all culminated in the twenty-four hours prior to his departure, with 121,000 demonstrators gathering at hundreds of locations nationwide. The shimin repression escalated; even Beheiren was banned from holding a rally, though it went ahead anyway. The police checked cars on highways and arrested radicals travelling to demos on trains. With Tokyo an impregnable fortress, the Zengakuren and worker radicals instead moved in on the Haneda Airport area, around Kamata Station, setting it ablaze with Molotov cocktails. Local vigilantes then responded with baseball bats. The fights turned this residential district into a battleground. The elite Kidōtai riot police had greatly enhanced their skills since 1967 and the motley radical army was no match for them. New Left groups mobilised 19,000 radicals in Tokyo that day, though they were matched by 75,000 police nationwide. The number of arrests set a new record for a political protest—1,689 in Tokyo alone. A student from Okayama University, Takayuki Kasuya, was beaten to death by police at a rally in Osaka.

Once again there was no hindrance to the prime minister’s plans. The tempestuous violence of the radicals left only broken glass, damaged buildings and injuries. Satō flew out and made his last negotiations with President Nixon, the arrangements to come into effect in 1972. It was bread
and circuses for the general public: Okinawa was finally being returned to Japan and the World Exposition was about to be held in Osaka. Satō called a snap election in December and won, with the JSP losing yet more seats. The year 1969 had been Japan’s most dissident on record. But for all its vehemence, was the movement—both its peaceful face and violent one—an abject failure?

Beheiren at any rate did not give up and continued to hold demos throughout 1970. Meanwhile, as we will see, the radicals were moving from the campuses to the streets, cities and even airplanes around the world. Not just to end the Vietnam War, some of them aspired for global change and were prepared to engage in what is now so mundanely categorised as revolutionary terrorism.

June saw Beheiren attempt to hold a demo every day. The momentum built through the month, coming to a head on the tenth anniversary of Michiko Kanba’s death, which generated thirty-five memorial rallies and 35,000 participants (Beheiren put the number at over 70,000). Anpo was automatically extended again despite huge protests on 23 June. Nationwide there were protests in 1,345 cities and towns by some 1.5 million demonstrators. These demos were the largest street protests in post-war Japan. Even the more conservative estimates—more than 700,000 across the country and 157,000 in Tokyo—still mean that 1970 bested 1960’s peak of half a million demonstrators by over 50 per cent. A total of 5,000 missed their last train because a rally took so long to finish and ended up taking over Shinbashi Station or roaming the streets of Ginza for the night.64

But numbers do not tell the whole story. Most of the demos were orderly and there was less sense of impending crisis as in 1960.65 Unlike Kishi, Satō’s government was never really in danger of falling since the power of the mainstream left-wing parties had suffered from ten years of decline. With the exception of Zengakuren, Zenkyōtō and their spin-offs, this was a civilised season of protests, though if Okinawa’s return had not been pledged, it might have been very different. Despite their blood connection, Satō was no Kishi. The popular frustrations lacked a tangible hook and so diffused widely, but more vaguely. Japan was removed enough from the war in Asia for the government not to seem directly complicit. Union activity was also less coherent than in 1960. Only around half the unions in the Sōhyō federation took part. Sōhyō mobilised just 350,000 strikers, compared to the roughly 2 million who went on strike on 21 October 1966, and some of the walkouts were for a mere one or two hours.66 However, the anti-war and anti-Anpo 1970 movement was arguably driven less by organisations
DISSENTING JAPAN

than by citizens under the decentralised Beheiren umbrella, and in this sense was more voluntary and successful.

With Anpo passed and Okinawan restoration finalised, Beheiren struggled to maintain its earlier momentum and exposure. It still managed some striking moments, though, such as when it sent people to demonstrate outside Mitsubishi Heavy Industries’ annual shareholders’ meeting in May 1971 wearing death masks in protest at the firm’s arms manufacturing. The corporation responded by hiring thugs to break up the demo, a common tactic at the time. On 17 June 1971, tens of thousands of protestors defied the movement’s increasing lassitude and demonstrated nationwide against the terms of the reversion. A suspected Sekigun-affiliated radical threw a makeshift pipe bomb at riot police in Meiji Park, injuring thirty-seven officers. International Anti-War Day in October then saw sporadic rioting and car-torching, followed by unrest in November. On 14 November, the police shut down Shibuya to combat Chûkaku-ha and Hansen Seinen linkai during the so-called Shibuya Riot Incident, in which a riot officer was burnt to death.

But these were actions undertaken by radical New Left groups. What of the hundreds of thousands of ordinary demonstrators on 23 June 1970? Did they count for nothing? Beheiren and the anti-Vietnam War movement failed to deliver pressure on the government of Japan, let alone America. It did not even manage to topple Satō. Why? Likely that most universal of sops: money. In the 1960s, GNP expanded by 450 per cent. Per-capita income jumped from $381 to $1,289. With the country enjoying unprecedented economic success and Okinawa at any rate returning to Japan in 1972—albeit still bedizened with numerous American bases—the majority of people would not have seen anything to protest about. Is it any wonder that in a government survey of new office workers in the spring of 1970—just before the largest day of protests in Japanese history—only 15 per cent said they were interested in the issues of Anpo, Okinawa and Vietnam?

Satō did eventually resign in 1972 amid gross unpopularity, and his successors then scrambled to heal any damage done to Asian communist nations by his support for America during the conflict, though Japan in principle remained loyal to US policies in Vietnam until the bitter end. Over 1973–4, the various Beheiren groups and offices began to disband. Saigon fell in 1975.

There were no sustained mass protest movements in Japan again, with the exception of continued fury in Okinawa over America military outrages, until the anti-nuclear power movement in the wake of the Fukushima crisis. Though it lacked the singularly watershed moments of Anpo 1960
AN ANGRY ELEPHANT

with Michiko Kanba’s death, government defiance of parliamentary process and popular feeling, and then Kishi’s resignation in scandal, the general season of protest around 1970, from the campus movements to the anti-Vietnam and Anpo campaigns, still form a post-war turning point. For leftists, it marked another failure in the litany of disenchantment.

Likely, what left the most rancour was Satō’s 1974 Nobel Peace Prize, awarded ostensibly for his opposition to nuclear weapons. The apparently irenic Satō had indeed stuck true to his principles, though cynically never for a moment endangering his obsequious relationship with America and their specious policy of neither confirming nor denying if nuclear arms were being conveyed through Japan.
A HIJACKING AND A SIEGE

The experiment in uniting all the campus movements as National Zenkyōtō in 1969 had resulted in, if not dramatic failure, then a rather ignominious fade-out. The council soon collapsed as a result of our old friend, infighting. The campus conflicts were mostly over by late 1970. But for many, Zenkyōtō had been just a stepping stone, a warm-up. As the various Zengakuren sub-factions had shown years earlier in the 1960s, they were fully prepared for violence; for some, this was the aim in the first place. Armed struggle was being openly promoted and propagated by the thinkers and rhetoricians of the young.

Take a renegade like Osamu Takita, the *nom de guerre* of Nobuhiro Takemoto, an influential and popular radical who would be fingered as a suspect in a terrorist incident and forced into a life on the run for years. In 1971, he released a collection of ‘rogue violence propaganda’ in which he claimed the country to be in an age preceding an uprising. Takita said it was time to move on from Zenkyōtō and all its angst and naval-gazing. Rather than a student-led Zenkyōtō and its existential self-denial, Zenkyōtō should be created by the armed masses. Now was the stage for opening the movement out to workers and public servants, for establishing a ‘provisional revolutionary government’.

In short, Takita was issuing a battle cry: activists must now form a guerrilla army of partisans; protest needed to be militarised. The bourgeois university system and imperialist civil society had to be destroyed. Scholarship was a weapon and violence was learning. Given the way things were developing on the streets in 1969, all this was
not as incredible as it may seem today. The glamour of someone like Takita was amplified by his forceful rhetoric, how his manifestos appeared in an edition with a manga-esque cover designed by artist Genpei Akasegawa (of whom, much more later), and his appearance in the documentary The Pre-History of the Partisans by Noriaki Tsuchimoto, which records the occupation of Kyoto University buildings by students in 1968. Firebrands like Takita were now advocating direct action off-campus. The end of Zenkyōtō was not the end. Its demise merely ushered in a new chapter where the protagonists were not the nonpori—but the kagekiha. This is often translated as 'extremist' or 'militant' group, but perhaps we might better render it as 'radical' or 'agitator'.

Sekigun-ha (Red Army Faction) was formed in 1969 as a splinter group of hardened Kansai members of Bund’s Shagakudō. After Sekigun-ha (or Sekigun) became independent, the Second Bund’s brief period of re-unity ended, and it fractured once again. Sekigun-ha’s leader, Takaya Shiomi, a philosophy student dropout from Kyoto University, despite being at odds with Bund over the extent to which violence was permissible, did not originally want to create yet another splinter group. But it was inevitable that the new organisation was heading towards a wholly different Rubicon to the rest of the New Left.

It initially had some 300 central members and many more reinforcements on standby; because of the way the campuses and student councils were affiliated, very quickly it had the manpower equivalent to a large corporation. Its core activists were high-fliers drawn from elite colleges and backgrounds. It aimed for Trotskyist simultaneous world revolution by violent means, inspired by what was happening in Cuba, North Korea, Palestine and China. One of its marching chants was ‘Korea, Cuba and Palestine! The flowers of our triple dream will explode there.’ It made overtures towards the Students for Democratic Society, the American radicals also causing domestic havoc, though we can only speculate what any alliance may have led to in the long run. For now its ideology was clear: the world has reached a period of transition to global revolution. Agitation by a trained guerrilla army would trigger a pre-revolutionary ‘early stage armed uprising’ (zendankai busōhōkiron). The key shared crusades of the New Left at this time were fighting the upcoming Anpo renewal and the terms of the reversion of Okinawa. But Sekigun was endeavouring to operate on a much more radical scale of praxis and its vision of international guerrilla war connected with the aspirations of many students looking for something
A HIJACKING AND A SIEGE

longer-lasting than the campus strikes. Lighting the fire in Japan, their army would assist in directing the way towards a global insurrection, joining with comrades in arms in America, Europe and elsewhere. Romance, undoubtedly, and yet they cannot merely be dismissed as idealistic provocateurs either, since they had the funds to support their missions. They were flush with money and academics’ covert support.

They were not the only radicals dreaming globally. The Second Bund had held an International Anti-War Summit in August 1968 and, in the previous month, celebratory events to commemorate the Cuban Revolution. It organised many other ‘international’ events and visits from overseas leftists. Its slogan in 1967 was ‘Organised Violence and Proletariat Internationalism’.

A broader revolution was a frequent refrain of activists, especially one that was Asia-wide. Non-sectarians were understandably concerned more with local issues, but the most energetic Zengakuren sects believed in a proletarian movement that was much bigger.

Sekigun-ha quickly made enemies among its fellow radicals. After attacking Bund at Meiji University on 6 July, Shiomi and several other members were kidnapped in a counteroffensive strike demanding that the prisoners undergo self-criticism for their rebellion. Escorted to a stronghold at Chūō University, they were held for three weeks, subjected to torture and threats of being drowned in Tokyo Bay. ‘I was beaten naked all over in the basement,’ remembered Shiomi. ‘I just protected my balls for dear life.’

One of other captives, Jōshi Mochizuki from Kyoto’s Dōshisha University, had his hand broken. But as the days went by their captors grew slack and the prisoners saw an opportunity to escape from a window, using a curtain and hose to climb down. Shiomi descended first and safely, but the next person to attempt the getaway, Mochizuki, fell and hit his head. The twenty-two-year-old was taken to hospital but died in September. This was the earliest recorded death by infighting (uchi-geba) between Zengakuren groups. Many more would follow.

Mochizuki’s fate would be idealised by Sekigun members. He had died a martyr’s death, even if the details of his demise were less than glamorous. His death led to the romantic notions that other activists in the Red Army developed in the years to come. Other radicals were not so convinced, however. A Bund captain remarked, ‘His death was in vain, a dog’s death.’

Sekigun’s first public meeting was held at a hall in Tokyo in September 1969. It was given a police chaperone, with uniformed officers ringing off the venue and plainclothes police photographing the 300 attendants as they entered. On stage, the leaders addressed the activists wearing masks to hide
their identities. Nothing was illegal yet, but this was only a matter of time. That month, Sekigun-ha also appeared at the National Zenkyōtō rally in Hibiya Park. Some eighty members tried to gain access to the main event and clashed with Shagakudō. Meanwhile, near the venue, two young women, Fusako Shigenobu and Kazuko Shiomi (Shiomi’s wife, an elementary schoolteacher), were hawking issues of the first edition of the Sekigun newspaper. They sold all 1,000 copies.

There is a thin line between provocation and genuine revolutionary actions. For some, Sekigun-ha was spouting a lot of the former and it was not clear if they were really capable of following through with the latter. Osamu Maruoka, who would go on to be a senior member of Sekigun’s discrete international wing, was doubtful of the original group’s abilities. ‘I didn’t think it was an organisation that could make a revolution so I didn’t join.’ In late September, though, Shiomi launched the ‘Osaka–Tokyo War’, a series of attacks on police facilities in the two cities, injuring many. Sekigun openly propagandised in advance—conveniently allowing the police to raid some campuses with bases—and were developing weaponry and fairly sophisticated homemade bombs. The campaign extended to further actions during the chaos of International Anti-War Day in October, though these were mostly ineffective.

With the disorder and street battles in danger of turning Tokyo into a war zone, the militancy of certain radical groups was clearly escalating. The police had already cultivated their elite Kidōtai unit to deal with rioters and they were also stepping up attempts to combat the source of the violence. Mobilising over 2,000 riot police, the raids in Osaka and Kyoto on Sekigun strongholds yielded nearly 100 arrests and sixty-four indictments. In the last three months of 1969, the police confiscated over 10,000 Molotov cocktails. The numbers of staves seized increased twenty-two times over 1968 figures, helmets eight times and metal pipes an incredible sixty-eight times.

For all its amateurish tactics, the authorities took Shiomi’s fledgling guerrilla war very seriously. A large contingent of Sekigun foot soldiers retired to Daibosatsutōge, a mountain pass in Yamanashi Prefecture near Mount Fuji, where they were doing field exercises to train for an attack on the prime minister’s residence, though this was not known to most of the activists who had agreed to go. They planned to occupy Sato’s official home and kidnap the leader. They would also attack the police headquarters using five stolen dump trucks, preventing the prime minister’s trip to America in mid-November and riding on this dramatic act to spark off an uprising in Tokyo. (It seems, though, that old habits die hard. The ‘radical’ Sekigun’s plan was
organised in different hierarchical levels of leadership according to the members’ affiliated universities, with the more elite colleges at the top).\textsuperscript{15}

While the would-be revolutionaries slept, the police pounced, arresting fifty-three members on 5 November. It looked like game over for the Red Army. A mere three months after being founded with such lofty ambitions, Sekigun-ha had been humiliatingly routed in their pyjamas. Or had they? They had a trick up their sleeve. From being an open, even flagrant army, Sekigun was driven underground and its organisation and methodologies evolved to reflect its new clandestine nature. It shifted from a vertical structure to one that was more cellular, arranged around a series of telephone stations in coffee shops where captains would call in to give or receive instructions. They used codes and false names, and above all strove to keep the commanders’ whereabouts secret in the face of acute police surveillance.\textsuperscript{16}

Fortunately, most of the leaders had been absent from Daibosatsutōge, but the police were by no means resting on their laurels, arresting dozens more members over the next few months. They had also scored a large arsenal of pipe bombs, knives and chemicals, depriving Sekigun of its arms. Shiomi was caught by a policeman, not in a deliberate raid but by fluke when he was mistaken for a common thief in a sketchy neighbourhood. His son turned one on the day of his arrest but Shiomi would not leave prison until he was an adult. Shiomi’s capture caused problems for the interim leadership, not least because it was only a matter of days before they hoped to pull off a real spectacle. Their plans to break him out of prison never reached fruition and instead they just went ahead with their next major operation, the greatest publicity stunt the New Left in Japan had ever seen.

On 31 March 1970, Sekigun-ha astonished the nation. A Japan Air Lines Boeing 727, Flight 351, nicknamed the Yodogō, was heading from Tokyo to Fukuoka. It was carrying 131 passengers and a crew of seven. Among those on board were nine members of Sekigun, led by Shiomi’s deputy and tactician Takamaro Tamiya, just twenty-seven years old at the time. One in the band was only sixteen. It was a short flight and the radicals were not planning to waste time. As the plane was cruising over Mount Fuji, they made their move. In their hand luggage they had brought on small tube-like cases of the kind used normally to transport tents or fishing rods. From these they produced weapons and shouted at the passengers to raise their hands. They charged the cockpit. The pilots were hardened veterans of the wartime air force. Nonetheless, this was Japan’s first ever airplane hijacking and they were wary of resisting.
The pilots were given a new destination. The flight became an international one. The hijacking was conceived as part of Sekigun’s theory of *kokusai konkyochiron*, a lofty ideal of fermenting revolutions in Africa and elsewhere as the start of a global communist epoch. The plane was to be flown to North Korea. But this is when things started to go awry. Though the underground Sekigun had greatly enhanced its methodologies and planning, to the point of precisely rehearsing the hijacking by hiring a large meeting room and arranging the chairs according to the airplane’s seating, they had still missed a key element in the logistics.¹⁷ There was not enough fuel to reach Pyongyang, so the plane was forced to land in Fukuoka, re-fuel, and then fly on to North Korea. The hijackers had prepared well and brought 200 pieces of rope and cord to tie up the passengers, though they spared the women and children. The press had gathered in force at the Kyushu airport by the time they arrived. The hijackers let some passengers go as a sign of good faith and, escorted by Japanese SDF jets, the JAL craft flew towards Korea. However, at their destination it became apparent that a deception had been performed. The airstrip where they landed was not Pyongyang but Kimpo, near Seoul, which the US 5th Air Force and South Korean Air Force, with the likely cooperation of JAL, had tried to disguise with fake signs and airport guards.

The hijackers still had around 100 crew and passengers in their custody and were threatening to blow them up. A standoff inevitably began, with the Yodogō not budging from the runway. The visitors were not even provided with food until the evening of 1 April, by which time the Japanese government, who seemed unaware of the trick until it had happened, sent its transport minister to negotiate. A compromise was finally reached on 3 April, whereby the Japanese vice minister of transport volunteered to become a hostage in exchange for the remaining hostages. The hijackers were now suspicious of another ruse, but after a JSP politician was flown out to identify the volunteer, the details of the plan were agreed. The hostages were released that evening after an ordeal of seventy-nine hours and the Yodogō flew on to the real Pyongyang.

The whole affair is notable as much for its bizarre aspects as its drama. The passengers were treated well, with one American apparently even responding in a very complimentary way. ‘I’m going to recommend them to Japan Air Lines. They’ll make good stewards. They cleaned up the ashtrays, picked up paper from the floor and even brought me a magazine to read.’¹⁸ Their weapons were fakes and they had not even told North Korea they were coming. Their first attempt at hijacking a plane was unsuccessful because most of the hijackers failed to get on the plane in time. And there
was another slightly theatrical element to the incident. Tamiya penned a ‘Departure Declaration’, the final lines of which have become very famous:

We will carry through to the end with the historic mission given to us.
Brothers and sisters of Japan! Comrades of the Proletariat! Early stage armed uprising = World Revolution, banzai!
Sekigun-ha, banzai!
Finally, to confirm:
We are Ashita no jō.19

Ashita no jō (Tomorrow’s Joe) was a popular manga comic of the day featuring the exploits of a young boxer. Tamiya was declaring that, although he might be Japan’s first hijacker, he is also the everyman, just like any other Japanese person in 1970. But with his metaphor he seems to shoot himself in the foot. Rather than being galvanised, we are surprised by the ordinariness of the reference—that in-between Marx, Yoshimoto and all the other usual suspects, the hijackers were in fact still kids who read regular comics. Shiomi even openly admitted that they all ‘read too much manga’.20

The link between comics and activism was well known at the time. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the explosion of mass popular consumer culture in the form of television and weekly manga publications. The first weekly magazine was Shūkan Shōnen Magazine, launched in 1959. Its readership quickly expanded, and by the end of 1966 it had a circulation of 1 million. For impoverished students with no television set, manga was ideal for providing a wealth of regular, cheap entertainment, especially for boys. The protagonist of Ashita no jō, serialised in Shūkan Shōnen Magazine from 1968 to 1973 (which corresponds almost exactly with the height of the Japanese protest movements), was a poor but determined boxer, and he became a role model for male readers who were also fighting against the system in 1968. The comic’s influence was said to be so strong some even blamed the manga for inciting violence. The popularity of Shūkan Shōnen Magazine was such that it inspired a slogan in the Waseda student newspaper: ‘In the right hand, Asahi Journal; in the left hand, Magazine.’21

The manga of Sanpei Shirato was also popular among intellectuals and politically minded students during the 1960s with its themes of historical class rebellion, and Ninja bugeichō was adapted for cinema by Nagisa Ōshima in 1967 and screened with his earlier Anpo-inspired Night and Fog in Japan.22 Many manga in the late 1960s and early 1970s dealt with leftist themes and storylines, such as Chairman Mao and peasant revolts in Japanese history, as well as the Burakumin, poverty, oppression, class warfare and the Anpo movement.23
The cultural critic Hiroki Azuma once made a tantalising comparison with the early development of the anime and manga subculture *otaku* (roughly translated as ‘geek’): ‘For the first-generation *otaku* who appeared [during the 1970s], knowledge of comics and anime or fan activities played a role extremely similar to the role played by the leftist thought and activism for the [Zenkyōtō] generation.’

Sans manga, Shiomi stewed in jail, wistfully imagining the glory his comrades were feeling after their successful hijack. He had twenty years of prison ahead of him. But in the end, perhaps his was the luckier fate. The truth was the hijackers did not want to go to North Korea. The Communist state was only meant to be a transit point en route to their real destination, Cuba. They did not support the North Korean regime; their model was Castro’s Cuba. There they would get training, before returning later to lead a revolution in Japan. They were, to say the least, woefully optimistic. The North Koreans had plans for the new arrivals, welcoming them with open arms in the embrace of the fellow Marxist—but not one who would then release his comrade just yet. The Yodogō itself returned to Japan with the government minister and crew, while the hijackers were presented with luxury apartments and no possibility of leaving. They did not even bother to learn Korean for some time because they naively believed they would be able to leave. Instead, they were to help the regime. The radicals were effectively stuck in a limbo, their revolutionary engine only half kick-started. They had been aiming for global horizons but ended up with a one-way ticket to the most isolated state in the world.

They officially worked as translators and teachers, though ultimately they would not stay put in North Korea. Brides were secretly brought in and they and some of the hijackers may very well have been involved in the notorious abduction of other Japanese citizens to North Korea in the years that followed. The level of their complicity in North Korean espionage in Japan has never been fully ascertained, though there is evidence to link the wives to activities in European cities when many Japanese disappeared during the 1980s. Rather than igniting the flames of world revolution, the Yodogō Group ended up re-indoctrinated.

There had been at least one bad omen before they even set foot on the airplane. Leading up to the incident, Shiomi and Tamiya had met with a member of the Cuban embassy to make contact about their plans. ‘We’re heading to Cuba,’ they announced. Since there were no flights, the embassy staffer naturally was curious to know how. Upon being told they were going to hijack a plane to get there, the person quipped: ‘Sure, all you need is a razor to threaten the pilot and then you’ll be there in no time!’ Shiomi
A HIJACKING AND A SIEGE

was surprised but Tamiya did not see the joke. He thought the suggestion was a great idea.26

Despite losing its top members through arrests or their voluntary overseas expedition, Sekigun-ha’s numbers were still strong: 800 came to the 1970 ‘Uprising Summit’ in Tokyo. It could mobilise some 1,500 activists in Kansai and even 500 in Sapporo in Hokkaido.27 Many former Bund radicals who had languished in prison for months following their arrests during the height of the student movement were now released—and could return to the frontline.

Sekigun retained a centralised structure, which kept control over ideology, strategy and funds. To make ends meet, it committed robberies and shoplifted. With the usual New Left penchant for arcane terminology using quasi-foreign abbreviations and coin words, it christened these new operations the *PBM* sakusen, or ‘PBM’ operations: Pegasus, for kidnapping famous people; Bronco (meaning a fast horse), for raids and armed struggle; and Mafia, for bank robberies to raise funds. The only tactic that was successfully executed was ‘Mafia’ over February and March 1971. (The Yodogō hijacking operation had also been given a cryptic name; it was the ‘Phoenix Mission’.)

In the interregnum following Shiomi’s apprehension, Tamiya’s departure, and continued police crackdown in 1970, the leading personnel in Sekigun-ha changed. Emerging as de facto commander was Tsuneo Mori, whose focus was more domestic and who oversaw the success of the ‘M’ operations: between 22 February and 9 March 1971, Sekigun carried out five robberies, raising ¥2 million. The heists culminated in a daring ¥6 million bank raid in July, bringing their booty to over ¥13 million, though some of the spoils and bandits were lost to the police.28 Sekigun had always had money. When Shiomi had been arrested on the street in late 1969 he was carrying ¥100,000—a huge amount of money to have on your person at that time.29 It had previously been receiving a lot of its funds from sympathetic professors at major private universities in Tokyo. The tactic of robberies leads inexorably to a political bind. The money Sekigun was assiduously stealing was from banks and post offices, and so belonged to ordinary people rather than the government or corporations. Though the funds they were accruing were valuable, members had misgivings about aiming to achieve revolution through larceny. Generally speaking, bank robbery and theft are not as anathema to revolutionaries as one might expect. Members of the JCP had committed the daring Ōmori bank robbery in 1932 to raise funds. In
Germany, the Rote Armee Fraktion often indulged in banditry, as did the Bolsheviks in and around the 1905 revolution. They certainly were not spending the money on themselves. Life was harsh for the main Sekigun activists, who existed on rationed cigarettes and instant noodles, working as labourers and sleeping in tiny rooms. Drinking and entertainment were banned from the life of the radical. As well as money, the other resource Sekigun needed was arms. For this it sought assistance from another group, the Nihon Kyōsantō Kakumei Saha Kanagawa-ken Jōnin Iinkai (Japan Communist Revolutionary Left Faction Kanagawa Prefecture Permanent Committee). This had been formed in April 1969 as a revolutionary breakaway faction of Maoist radicals. Its public parent organisation was the Keihin Anpo Kyōtō, or Keihin Anpo Joint Struggle (Keihin is the Tokyo–Kawasaki–Yokohama area).

Like Sekigun-ha, Kakumei Saha was a militant group not afraid to try risky operations. Soon after being formed, its members evaded a police blockade by swimming across to Haneda Airport and then running on to the runway to throw Molotov cocktails in protest at the foreign minister’s visit to America and Russia. Kakumei Saha raided a stone quarry for over 100 sticks of dynamite, which it used to attack US bases around Kanagawa Prefecture. Activists then attacked a police substation in Tokyo in December 1970 in a botched attempt to steal weapons and create a Maoist people’s army. Though armed with a short sword and an assortment of other homemade weapons, they underestimated Tokyo’s finest. One of the radicals was gunned down, and his two comrades shot and injured. It was the first such raid on a police substation and the first time the police had shot dead a New Left radical.

As 1971 dawned, there was an upsurge in the violence. The number of police officers hurt in battles with extremists doubled in 1971 from the previous year to 1,500. There were fifty-one attacks on police substations and dormitories, universities and courts throughout the year—sixteen bombs were placed at police facilities in the final six months alone. There had been bombing seasons before, such as a series of attacks in the autumn of 1969 on American and police facilities. But 1971 was a whole year of bombs: explosives were used in eleven prefectures or districts; thirty-seven bombs left forty-two casualties.30

The year just seemed to get worse as it wore on. A suspected Sekigun pipe bomb thrown at police in Meiji Park after a 10,000-strong anti-war rally by Chūkaku-ha and Fourth International on 17 June injured thirty-seven officers. Two Sekigun-ha members were arrested for attempted murder in September but released without charge due to lack of evidence.31
A HIJACKING AND A SIEGE

August brought the notorious incident at the Asaka Japan Self-Defence Forces base in which a twenty-one-year-old soldier was stabbed and killed. Wearing stolen SDF uniforms, two young radicals from the small fringe group Sekieigun (Red Guards) infiltrated the Asaka base to steal weapons during the night. Unable to locate the arsenal, they ended up stabbing and killing a sentry they encountered. Things took a turn for the farcical when the pair groped around in the darkness for the soldier’s rifle. Again unsuccessful, they made do with scattering revolutionary leaflets around the area and escaped with an armband. Meanwhile, their leader, Ryōji Kikui, a loquacious twenty-two-year-old Nihon University student, was safely ensconced at a coffee shop.

The perpetrators—all students from Nihon University and Komazawa University—were later arrested and imprisoned, but what was perhaps more shocking was the discovery of collusion between the press and the radicals. Journalists had provided the students with money and gear to help with the incident, though they were caught out by their scoop article when it revealed a detail of the events that had not been made public: the armband was not only a pyrrhic prize for a killing, it also proved the undoing of the reporter. Of the two journalists who went to prison, one wrote a book about his experiences, My Back Pages, which was later filmed. Osamu Takita was also a suspect in the case. The police claimed Kikui’s testimony implicated Takita as having directly advised the young leader in his conspiracy. Takita certainly did meet Kikui but he always maintained he knew nothing of what the student radical was planning. He was forced to leave his wife and child and go on the run for over ten years.

As we will see, the crisis over the construction of Narita International Airport was also escalating in 1971. Three police officers clashing with protestors were killed in September. In the capital, four Chūkaku-ha Okinawa Youth Committee activists drove a rental car into the grounds of the Imperial Palace and lobbed Molotov cocktails and smoke canisters. In October, a bomb went off at a post office in the Nisseki Building in central Tokyo. In November, two Chūkaku-ha rallies turned nasty: one in Shibuya on 14 November, in which a police officer was killed, and another in Hibiya Park on 19 November, where a building was burnt down. Police arrested some 2,000 radicals in connection with the two incidents. And then came December, with a bomb disguised in a shopping bag with a small Christmas tree exploding outside a police substation at a major intersection in Shinjuku on Christmas Eve, injuring twelve police officers and civilians out shopping. The indiscriminate nature of the bomb shocked
Tokyo, but other tactics employed by the militant radicals were far more personal. The same month saw the superintendent general of the national police force targeted. Kuniyasu Tsuchida’s wife surely thought nothing untoward of the package that she accepted at the family home since the sender’s name on the wrapping was someone she knew. Putting it down on a table, with her teenaged son nearby, she knelt to unwrap it. Untying the string and opening what she likely believed to be a gift from a New Year well-wisher, she set off a device that immediately detonated. Tsuchida himself had not been home but the young boy was seriously wounded and his wife killed, the bomb blowing her to pieces.

Numerous radicals were arrested for incidents in this violent season. However, several of the arrests were egregious frame-ups, eventually resulting in acquittals (a rare thing in Japan). This was especially the case with the eighteen unfortunate people spuriously charged as part of a fabricated connection between the Tsuchida attack, the Nisseki bombing, and attacks on a Kidôtai facility in Shinjuku in October 1969 and on the American Culture Centre in November 1969.

Sekigun was just one of several violent revolutionary groups during this most fervent of times in recent Japanese history. (Over half of the bombings in 1971 and 1972 were actually carried out by the growing numbers of so-called ‘black helmet’ radicals—non-sectarians and anarchists). Its ally, Kakumei Saha, raided a gun shop in February 1971, netting them an arsenal but also making them the police’s number one priority. The leaders had to hide out in Hokkaido for a while and even considered moving to China. Some 45,000 police officers (out of a national force of 250,000) were involved in hunting for Kakumi Saha, searching 25,000 locations: hotels, station waiting rooms, left luggage, apartments, shrines and temples.

Sekigun had previously held a joint rally in memory of the Kakumei Saha member killed in the raid on the police substation. They drew closer and closer until, in July 1971, Sekigun-ha’s paramilitary unit ‘married’ Kakumei Saha (both their public organisations stayed separate), though to all practical effects it was a takeover. In December, out of the merger of Mori’s Sekigun-ha commandos and Hiroko Nagata’s Kakumei Saha came Rengô Sekigun, the United Red Army. Although they conjoined in the name of starting a domestic people’s uprising à la Maoist China, their ideological approaches had not been homogeneous. Sekigun attracted academic patronage and students from elite colleges while Kakumei Saha recruited from a more working-class pool. In contrast to Sekigun’s campaigns against the police, Kakumei Saha’s stance focused on America, and most of its
targets in the past two years had been US bases. And whereas Sekigun had clearly been operating on an ambitious and dangerous level, Kakumei Saha had essentially restrained its actions to lobbing Molotov cocktails. Doctrinally, the union with Sekigun would tie it to a broader and more belligerent radicalism, while Sekigun-ha gained valuable arms and members. Strange bedfellows as they were, on a practical level the merger made a lot of sense: Sekigun had money but no guns; Kakumei Saha had guns but no money. It was a marriage of convenience.

Both groups had lost their real leaders. Kakumei Saha’s commander, Tsuyoshi Kawashima, was languishing in prison and the alliance with Sekigun meant Kakumei Saha and Hiroko Nagata also broke away from the control of her mentor. Kawashima had still been able to give instructions while in captivity through coded hand signals during meetings and the successful gun shop raid had been part of a plan to break him out as per his request. Nagata’s psychology was, as we shall see, a complex one and so was her relationship with Kawashima. He had raped her one night in August 1969 at his house while his wife was away and the merger allowed Nagata to move towards a new male. Nagata, a former pharmacy student and Marx–Leninist-ha activist, and the daughter of a factory worker and nurse, had stepped up to a senior position in Kawashima’s absence. She was responsible for writing the group’s literature.

The Japanese New Left is perhaps defined almost predominantly by its fissiparous proclivities. A union like this was very unusual and the hierarchy and power structure of the ‘child’ of the marriage has been the subject of much analysis. It can hardly be disputed that Mori was the initiator for the coalition; he was a charismatic and sophisticated manipulator. Sekigun had the most to gain, as Kakumei Saha had an arsenal and a greater army. He suggested taking Sekigun’s pillaged money and Kakumei Saha’s weapons to establish a mountain base both to hide from the tightening police dragnet and prepare for an uprising. Mori assumed the top position as the leader of the new organisation, with Nagata below him. A central committee was composed mostly of veteran Sekigun members; the influence of the smaller partner was disproportionate to its size and what it brought to the table.

Nagata’s personality is one of the most dissected areas whenever an examination of Rengō Sekigun is attempted. She seemed to seek out ideologically stronger men to guide her dogma. However, as a character she was formidable in her own right. Ostensibly married to Hiroshi Sakaguchi, another senior Kakumei Saha member viewed as weak (he had not taken part in the gun shop raid, though he had been one of the aquatic radicals
who had pulled off the daring Haneda Airport stunt in September 1969), she would in time ‘divorce’ him in favour of Mori (these were political marriages rather than real legal ones, since Mori already had a wife and child). Much of the discourse about Nagata focuses on her femininity. She was afflicted with Grave’s disease, making her eyes bulge. She is often characterised as sexless and non-maternal—she even called herself a ‘woman without sexual emotions’.36 She has been demonised as a witch who had a complex because she was ‘ugly’. She has even been described as barren, although her memoirs recount becoming pregnant by her husband and aborting the baby to concentrate on revolutionary causes.37

The frequent chronicling of figures like Nagata in almost misogynistic terms is particularly troubling as women in the Japanese New Left were often subject to the sexism endemic in the era, attitudes that feminism was only just beginning to crack. The treatment of women members and activists is often overlooked as it does not fit neatly into the ‘radical’ framework of the movement. One female activist recalls the double standards of the time. ‘The student council is full of boys and you’re a girl,’ she was once told, ‘so all you’re doing is just larking around.’38 Zenkyōtō girls were often characterised as unattractive, and most would wear no make-up and just jeans or T-shirts. They were damned if they did, damned if they didn’t; activists were faced with the impossible task of pleasing male comrades who expected them to look nice, even though cosmetics and fashionable clothes were both anathema to their ideology and practically implausible, given the reality of their funds and activities. A Chūkaku-ha activist from Waseda once remembered:

I think women who go so far as to have sex with peers during activism have an inferiority complex. There is a very strong sense of comradeship in student activism. These women have complexes about how they are inferior to the men in all kinds of ways, so they try to bridge this gap by having sex with them.39

The factions and Zenkyōtō were undeniably sexist. During the campus struggles of the late 1960s, despite the ostensible non-hierarchical structures of the student organisations, women were told to stay at the back during protests while the men handled the staves and did the ‘dangerous’ work. One early Women’s Lib activist was frustrated by the attitudes she encountered in Chūkaku-ha, including even from the complacent female peers in the group. Despite proving herself as capable as any man in a violent demonstration at Nihon University and being hospitalised in the fray, when a male comrade came to see her, he laughed. ‘When I saw you enter the demonstra-
tion, I thought, “Oh no, not a woman!” The division of labour was sexist: female members of New Left groups might be consigned merely to washing up teacups after meetings, or perhaps forming the teams in charge of cooking, first aid or support for arrested activists. Female activists were either expected to be leaders à la Rosa Luxemburg or cute hangers-on who helped out in practical, or physical, ways. The girls were even referred to as ‘public toilets’ for the male activists to ‘relieve themselves’.

Ryū Ōta, despite being a pioneer of Trotskyism in Japan and co-founder of Kakukyōdō in 1957 and associated later with the Japanese branch of Fourth International, was not revolutionary enough for his wife, leftist activist Aiko Iijima, who divorced him because of the oppression she felt as a woman. Even in Sekigun, someone as proficient as Fusako Shigenobu was basically assigned just to manning the phones, making handbills and raising money, along with the wives and girlfriends of commanders. Shigenobu, the only woman on the Sekigun-ha Central Committee, recalled that the men in the campus and sect struggles treated women like their property, though many couples lived together. Sekigun-ha was well known as a sexist organisation that did not favour female members rising up through the ranks. Mori’s conservatism towards Women’s Lib also exasperated Shigenobu and surely did little to encourage her to stay in Japan when she considered taking Sekigun-ha overseas.

Rape and abuse took place, as did arranged marriages between members dictated by the leaders as per what was deemed apt for the group. Rape would likely be covered up for the good of the sect. Sexual violation might also be enacted as an instrument of uchi-geba sectarian infighting. When Kakumaru-ha student radicals once lynched Chūkaku-ha rivals at Chiba University, the attack concluded with rape as the ultimate way to discourage female Chūkaku-ha students from coming on to the campus.

Nagata’s position as a female leader and then Mori’s deputy is hard to place in a straightforward feminist classification. She put the well-being of Kakumei Saha over her own violation when she did not seek punishment for Kawashima’s rape. Kakumei Saha’s attitude was that you were a revolutionary first, a woman second. Women would be liberated by the revolution; you had to commit to the revolution first. ‘In order to live proactively as a woman,’ Nagata once wrote, ‘a woman with self-assertion and independence, firstly, “one should live as a human” [i.e. not as a ‘woman’]; you should deny all your femininity you had until now for men, in short, the subservience of women to men.’ And yet, what of Mori and Kawashima? Was it feminism, leftist radicalism or plain bitterness that led her to tell the other girls at
Rengō Sekigun’s mountain base that ‘being pretty or intelligent makes you more inclined to bourgeois tendencies, and leads to the anti-revolutionary’? ‘I hate people who are pretty or smart,’ she said.47

Mori is also psychologically ambiguous. Not merely a political ‘fanatic’, lurking in his mind over 1971 must have been memories of disgrace. When Sekigun was battling Bund in its early days, Mori had fled the key ‘7.6’ clash in July 1969 before the fighting began and broke off contact with the group for a while. Although later accepted back into the fold in late 1969 despite his cowardice, shame and guilt must also have hardened him. He threw himself into his second Sekigun-ha career, carrying out rookie duties in printing and producing the faction’s pamphlets, as well as playing his part in _uchi-geba_. He rose quickly, not only through his own efforts but by default as senior members left the scene. The Yodogō hijackers were in North Korea and Shiomi in prison. The last member of the original founding Central Committee was arrested in June 1970, and Shigenobu departed for the Middle East in February 1971. In many ways, Mori’s leadership was an accident of circumstance.

In August 1971, Yasuko Haiki and Shigenori Mukaiyama, two young members who had left Kakumei Saha’s mountain base, were strangled to death on two separate occasions, and their bodies buried in the mountains. Their crimes? Desertion and betrayal to the police. The murders were carried out by Kakumei Saha, allegedly at Mori’s suggestion prior to the official merger of the two organisations. Nagata was possibly trying to prove herself and her members’ resolve to Mori. Violence was cementing the groups.

Towards the end of the year, the newly formed army went to a humble mountain base in Gunma, where temperatures dropped to below freezing and the occupants had just a single stove. They lived on simple meals while undergoing joint military training exercises. The terrible details of what then took place over the next few weeks have been chronicled and made famous not least following the release internationally of Kōji Wakamatsu’s film _United Red Army_ (2007).

All of the two-dozen or so radicals who gathered at the hut in the Japanese Alps were very young. Most were in their early twenties; the leaders were only around twenty-seven. There were youngsters still in their teens, a pregnant woman and, later, even a businessman accompanied by his wife and child. It was a varied and troubled group, recently brought together and with tacit power divisions still being silently worked out. Backed into a corner, with the pressure of the police search mounting, their
A HIJACKING AND A SIEGE

desperation seemed to turn into self-destruction. Between December and February, the group began to lynch members. Eventually, twelve would die in gruesome circumstances.

The nascent Rengō Sekigun set about discussing their new ideology and how to overcome the contradictions of their discrete revolutionary tenets, and emerge as a strong army. This process was called sōkatsu, typically a method of evaluation, discussion and conflict that ends with a group consensus on an ideological direction to take. But Mori scrambled things, merging sōkatsu with jikohihan, individual self-criticism; the mutation meant everyone was navigating unknown waters, except Mori. Essentially trapped in a Sartre-like hell of each other, slowly their beliefs and their efforts to satisfy the expectations of the cause warped into hysteria. The persecution was led by Nagata and Mori, and started off small. As we saw with the Zenkyōtō movement, the New Left in Japan had a preference for criticism—whether self- or collective. A microscopic perceived misdeed could become a trial where the perpetrator’s commitment to revolutionary creeds would be harshly questioned.

Mieko Tōyama, an experienced Sekigun activist, drew the ire of Nagata for wearing a ring and make-up in the midst of the radicals’ austerity. The truth was that, compared to her more glamorous departed friend Fusako Shigenobu, Tōyama was not even particularly feminine or fashionable. She was a genuinely hard-working woman from a difficult family—her father had killed himself—and a long-standing, though not senior, member of Sekigun. The ring that Nagata criticised so harshly was actually given to her by her mother as something to sell in an emergency. But after her superior rounded on her, she only exasperated the situation through a very ‘Japanese’ feminine response, maintaining a polite silence in the face of the onslaught of criticism. This only infuriated Nagata further. When verbal exchanges had been exhausted, Tōyama was instructed literally to hit herself continuously in the face. After this bizarre punishment had seemed to run its course, Nagata ordered her to look in the mirror. ‘Your beautiful face has become this horrible one,’ she told her. Tōyama would be among the final tally of the dead.

From personal and minute beginnings like this, the lynching began, lasting several weeks over the harsh winter. The purge only seemed to escalate; led by Mori, members were accused of crimes, put on trial, tortured, interrogated, stabbed or tied up outside to starve or freeze. Each lynching had its own peculiar linguistic curse that was used against the victim: non-militant, bureaucratic, Lumpenproletariat, old-style Sekigun-ha, a fence-
sitter ... Some were especially opaque in their lexicon, becoming a code word relentlessly employed but understood in the cabin only by Mori, who was a skilled wordsmith, ready with an explanation and label for every new development. Mori’s idiosyncrasies with language bewildered the group—even Nagata was surprised by his twists and turns of the tongue—but letting on that you did not understand the leader’s latest ideological chicane might seal your doom. Instead, the occupants of that cramped lodge were forced into an absurd complicity whereby joining in with the purge was likely the only way to protect yourself.

When a member being punished died unexpectedly, Mori came up with an especially novel but infamous condemnation. The fault had not been theirs; the peer had died from ‘death by defeatism’—if he had truly wanted to be a revolutionary, his body would not have given out. In the fanatical circumstances in the mountains, what appears patently ridiculous was accepted as valid. The fundamental problem was that the members had gathered at the base to train and hide from the police crackdown, but also to refine their own political mindsets for the coming rebellion. Mori had called this new ideological goal kyōsanshugika—‘Communisation’. He had heard it from previous Sekigun commander Shiomi, who had used the coinage just once but never explained its significance or full meaning.\(^5\) Mori seized on the word as a new slogan and bandied it at his followers like the Holy Grail they all had to achieve. But since its meaning was obscure it became impossible to satisfy the demands of sōkatsu.

The use of esoteric buzzwords and impenetrable mantra that not everyone in the movement is party to (but still willingly commits to in an act of self-deception) was not without precedent. Shiomi also admitted having done this for other earlier Sekigun concepts, which only he seemed to comprehend. As one expert has said, ‘One of Sekigun’s most endearing qualities is rhetorical aggrandisement.’\(^5\) Think of the ‘war’ Sekigun announced they would rage on Osaka and Tokyo in 1969, which was ultimately small numbers of radicals armed with firebombs.

Mori’s linguistic prowess and whimsy enabled him to supply convincing ideological interpretations to suit the moment. But it still took violence to reach those later, chronic stages. As Nagata and Mori competed to put pressure on their respective members and not let the other side see their weakness, a handful of people were caught in the middle and used as fodder for the couple to carry out their jousts. When the criticism sessions evolved into violence, it only seemed to justify the means. Beatings would elicit further confessions, no doubt uttered by the victims in an attempt to satisfy their tormentors, and thus physical assault became seen as more
effective than simple penalties or criticism. The violence was not a punish-
ment but rather a way to force the accused to face up to defects and over-
come them to reach kyōsanshugika.

The initial three deaths at the lodge were essentially accidental—punish-
ments, such as being tied up outside in the freezing cold, that went wrong. 
The first shocked the group, even though several of those present had medi-
cal training as nurses and should have been able to predict the effects that 
exposure would have on a weakened physical constitution. They tried to 
resuscitate victims and even save the unborn child of a pregnant victim, 
Michiyo Kaneko. But in time the purge became truly self-destructive, with 
the lower-ranking members turning on themselves. They became vindictive 
and personal, attacking each other for minute misdemeanours or perceived 
insincerities. The petty inhumanity stretched to accusations of sexual assault 
and even masturbation. Tissues discovered in a sleeping bag were paraded 
before everyone as proof of the crime of having basic needs. (Sexual tension 
rained high at the lodge, with Nagata’s husband Hiroshi Sakaguchi aware that 
he was being manoeuvred out of his marriage bed, and thus also any real 
inefluence, by Mori. He would also have known that once he was ‘divorced’ it 
was only a matter of time until he too faced a purge.) The pregnant Michiyo 
Kaneko was strangled to death after her face was beaten so much it swelled 
to twice its size. Her murderers included her husband. The most bizarre epi-
isode of the winter occurred when some members were tasked with burying 
the corpse of a disgraced friend. Even without Mori present, the madness had 
ballooned to such levels that the group began spontaneously to punch the 
dead who in their mania they thought was smiling with an anti-revolution-
ary sneer. However, all was in vain. Mori rejected this as nonsense and noth-
ing to do with achieving sōkatsu.

Suspicions had been raised in the area by the comings and goings of the 
visitors. In February, Mori and Nagata left temporarily to make a trip to get 
supplies and were intercepted by police and arrested. With the authorities 
closing in, the surviving members of Rengō Sekigun tried to escape across 
the mountains. Four were caught at a train station in Karuizawa, a well-to-
do resort, and the remaining band desperately holed up in a nearby villa. 
They were an army of five, including Sakaguchi, Kunio Bandō and two 
siblings still in their teens (their older brother had already been killed in 
the purge). By chance, the hideout was a natural fortress, three storeys on 
a slope and commanding a tactically high location. They had also managed 
to capture a hostage, a woman who happened to be at home when the
rebels came calling. The location of the lodge (sansō) was near Mount Asama and the incredible resulting events became ingrained in the public consciousness as the Asama-sansō Incident.

When the hostage’s husband realised something was amiss the police closed in, beginning a siege that would last 218 hours, with numerous injuries and three deaths. The police brought the mothers of the defenders to the site and had them try to exhort the occupants to give themselves up. Much as in the final stand at the University of Tokyo, with the might of the Japanese police forces against them—hundreds of officers—there could be no hope of victory or escape. However, to surrender was failure and, marking a distinct difference to the far Right, suicide was not an honourable way out.

The hostage herself was treated well, all things considered. She was even given a talisman by one of her captors as a protective charm. Rengō Sekigun kept the police at bay by boarding up the lodge and firing shots or throwing bombs at any sign of an advance. One local bystander, in a display of unthinkable heroics, forced his way through the police lines. Thirty-year-old bar owner Yasuhiko Tanaka had tried this once and been briefly put under arrest for his troubles. His second attempt succeeded and he made it to the door. He called through the barricade to the defenders, trying to make an offering of food. Despite police announcements that he was an unarmed civilian, those inside sensed a trap and fired through the door. Tanaka was killed by a bullet to the head.

The siege was covered in a marathon live television broadcast. Television sets had now become much more common in households by 1972—around 90 per cent of urban households possessed black-and-white TVs in 1970—and Asama-sansō was one of the earliest mass televised news events, a national collective media experience. (The besieged also watched television, through which they witnessed the ideologically devastating scene of Nixon meeting Mao in China.) Any major TV drama needs a satisfactory denouement. The deus ex machina of sorts was a massive demolition crane the police used to destroy the house like a medieval siege engine. They then pummelled the building with powerful hoses. The whole country was watching so they proceeded with care, anxious to avoid injury to the hostage. Two policemen were shot and killed during the last assault. Even after the forces had finally entered the house, it was still hours before they could reach the top floor where the radicals had barricaded themselves. The lodge was claustrophobic pandemonium, all bombs, gunshots, tear gas and water hoses as the police edged ever higher to the summit of the citadel. One
officer lost an eye from a shot fired by Kunio Bandō inside the house. The end was inevitable; the police seized the radicals and rescued the hostage from under a pile of futon mattresses, shaken but ultimately unhurt. The police had used firearms only reluctantly in the final stage, when they were shot at inside the house. Firing a mere fifteen rounds of ammunition, they relied on their hoses, crane, smoke bombs and hundreds of canisters of tear gas. The last battle from 9.45 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. was covered by broadcaster NHK almost without interruption. At its peak, the ten-day siege achieved a TV viewership with an audience share of nearly 90 per cent.

Despite the high drama, deaths and the implication that it could have been even more serious (among the Rengō Sekigun hoard, police found guns, 104 sticks of dynamite and around 4.4 kilograms of gunpowder), the nation’s greater shock was still to come. It was after the siege that the extent of the Rengō Sekigun purge was discovered. Initially, the police did not even believe the accounts of the members in custody when some spoke of killing twelve of their own. It was only until the butchered bodies were exhumed from a frozen mass grave that the terrible truth was fully unveiled. The backlash was guaranteed and the police were very happy to bring the media to the grave to disseminate the horrors of the militants to the population.

The much-publicised bloody results of the purge sent reverberations through the whole spectrum of the Left. The besieged radicals had been feted as heroes by New Left activists and even seen sympathetically as underdogs by general television viewers, but now they were murderers. It devastated comrades such as Fusako Shigenobu, by then living abroad; Mieko Tōyama had been a close friend. ‘This fantasy of Communisation ... just serves vicious tyranny,’ she said at the time. ‘This is not the kind of revolution we need.’ One activist linked it directly to his decision to leave the factions behind: ‘When it went as far as the discovery of the bodies, I broke completely away from partisan activities.’ It also had a negative effect on general causes of the Left. ‘What they did caused great trouble to civic activism,’ responded literary critic Makoto Nakajima. A thinker like Takaaki Yoshimoto meanwhile compared the political confusion of the purge to the same illusions that govern all our relations in society, not only special New Left groups. The members of Rengō Sekigun were ordinary people who did not even know themselves how things ended up like they did. Likewise, Mori and Nagata were not especially mentally disturbed and Yoshimoto criticised the facile correlation that psychiatrists drew with Nagata’s medical ailments.
Many in Rengō Sekigun had ‘graduated’ from regular student activism. Their backgrounds and contexts were not particularly different from most of their contemporaries, only their ultimate choices. The effects were shattering for their peers. ‘For our generation,’ said the feminist Chizuko Ueno, who took part in activism at Kyoto University, ‘the Rengō Sekigun incident was a trauma.’ The Asahi Shimbun newspaper spoke to students at the time and found feelings of betrayal and bewilderment. ‘When they did not kill themselves but were arrested at Asama-sansō, I thought, yes, they are revolutionaries, and I objected when adults called them a deranged gang,’ remarked a twenty-year-old university student. ‘But there is no logic to the lynching. I lost the desire to defend them.’ ‘They just went on to a different world to us,’ was the response of one teenager.

Arguably, though, it was not a different world but a place much more mundane. Patricia G. Steinhoff, the foremost non-Japanese expert on Sekigun-ha and the Japanese Red Army, has suggested that the Rengō Sekigun purge was caused by an innately Japanese mechanism in a society with a strong group ethos and endemic factionalism, one stemming from the schema of consensus-centric group management that is specifically Japanese and in fact very ‘normal’. Just as Hannah Arendt saw in Eichmann not an impenetrable, unprecedented corruption of humanity but rather, in her eternal phrase, the banality of evil, so too does Rengō Sekigun’s degradation refuse to be so easily categorised as an anomaly. The ‘real horror’ of the purge was that it was ‘a dynamic social process, comprising not only the acts and ideological justifications the participants created and carried out together, but also the assumptions and habits they brought to the situation as members of Japanese society.’

While it is true that the authorities were closing their net around Rengō Sekigun, it is not wholly accurate to say that the members at the lodge could not leave. There was mobility, with some departing regularly to collect supplies and run errands, and others coming to visit; it was not a rigidly enforced prison. If they had feared for their life or had wanted to flee, escape was not outside the realms of possibility. Except for a few members at the very end, most chose to stay, accepting their part in the process of the purge and the quest to complete the ethereal Communisation. The Rengō Sekigun underlings were complicit in their own self-destruction. Perhaps this was an inherently ‘Japanese’ display of behaviour, in that in consensus-driven group actions individual participants are expected to suppress their private objections to a process once the collective has decided on a course of action. This is more ambivalent than ordinary peer pressure, as the participants, even
A HIJACKING AND A SIEGE

after lodging initial challenges, are required to be wholly involved parties, not merely nominal ones, in the procedure following the group’s ultimate decision. It is a corrosive double bind.

The external, unseen authorities also played a role here. Through their attempts to crush the radicals and by defining them as deviants, the rebels are then encouraged to act that way. And in this case, it meant blindly following an ideologue like Mori.64

The media were not interested in such subtleties, though. Hiroko Nagata was portrayed as a demon woman, a witch and object of loathing for the nation. Newspaper and magazine photos showed Nagata being escorted by the police with her face down, hair ragged and with a rope around her. She was literally a kind of savage creature. Images of her co-leader, Tsuneo Mori, on the other hand, were more neutral. The authorities also made much of Nagata’s feminine failings; the judge described her as emotional, aggressive, jealous and sadistic. Mori was a political leader who went down the wrong path; Nagata was apparently irrevocably crazed, an ‘old hag’.65

Although Women’s Liberation activist and intellectual Mitsu Tanaka had rejected Rengō Sekigun when contacted by Nagata, like other early Japanese feminists she was angered by the portrayal of Nagata as a female aberration. Tanaka argued that Nagata had done what she had done to please men, caught in the destructive matrix of a repressive state and sexist New Left organisations. She was like a career woman who had to prove herself to Mori, to the point of denying her own gender. In this sense, she was no monster, but a martyr of the revolution.66 Tanaka reclaimed Nagata for Women’s Lib to protect her from society and the media; in the face of misogynists on all sides, Tanaka rather declared: ‘I am Hiroko Nagata.’67

The response of the Rengō Sekigun soldiers’ families appears to manifest the hallmarks of a shame culture. Kunio Bandō’s father committed suicide, while another’s mother visited the families of the police victims to apologise for her child’s actions. And Tsuneo Mori, despite the New Left’s ostensible rejection of such ‘traditional’ behaviour, hanged himself in his prison cell on 1 January 1973, recalling the gyokusai honourable suicide not least of Inejirō Asanuma’s young right-wing assassin in 1960.

Mori avoided what his colleagues had ahead of them—lengthy prison terms. Sakaguchi and Nagata were sentenced to death, though the executions were never carried out. Around a decade later, both wrote books about their crimes. Nagata in particular is openly remorseful for her ‘errors’. This would also seem to reflect the Japanese leftist convention of tenkō. For most of their generation, though, the Rengō Sekigun purge was
an inconvenient truth that was ignored. Even after Nagata’s memoirs were published in the 1980s, people evaded directly tackling the subject. As Chizuko Ueno said, ‘Not just for me, Rengō Sekigun was a real trauma for my generation. We avoided it. We didn’t want to see it, hear about it or discuss it.’68 It is only in recent years that the disquieting legacy of Rengō Sekigun has been dealt with in several films, as well as a large body of memoirs from the period by ageing former participants, and even a manga. Nagata herself died of brain cancer in 2011 after nearly thirty years on death row.

Shiomi, who had to hear from his prison cell how his Red Army had turned out in his absence, put the onus of responsibility for the consequences of the theory of Communisation on himself and Tsuyoshi Kawashima as founders of Sekigun and Kakumei Saha respectively. A managerial style of incorporating decision by consensus was certainly a trait of the early Sekigun. Shiomi even went further: ‘Put in the extreme, it is an error that should be borne by the whole of the movement.’69 However, he also qualified that Rengō Sekigun was more Stalinist than New Left.

With the number of reputed members left at large a mere thirteen, it is easy to characterise the Rengō Sekigun catastrophe as an event that put a final full stop to the era of domestic strife, and as a shattering occurrence that damaged the reputation of radicalism and even civic activism beyond repair. This narrative is one that tends to prevail today. The journalist Toshinao Sasaki recently described the purge as the ‘decisive trigger for the decline of student activism’.70 While the collective trauma unleashed on the generation in the long term is generally accepted, the actual immediate situation in 1972 was not so simple. Large-scale radical movements were still in full swing, such as at the proposed site of Narita International Airport, and would continue for years more despite the shock of the Rengō Sekigun collapse. Even Sekigun-ha regrouped and attempted to continue for some years in other incarnations.71
From the Reign of Terror to the excesses of Stalinism and the hecatomb that was China’s Cultural Revolution, the purge is a chronic feature of revolutionary movements everywhere. A trait becomes a synecdoche all too quickly, and yet self-destructive factionalism does appear, if not unique to Japanese radicalism, then at least inherent. One cause may be a supposed local inability to repudiate the panjandrum of the moment, since feudalism was not naturally massaged out of society, but rather wrenched from the social mechanism through the hasty, top-down revolution in 1868 that proceeded head-on into industrialisation.

/Uchi-gebra/ infighting has always been entrenched in the Japanese Left. Rengō Sekigun’s intra-factional conflict was a case of internal cannibalisation by two originally discrete groups. At least with inter-factional conflicts the battle lines were clearer, though they ultimately remained perhaps what Freud called the narcissism of small differences.

In 1950, there was a split in the Japanese Communist Party between the Kokusai-ha and Shokan-ha, which led the JCP’s paramilitary activities in the early 1950s. At a 1952 Zengakuren gathering, the two sides attacked each other and rumours of the presence of a CIA spy led to the persecution of one person, who later committed suicide. The litany goes on. Radical Zengakuren members stormed the JCP headquarters in the notorious 1 June Incident in 1958, leading to the leaders’ expulsion from the party and the formation of the first Bund (Kyōsandō) in December of that year. And as we saw, the
subsequent division of Zengakuren evolved into ingrained conflict between the JCP-affiliated student activists and the Bund-affiliated groups that proved so distracting during the Anpo and other 1960s movements.

A corollary of this perpetual splintering is a preoccupation with naming and coding. The New Left in Japan would obsess over certain ‘incidents’—for example, the ‘7.6 Incident’ that was such a banner for Sekigun-ha—often labelled with obscure dates pointing to an esoteric past struggle, or a perceived victory or betrayal. Takaya Shiomi’s wife once described _uchi-geba_ as ‘adolescent games’, and much like infants the New Left groups would characteristically bear grudges for years.¹

There was no more bitter or longer-running rivalry than the conflict between Kakumaru-ha and Chūkaku-ha. That their dispute could be so epitomising and destructive is ironic when we consider that the two groups emerged from the same parent, Kakumeiteki Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Revolutionary Communist League), or Kakukyōdō (colloquially, Kakkyōdō), and its student organisation, Marugakudō, in 1963. Kakukyōdō had initially been formed by Kanichi Kuroda, Ryū Ōta and others in 1957 as a foil to the Japanese Communist Party and almost immediately floundered, with Ōta’s faction breaking away to pursue a more Trotskyist ideology in 1958.

After a second dispute, a Zenkoku Inkai (National Committee) version of the league was spawned in 1959, with Nobuyoshi Honda as secretary-general and Kuroda as chairman. (What was left, the so-called Kansai faction, would eventually go on to form the Japan branch of Fourth International with Ōta.) A rift over fundamental issues surrounding how to organise their revolutionary workers’ party caused Kuroda, the blind ideologue, to secede in 1963 with his followers. He and Akira Matsuzaki formed Kakumaru-ha, the Revolutionary Marxist Faction. What was left of Kakukyōdō then took to branding itself as the Central Core Faction, or Chūkaku-ha.

Kakumaru-ha was quite different from its cohorts in the flourishing New Left scene at the time, not least in the presence of veteran political philosopher Kuroda, who exerted a near mystical influence on the students in the faction, and his writings formed the backbone of Kakumaru-ha ideology. It was Kuroda who originally formulated the tenet of ‘anti-imperialism and anti-Stalinism’ in the early Kakukyōdō days, which remained fundamental to both Chūkaku-ha and Kakumaru-ha. Although Maoism and Trotskyism influenced other factions, Kakukyōdō’s twin strands are committed to a purer Leninist approach. While intellectual and theoretical, it was nonetheless a proletariat movement, and its leaders like Honda were working-class. It also did not label itself as ‘New Left’, which it regarded as nothing more than petite bourgeoisie activism.
THE STRANGE DEATH OF THE JAPANESE NEW LEFT

It had been a future Kakumaru-ha leader, Hitoshi Nemoto, who had led the 1962 Marugakudō protest against Soviet H-bomb tests in Red Square. Kakumaru-ha was fiercely independent and criticised the attempts to form alliances between the New Left groups, such as Sanpa Zengakuren and its successors. Such joint action was like ‘fighting with a water pistol’, as Kuroda said. Kakumaru-ha prioritised the establishment of a single revolutionary party to lead the struggle against Stalinism. Chūkaku-ha’s emphasis lay first and foremost on revolutionary Marxism, the proletariat masses and the class war. They were two shades of the same colour, though their approaches to the practicalities were what split them apart. Having experienced the failures of Anpo and Miike, in 1962 Kakukyōdō focused on building a revolutionary Marxist party to challenge the JCP. Honda argued for the creation of ‘district parties’ among workers across industries, building a strong revolutionary party by linking this network of cells and committees to a central committee. But Kuroda and his followers wanted to maintain industry worker committees. In 1963, this dry but essential argument over the structure of the party resulted in Kuroda and Matsuzaki’s departure from Kakukyōdō to concentrate on organising workers on a per-industry basis. In this sense, Kakumaru-ha maintained a distance from the proletariat whereas Chūkaku-ha embraced these grassroots.

Chūkaku-ha was ardent about creating a movement of the masses, a vision rejected as illogical by Kakumaru-ha, who stressed the importance of a strong revolutionary workers’ party. Chūkaku-ha disparaged Kakumaru-ha for being petite bourgeoisie, the equivalent of conspirators meeting in shadowy corners of coffee shops to whisper dreams of revolution. Ideas on methodology also differed; Chūkaku-ha saw it as perfectly acceptable to resist violently as part of a crusade, while Kakumaru-ha ostensibly adhered to a code of eschewing militant tactics, though it believed violence was an inevitable part of factional conflict.

At first, Kuroda’s new Kakumaru-ha faction was significantly stronger than Honda’s Chūkaku-ha since it controlled far greater student numbers through its Zengakuren arm, Marugakudō. Kakumaru-ha’s leadership was also very young: the average age was twenty-one or twenty-two, though Kuroda was in his thirties and due to his experience and charisma exercised an almost dictatorial command over the youngsters. Chūkaku-ha’s leaders were slightly older, being mostly in their late twenties and included many former Bund veterans who had joined Kakukyōdō after the Anpo failure.

Although the overall number of militant activists had been falling since its peak in 1969, the figures were still estimated at some 35,000 in 1975.
Kakumaru-ha and Chûkaku-ha were now two of the strongest groups, with 5,000–6,000 foot soldiers each, running activities costing ¥200 million, and circulating their newspapers to over 10,000 readers. But, as we saw, they had adopted differing methodologies, with Chûkaku-ha the more aggressive, pursuing militant resistance whereas Kakumaru-ha did not advocate street fighting. For Kakumaru-ha, Chûkaku-ha’s tactics would never be effective; attempting to escalate the struggle and create the same circumstances as Russia in the early twentieth century would fail just as the JCP and the Old Left had failed. However, Chûkaku-ha’s aims were never Blanquist; it did not seek to overturn the state purely through its own bellicosity. The revolution would come about through strikes and workers seizing control of the means of production.

Although there had been some earlier skirmishes, the infighting worsened during the campus movements. The collapse of the student movement did nothing to quell the war and it was in the years that followed that the deaths and the injuries came in their dozens. The choice of weaponry was the most brutal variety—not efficient blades or noisy guns, but blunt pipes and clubs that could beat a victim to a pulp.

Uchi-geba was nationwide, with incidents occurring from Hokkaido to Okinawa, though by far the most took place in Tokyo. Sekigun provided the first fatality from uchi-geba in 1969, but in that same year there were some other 180 incidents of uchi-geba at sixty-six universities around Japan, with the tally of injuries hitting the thousands. By 1974, this had gone up to 286 incidents, around a third occurring on campuses. Uchi-geba continued to escalate throughout the 1970s, predominantly as clashes between Kakumaru-ha and Chûkaku-ha. The strength of the two factions lay in how in the late 1960s they had evolved from being student movements to have formidable roots also in youth labour organisations, including among manufacturing and local government workers.

One of the most dynamic was Hansen Seinen Iinkai (Anti-War Youth Committee). Formed in 1965 by the JSP and Sôhyô, it had established branches at nearly 500 workplaces around Japan by the end of the 1960s, with some 20,000 members. Around half of these were affiliated with its original source, the JSP, while the rest were attached to various radical New Left factions like Chûkaku-ha, Kaihô-ha (Kakurôkyô) or Bund. Despite its Old Left genesis, Hansen Seinen Iinkai refused to be tied to its parents. Its membership grew steadily more militant and idiosyncratic; it had no charter or central platform, and unlike the custom of organisations and parties on the Left of paying workers a daily rate when appearing at rallies, the
THE STRANGE DEATH OF THE JAPANESE NEW LEFT

Hansen activists refused such incentives. All this added up to a highly volatile and decentralised young army.

In *uchi-geba*, then, neither fighters nor victims were merely students, though campuses like Waseda (a Kakumaru-ha centre) and Hōsei (a Chūkaku-ha stronghold) were crucibles. One of the greatest of misconceptions about the Japanese New Left and its militant radical groups is their conflation with the student movement alone. The multitudes of student councils often affiliated themselves with a Zengakuren faction, but these councils were one of many groups that might be attached to the respective splinter of Kakukyōdō or Bund. The student arm of the *tōha* was just one part of the organisation. In other words, the ranks of, say, Kakumaru-ha were not only made up of its affiliated Zengakuren student councils. It is particularly problematic for the reputation of a group like Chūkaku-ha, since that name, applied originally to its Marugakudō student arm, colloquially came to stand in for the whole group.

Both Kakukyōdō factions were fundamentally workers’ movements; organising labour lay at the heart of their visions for revolution. (Chūkaku-ha repudiated the actions of Sekigun as ‘warfare without strategy, a military path lacking a party’). For example, a railway workers’ union, Dōrō-Chiba, is also a major affiliate of Kakukyōdō Chūkaku-ha, while Kakumaru-ha co-founder Akira Matsuzaki rose to be the head of the National Railway Motive Power Union and, to Chūkaku-ha’s horror, assisted in the privatisation of the railways, ostensibly to protect Kakumaru-ha’s position. (Kakumaru-ha always puts the preservation of the overall organisation above individual crusades.) Much of the later Chūkaku–Kakumaru conflict was occupied by the battle for control of industry. (Chūkaku-ha and Kakumaru-ha contrast with Bund, then, whose primary area was student activism through Shagakudō.)

During the 1970s, some 80 per cent of New Left activists were actually made up of workers, not students. It was especially hard for these worker activists, as being arrested would put their jobs at risk. But unlike students, they were less likely to leave when graduation loomed and they could also draw on a formidable weapon—striking. Labour activists successfully organised rail strikes in protest against the American presence in Japan, for example. A few years on from the sound and fury of Sasebo, the radical groups had acquired new and more effective means to make statements, on top of the prerequisite charge into the full brunt of the riot police.

Although Kakumaru-ha was fiercely independent and had not supported the attempts to form a national Zenkyōtō movement, it had brought itself
to join its enemies against a common foe at Ōji Camp Hospital, the two Haneda incidents, and at the clashes at Sasebo and Sunagawa. But fraternity was always elusive. The chaos of the factionalism severely affected the functionality of the whole movement—such as when an anti-Vietnam War meeting of various Zengakuren groups collapsed as Chūkaku-ha’s members took over the stage before brawling outside with Kakumaru-ha.

But the real clincher was yet to come. On 18 January 1969—it would forever be known as ‘1.18’—the night before the riot police were set to storm the University of Tokyo’s final bastion of student liberation, Kakumaru-ha abandoned its post. To the impartial outsider, it was a realistic decision given what they were facing—a tactical retreat. But in the eyes of Chūkaku-ha it was desertion, an act punishable by death since they saw themselves as a genuine army. There was no possibility of exoneration after that. And when the arrests among Chūkaku-ha members grossly outnumbered those of Kakumaru-ha in the later 1969 conflicts—‘4.28’, ‘10.21’, ‘11.16’—once again the cowards of Yasuda did not seem to be pulling their weight in the revolution.

In fairness, Chūkaku-ha was now much stronger and could afford to lose foot soldiers to prison spells. It controlled forty-two student councils to Kakumaru-ha’s twenty-nine, with a thousand more activists and a larger body of reserves. And around this time, in the autumn of 1969, Kakumaru-ha was more interested in protecting Waseda University against the influence of Zenkyōtō. In September, Zenkyōtō and Kakumaru-ha conducted a one-day open war on the university grounds, each occupying different buildings just outside the main campus. The battle reached such a state that the college called in the riot police, though it was hours before they could get through the barricades to nab the last Molotov cocktail-throwing student.

It was well over a year after the treason of ‘1.18’ that the Chūkaku–Kakumaru conflict really got into its stride. By 1970, the veterans from both factions who had been arrested in 1968 and 1969 were being released. The armies’ ranks were swelled by hardened and bitter activists, eager to punish the other side.

We could characterise the events that had happened until now as scuffles—physical fights with little consequences. But in August 1970 the situation vaulted over an incorrigible line. After days of street skirmishes throughout Tokyo, including Shinjuku’s popular pedestrianised shopping zone, Toshio Ebihara of Kakumaru-ha was kidnapped in Ikebukuro by a band of Chūkaku-ha foot soldiers, who then whisked him to the Hōsei...
University campus. His body was dumped outside a hospital in Shinjuku in the early hours of the following day, beaten to death with iron pipes and wooden staves, and stabbed multiple times with drills. Chūkaku-ha wanted to stop Kakumaru-ha from raising funds on the street and Ebihara had the misfortune to be doing this when he was spotted. (He had been one of a group of Kakumaru-ha activists who attacked a Chūkaku-ha student selling copies of the faction’s newspaper on a Tokyo campus in July, though, which made him a marked man.) Days after his brutal murder, Kakumaru-ha launched a daring revenge raid, storming the Hōsei campus by camouflaging their forces with Chūkaku-ha helmets. Riot police were called in to break up the fight that resulted.

Whereas the previous death in the 1969 Sekigun _uchi-geba_ had been an accident during the victim’s escape, now the radicals were torturing each other to death. There seemed no going back. Over the next few years many more would die—between 1969 and 1977 there were 1,823 incidents and fifty-seven deaths. Most of the dead were Kakumaru-ha, casualties of the conflict with Chūkaku-ha, though by June 1980 Kaihō-ha (Kakurōkyō) had also killed twenty Kakumaru-ha members. It is estimated that at least 113 people died from _uchi-geba_ overall. At the time, violence was also not just within the New Left. A Nihon University student was murdered by right-wing zealots in 1970, another year of general unrest and social violence.

Kakumaru-ha had been trying to influence the student body at Yokohama National University (at the time, a Chūkaku-ha stronghold) and there were students from other universities staying on the campus as Kakumaru-ha representatives. A group of these, including Toshimi Mizuyama, were attacked by Chūkaku-ha members with pipes and hammers. Mizuyama would die from his injuries. That evening, Kakumaru-ha responded by assaulting the Chūkaku-ha headquarters with Molotov cocktails. And yet, just like after the Ebihara murder, Chūkaku-ha remained silent (in comparison, Kakumaru-ha released statements, including public self-criticisms, and held press conferences after significant incidents). Chūkaku-ha’s silence could be taken as a sign of cruelty but also of self-assessment, while they internally analysed what they had done. The Mizuyama attack, like the Ebihara, was not an assassination; it had unintentionally descended from an attack into a murder.

During the Shibuya Riot Incident of 14 November 1971, in which Chūkaku-ha and Hansen Seinen linkai coordinated an attempt to bring the
fury of the Koza uprising to central Tokyo in protest at the terms of the restoration of Okinawa, a twenty-one-year-old police officer was beaten and burnt to death on the outskirts of Shibuya. Several Chūkaku-ha radicals were later arrested for the death, though one suspect, Masaaki Osaka, remains at large even today, over four decades later, with his face one of many that populate the wanted posters on police substations in neighbourhoods around Japan. Notorious among those arrested is Fumiaki Hoshino, the leader of the demo group where the officer was attacked and who has languished in prison since 1975 on the most dubious of witness testimonies. However, much lesser known is that a female junior high-school teacher from Osaka affiliated with Chūkaku-ha was also burnt to death by a Molotov cocktail that bounced off the police lines at Ikebukuro Station. Chūkaku-ha has always felt victimised by police (keisatsu) oppression, and tied this to their linguistic attacks on their other foe. ‘K = K’ (keisatsu = Kakumaru) became a slogan to taunt Kakumaru-ha and deny it legitimacy as part of the revolution. (Chūkaku-ha believes the police were for many years in cahoots with Kakumaru-ha: my enemy’s enemy is my friend, as the saying goes.)

True leftist or not, Kakumaru-ha was no longer merely on the defensive. It attacked Kansai University, a Chūkaku-ha bastion, killing two veteran student activists from Kyoto universities. There was further sporadic fighting in 1972 and 1973, including four days of bloodshed in January 1973 at Waseda, when 700 Chūkaku-ha troops stormed the campus and fought Kakumaru-ha for twenty minutes before riot police arrived. Sixty Chūkaku-ha radicals were arrested on that occasion alone. The conflict reached its peak between 1974 and 1975. There was now no pretence; each side was trying to kill the other.

It was a veritable state of war, with leaders living in secret locations under pseudonyms and with nameplates disguised on buildings. Headquarters might be stormed any day and volunteering to give out faction literature on the street might mean putting your life in jeopardy. One journalist compared visiting the Kakumaru-ha HQ to a trip to the PLO’s base in Beirut. On the ground floor there appeared to be no one around, while going upstairs you encountered a narrow entranceway and a few loitering guards. Numerous baseball bats were to hand in case of attack.

Nowhere was sacred. An expensive Ginza coffee shop; a flat in Setagaya; a train station in Kobe. You might suddenly be set upon anywhere or followed home or attacked in a carefully planned assassination. You could be kidnapped, beaten and then left in the mountains to find your own way home somehow—if you were one of the luckier ones.
THE STRANGE DEATH OF THE JAPANESE NEW LEFT

What started out as a conflict of revenge for a perceived crime in 1969 degenerated into years of endless, perhaps innumerable skirmishes and killings in homes, on campuses and on the streets of Japan’s cities. It was a cycle of retaliation for retaliation. Once they were attacked, the other side had to respond. It grew into animosity over each other’s ideologies, with barbs exchanged, propaganda flexed and even accusations made of that worst sin of all, being anti-revolutionary. Death was merely an acceptable by-product. ‘War comes with war dead,’ remarked Nobuyoshi Honda. ‘Is it not natural that when two social groups fight a war using physical means there will be deaths? If you are fighting, it is meaningless to detach death for form’s sake.’

As almost every left-wing movement around the world has testified, internecine collapse is often a sad inevitability when ideology gets its hands on weapons. This conflict was more like gang warfare than genuine partisan or paramilitary activity. The participants themselves saw it as a just cause, though. ‘You think we’re just killing each other, right? Like the goings on of the Yakuza? It’s not like that,’ said Kakumaru-ha’s Hajime Domon. ‘Everyone thinks that this is utterly vital for the progress of their own revolutionary movement—they are wielding their iron pipes like they are praying.’ This praying was not new—recall the Second Bund’s slogan from 1967: ‘Organised Violence and Proletariat Internationalism’.

Language was significant to the two sides; here the cliché ‘a war of words’ really does apply. Kakumaru-ha was particularly vehement in its tone, insisting on calling Chūkaku-ha ‘maggots’. Kakumaru-ha called a different group ‘cockroaches’; they seemed to have insect names for all their enemies. The conflict resembled ethnic cleansing in many ways since it was so utterly impersonal and indiscriminate. Chūkaku-ha in turn did not write ‘Kakumaru’ with the usual character for kaku because it means ‘revolution’. They wanted to deny Kakumaru-ha’s credibility as a radical organisation, and by doing this, the conflict became a ‘war’ and not uchi-geba. (Kakumaru-ha, on the other hand, did not recognise the conflict as a ‘war’.) To Chūkaku-ha, Kakumaru-ha was a fascist group that tried to crush any organisation with an ideology that differed from theirs. In this respect, the word uchi-geba was not accurate to describe the conflict, since there was nothing internal about it. Amid all the irate cant, though, sometimes the labels were only one step away from the schoolyard. Kakumaru-ha liked to mock their archenemy by calling it the ‘bukuro’ group, which was a reference to how Zenshinsha, the Chūkaku-ha newspaper’s office (and the organisation’s de facto public HQ), was originally based in Ikebukuro, north Tokyo.
What may surprise people, especially given that the groups had headquarters and were heavily publicising the war, is that the police did relatively little at the time. Arrests were certainly made to contain the overt aggression in the large street scraps out in the open, but much of the violence went unpunished. Whereas decisive action was needed to deal with a threat to the state in the case of factions like Sekigun-ha, no doubt here it seemed easier simply to let the two sides fight it out among themselves. This is not to say the boys in blue did nothing whatsoever. Twenty-one Chūkaku-ha Zengakuren committee members were ultimately arrested in connection with the Ebihara case. And in 1974 alone the police arrested forty-five cases of *uchi-geba*, including five murders. But still the mayhem continued. Until now, the police had been successful with smaller organisations, where their tactics—such as mass arrests—could decapitate a militant group in one swoop. This worked for Sekigun-ha and the Hannichi bombers (who we will meet later). But here the main two assailants were too large. It is very likely that they could have made dozens more arrests at any time—but why bother when the war was accomplishing what the authorities wanted anyway? The police were content to try to insert spies into the ranks, recruit informants and hope the two armies destroyed each other. They knew what *uchi-geba* was doing to the resources and reputation of the New Left. And so, much like the Rengō Sekigun purge, where they had willingly escorted the press to the sites of the graves, the police were happy to release details of the latest ‘extremist incidents’ to the press.

With such intense pugilism, it was inevitable that there would be cases of mistaken identity and ‘friendly fire’, such as the tragic killing in November 1972 of Daisaburō Kawaguchi, kidnapped and lynched on the campus of Waseda University by Kakumaru-ha for being a suspected Chūkaku-ha spy. After seven hours of torture, he was dumped outside a hospital in his pyjamas, a bruised, fractured mess. But Kawaguchi was actually only an occasional participant in Chūkaku-ha rallies and was more interested in campaigning against Buraku discrimination. Kawaguchi’s murder led to a large backlash against Kakumaru-ha at Waseda.

The faraggae escalated to new heights in 1974, with four deaths in one month alone. Kakumaru-ha also attacked Chūkaku-ha’s lawyer. He took four months to recover from his injuries. One large fight took place in May 1974 on the streets of Ichigaya in central Tokyo, only a mile or so from the Imperial Palace and near the Hōsei campus. Kakumaru-ha ambushed a battalion of 100 Chūkaku-ha returning to the university. In the melee there
were twenty-six arrests, over half of them Chūkaku-ha. More than thirty people were injured and a senior Chūkaku-ha activist was killed. It was a stunning Kakumaru-ha victory on the doorstep of Chūkaku-ha’s strongest Tokyo campus.22

It was not only human flesh that was valued as a target. Since rhetoric and communication was such an addictive and unabated element of the war, the two sides targeted each other’s propaganda organs. Kakumaru-ha struck first, stopping the publication of the Chūkaku-ha’s newspaper Zenshin by attacking the print works. The requisite manpower later needed to protect the delivery of issues proved too much for polite society not living under a state of warfare, and amid pressure from the police, the media was shut down for a while. Tit demands tat. Chūkaku-ha got its revenge by assaulting Kakumaru-ha’s press, throwing stones into the press. Kakumaru-ha activists were inventive saboteurs, though; they once managed to issue a skilfully faked extra edition of Zenshin.

If success can be measured purely by murder, then Kakumaru-ha likely scored the biggest victory of the campaign when they murdered Nobuyoshi Honda in retribution for the death of a senior member of their own faction, Tsutomu Nanba. Saitama police got a call early in the morning on 14 March 1975. A resident in Kawaguchi City had heard some crashing in a neighbour’s apartment during the night and in the morning had awoken to find the windows smashed, and a bloodied corpse inside. Honda had been attacked in a Chūkaku-ha ajito (‘agitation point’, or a covert base) by around fifteen Kakumaru-ha intruders, who butchered him with axes, pipes and hammers. Kakumaru-ha proclaimed responsibility for the assassination: ‘Our revolutionary warriors from Zengakuren have dealt a crushing class blow, imbued with the fury of the proletariat, to the anti-revolutionary spy group Chūkaku-ha’s leader.‘ Kakumaru-ha then declared ‘ultimate victory’ in the conflict and a unilateral ‘ceasefire’. But Honda’s murder merely opened the floodgates and led to all-out war, with fourteen Kakumaru activists killed in revenge in 1975.23 Forty-one-year-old Honda was the highest-ranking victim of the war.

The years 1972–5 were the height of the conflict, though it stretched sporadically into the 1980s, with each year leaving further dead. Chūkaku-ha particularly targeted Kakumaru-ha’s hold on the railway unions by allegedly attacking and killing several leading Japan Railways (JR) unionists in the late 1980s and 1990s. While the Chūkaku–Kakumaru war calmed somewhat in the new decade, with some years even producing no fresh corpses at all, a third character had also made their entry on the stage.
Kaihō-ha’s separate fracas with Kakumaru-ha entered its heyday in the late 1970s, with Kakumaru-ha suffering many losses. Kakumaru-ha had struck a major blow to Kakurōkyō, the labour branch of Kaihō-ha, one evening in 1977. Masayoshi Kasahara (Hajime Nakahara), the secretary of Kakurōkyō and de facto leader of all of Kaihō-ha, was beaten to death on a train by six Kakumara-ha foot soldiers armed with pipes. Kakurōkyō took revenge. In April it ambushed four members of Kakumaru-ha travelling in a van. Ten people leapt out and began to smash up the van with pipes so the doors could not be opened. Then they poured petrol into the vehicle and set it on fire. The men from Kakumaru-ha burnt to death. Kakurōkyō carried out a further three attacks on Kakumaru-ha, killing seven of the enemy in total. Though the twenty killed in 1975 was the largest toll of war dead in a single year, 1977 reached another nadir: there were forty-one incidents of uchi-geba, with ten dead—nine of them Kakumaru-ha.24

In the 1980s, Chūkaku-ha, who throughout these years had been very prominent in the Narita International Airport struggle in Chiba, also continued its occasional quasi-terrorist activities, including an arson attack against American facilities. It also launched projectiles at the Akasaka Palace in central Tokyo, the venue for the twelfth G7 summit in 1986. In 1990 it allegedly killed the wife of the senior managing director of Nippi Corporation, the aircraft manufacturer, in an arson attack. It continued its anti-government activities until beyond the Millennium, but these days is ostensibly a strident yet peaceful political group, committed to organising labour unions and fighting neoliberalism. It maintains power at several colleges, including Hōsei and Kyoto University, though colleges have made efforts to dismantle the infrastructures supporting the presence of far-left factions on campuses. The police still treat Chūkaku-ha as a threat. Plainclothes security police officers attend events and rallies in large numbers to photograph and monitor activists, and continue to place spies in its ranks even now.25

Kakumaru-ha also exists today. It became involved in bugging JR labour union leaders and enemies at Waseda University who have worked to remove its student councils and other sources of income. As its influence dwindles, it has become attracted to conspiracy theories. It was embroiled in the notorious 1997 Kobe child murders case, claiming the teenager Seito Sakakibara had not killed the two victims as he apparently confessed. Although Kakumaru-ha was far from alone in casting suspicion on the conviction, it went further in stealing police documents, tapping the telephones of the suspect’s parents in their new apartment, and breaking into
hospitals to view autopsy reports and information on Sakakibara’s psychiatric tests. Warrants were put out for seventeen members of the group after the discovery of a mountain of incriminating evidence at an ajito.26

The seemingly out-of-the-blue decision by the police to raid Kakumaru-ha bases, suddenly ‘uncovering’ secret locations, merely confirmed the suspicions of Chūkaku-ha that Kakumaru-ha had been in league with the authorities all along—but had now outlived its usefulness or stepped over a line. Although the ideological conflict with Chūkaku-ha still continues, Kakumaru-ha no longer has the resources to wage a war. That said, its purported affiliation with JR unions remains a perennial topic of tabloids and politicos.27 We could say that ostensibly Chūkaku-ha ‘won’ as it probably remains the largest New Left organisation in Japan, though its strength has also been weakened by a schism with Kansai members in 2006–7.

Shaseidō Kaihō-ha had evolved into Kakumeiteki Rōdōsha Kyōkai (Kakurōkyō) (Revolutionary Workers) in the late 1960s, but this split in 1981, leaving the Hazama-ha faction. Internal conflict became a feature of Kakurōkyō. A rival was abducted from his apartment and assassinated in 1989. Inevitably, there was further bifurcation; the Sekisaisha-ha (or Kimoto-ha) faction broke away in 1999. Uchi-geba continues to the present, with numerous incidents between the former Kaihō-ha sides leaving ten dead.28 Recent years have seen fighting at Meiji University over student clubs, including cosplay circles. For most students, extracurricular activities are for fun and socialising. For others, they are war trophies. These power struggles still know how to descend into cruelty. In August 2000, Mieko Katayama, a middle-aged female member of staff at Meiji University and member of a Kaihō-ha faction, was encircled by three or four people during the morning rush hour at Uguisudani Station in Tokyo and stabbed to death. The escalation of violence between Kakurōkyō Hazama-ha and Sekisaisha-ha led Meiji University to remove Sekisaisha-ha’s base from its campus and dismantle its funding sources. During the 2000s and 2010s, Sekisaisha-ha also reportedly carried out many small mortar attacks on US bases and elsewhere.

In 1982, Osamu Takita (Nobuhiro Takemoto) was sitting on a bench in a park in Kawasaki City, just outside Tokyo, enjoying the late summer afternoon and watching a fountain. Suddenly, he was surrounded. A police badge was flashed. After more than ten years on the run, he had been apprehended. The former Kyoto University demagogue, Rosa Luxemburg scholar and renegade is an obscure figure now but had been one of the
most vocal and provocative members of his generation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His articles often appeared in the mainstream left-leaning press and his influence had been felt in the Asaka Japan Self-Defence Forces base incident in 1971, as well the Lod Airport massacre in 1972. One of the perpetrators of the latter once told an interviewer: ‘If you want to find out about the student movement [in Japan], go to Kyoto.”

This reputation was down to Takita and the future Japanese Red Army operatives who hailed from the colleges in the Kansai region.

Takita had spent 4,000 days ‘underground’, living in flats in Tokyo and Saitama, moving from friend to sympathiser to friend, leaving a trail of arrestees behind him, including a girlfriend. He was far from silent during this time, though. Takita had always been savvy and was fully aware of the importance of hype and creating mythology. ‘Arming the masses will make the urban guerrilla. And to do that, propaganda is necessary,’ he said.

He continued writing and publishing while on the run, only adding to his appeal and fame. The police distributed thousands of copies of his photo to try to catch him. Takita was working the whole time in a string of manual labour positions and at one point even spent forty days in hospital recovering from an injury he had sustained in a factory. His eventual and rather anti-climatic arrest after police got wind of his latest hideout seemed to bring an era of lore to an end. He always maintained his innocence of any part in the Asaka Japan Self-Defence Forces murder and the case against him rested solely on the testimony of Ryōji Kikui, the ringleader of the small band of radicals that carried out the attack. Frame-up or not, the police were no doubt very pleased finally to bag this legendary figure. After a spell in prison, Takita would go on to run a video production company.

There is a risk of hyperbole to talk about the ‘death of the Japanese New Left’—let alone a demise that is ‘strange’. The movement did not simply evaporate or die. Throughout the 1970s, further factions emerged and new political groups were formed, and even Sekigun continued to survive for a time. As we will see, the Sanrizuka anti-airport movement was still going strong more than ten years after the Rengō Sekigun purge. Campus protests were evident year-on-year in the 1980s, and also survive today in a prolonged, acrimonious conflict between Chūkaku-ha-affiliated students and Hōsei University.

But police and state pressure was working, and the radicalism, while it did not disappear, was no longer as visible. And the more byzantine the New Left in Japan became, the more its strength also dissipated. The strongest groups were engaged more and more with fighting each other (many,
THE STRANGE DEATH OF THE JAPANESE NEW LEFT

many more members of protest groups have died through *uchi-geba* than in clashes with the state). Plurality is healthy to a political movement, but the heyday of Bund and Zengakuren was already long gone by the early 1970s. The main rallies for Zengakuren in the 1980s were a shadow of the more than 20,000 people who gathered for the National Zenkyōtō rally in September 1969 in Hibiya Park. In 1984, Chūkaku-ha managed 400 participants; almost double that of Kakumaru-ha and more than the JCP. By the early 1980s there were also fewer student councils, down to around 500, although the JCP’s 70 per cent ratio changed little after the 1960s, despite all the strife in the meantime. By the time of Fukushima, the system that had supported student activism had been dismantled.

More widely, malaise had set in and the way radicalism developed appeared to contribute to, or at least aggravate, a general downturn in the Left in Japan. From being a small minority of 6 per cent before the 1960s, the number of voters who did not adhere to a political party rose to over 20 per cent in the 1970s. This was not only at the expense of the mainstream left-wing parties, since the conservative LDP government’s reputation was also frequently damaged by the opprobrium of the Lockheed or Recruit scandals. But predominantly it was the parties on the Left who were losing their supporters. Voters were giving up on politics as a constructive or relevant element in their lives. No doubt this was partly because they were living in times of economic prosperity and could afford not to worry about policies and ideologies. But we cannot put it down to pure nihilism. The purges and infighting revealed the weird and unpleasant underbelly of militant radicalism, and led to an unshakeable cynicism towards the Japanese Left.

In a 1994 survey of former activists, the number one reason stated for why they had left student activism was *uchi-geba*. The reason with the second highest number of responses was the Rengō Sekigun purge. The World Youth Survey in 1977 spoke volumes when over 60 per cent of the Japanese respondents said they did nothing despite being dissatisfied with society because ‘the problems involved are beyond the reach of individuals’. This was especially shocking as the result dwarfed that of youth in other nations around the world.
An airport is part of the insignia of a city or nation. When a city builds a new airport, it designs and stitches on a gaudy badge. And so it was with Tokyo. Not for nothing was Narita International Airport originally called New Tokyo International Airport. The project was to be one of the great symbols of Japan’s incredible post-war recovery, starting with the Shinkansen bullet train, and then the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and 1970 World Exposition in Osaka. If the airport had opened as expected in the early 1970s, it would have joined this pantheon of national triumphs, embossed and shiny. Instead it may be regarded as Japan’s greatest post-war folly.

The Japanese countryside was frequently neglected in the post-war period as the government sought to push industry and growth forward at all costs. Up until the Narita crisis, though, most of the problems in rural Japan—lower standards of living, declining populations, environmental damage—were very much a case of out of sight, out of mind.

Some campaigned for a shift away from city living to an agricultural idyll. The rural activist Gan Tanigawa wrote a famous poem, Go Not to Tokyo. ‘Go not to Tokyo. Create a hometown,’ he says. For ‘hometown’, he uses the word furusato, one of the most nostalgic terms for the rural heartland; we might translate it alternatively as ‘native place’.

There is a long tradition of agrarian radicalism in Japan. More than cities like Edo or Osaka, the village was far likelier to be the fount of discontent, precisely for its greater deprivation and the lack of the distractions that urbanites enjoyed and which kept them gratified.
The historical villager makes for a dissatisfactory left-wing hero, though, given that many of the local rebellions and uprisings that occurred were highly materialistic. The dissenting villagers at Shimotsuke in the 1867–8 uprising, for example, wanted their debts cancelled and their pawned land returned. The mob was calling for a new ‘order’ in the village, but it was fundamentally about immediate injustices. They did not seek to eliminate the entire society, or even to go higher to the lord with demands for more radical reductions on taxes. As cleansing events, *yonaoshi* (world rectification) could even be a paradigm for the Right. Bin Akao once called for *yonaoshi* and village revolution to free Japan of American influence and all its post-war shackles.  

The farmer radical was at once as much a conservative and bourgeois figure as an anti-establishment or anti-state one. His gripes were more frequently than not about property or taxes; he was, after all, a proprietor. As we saw in Chapter 3, rural ideology was often the preserve of the Right and *nōhonshugi*, the Japanese agrarian radicalism that emerged in the late nineteenth century and gained currency during the militarist period, could be amenable to individual small-scale farmers as well as genuine leftist sympathisers. In this sense, tenants and landlords could unite against larger external authorities trying to impose upon their local rights to the soil and crops. What happened at Narita was in many ways another manifestation of the kind of minor disputes that arose fairly often in Japanese rural communities during the Shōgun period. The chief participants in the regular episodes of contention in the Tokugawa era were landed farmers, ahead of groups such as labourers and fishermen, or marginal peoples. When these incidents escalated into full-blown peasant uprisings, they were crushed. When they remained orderly and represented by a village headsman, they might be settled by local authorities. But between the feudal era and the post-war period, Japan’s farmers had acquired the ideological obstinacy of peasantism.  

*Nōhonshugi* is nostalgic, with its ideal of the peasant warrior and the noble *hyakushō* serf, although it was in truth a petite bourgeoisie movement driven mainly by the sons of farmers. It saw the village and agricultural life as the essence of the Japanese nation, one where smallholder agriculture becomes the heart of the state, and as such proved an ideology very tractable for right-wing thinkers too. It advocated a decentralised, village-centric state; by its nature it was paternalistic. It emphasised the disparity between the city and the country, and downplayed landlord–tenant conflict as being the result of agriculture becoming too commercialised. The same kind of rural romance and regional protectionism also inspired the samurai who rebelled against the newly restored Meiji emperor.
While the Tokugawa Shōgun paid lip-service to the farmers who grew the food of the nation by ostensibly placing them at the top of the official hierarchy of social classes, even above the warrior class, this was a smoke-screen. The rice crop the farmers grew was collected by the local lord and used as currency. The more rice you had, the more wealth you had, and thus the more power. Rice became the unit for measuring clout. Those who did the labour were not to be rewarded. In this way, Japan has seemingly forever been taking with one hand but holding back the other, never sincerely giving farmers equality and due attention.

After the war, the Japanese government wanted a wealthy population so it shifted policies from supporting agriculture to bolstering industry, though it maintained subsidies to rice farmers. Farming was a healthy 20 per cent of Japan’s GDP in 1955, but less than 5 per cent by 1978. Most people were very happy when their income doubled during the 1960s, but this was literally at the expense of the farmers. The percentage of the labour force engaged in agriculture fell from 24.7 per cent in 1962 to 18 per cent in 1968, while of Japan’s 16.7 million farming families in 1969, only a little over 1 million were engaged chiefly in agriculture to make their living. The population of villages dropped by 10 million between 1964 and 1973. Farming was not glamorous, nor was it financially viable. Between 1960 and 1985, income for farmers rose a meagre 5 per cent, while overall costs went up fourteen times. It just did not make sense to be a farmer and that must be the fundamental cause for the phenomenal decline in farming populations over the same period, down 56 per cent—and even more chronically for the fraction of the farmers who derived their main income from agriculture.

Rice consumption was also declining nationally, from 260 pounds per capita in 1960 to 178 pounds in 1978. Rather than eating home-grown produce, consumers were increasingly being sold food made from imported grain and ingredients, with a shocking concomitant drop in the nation’s self-sufficiency ratio, now often said to be less than 40 per cent. Today Japan ranks among the largest of agricultural importers.

Instead of supporting farmers, Japan was building golf courses, its citizens blithely putting balls into holes in the grass while the long-established and sustainable agricultural systems like satoyama farming disappeared. In 1945, there were fewer than fifty golf courses but almost 1,000 by the mid-1970s. The countryside today in Japan is littered with shopping malls, hotels and theme parks. When the economy fluctuates, these are abandoned, leaving spectacular Ozymandias ruins that have inspired their own subculture of urban exploration in recent years.
As long-time Japan observer and ardent rural champion Alex Kerr once wrote, with perhaps only a pinch of alarmism, the post-war construction blitz, which did not slow down even after the Bubble burst, had turned Japan into ‘arguably the world’s ugliest country’. The facts do seem to support his pessimism. All but three of Japan’s 113 rivers are dammed or diverted. The policies of the local and national governments re-routed money into the rural regions for civil engineering projects that made the areas economic addicts to construction jobs. It was easy money but it was destructive. Other industries, such as farming, were neglected.

The shores of Japan have been ravaged. By the end of the twentieth century over 60 per cent of the coast of the entire country had been lined with cement slabs and concrete tetrapods, which actually accelerate sand erosion rather than delay it. There can be no sincere justification for the wanton destruction of the seashores except that it was done for money, since concrete means big business. The construction industry in Japan has been called the largest in the world. (And perhaps it is no coincidence that a lot of it is controlled by the Yakuza.) It was consuming 18.2 per cent of GNP in the early 1990s, over double the investment in the industry in the United States. Much of this is government money. Far from slowing down following the catastrophic collapse of the economy, the country was still spending around 9 per cent of its GDP on public works in the 1990s, almost ten times more than America.

On top of the obvious impact on natural habitats, there was also a human cost to this ruthless pursuit of economics. Minamata disease was the name given to the mercury poisoning that killed 1,000 in the town that bears its name after a corporation dumped chemical waste in the bay. The situation came to international attention, thanks largely to Eugene Smith’s photography. And then there was Itai-itai, a disease caused by contaminated rice paddies in Toyama Prefecture, with the locals dying excruciatingly as their bones disintegrated (Itai means ‘painful’).

The farmers’ protest movement at Narita was not merely an example of Luddite anger at change and technology sweeping away what a small community had. The views of the farmers were diverse but they were united in their obstructionism, the seeds of which had been sown in the early period of Japan’s modernisation, when many thinkers and farmers believed that agriculture was sacred, even mystical, and its propriety rights inviolable. ‘We must cease making Tokyo richer and concentrate on rural districts.’ Yukichi Fukuzawa wrote that in 1874, but it could easily have come from the mouth of a local protestor in Narita a century later.
What was new in the Narita movement was how this rural ideology and identity was reinforced into the new model of grassroots political campaigns that had been growing since the post-war period, galvanised by US military base protests, environmental and health issues (like the tragedy of Minamata), discrimination (litigious lobby groups fighting for rights for former Burakumin ‘outcastes’) and civic activism (Beheiren, Koe Naki Koe no Kai). Local demonstrations and campaigns had succeeded over the 1964–75 period in raising awareness of the unsavoury by-product of Japan’s economic boom. The recycling movement was also started in Japan by Yūichi Takami in the early 1970s as another response to this.

Even among the general populace, there was widespread concern about the effects of the economic boom from which it was benefitting; a 1973 survey found that nearly 60 per cent of people believed that economic growth had more negative effects than positive, with environmental pollution cited as one factor.14

For many former activists, the disenchantment with revolution propelled them into more practical campaigning. The ‘quieter’ political and social movements that got into their stride in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Women’s Lib, environmentalism, minority rights, consumer groups and the anti-nuclear power campaign, were populated by former New Left activists. Shifting from a stance of accusation and criticism and struggle, the graduates of the failure of radicalism and extremism were now concerned with daily life, with defending and improving lifestyle not through opposition—but through productive and concrete action.

One answer lay in physiocratic activism. Kazuyoshi Fujita was a former student activist who founded the Association to Protect the Earth (Daichi o Mamoru-kai) in 1974 following his release from prison. Aided by another newly freed ex-student radical, Fujita began to sell organic produce in Tokyo in conjunction with farmers in Tochigi. The association grew into a successful cooperative of several hundred producers and consumers, eventually becoming a corporation with its shares partly distributed among staff and members. It is today a for-profit company but one that seeks to protect agriculture and connect consumers directly with farmers. Young activists matured into serious but ethical civic entrepreneurs.15

This flowering continued well into the late 1970s and 1980s with the proliferation of small-scale pragmatic volunteer shinmin groups that were part-time, participatory and successful. The recent explosion in NPOs after the law changed to accommodate non-profits is another example. In 2005, there were over 7 million volunteers at social welfare councils, out of a population of 127.77 million.16
There is another skein with an older pedigree. Today Japanese clubs and social associations are frequently known as ‘circles’, using the English word (sākaru), particularly at schools or universities. The word was originally used by the All-Japan Proletarian Arts League in the 1930s for literary or artistic groups that were being organised by Communist Party-affiliated activists in factories or unions. By the 1960s, it had evolved to mean any small collection of amateurs engaged in some sort of shared cultural activity. This model of the circle also weaves its way into the grassroots and civic activism that developed over the post-war era. And it intersected again with rural radicalism. In the 1950s, the poet and activist Gan Tanigawa and others organised a series of ‘circles’ among coalmining communities in Kyushu as part of their regional efforts to promote the village as the ideal revolutionary model. Tanigawa wanted the masses to develop philosophies independently, rather than conform to the ideology of a party. He believed that the pre-proletariat class lay at the core of ‘Japanese-ness’, and a new national belief should be built on peasant and rural sensibilities. The result, Circle Village, both a movement and a magazine, was ultimately a short-lived affair.

The Narita Airport struggle then, due to the age of the principal farmers involved and the participation of Zengakuren groups, had one muddy foot in the camp of this kind of environmentalist grassroots model, and one bloody foot in the more fundamentalist, oppositional and anti-establishment camp of broader political radicalism. Though numerous factors played their parts, with this pull in two directions, and with the proprietary conservatism of nōhonshugi thrown in to boot, it is not surprising that the movement became bogged down in decades of stalemate and attrition.

Airports are recurring sites of conflict in Japan. However, the multiple clashes at Haneda in the 1950s and 1960s still felt like Tokyo events, while the Narita fiasco was more remote. Visitors today are often unaware how disparate Narita and Haneda are in their respective distances from the city. Newcomers are naturally surprised that it takes over an hour on a high-speed train link before you are even close to central Tokyo from the capital’s main international airport. There is a reason for this: Japan is crowded. Only 15 per cent of the land is arable. Lacking the space to build new developments like airports, in recent years it has often constructed them on artificial islands in port areas.

The first thing to recognise about the ‘Narita’ struggle is that it was not at Narita. This is the nearest city to the eponymous airport. The site of the
SANRIZUKA

construction for the new airport actually stretched over a series of villages and hamlets in the Narita vicinity, including Sanrizuka, Yokobori, Tenjinmine and others. They are often grouped under the area name of Sanrizuka–Shibayama, a label that has become synonymous with the whole drawn-out affair. Saying ‘Narita’ in Japanese likely conjures up an image of a tedious train trip to a dull terminal. But ‘Sanrizuka’ means protest.

Haneda was at capacity as Japan’s economy expanded during the 1960s. With no let-up in sight to the good fortune, it was deemed necessary to construct a new international airport to facilitate Japan’s unabated boom. It was the largest government project Japan had ever seen. The early designs for the airport were monstrous. It would eventually shrink to around half its original size and the initial expectations for the period of development and construction work, from 1964 to 1971, in hindsight now seem frankly risible. The first site under discussion in the area was Tomisato, a village to the west of Sanrizuka, although harsh opposition after its proposal in 1965 led to it soon being rejected. A less complicated option appeared to be the neighbouring Sanrizuka–Shibayama district, and it was here that the plan for the first phase of development work was fixed in 1966.

The farmers and residents were caught by surprise. Several hantai (opposition) groups were hastily formed but eventually they sensibly united across all the villages involved as the Sanrizuka–Shibayama Rengō Kūkō Hantai Dōmei. The Sanrizuka–Shibayama United Opposition League Against the Construction of Narita Airport, as it is known in English, still exists today. Its leader was a local trader called Issaku Tomura, with Kōji Kitahara as his deputy, and the pair proved deft campaigners.

To the farmers of Sanrizuka and Shibayama the announcement of the first phase of development was like an invasion by the central government. Some of the farmers were former tenants who received land in new hamlets after the post-war land reforms. Returning servicemen had also received land in the area as thanks for their wartime duties and now this was being snatched from them by higher authorities. In the bulldozing guise of the airport authority body, Tokyo was advancing into their territory to carve out Lebensraum. There had been no real consultation or warning, and the farmers’ rights had not been respected. The local Chiba prefectural government had also been sidelined. As with the 1960 Anpo crisis, the government’s behaviour in its eagerness to push through realpolitik exasperated an already delicate situation and churned up an emotional quagmire from which little could be soon extricated.

The farmers at first tried petitions but these tactics were abandoned when they were seen to be useless. There would be no change or compromise
forthcoming from the Airport Authority. Hantai Dōmei then adopted a civil-war mentality and began to take direct action against the land surveys and construction work. The farmers’ war experience became invaluable for planning their tactics. Tunnels, bunkers and ditches were built. Fields and crops were neglected to attend rallies and create fortifications. When diggers came, locals would throw themselves in front of them. When tree surgeons came, they would chain themselves to the trunks. They obfuscated the complex legal process of acquiring the land by buying it up between Hantai Dōmei members in tiny strips. They used faeces and catapults to attack developers. This was insurrection.

They were not alone. The airport protest was a rare example of a residents’ movement uniting firmly and lastingly with the New Left. Zengakuren factions began to send student activists out to Sanrizuka from 1967, though the radical presence was increasingly dominated by Chūkaku-ha. The latter, along with the other sects, repudiated the presence of Kakumaru-ha, who were forcibly prevented from attending rallies. Kakumaru-ha did not actually believe Sanrizuka represented a genuine part of the class struggle and the faction’s attitude won it few friends among the farmers. Hantai Dōmei eventually expelled Kakumaru-ha for spreading rumours, much to the delight of Chūkaku-ha. The mainstream Left was also active in the protest campaigns for a while—the JCP for a year and the JSP for two years—though they objected to the involvement of the extremists. The police and the government, meanwhile, were supported by the likes of right-wing figures like Bin Akao, no doubt angry at how the New Left was seeking to hijack the movement for their own ‘anti-Japanese’ ideological goals.

Many of the most serious of the student activists showed their solidarity with the farmers by living out in Sanrizuka. They helped build ‘solidarity huts’ (danketsugoya) and fortified towers they called ‘fortresses’ (toride). They occupied these citadels by rote, living austere lives in constant vigilance. The police would harass them with loudspeakers and many gave up their studies to reside permanently at Sanrizuka. In-between political debates inside the huts and participation in the demos in the local area, the students also provided free labour to the farmers in the fields. On the whole, they rose early and lived very simply. With the sparse diet and communal living quarters, the huts and ‘fortresses’ dotted around the airport site were somewhat like student dorms. In the particularly tall towers, the radicals had existences that were more isolated, like medieval ancho rites. They continued twenty-four-hour watches on the airport site from inside their forts—one such sentry duty lasted 500 days. Daily life was
actually a dull affair for these dissidents, self-imposed exiles from mainstream society after years of limbo at Sanrizuka, dependent on their faction umbrella organisation for food, petrol, vehicles and other forms of upkeep. Especially after the airport opened and until the mid-1980s, when the movement revived to counter new development plans, the hut occupiers’ cause seemed more like purgatory than protest.

The farmers were grateful for the extra hands, both in their protest campaign and also tending their crops. Although there was a clear demarcation between the sets of activists, it was to a certain extent a symbiotic and organic relationship. The students were essentially living among the farmers and there were cases of activists and younger farmers marrying. This was not an insignificant union, since until now the student movement had been a largely urban affair, only venturing into the countryside for certain campaigns like Sunagawa. The older farmers no doubt still associated students with the social elite, as they had been until the 1960s. Some cotton farmers had also blamed students for the cancellation of Eisenhower’s visit in 1960, since the Anpo debacle led to a drop in the price of cotton. However, all marriages have their secrets. The Zengakuren radicals who stayed on at Sanrizuka were not just there to guard against incursions from the police and airport developers. They were also there to spy on the locals, checking on farmers who might be collaborating or looking to negotiate land compensation with the authorities. Chūkaku-ha’s resident activists would be instrumental in exposing collaboration among senior farmers in 1982.

Not only students, the committed and long-term activists also included many workers. In 1978, of the 200 people arrested in the Sanrizuka struggle, over 60 per cent were workers, and between 20 and 30 per cent of them were public servants. There were plenty of ad hoc volunteers and supporters, such as journalists and artists. However, these types of people did not receive the kind of aid that the sectarians could count on if arrested. They faced grave financial problems later in life because of the legal costs of trials, and almost certain loss of employment.

The earliest significant clashes occurred in 1967 during the first land surveys on 10 October by airport engineers, backed by 2,000 Kidōtai. Hantai Dōmei fielded 1,200 protestors, blocking all roads. The JCP fled the protest as it turned violent. In November, the first contingents of 1,200 arrived from Hansen Seinen Iinkai, the strident anti-war youth labour group.

With December’s irrevocable split between the Communist Party and Hantai Dōmei, the alliance of New Left groups and the farmers grew stron-
ger from 1968. A Zengakuren operational base opened in Sanrizuka and joined with Hantai Dōmei at a 26 February protest at Narita City Hall. During a clash with the riot police, Issaku Tomura attempted to rescue a student caught in the fray and found himself surrounded and targeted by police. Beaten to the ground, the officers knocked off his helmet, the better to inflict injury on the man, who was nearly sixty years old at the time. The incident deeply affected Tomura himself. Tomura was not like his fellow Sanrizuka residents, not least because he was a trader in farming equipment, as opposed to an actual farmer. He was also a Christian and a sculptor, and littered his rhetoric with religious motifs and language that his audiences found difficult to understand. A formal and rather solemn man, he saw himself as a village intellectual and the Sanrizuka movement as a struggle in epic moral and biblical terms. His abuse at the hands of the police convinced him of the need for and validity of violent means of protest. Coming just after the shocking scenes at Sasebo, photographs of a prostrate and bleeding Tomura also did little to mitigate the image of the state as aggressor in the eyes of the New Left and the nation at large. ‘If not for February 26th,’ Tomura remarked, ‘the Sanrizuka struggle would not have developed like it did.’ He said it inspired farmers who had been on the fence to turn militant and not leave the students fighting on their behalf in the lurch. ‘A qualitative shift came about in the struggle. And it was born out of the violence of the Kidōtai.’

Sanpa Zengakuren, Hansen Seinen Iinkai, Beheiren and Hantai Dōmei continued demonstrating, rallying and parading up to the offices of the Airport Authority in their thousands twice in March alone. The three major protests of 1968 so far had already yielded around several hundred arrests and 1,700 injuries. It did nothing to stem the relentless advance of the developers. Backed by police, the authorities next started a series of surveys of the outer rim of the site for three months over the early summer of 1968, meeting violent demonstrators. Leaving lucrative seasonal crops like water melons to rot in the fields, the farmers blocked roads with barrels of manure, and laid wire traps for police; anything to try to hinder the authorities. Sit-ins and skirmishes with the police became the norm over the next two years until the next major test for the campaign—the first and second land expropriations in February and September 1971, where after a legal process the Airport Authority was allowed to use the police to forcibly evict people from their land.

To keep the thousands of riot police at bay, the Sanrizuka defenders constructed tunnels, dug ditches metres deep and wide and filled with faeces,
and built bamboo traps and barricades. They even set up their own hospital. Initially overseen by the prefectural governor, a temporary halt had to be called to the expropriations due to the violence. The governor ordered the police not to use sticks on the activists and farmers. However, when the airport body itself took over direct control, the seizures proceeded with more success, though at every turn still meeting the rocks and spears and Molotov cocktails of the fortified defenders. Injuries numbered over 700, and with 487 arrests during the first phase.

During the second expropriation the police were better prepared, with 5,000 officers and 130 machines—water cannons, cranes and more. Hantai Dōmei was not weary yet. The more it fought, the more passion it seemed to inspire. There was even a Children’s Corps contingent of young boys. Protestors chained themselves to trees and the police had to cut down the trees with chainsaws, the people still attached. A massive crane was used to ram and breach a huge fenced fortress built by radicals on the land. One tower was pushed over while still occupied by defenders, resulting in serious injuries. Over the five days of the second expropriation, 471 were arrested.

With such aggression and materiel being employed on both sides, that tragedy would occur was never just a possibility, it was an inevitability. On 16 September, three Kidōtai officers aged forty-seven, thirty-five and twenty-three were killed at the Tōhōjūjiro crossing, a bottleneck for the violent clashes. Some of the farmers responded callously that it was punishment from heaven. Kōji Kitahara, one of the Hantai Dōmei leaders, put the blame squarely on the police and Airport Authority for usurping the role of Chiba Prefecture. ‘The responsibility for the death of the three police officers lies with the state,’ he said. The authorities had in fact surely been expecting such an eventuality. They had even prepared ten coffins in advance.

Another moment from the second expropriations became definitive of the whole Sanrizuka movement. Yone Ōki seemed to symbolise the ‘peasant’ element in the Narita debacle. Poor, uneducated (she could neither read nor write), she lived in a tiny house on a postage stamp of land that stood in the way of the first runway. She knew what was coming but continued to do her meagre farming at her shack while crowds of onlookers and police gathered right beside her. The old woman lived the most basic of lives in her home, lacking modern utilities and working on her knees in the small field outside. But it was hers and it was all she had. She refused to cooperate with police right until she was forcibly removed and her home dismantled in the second expropriation. Photographs of her being carried off

SANRIZUKA
by riot police officers, as weak politically as she seemed physically, became iconic. And yet she was anything if weak in spirit, losing three teeth in the struggle. The police then dumped her on the ground nearby while her hut was demolished. The mayor of Narita City offered her a prefab house that replicated the size of her original hut but she rejected it, and died at the age of sixty-six in December 1973.

Such scenes of death and destitution made for a highly emotional response around the country and also within the ranks of the movement itself. A local youth activist, Fumio Sannomiya, felt he had nothing more he could contribute to the campaign except the ultimate act. He hanged himself in protest at the land seizures on 1 October. He was just twenty-two years old.

For the death of the three police officers, 114 members of the youth activist corps would be arrested over the next nine months, with over fifty charged. Farmers were also being arrested over separate incidents, though typically they would be held for a few days and then released for lack of evidence of any real crime. This was a tactic designed to scare or wear them down. There was no chance of that. On the contrary, Kitahara and Tomura were running in local elections. Tomura even ran in a national election and fielded an admirable turnout of votes, though failing to secure the seat. The Genyasai music festival was also held over three days in August 1971, with avant-garde musicians like Keiji Haino heading out to Sanrizuka to perform in support of the movement.

In the first six years of the conflict, some 8,500 had been injured and 4,000 arrested. The Airport Authority finally had all the land it needed and the first runway was completed in 1973. But the airport could not open. A pipeline was required to supply the planes, yet its laying was passionately disputed by the farmers because of the potential environmental damage to the soil in the area. And so the opening was delayed further, with Narita now a national embarrassment and huge financial disaster, sitting like a mammoth boondoggle in the Chiba countryside, fully constructed to the first phase of the plan but unused. The authorities attempted to continue to negotiate with the locals, though this was rejected by Tomura as cynicism. ‘When [they] say “negotiating” it is simply piling up notes in front of the farmers’ eyes to cajole them somehow.’

By now there were several ideologies in play at Sanrizuka, all working towards a common goal that for the present kept the disparate elements aligned. For some, the Sanrizuka campaign was a pacifist cause, since there were genuine fears that the airport would be used to aid the American war
in Vietnam, either directly by America as a landing or logistical hub, or as a base for Japanese and international planes to take supplies to the Americans. By extension, the Narita conflict was seen in the same context as the Sunagawa base struggle (which had revived in the late 1960s), the clash at Sasebo and other military base campaigns. In more general revolutionary terms, Narita was also part of the wider movement against the state and the Anpo system. By stopping Narita, you could work towards dismantling the American-allied Japanese capitalist machine. It was of course also about protecting farmers’ and rural rights, not only locally but in a broader sense. In 1973 Tomura wrote to his fellow campaigners:

First, I have a request for all of you—to think of the struggle at Sanrizuka not as a struggle limited to the area of Sanrizuka. There are fights unfolding in Kansai, Kantō, all over Japan confronting head-on the authorities’ way of taking farmland away from farmers. This is not only Sanrizuka’s fight.\(^3\)

And yet the dichotomy of rural (Sanrizuka) versus central state (Tokyo), though especially tempting when considering the movement in retrospect, is one that belies the details of the narrative. While the Chiba prefectural government had been sidelined, the farmers themselves were still well compensated for their land, receiving generous rates of three times the market value. Much of the land that was used for the airport’s first phase of development was actually not even owned by smallholding farmers and ‘peasants’. The main single stake of land belonged to the emperor, a massive horse pasture owned by the Imperial Household and handed over to the state voluntarily for the good of the country. The construction project also brought welcome local wealth to Sanrizuka, with the necessity for restaurants for workers, plus the promise of jobs at the new airport facilities once they were finally complete and allowed to open. Likewise, although many farmers were originally supporters of the JSP or JCP, others (like most farmers in Japan) were conservatives and voted LDP. Sanrizuka is frequently confounding, a conflict that defies simplistic attempts to apply a dualist interpretation.

The farmers themselves disagreed over the particulars about what to do and what they were fighting for: revolution, compensation, getting their land back, an apology, making a point (not going down without a fight), or merely for revenge and teaching the state a lesson. All knew that reversing the airport was impossible—it surely became so from 1968—but they were desperate at the very least to prevent the second and third stages of the airport development from proceeding. Those who did sell out were not, as might be expected, shunned or despised. Their neighbours
were realists and understood that, for some, fighting on did not make economic sense. Most of the land in the first phase of the development was ultimately purchased peacefully.34

The limbo was broken in 1977. The government was now determined to open the airport at the very least with a single runway. The terminal building was completed and a solution to the pipeline issue was found by transporting the fuel by train, though this led to strikes by rail workers. The authorities began to combat the war apparatus of Hantai Dōmei, in particular Iwayama Tettō, a 62.3-metre steel tower that stood in Sanrizuka as a symbol of defiance. The protestors had built it in 1972 to replace an earlier smaller tower used for surveillance and broadcasting announcements. A massive rally was held in April to protect it, drawing a record 23,000 demonstrators from Hokkaido to Okinawa.35 A showdown was inevitable. When the authorities came to tear it down in May 1977, they met an impassioned defence. In the melee, a student called Kaoru Higashiyama died when hit by a gas shell. Later, a police officer was also killed in an attack on Shibayama.

And yet, the more deaths and arrests there were, the more turning back became an impossibility. Narita International Airport was set finally to open on 30 March 1978, but Hantai Dōmei’s cohorts had one more ace up their sleeve. On 26 March there was a last-ditch effort to prevent the airport from opening and what a spectacle it was. The facility was being protected by 14,000 riot police, and so, to create a diversion, the protestors rebuilt their fortresses and a 16-metre tower. They held a massive 10,000-strong rally at the fortresses, drawing the police away.36 And then all hell began to break loose. A burning truck loaded with radicals came from nowhere and rammed through the main airport gates. (One of those on the truck would later die from his burns.) Hundreds then rushed into the airport grounds at fourteen points around the site. Emergency services ran around frantically, trying to put out the flames. Foot soldiers from the all-red Fourth International were chased by the all-black riot police, making for a colourful, oddly beautiful scene.

But all this was a distraction, mere bagatelles of fireworks and marauders. While the tumult was going on, fourteen militants, mostly from Fourth International, were lying in wait. They had entered the airport through the sewers the night before and now, coming out of a manhole near the control tower, like ninjas they made good on their carefully planned assault. Ten managed to get inside the control tower, fired upon by guards. Six then
made it up to the control room and started to smash up equipment. Having captured the heart of the airport, they unfurled a red banner from the roof. A hammer and sickle was painted on one of the few unbroken windows. The occupiers threw endless pieces of paper from the gaping holes where the glass had been. A helicopter buzzed angrily overhead, trying to winch people down. The control tower staff had escaped to the roof and were rescued by the helicopter. The band of saboteurs, meanwhile, barricaded themselves in, so police were eventually forced to climb up from the outside, firing tear gas in through the windows to recapture the castle keep from the invaders after two hours. This incredible coup delayed the opening of the airport to 20 May.

Tomura died in 1979 but, though Narita International Airport was now in operation, there had been a victory of sorts. The airport had been scaled back to just the first phase of its original gargantuan plan. It had been expected to open in 1973, but instead the journey had taken twelve long years from the announcement of the airport site in 1966. It was 16,000 hectares in size and with a 4,000-metre runway, yet only a third of the plan. To reach this took the deaths of four policemen, two students, and those of many others who died indirectly from injuries or trauma suffered in the protest movement. Thousands had been injured and arrested, and there had been direct underwriting to the tune of ¥160 billion and indirect investment of some ¥800 billion.37

If the Narita enterprise was largely a victory for Hantai Dōmei, it was a pyrrhic one. The movement split in 1983 after two senior members of the organisation were revealed in 1982 to be secretly negotiating with the Airport Authority. Hantai Dōmei broke up without the visionary leadership of Tomura to guide it, dividing into two main factions, one led by Kitahara and the other by another farmer, Hajime Atsuta.

During the early 1980s, with Hantai Dōmei no longer a strong single confederation, the movement seemed to be ebbing away. At one point there were some seventeen militant factions supporting the movement, living in thirty-three huts guarding the parameter of the airport site like a frontier between two civilisations, though even these were now split, with the Atsuta group supported by Fourth International, and Kitahara’s allied with the likes of Chūkaku-ha, Kaihō-ha (Kakurōkyō) Hazama-ha and Senki-ha (a tōha that emerged when the Second Bund collapsed and split into several smaller factions).38 Planes were landing and taking off right over the heads of the farmers as they tended their crops. The first part of the pipeline that had been so bitterly fought over was laid in 1983. All their
efforts had seemingly been futile, as they could no longer even cooperate with each other. But the movement gained its second wind thanks to the decision by the Yasuhiro Nakasone government to push ahead again with the next phase of the airport development.

This sparked a renewed series of confrontations and demos, as well as guerrilla terrorist attacks. In October 1985, thousands were mobilised by the Kitahara faction of Hantai Dōmei to protest the Phase II plans, the biggest rally since the movement split. Meanwhile, Chūkaku-ha had arrived with massive battering rams, which they used to charge the riot police at Tōhō junction. A chaotic, messy street battle erupted for two hours, with the radicals lobbing Molotov cocktails and running en masse straight into the rigid walls of the cops, like some fanatic Sisyphean labour. There were 241 arrests and nine Kidōtai were injured, with total casualties numbering fifty-nine. The authorities swooped down on the target land in 1986 as the construction work began. Several huts and fortress towers that stood in the way were destroyed, though not without the prerequisite fight. Strange circular cages were lowered down on to the manned towers as they were blasted with water cannons. The land was eventually cleared and a new terminal opened in 1992. Every inch of its floor had been fought over. Narita was still a veritable militarised zone by the end of the 1980s, surrounded by barbed wire fortifications, check points and a garrison of 6,000 riot police.

There was more cruelty, more ferocity to this new chapter to the Sanrizuka saga. When the two Ogawa brothers split from the Hantai Dōmei Kitahara faction, police had to be stationed outside their house to protect them. The chairman of the expropriation committee was badly wounded in a pipe attack in September 1988. When resisting as their huts were being raided and demolished, the younger radicals now resorted to tactics as hazardous as filling fire extinguishers with gasoline fuel to turn them into flamethrowers.

And there were even more extremes to come, courtesy of Chūkaku-ha, Senki-ha and Kaihō-ha (Kakurōkyō). The announcement of the Phase II development merely had the effect of turning the second half of the 1980s into banner years for guerrilla activities. The radicals targeted the contractors who would carry out the construction, planting timed explosives at thirteen such companies and their sites in Chiba, Ibaraki, Osaka and elsewhere in March and November 1987. Another eight sites in Tokyo, Chiba and Ibaraki were hit in July 1988, with thirty dumpsters, cranes and other vehicles destroyed.
In 1984, Chūkaku-ha showed it still possessed real temerity in protesting Prime Minister Nakasone’s privatisation of the national railways, which Chūkaku-ha viewed as another major foray by the neoliberal capitalist state similar to Narita. It attacked the headquarters of the governing LDP with a homemade mobile flamethrower—a disguised car with a firefighter-style hose that shot burning petrol at the building. In January 1985, it allegedly launched three homemade mortar-like projectiles at the US consulate in Kobe. And on 29 November 1985, it pulled off a stunt that every beleaguered salaryman from the time cherishes, damaging rail signals on twenty-two lines at thirty-three places in eight cities, causing transport chaos all day. Many people in Tokyo got the day off.

And then in the evening, residents noticed something strange near Asakusabashi Station in Tokyo. Around seventy men were gathered. They put on Chūkaku-ha helmets as police approached, covering their faces with towels, and unloaded pipes and Molotov cocktails from a vehicle. Battle was about to begin. Breaking through the police ranks, some of the foot soldiers then got into the station through its partially open shutters, where they proceeded to wreak havoc, setting the platforms and station building alight. The dozens of arrested that evening included railway workers, senior Chūkaku-ha Zengakuren representatives, and even civil servants.42

Similar sabotage campaigns the following year in May and September once again caused pandemonium for commuters. The Chūkaku-ha-affiliated Dōrō-Chiba union also led railway strikes during this period and continues to battle the effects of the 1987 privatisation even today. It proved a bitter issue, splitting unions between those cooperating and those determined to fight to the end. Despite the inevitability of defeat in their struggle at the time to prevent privatisation, and the surely even greater futility of the later campaign for restitution for workers who lost their jobs in the process, Dōrō-Chiba and Chūkaku-ha will never give up. Yet again, this is hōganbiiki and the nobility of failure.

Chūkaku-ha is also accused of launching several homemade ‘rockets’ at the venue for the 1986 G7 summit in Tokyo. That year there were many such attacks by Chūkaku-ha, Senki-ha and Kakurōkyō on imperial, government or US military targets. The G7 summit attack was particularly humiliating for the Japanese police, who missed it despite arresting 900 activists on no real basis, searching 50,000 apartments and buildings within 2 kilometres of the venue, and sealing off the surrounding area and mobilising 30,000 police officers.43 That the projectiles ended up overshooting their target was perhaps just luck.
And then, on 21 November 1990, the day before another major imperial ceremony, two men in a road sprinkler drove up to the palace grounds in Tokyo and started to release liquid dung from the vehicle. The police soon appeared but no one wanted to get close enough to arrest the pair. As they approached, the two protestors, affiliated with one of the Senki-ha factions, threw manure at them. They became known as the ‘shit warriors’, after their unusual choice of weapon, which covered them from head to toe by the time they were taken into custody.

The spectacular guerrilla attacks continued into the early 1990s, proving that Japanese radicalism had not ended so neatly with the nadir of Rengô Sekigun. Targets included shrines (Shintô is seen as a symbol of the state), corporations, JR railway facilities, the government and the Imperial Palace. Police figures record 143 guerrilla or terrorist incidents in 1990 alone, the most since 1975. Many of these were arson attacks or involved bombs and timed explosives.

In 1990, the new Heisei emperor was officially enthroned, one year on from assuming the crown upon the death of his father. There were forty incidents on the day of the enronement ceremony. The changeover of emperor is a heightened, sensitive time in Japan, where pressure is placed on society not to indulge or enjoy entertainment. It was also a time when the police were alert to the radical threat: they had searched 600,000 apartments without warrants during the week preceding the Shôwa emperor’s funeral, sealing thousands of manholes and inspecting tunnels. The attacks in 1990 resulted in three deaths (including civilian) and seventeen injuries. The New Left led a campaign superimposing the emperor system on Sanrizuka, including attacks on an airport car park and another car park in Narita City, and the arson attack that killed the wife of the senior managing director of Nippi Corporation. The Kakurôkyô Hazama-ha faction also allegedly carried out a bombing of a police dormitory in Shinjuku that killed a police officer and injured seven others.

The guerrilla incidents were part of a much wider New Left anti-monarchist protest movement that took place over the two years of ceremonies to mark the change of emperor. The series of demonstrations followed the new head of state around the nation over the course of the rituals, with the protestors including hardliners like Chûkaku-ha alongside a more all-encompassing scene of Christian and other religious groups, Buraku, ethnic Korean, the disabled and other minority civil rights groups, and even day labourers. The eclectic movement, though hardly reported by the mainstream media, scared the police, who instituted harsh measures to deal with the demos, putting on a show of force by arresting certain activists.
and installing other special security measures in Tokyo. They urged citizens to report any ‘suspicious’ persons, and train stations were covered in public information on what the tell-tale signs of a lèse-majesté terrorist were.48

Though 1990 was a year of protest and guerrilla activity, all this was ultimately smoke and mirrors as far as Narita was concerned. The airport was there to stay and it was now even expanding. In 2002, a new 2,180-metre auxiliary runway was built, extended to 2,500 metres in 2009, finally giving the airport potential for the 250,000 landing slots it had long desired. A new terminal for low-cost carriers opened in 2015. A third runway is also under consideration and this would at last realise the vision of the original airport plans, a dream from the post-war Economic Miracle that has evaded its designers for over forty years. The government’s total intransigence in the face of violent opposition had finally paid off.

As the farmers and their radical allies got older, the movement became a ‘faded cause’. Chûkaku-ha no longer launches attacks, and the main Senki-ha group—technically the Ara-ha—outright rejected its militant tactics and is today a peaceful lobby group called Actio Network. Despite the decline in publicity and, thankfully, ferocity, there was still grassroots support for the movement when it was needed. After years of legal wrangling and prison sentences of between four and ten years, in 2005 the sixteen charged as perpetrators of the 1978 control tower occupation were also facing a mammoth fine for the damage they had caused the facility. The former activists, now in their fifties, then rallied support through an online fundraising campaign and managed to collect all the money needed.

The Atsuta faction began to negotiate with the authorities in the 1990s. The Ogawa faction also announced in 1995 that it was ending its protest activities after its leader received a formal apology from the minister of transport, though the other two factions vowed to continue the struggle. But with the ages of the farmers in particular fast approaching venerable status, the inevitable happened: people began to die. Farmer Hajime Atsuta, one of the last remaining original activists and leader of the eponymous faction, died in January 2013 at the age of ninety-three.

It would be a mistake to say the movement is over, though it is looking into the face of certain closure due to the simple facts of mortality. Hantai Dômei continues to exist today and the extensions are still obfuscated by local landowners. Protests continue as well, with ever more elderly demonstrators and not much media fanfare, yet clamorous participation from Chûkaku-ha and Kaihō-ha activists and locals. A new, younger generation
is present, as is a disproportionate corps of riot police. Arrests are still made amid tussles with the cops. It remains to be seen if there could ever be scenes again like there were in the 1970s, though the authorities are still, understandably, cautious. Security remains tight for anyone entering the airport. Protestors find themselves under surveillance, followed by ominous black vehicles. But Japanese protest movements never accept defeat, no matter the odds. We remain in the realm of hōganbiiki.

The last of the iconic huts that stood in defiance of the airport’s creep is being forcibly dismantled by court orders, meeting meeker but nevertheless vigilant protests. Demonstrators shout at the demolition teams, but it is no good. Some farmers’ property and fields remain in the sites officially earmarked for the airport’s constant expansion, though they are slowly being whittled down. The court battles continue.

What is perhaps saddest of all, though, is not that the Sanrizuka protest movement inexorably failed and faded, but that the very raison d’être for Narita has ceased to be viable. While the authorities continue to push bullishly for more extensions and a second high-speed railway link opened in recent years, Narita has been surpassed in clout among East Asian airports by Incheon and Hong Kong. When Haneda began again to offer long-haul international flights in 2010, Tokyoites were febrile—at last, an airport to travel to Europe or America that was within logical distance of the city. But perhaps most of all, Haneda’s new services exposed the specious reasoning behind the whole construction of Narita in the first place. Today, the terminals of Narita are quiet, bizarrely isolated and lonely despite its prestige as Tokyo and Japan’s premier international hub. A traveller feels like they are at an airport out on an artificial island in some port, not plunked down off their plane in the middle of what used to be imperial meadows and small farms.
30 August 1974 must have seemed just like any ordinary working day in the heart of Japan’s economic powerhouse, Ōtemachi-Marunouchi. Largely owned by Mitsubishi, the Tokyo Station area is the centre of Japan’s finance and business. Many major corporations have their headquarters there, along with several big newspapers and overseas companies. Ginza is within walking distance, as are the lush grounds of the Imperial Palace.

It was lunchtime so the streets were busy with workers popping out of their offices to eat during the break. It had been cloudy since the morning and there was no wind, making for a humid temperature of over 30 degrees Celsius. Masashi Daidōji had left the magazine sales company in Yushima where he worked at 11.45. He had gone to a coffee shop near Ochanomizu Station and ordered a drink. Right on time, Toshiaki Kataoka pulled up in Daidōji’s car, and he waited. Daidōji got in and Kataoka began to drive on. After a little while Kataoka parked the car and they got out.

Daidōji took two pails from the boot, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. They looked like two large cans of cinema projection film, only an English word was written on the paper: ‘Danger’. Inside these heavy but inconspicuous drums were 40 kilograms of explosives. The two men now performed their final preparations by pulling out the safety pins. Then they went out on to the main road and waited. They still had time. At 12.10 they hailed a passing taxi and directed it to Marunouchi. They rode in the car with their packages. As the taxi approached the headquarters of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, they instructed the driver to pull up. Masashi Daidōji got out. They were two minutes ahead of schedule. It was 12.23.
A co-conspirator, Ayako Daidōji, Masashi’s wife, was waiting in front of the building by some flowerpots. She was supposed to give them a hand signal if there was any reason to abort. There was no hand signal. Kataoka saw someone about to come and take their taxi. He feared this might mean the driver would remember where their journey had ended, so he acted quickly. He stayed in the car and asked to be taken to Tokyo Station, which was just around the corner. ‘I’ve remembered another thing to do,’ he told Masashi, who consented and let him go. He was left alone to finish what they came to do. He took his two pails to the flowerpots, conscious of being spotted by security guards at any moment. With a practised casualness he placed the two cans down by the flowerpots and then entered the Mitsubishi building. He passed through and out the other side. He walked to Tokyo Station and took a train back to Ochanomizu. He was back at his office an hour after leaving. All had gone to schedule.

Ayako stayed watching the flowerpots. The security guard in the Mitsubishi building did not seem to notice the objects, perhaps because the shadow of the flowerpots shielded them. After a while she left and went to Tokyo Station to catch a train back to her office.

There was one more member of the cabal. Norio Sasaki, the most recent recruit, had a different role to play in the day’s events. He left the warehouse where he worked in Kuramae, northeast Tokyo, and went to a public telephone. It was now 12.37. It should have taken only a minute to say what he had to say. He had rehearsed numerous times.

What I will say from now is important so I want you to listen carefully. We are Higashi Ajia Hannichi Buso Sensen Ōkami and have just laid two timed explosives between the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries building and Mitsubishi Electric Corporation building. They will explode soon, so immediately evacuate the people near the windows, the pedestrians and cars. This is not a prank call. I repeat. The explosives on the pavement will soon explode. Evacuate immediately.

He did not get to deliver this message. For some reason his call cut off right after he was connected, so he had to redial. When he did finally reach the Mitsubishi switchboard, the staff were relaxing during the quietest point of the day. It was 12.40. Sasaki cut off the operator as soon as he answered. ‘We have set two timed explosives in the road in front of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Evacuate everyone nearby immediately. I repeat. We have set up two timed explosives in the road in front of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Have everyone nearby evacuate immediately. This is not a joke.’
The operator had by now passed his phone to his colleague and they were listening together. They went to contact their superior, who was upstairs. As the two operators were riding the lift up they heard an explosion. As soon as the doors opened, they shouted: ‘There are two bombs! Everyone get out!’ It was too late.

The bombs had exploded just after 12.45. The sound was heard as far away as Shinjuku on the other side of the city. Those who had been walking past the flowerpots were hit directly by the blast, which roared through the business district and its walls of windows. The glass was the true measure of the damage and the carnage. Some 3,535 panes had been shattered. Not one window was left intact on the whole of the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries building. The 40 kilograms of explosives in the pails had blasted glass as high as eleven storeys up. Eight were dead and nearly 400 injured, showered with shards of glass cutting through people like watermelons.

The first news flashes reported the cause as a boiler explosion. An event like this was so unprecedented, even with memories of 1971’s incendiary twelve months only just receding, that likely people did not initially imagine it could have been a bomb. Almost immediately, though, the media did report deaths among the casualties. The bombers listened to this news on the radio or from colleagues in shock. What about the warning? Why had the people not evacuated?

The four gathered as planned at a coffee shop that evening. ‘Did you give them the proper warning?’ Kataoka asked Sasaki sharply. He suspected the newcomer of botching his mission. When Sasaki explained he had but the warning had only provided a mere four minutes’ notice, it must have hit the group just what they had done.

The legacy of the Mitsubishi attack is long. It is remembered in images of bewildered office workers standing in glass-littered Marunouchi streets. The bombing caused ¥400 million in damage. It led to windows being reinforced in all tall office buildings after the then-standard thin glass that rained down on pedestrians caused such bloodshed. And it remained the worst single domestic terrorist incident until the sarin gas attack by the Aum cult on the Tokyo subway in 1995.

But the perpetrators, Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen (East Asia Anti-Japan Armed Front), were just getting started, and they were very different from the other radicals operating in Japan at the time. The cell sent a declaration to New Left groups in late September:

The strike on August 30th, 1974, the Mitsubishi Bombing (Mission Diamond), was carried out by Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen Ōkami. From the former
colonialist era to the present, Mitsubishi has functioned as the nerve centre of Japanese imperialism, under a pillar of Japanese imperialism eating the flesh of the dead beneath the shadow of a mask of business. Mission Diamond was an attack on the invasive corporations and colonialists of Japanese imperialism of which Mitsubishi is the boss. The people killed and injured by the Ōkami bomb are not ‘workers like anyone else’ or ‘unrelated ordinary citizens’. They are parasites on the nerve centre of Japanese imperialism and participants in colonialism, colonialists growing fat on the blood of the people of the colonies. Ōkami will unremittingly turn the centre of Japanese imperialism into a war zone. Except for those Japanese imperial parasites who do not fear war dead, leave the area quickly. Ōkami will rely on the people within the Japanese Empire and the world rising up in the anti-Japan struggle, gradually infiltrating the political and economic nerve centres of the Japanese Empire and subverting it. Further, the imperialist-colonialists once again contriving towards a ‘New Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ will be executed. Lastly, we warn the invasive corporations and colonialists of the Japanese Empire, led by Mitsubishi: cease all your overseas activities. Liquidate your overseas resources and abandon all your assets in ‘developing nations’. Complying with this warning is the only way not to increase the number of war dead.3

The group launched a series of eleven bombings on large corporations during 1974 and 1975. The ‘front’ was composed of three cells, which were only loosely connected. Each team took a different metaphorical name. The most active cell was the Ōkami group, named after the extinct Japanese wolf, and was composed of Masashi and Ayako Daidōji, Toshiaki Kataoka and Norio Sasaki. The other two teams joined after the Mitsubishi attack: the ‘fangs of the earth’ cell (Daichi no Ba), with Nodoka Saitō and his common-law wife Yukiko Ekita (also often called Ekida); and the ‘scorpion’ cell (Sasori), with Yoshimasa Kurokawa, Hisaichi Ugajin and Satoshi Kirishima. A woman, Mariko Arai, was suspected of being a member but this has never been fully substantiated.

The Japanese New Left was obsessed with code names and the esoteric, and the Hannichi bombers were no different. However, its breed of radicalism advocated a cause very specific to localised contexts, and its extreme aims mean it sits uncomfortably in the contemporary New Left pantheon. To this end, the group itself went to lengths to present itself in a style differentiating it from the New Left in Japan. The use of peculiar and obscure ciphers was one way, though at times it almost verged on the risible. For example, their code name for the coterie itself was, rather incongruously, ‘Clint Eastwood’.

The radicals were not students, though many had participated in student activism in the previous years. Growing out of a study group, the non-
sectarians had graduated on to their own very particular ideals. De facto commander Masayoshi Daidōji was a former Hōsei University student with experience working alongside the day labourers of Tokyo’s Sanya slum district, which heightened his consciousness and identity with the dispossessed. They were all in their twenties and most were regular company employees. In contrast to the lifestyles of many other New Left radicals, they remained in contact with jobs, family and society; their radicalism was far more clandestine than any other in Japan at the time. They were invisible bombers; leading a double life, in the manner championed by Carlos Marighella, was part of their praxis. Though they were based in Tokyo, some of the cell members hailed from Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan, and so perhaps it was inevitable that their doctrine would be drawn towards Ainu causes.

In March 1974, the Ōkami cell published a text, Harahara tokei (The Ticking Clock), proclaiming their creed and approaches, distributed free of charge to leftist groups and bookstores. Once again the choice of the arcane title seems to have been deliberate, designed to create a sense of the oracular and cultish. The ‘clock’ refers to the group’s preferred weapon, the timed explosive device. ‘Harahara’ is a play on an onomatopoeic expression for being full of suspense (like the ticking of a bomb), as well as a reference to Korean grammar. Despite the cryptic title, its prose style is lucid and likely the first thing one notices is that it mentions none of the staple darlings of the New Left—Marx, Lenin or the other usual suspects. This was a new cause and it came with a new language. It was a statement of their beliefs and also a manual for life as an urban guerrilla, including how to behave with regard to family, work and lifestyle. Austerity was the norm—no drinking was allowed. Mixing with other ‘legitimate’ leftists was also not permitted, since their doctrine was different. And it was necessary to have a code name for use in the organisation to separate regular citizenship and the underground city guerrilla lifestyle. Secrecy was paramount:

> The guerrilla must not let their true identity be known by civil society. This is a cardinal rule. However, those fighting factions are utterly unscrupulous and inept regarding human relations. It is not too much to say that the majority of the failures of fighting factions are the results of failures of human relations.¹

The Hannichi bombers also bear the hallmarks of veteran leftist figure Ryū Ōta. A prolific writer whose real name was Tōichi Kurihara, Ōta had helped found the original Kakukyōkdō and was later part of Fourth International Japan, but left Trotskyism behind in 1971 and took his activism towards a whole new strain. Ōta campaigned for the break-up of Japan.
The world revolution would emerge not from the traditional proletariat but from the downtrodden and minority groups. One springboard for this so-called *kyūminkakumeiron* theory would be the independence of Okinawa and Hokkaido, returning them to their rightful ethnic groups. Ōta rejected Marxism–Leninism as the means to revolution, as well as renouncing student activism for existing within the framework of the civil society. Instead he advocated a revolution led by the repressed, in particular day labourers, the underclass of workers who dwelt in slum districts of the major cities, and the people of the colonial ‘frontiers’—the Ainu, Okinawans, and the Japanese of Korean descent (*zainichi kankokujin*). Society, according to Ōta, was dualistic, a world of masters and their slaves. Ōta’s ideas, which he never got off the ground beyond proposing Ainu separatism in the early 1970s, meant he was long suspected of being a member of the front, though he actually had no ties to the younger revolutionaries. His impact on others was probably more significant that his own actions, which largely amounted to a prodigious output of texts and little else. The mercurial revolutionary later became an ecologist, anti-Semite and conspiracy theorist, and died in 2009.3

But what is this ‘anti-Japan’? We are only too familiar with anti-Japanese (*hannichi*) sentiments in Korea and China, but this is nationalism expressed as antagonism towards a neighbour. The Left has long argued that Japan’s past militarism had tarnished its social structures and was a reason for breaking up the country’s residual elements of feudalism, monarchy and class. In effect, Japan’s historical sins gave the communists and socialists the moral high ground. The ‘anti-Japan’ of the New Left went further and argued that the very existence of Japan itself should be questioned. This ‘Anti-Japaneseism’ (*hannichibōkokuron*), as it was known, advocated the destruction of Japanese society, wiping ‘Japan’ as we know it off the face of the earth. Its proponents were not aggrieved Ainu or furious Okinawans, though, but Japanese, tying them in a rather curious double bind: what to do about themselves? This contradiction ultimately makes them a sort of Japanese version of the self-hating Jew.

At its core was the belief that Japanese history is defined by a series of conquests, that the Japanese are endemically imperialist and aggressive. The invasions of Korea, Taiwan and Manchuria by Japan in the decades after it industrialised are well known, as are the two failed invasions of the Korean Peninsula by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. However, in the murkier waters of Japanese proto-history we can find other support for the theory. Even the early records of Japan note ambiguous names of other tribes who were
THE WOLF, THE SCORPION AND THE FANGS

subjugated by the Yamato (Japanese) during the transition from the Yayoi (300 BC–AD 250) to Kofun (250–538) periods. Quite where the Yamato came from, what their relationship is to the ancient Japanese country Yamatai and the quasi-mythical Queen Himiko, and how they came to settle their seat of power in the Kansai region—in short, the exact origins of the Japanese—is the greatest unanswered question in Japanese archaeology.

The pedigree of the Japanese may well be Korean or Chinese. It is highly disputable that they are ‘native’ to the islands they now possess. The exact nature and process of the immigration is unknown, though one archaeologist, Namio Egami, proposed a controversial theory in 1948 that unwittingly played into the arguments of Anti-Japaneseism, particularly after it was published as a book in 1967. Citing evidence of the sudden appearance of horses in the Kofun burial mounds period, Egami hypothesised that the Japanese are descended from a race of conquering Eurasians, continental equestrian invaders that galloped their way first down the Korean Peninsula and then crossed over to Japan. From their very genesis, the Japanese have been invasive and bellicose marauders, constantly looking to attack and vanquish neighbours.

To the south, the Okinawans were a separate kingdom for centuries until they became vassals of the Tokugawa Shōgunate. With modernisation, Japan borrowed the concept of the nation state from its new Western friends (and rivals), and quickly incorporated Okinawa into Japan proper, along with Hokkaido in the north. ‘Japan’ is as much an imagined community, to plunder from Benedict Anderson, as those other results of the frenzy of nationhood and statehood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Ainu is the name of a people believed to be indigenous to northern Japan and often wrongly presumed extinct as a separate entity and fully assimilated into Japanese stock. The nihonjinron view of history and Japanese ‘uniqueness’ does not like the Ainu; they are a pesky footnote, a minor blimp to be elided. The truth is that the Yamato people, having conquered and absorbed other tribes, started to advance into the north in the seventh century. This was the territory of the Emishi, who may or may not be related to the inhabitants of the archipelago during the prehistoric Jōmon period. The Yamamoto began to clash with the natives and force them out. By the thirteenth century, the Yamato had brought the north under their control, leaving the Emishi (often said to be the ancestors of the Ainu) with the vast island of Hokkaido, then known as Ezōgashima, along with Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands. These lands formed the ‘Ainu Mosir’, the Ainu homeland.
The Ainu—or Utari, as some came later to prefer, since ‘Ainu’ has connotations of racial inferiority—were utterly different to the Wajin, the non-Ainu Japanese. They looked, spoke and ate differently. They were hunters, rather than farmers, and bears were integral to their customs and ceremonies. They had no written language and were notably darker and more hirsute than the mainland Japanese, no doubt helping give birth to the stereotypes of barbarism that would dog the Ainu. They were also not one united people but a series of tribes.

After setting up trading posts from the fifteenth century, the central Tokugawa government became worried in the nineteenth century about Russian aspirations in the region and so established full control over Ezō. And thus began the assimilation and subjugation of the Ainu Mosir, leading to the formal incorporation of the island into the Empire of Japan in 1869, and the renaming of Ezō as Hokkaido. Forced labour and resettlement were common tools to get the Ainu out of the way, though as the colonising continued, the natives became less useful economically. Now the Wajin could do the work themselves and the hairy savages were merely an obstacle.

Dispossession had lasting impacts on Ainu populations. They were moved out of the richer areas, leaving them with poor land to live off. Immigrants brought new diseases and their natural diets of salmon and deer were depleted by Wajin exploitation. Ainu women became objects of sexual abuse by colonists. And the Ainu were being bred out of their ancestral territory—by 1900, the 17,000 Ainu in Hokkaido made up just 2 per cent of the island’s population. After the Meiji Restoration, eugenics took hold in Japan and underlay measures either to dissolve or eliminate the ‘inferior’ Ainu race through marriage, migration and re-education into Wajin civilisation. There were some who campaigned to save the dying race but this only reinforced the stereotype of a helpless, inferior people.

The American occupation brought a new constitution at last granting civil and social rights to all in Japan. However, the economic plight of the surviving Ainu was so severe, and discrimination so commonplace, that they experienced few or none of the benefits of Japan’s second burst of ‘modernisation’.

A regional government-commissioned research report revealed in 1965 that the remaining ethnic Ainu population on the island were living in slums and suffering from discrimination in their communities. Even today, Ainu are low-income earners and less Ainu attend further education than Wajin. Their culture and heritage has been squeezed out; nearly half responded in a 2008 report that they hardly felt aware of their identity, and
a chilling 74 per cent said that they would like to live in the future without any particular awareness of ethnicity.7

There were more positive signs with the establishment of the Ainu Museum in 1984—though memorialisation also alienates—and welfare measures introduced by the government in 1974. As we will see, there were Wajin radicals willing to bring the Ainu fight to Tokyo, but the Ainu themselves were not involved and those who were politicised were trying to revive crafts and culture in their homeland. It was a case of too little, too late, however, since the communities had waned to such an extent that any attempt at renaissance could only be a reimagining of what was Ainu, and was naturally divorced from the reality of modern-day Ainu life.

Since the 1980s, Ainu civil rights groups have campaigned harder for a legislature and taken their causes to international platforms. In 1997 the controversial Ainu Cultural Promotion Act became law, a well-meaning piece of legislation that sets out to foster Ainu culture, though it does this in a commoditised way (Ainu culture as one of Japan’s ‘traditions’) that is paternalistic and fossilising, with no reference to indigenous rights. Legal progress has happened grudgingly, not least perhaps because Japan does not want to jeopardise its claims to the Northern Islands, the isles in the Kurile chain part of a territorial dispute with Russia after the latter seized them in 1945. The Ainu were officially recognised by the state as an ethnic minority in 1991, after years of denying their very existence. In 2008, as Hokkaido hosted the G8 summit, the government finally ceded that the Ainu were an indigenous people, though the struggle continues to evolve Ainu status beyond one of cultural preservation into something proactive and alive.

In the eyes of the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen, the post-war period was just as invidious and expansionist as Japan’s previous colonisation of Asia and Hokkaido, using investment, trade and overseas manufacturing bases to extend Japanese corporate interests. Harahara tokei asserts: ‘The “economic, technological and cultural” despatch, setting off under the label of overseas technological co-operation and so on, and the tourists “vacationing” to Korea to buy female entertainers [kisaeng], are all first-class aggressors of the Japanese Empire.’8 In 1974, the Vietnam War was also still going on and Japan had been a tacit collaborator in the conflict, while Mitsubishi was manufacturing parts for the arms American soldiers were using.

The Marunouchi bombing was an extreme form of the wider hannichi ideology in the Left regarding Emperor Hirohito, Japan’s past crimes in Asia,
the repression of ethnic minorities like the Ainu, contemporary corporate aggression, and more. Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen was the most radical among its hannichi peers, as well as perhaps the most dangerous domestic New Left group at the time. In the same way that classical Marxist ideology did not value the Lumpenproletariat, the other major militant groups in Japan were not inclined towards campaigning on the behalf of minorities or ethnic issues. For example, in July 1970 Chūkaku-ha ‘sabotaged’ the Chinese immigrant youth civic activist organisation, Kakyō Seinen Tōsō Iinkai (or simply Kaseitō for short), by attempting to manipulate control over a rally marking the anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident being organised jointly by Kaseitō, Beheiren and others. It led to the Chinese group’s withdrawal from the rally and a tit for tat ensued, with a senior Chūkaku-ha member’s dismissal of the departing Kaseitō denounced as discriminatory, followed by Kaseitō’s criticisms of the Japanese New Left’s nationalist tendencies.9 (The lesson was eventually learnt. New Left activists have subsequently proved very amenable to co-opting and working with peers in immigrant or foreign resident rights groups.)

General awareness in Japan of its minorities was almost non-existent until the 1960s, and the first major book to address the issue of ethnic Koreans who resided in Japan—the unsettling ‘leftovers’ from Japan’s imperial past—was not published until 1965.10 Though the early 1970s saw the general consciousness of Japan’s militarist crimes raised by the work of journalist Katsuichi Honda, exposing the atrocities in China for the first time to the general reader, the New Left did not have a pedigree for racial crusades. The Hannichi bombers distinguished themselves here clearly from other contemporary leftist revolutionary causes. They rejected the Yodogō Group and other ultra-left factions primarily for their internationalism or lack of realism. Their target was domestic and they stood alone doctrinally among militant factions: the first thing to be done in any revolutionary act was to address the sickness at the heart of Japan, the imperialist crimes that it had not atoned for and continued to perpetuate in the form of commerce. Ironically, however, until the Mitsubishi bombing their participation in the radicalism of the time had been minor precisely because they had not been trying to kill people. Their early operations, set against the backdrop of the violence of 1971, were relatively inconsequential.

On 12 December 1971, the Ōkami cell attempted to blow up a statue and memorial at the Kōa Kannon monument to Japanese ‘martyrs’, or, in another parlance, executed Japanese war criminals. As the Winter Olympics came to Sapporo in 1972, the cell continued its campaign against
THE WOLF, THE SCORPION AND THE FANGS

the memorialisation of Japanese imperial history with an attack on 6 April on an ossuary at Sōjiji, a temple containing the remains of 5,000 former colonialists re-interned from a cemetery in Seoul. On 23 October 1972, the cell then assaulted a well-known symbol of Japan’s expropriation of the Ainu homeland. Located in a park in Asahikawa, Hokkaido’s second largest city, the Fūsetsu no Gunzō is a bizarre, almost kitsch group statue depicting four naked pioneers standing with faux grace over an elderly Ainu noble savage. The ‘wolves’ blew it up.

The cell planted a far less effective bomb at the Institute of Northern Cultures Research, part of Hokkaido University, which they deemed complicit in the false commemoration of Japan’s past. The bomb was an attack on academia’s role in the control of Ainu memory and also went off on 23 October, though it malfunctioned.

While the Ainu community itself rejected these acts by their Wajin supporters, they were harassed by police who, perhaps understandably, believed the growing ranks of Ainu activists to be involved. An actual Ainu activist was likely only implicated in one such stunt, and that was the vandalism of an effigy of Ainu hero Shakushain in September 1972. The name of the governor of Hokkaido was chiselled off an inscription, though Shōji Yūki got some help from the likes of Ryū Ōta and Masao Adachi, the filmmaker who would go on to join the Japanese Red Army.11

It was not until 1974 that police began to make progress with the Shakushain statue incident. They eventually arrested Hiroshi Akiyama, a cameraman and former ally of Ōta. Three others were arrested and a warrant issued for Adachi, though he had apparently left the country. Ōta disguised himself as a well-tailored businessman and managed to elude the police for two days. However, he turned himself in to police in Kanagawa, who then took him to Sapporo. Like any bona fide New Left radical, Ōta refused to speak during interrogation. Evidence finally emerged that Yūki was involved. A carver and one-time souvenir maker, Yūki was the leader of the Ainu Liberation League. In August 1972, he had stormed into an academic symposium on Ainu society, along with Ōta and other New Left radicals, demanding the discussion be focused on living Ainu culture rather than historical artefacts.

The Ainu community, though shocked by Yūki’s role in the incident, sought to distance itself from Ōta and the New Left radicals, who they accused of hijacking the Ainu cause for their own anti-establishment ideologies. Yūki, despite confessing, was kept in extended detention; he claimed the police were doing this to play up the Ainu involvement in the
incident. Ultimately, though, only Ōta would be charged with intent to destroy property, depriving Yūki of his symbolic victory as leader of the stunt. His account has it that he had been the instigator of the vandalism and Ōta had tagged along; Adachi and Akiyama had filmed the act. But the police, it seemed, were only interested in the firebrand, Ōta.12

The early incarnation of the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen—before the Ōkami joined up with the other cells—was only partially successful in its initial attacks. Damage was caused but often not to all the targets, and for the most part was not irreparable. Statues and monuments were replaced or restored. Nothing permanent remained of the acts of sabotage. They attempted to escalate their schemes to something more substantial. After this warm-up with recondite and academic targets, it was time to proceed to full terrorism. They then spent months planning the highest kind of intrigue there can exist in Japan, the assassination of the man they viewed as personally responsible for the nation’s crimes in the Asian continent: the emperor himself.

Codenamed with characteristic enigma ‘Mission Rainbow’ (niji sakusen), the plan was to blow up the emperor’s train as it passed over a bridge in August 1974, but this was abandoned at the last minute for practical reasons. They now had a lot of explosives on their hands and pent-up will to use them. Although Mission Rainbow had explicitly been conceived to kill, the ultimate choice of substitute target, Mitsubishi, was not selected with the intention of causing fatalities. Mitsubishi was a major manufacturer of armament parts and one of the corporations that remained unrepentant for its use of slave labour during the war. Controversies over the collusion of such Japanese darlings of industry in heinous wartime activities continue even to the present. However, the plotters grossly misjudged their materials and should never have used so much explosive, not to mention their woefully optimistic conviction that a five-minute warning by telephone would be adequate. The result was what happened in Marunouchi on 30 August 1974.

Although shocked at what they had unwittingly done, the cabal of ‘wolves’ now linked up with the two other cells and began to work with more fervour (and skill) towards their goals.

The Sasori cell was formed by Yoshimasa Kurokawa, Hisaichi Ugajin and Satoshi Kirishima. Kurokawa and Ugajin, both young but experienced activists, had met through their activism for the labour underclass. They were part of Teihen Iinkai (Underclass Committee), a very loose group of
activists working in 1972 to raise awareness of conditions in Sanya and other communities around *yoseba*, the places where labourers would gather to pick up work for the day. There was still a strong sense of Japan’s imperial and feudal past in the *yoseba* in the 1970s, especially Sanya. The underclass was populated by Ainu, the Buraku caste, ethnic Koreans and Okinawans, as well as workers from closed mines, farms and fisheries. These workers now comprised the base labour for key industries. They were *Lumpenproletariat*, but Ugajin and Kurokawa did not see them as the ragged rabble in the traditional Marxist sense. They could be the agents of revolution if organised properly.

While *yoseba* activism focused on the conditions for the workers and their struggles with employers and the Yakuza, it was clear the slum-dwellers connected to a wider narrative about Japan itself. Teihen Iinkai was short-lived, but its members and associates went on to further crusades against the oppressors: Sasori was born out of Sanya. Ugajin and Kurokawa had come to the conclusion that they needed to fight the state more directly and violently. They began making bombs from mid-1974, following a first contact with Norio Sasaki in March that year. After the Mitsubishi attack, the three cells held a joint meeting in September 1974.

In October 1974, the Daichi no Ba group attacked Mitsui, while the Ōkami bombed Teijin in late November. The Daichi no Ba then bombed Taisei’s headquarters in the heart of Ginza in December, which also saw the Sasori cell attack Kashima, ostensibly for their use of forced labour during the war. By now both sides had learnt their lessons; the warning phone calls were made in good time and taken seriously. The post-Mitsubishi bombings did not cause any more deaths—and many of the bombings had no casualties at all—but were nonetheless dangerous strikes at the core of Japanese enterprise, wounding two-dozen further people and igniting a climate of fear in the nation’s industry, especially large construction and trading companies. Who would be the next target?

The police and the corporations went on high alert for months, holding twenty-four-hour night vigils at facilities. Meanwhile, the state was also hunting for the perpetrators. Although the series of industrial bombings carried out by the three cells in hindsight seem like a unique eight-month reign of terror—and in many ways, they were—it is important to remember that during 1974 and 1975 there were many other bombings and terrorist acts. Death could strike at any moment. In September 1975, a bomb accidentally exploded inside a seemingly ordinary apartment in Kanagawa. The home was in fact an *ajito* for Chûkaku-ha and the premature detonation in
DISSENTING JAPAN

the early hours of the morning killed five, including the three radicals possibly planning to use it to attack facilities linked to the Imperial Family. The entire apartment complex and the neighbouring building were completely destroyed in the blast. Over the two years there were thirty-seven incidents, killing fourteen and injuring over 400. Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen, for all the idiosyncrasy of doctrine, was just one of many militant factions operating in the period.

The front carried out a further six bombings in 1975, but the more they acted, the more risks they took in being seen or leaving clues behind. Police monitoring an Ōta-connected publication began to tail suspects, which led them to the cells. They swooped in May 1975, arresting almost everyone at different locations at the same time—seven members, together with Mariko Arai, a suspected conspirator who was held for many years on the slightest of connections to the cells’ activities. Nodoka Saitō was arrested but committed suicide by poison soon afterwards while in custody. All of the members of the cells carried cyanide with them in order to kill themselves if they were caught, though only Saitō was able to take his capsule successfully.

Police seized 2,500 pieces of evidence and a veritable bomb factory was discovered under the floor of Norio Sasaki’s tiny apartment. It was the fact that their crimes involved incendiary devices that proved the most decisive issue, since they were then charged with violating a Meiji-era statute that made it a capital offence. Death sentences were handed down to Masashi Daidōji and Toshiaki Kataoka (who later changed his surname to Masunaga when he was adopted into the family of a supporter), while Yoshimasa Kurokawa was sentenced to lifelong incarceration. Mariko Arai received eight years. Norio Sasaki, Ayako Daidōji and Yukiko Ekita would later be controversially freed by the government in response to the demands of the Japanese Red Army, though Ekita was returned to prison in Japan some years later, where she remains. Two of the members not arrested initially were put on a wanted list; one, Hisaichi Ugajin, was in time caught and sentenced to eighteen years, but Satoshi Kirishima has never been found. His face remains on wanted posters at police substations and train stations around Japan, along with those of Ayako Daidōji and Sasaki, ridiculously so given that it was the Japanese state that voluntarily liberated them into the outside world.

In another example of how they differed from other New Left radicals, not just in their ideology, methodology and lifestyle, the bombers were fatalistic and did not observe the custom for maintaining silence with the police. Instead, they initially quite readily started confessing. They also did not expect to call on the resources of the support network Kyūen Renraku
Sentā after they had been detained, though the group did support the bombers’ families to great effect. However, the ‘anti-Japanese’ nature of their radicalism proved too inexplicable for society and the families shouldered much of the burden of the hostility. The neighbours of Ugajin’s family left a mound of snow outside their house one winter morning with the word ‘traitor’ written in it in dog excrement. When his grandfather died, his father was not invited to the funeral because of the shame his son had brought on the family. Mariko Arai’s sister, who had been marginally linked to the group, killed herself by jumping from a train. (An early associate of the Ōkami cell also killed himself to avoid arrest.)

After their failed attempt to assassinate the emperor came to light, not to mention being handed down the first death sentences for political crimes, the group gained a degree of sympathy from some sections of the anti-imperialist Left. Their harsh treatment in prison, which had become more and more punitive in response to the threat of militant radicals, resulted in hunger strikes for the three women in the case, plus other forms of protest. During their trials, the defendants were held in ‘unconvicted detention’, in specially sealed and monitored suicide watch cells, and incommunicado from all except their lawyers. The death sentences were contested by the defendants, sustained in prison by their loyal supporters, and much attention during the long appeals focused on whether the attacks had been nihilistic acts intending to kill people, or simply ideology which had gone awry. Were they fanatics with no regard for human life or simply revolutionaries with initially amateurish terrorist skills? The suspects’ legal teams protested the death sentences for years and, though the appeals were unsuccessful, the executions were never carried out. (Death row in Japan is almost always a very lengthy affair, served in virtual total isolation, ostensibly where the convicts ‘prepare their spirits’ for their crimes before their lives are ended.)

No matter how inept or unlucky, it is a fact that the Ōkami cell attempted to give a warning for the Mitsubishi bombing and apparently did not expect such extensive damage. Overall, hundreds were injured by their attacks and this did exact an emotional toll on them, especially Kataoka, whom they discussed allowing to leave the group for a while. Masashi Daidōji even got sick with melena when he heard about a mail bomb in October 1982 at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. He believed that the perpetrators may have learnt their techniques from his group.

The faction was in many ways an exceptional player in the chronicle of Japanese radicalism, in the iniquity with which they are remembered, and
DISSENTING JAPAN

the originality of their ideology and methodology. They were, however, not alone.

The crown prince’s visit to Okinawa in 1975 to open the world fair Expo ’75 provoked a maelstrom of protest. The Left and the islanders, still suffering under the yoke of poverty, neglect and the millstone of US bases, viewed the royal’s visit as provocation, given the callous treatment Okinawa received during the war and as a suppressed colony of mainland Japan for centuries. The visit was also a great opportunity to mobilise the forces of radicalism. During his three-day trip to Okinawa in July, there were rallies and demos by New Left groups in twenty-four places around Japan, including ten in Okinawa itself. Overall, with demos on the occasion of the closing of the expo in January 1976, the New Left mobilised 22,000 people to protest the event.18 The police arrested hundreds on weapons charges.

More dangerously, as the crown prince’s motorcade was heading from the airport to his first stop, two radicals lobbed milk and drink bottles filled with cresol soap solution. And then, when the crown prince was attending a ceremony at the Himeyuri no Tō (Tower of Lilies), the monument to the female student nurses who died during the fierce Battle of Okinawa, a pair of black- and red-helmeted extremists from the Okinawa Liberation League and one of the Senki-ha factions appeared and threw a Molotov cocktail and firecracker towards the royal guest. The former reached as far as 2 metres from him, while the latter mostly just made a very large bang and a hole in the ground. The two young assailants had been hiding in an underground cave for days, subsisting on canned food and listening to the radio until they heard when the crown prince had arrived. Their choice of hiding place was not based on mere practicalities of concealment; it had been the site where many had died during the Battle of Okinawa. Despite resisting the police with nunchaku (a traditional Okinawan weapon), they were apprehended on the scene.19 Sitting under the ground, biding their time, the radicals must have known the impossibility of their task—or at least, the hopelessness of escape—and yet they still went ahead. There is, after all, nobility in failure.

The same year also saw the emperor and empress visit America, which prompted more protests by thousands in over 100 places in Japan and minor guerrilla acts of belligerence by radical groups.20 When Hirohito had toured Europe in 1971, he had encountered protests in Denmark and the Netherlands from locals who were angry to see someone that they regarded as a war criminal who never faced justice enjoying their nation’s hospitality. When the emperor finally got to America, instead of indignant crowds...
and veterans the response was more muted. Rather than the incensed demonstrators of his home country, Hirohito met Mickey Mouse in Disneyland.

Some stunts and protests might today seem madcap. Junichi Tomimura was an Okinawan responsible for the 1970 Tokyo Tower Incident, in which the forty-one-year-old briefly took an American hostage at the top of the famous Tokyo landmark with anti-American slogans written on his shirt. His daring yet ineffective act was a protest against the treatment of his homeland by both the United States and Japan, though the media reported it simply as the act of a crazed individual. More heart-wrenching, and also directly related to the Hannichi bombers, was the 1975 self-immolation in front of Kadena Air Base in Okinawa by a twenty-nine-year-old activist, Shūji Funamoto, who had been associated with Teihen Inkai alongside the Sasori cell’s Yoshimasa Kurokawa and Hisaichi Ugajin.

There was also a bombing at the Hokkaido police headquarters in Sapporo in July 1975, two months after the mass arrests of the Hannichi ringleaders, with a note claiming responsibility on behalf of the group. No actual connection has ever been made to the three cells of the ‘real’ front for the attack, which killed five. There were ten copycat incidents in Tokyo, Osaka and Hokkaido in 1975 that borrowed the ideology and banner of the group to attack police or corporate facilities such as the Mitsui headquarters. In March 1976, a fire extinguisher bomb in a sports bag at the Hokkaido government headquarters just after 9 a.m. killed two and injured eighty-one. A note found in a Sapporo subway station locker declared the bombing to be an attack against the ‘imperialists’ and ‘invaders’ of the Hokkaido government. It was signed ‘Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen’.21

Police eventually arrested Katsuhisa Ōmori for the attack while he was trying to escape by sea. Ōmori had a chance encounter with Ryū Ōta’s theories at a bookshop and was transformed. He shocked his parents by resigning from his new job as an educator after graduating from a university in Gifu and then devoted himself to becoming one of the world revolutionary rōnin that Ōta called for, working in the slums of Sanya in Tokyo and Kamagasaki in Osaka, and then heading to Hokkaido to try to help the Ainu. On the northern island he was angered by the Ainu discrimination he witnessed.22

Though an admitted militant who had been making explosives and overtly approved of the bombing, Ōmori strenuously denied any part in the attack. His beliefs were not dissimilar to the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen’s. ‘In principle, the Japanese will not be the instruments of revolution, but the Ainu, Okinawans, zainichi Koreans and so on,’ he had pro-
claimed. He also endorsed the Mitsubishi attack and, unlike Daidōji’s group, did not see civilian casualties as an issue. ‘While they may well be passersby, they are still the enemies we must defeat,’ he said.²³ His lawyers protested the lack of evidence showing that he transported the bomb to Sapporo, and they also produced an alibi for Ōmori’s whereabouts at the time. Nonetheless, he was sentenced to death and remains in prison awaiting execution.

Ōta’s clarion call for a life of poverty, deliberately lowering your standard of living and returning to a more primitive form of existence in tune with the downtrodden peoples had a powerful impact on young and impressionable revolutionaries at the time. Ōmori was not alone; others like Iwao Taniguchi were attracted to Ōta’s theories of becoming a vagabond as well as the call he had made for an Ainu revolution in 1973. Taniguchi would serve six years in prison for an attempted murder in 1974 in Shiraoi, a former Ainu community which was ‘exploiting’ the heritage for tourism. Taniguchi had also set fire to tourist offices in the town. His target, the Japanese mayor of Shiraoi, had already been stabbed in the throat earlier in the year by Yagi Tatsumi, a twenty-two-year-old radical from Hiroshima who worked in his office. Neither Taniguchi nor Tatsumi had connections to actual Ainu activists. There was also an arson attack on Hokkaido Shrine in November 1974. Responsibility was claimed by the authors of a letter sent to the press, declaring the attack was carried out in the name of an Ainu republic and establishing a ‘global Soviet socialist revolution’, all of which is highly reminiscent of Ōta.²⁴

The other main ‘copycat’ incident was a small bomb that exploded in the lobby of the Association of Shintō Shrines in Shibuya, central Tokyo, in 1977. Shintō is a powerful symbol not only of Japanese culture and its roots but also the state and the Imperial Household. The attack was carried out by Saburō Katō, a veteran activist who had been leading a one-man ‘armed front’ since 1976 under various names, bombing shrines and temples, including some famous sites in Kyoto. (He was also linked to Ōmori.) One of the many names he used for his cell was Yami no Tsuchigumo, ‘the soil spider of darkness’, derived from a derogatory name used for non-Japanese native tribes who refused to swear allegiance to the Yamato emperor.

As we have seen, anti-monarchist terrorism and anti-Japanese acts, such as attacking the machines of state or Shintō, also picked up pace during the late 1980s and early 1990s with the change in emperor. In particular, Chūkaku-ha allegedly used this period of utmost delicacy to the Chrysanthemum Throne to escalate its terrorism and arson. It allegedly carried out
124 guerrilla attacks in 1990, though dropping to twenty-five and forty-two in the following two years. However, in 1993 it scored a major publicity coup with a coordinated series of bombs and fires targeting religious, police and imperial sites in Kyoto over two days in April, including the famed Sanzen-in. Some of the damage was minor but at Shōren-in, for example, the resulting fire caused extensive destruction to the roof of its tearoom, and Tanaka Shrine’s oratory burnt down.25

Masashi Daidōji, Toshiaki Kataoka and Yoshimasa Kurokawa will all languish in prison until they die. In all likelihood, they had nothing to do with the ‘copycat’ incidents—and even a clear link to the ‘influence’ of their example and their ideology may be dubious. It does seem indisputable, however, that their sentences were harsh; punitive rulings handed down by a state affronted by their ideology and the fear they engendered in the all-important corporate sector. With the exception of the aborted assassination of the emperor, the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen went to lengths to avoid fatalities, especially after their naively botched debut in Tokyo. These were not inhumane terrorists but sincere, committed radicals attempting to do what they could to obstruct the corporate machine.

And what of Mitsubishi? It still owns much of the valuable Marunouchi district, but the headquarters of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries itself have now moved to the business park in Shinagawa, in south-west Tokyo. There have been no more bombs, though occasionally elderly protestors will travel there in the mornings to greet the rush-hour commuters leaving the opulent glass station along the network of raised walkways, holding banners urging the corporation to pay reparations for the slave labour it condoned during the military era.
Japan’s police system is a pervasive one. It eschews direct violence and, in stark contrast to American law enforcement, rarely resorts to firing guns on suspects. Instead the Japanese police instituted a system of neighbourhood police substations called kōban. These small buildings can be found in most city blocks, staffed by police officers and acting as drop-in sites for when you have lost something, require directions or want to report a crime. Kōban are information points, listening posts. Most people know where their local kōban is and many know the officers personally. At one point, 40 per cent of police were stationed at kōban, dealing with the majority of crimes through them. The system has been so successful that Singapore adopted it. It grew as part of the police campaign to develop ‘community relations’ to combat the rise of radicalism in the grassroots, which saw the police making efforts to work with citizen groups at all levels. Crime prevention associations were set up. Hundreds of thousands of households were designated local police checkpoints. The police force is thus integrated into Japanese society. A survey in the 1980s found that half of respondents had direct contact with the police over the previous year.

There is another side to this: it is a surreptitious way of asserting surveillance over the community. As one sociologist describes it, the Japanese model is ‘friendly authoritarianism’—it implicitly induces conformity. The police substations are not only a part of the local neighbourhood; they are visible signs of control and authority. Plainclothes police and volunteers go on ‘patrol’ in entertainment and commercial districts in major cities, stopping
and questioning youth. Japan is in fact saturated by police officers, with the number of law enforcement personnel in major cities grossly disproportionate to the crime rate. Officers pay local house calls daily, ostensibly to make contact with residents but also to establish a matrix of internal espionage whereby the community reports to the police when they see anything untoward, anyone who does not seem ‘right’. The Japanese police rely heavily on tips from the general public. The result is that Japan becomes a panopticon, constantly under watch, a society manoeuvred inexorably into policing itself. It works; in one particular campaign in 1973 to gather information on ‘suspicious’ persons, 430,000 civilians provided tips on 2,300 people. They were encouraged to call the emergency telephone number if ‘violent’ young radicals were spotted visiting lumber shops or pharmacies and so on to acquire the materiel for their offensives on society. The students were presented as a risk to citizens and their property.

To tackle a threat the police would typically make mass searches and arrest minor members on trumped-up charges, holding them for lengthy periods for interrogation in order to extract intelligence on group movements. This was also a practical way of pinpointing malleable activists they could potentially turn into spies.

The radicals then adopted their own strategy—total silence (kanzen mokuhi). To say something was to recognise the bourgeois authority of the police and what it was doing. Instead, they were encouraged to request that Kyūen Renraku Sentā be contacted, who could provide a lawyer, set up a support group with relatives, and be their contact with the outside world. Silence was the radicals’ only weapon—and it could be a very potent one. Many arrested radicals said nothing—not even their names—for the duration of their confinement. Some, like Fumiaki Hoshino, who was arrested in 1975 for his suspected involvement in the death of a police officer in the 1971 Shibuya Riot Incident, have maintained their silence for years despite the pressure of constant interrogation. At the risk of straying into the nihonjinron camp and its advocation of ‘unique’ Japanese character traits, we might interpret such determination as an example of giri, the sense of obligation and duty popularly ascribed to the ‘Japanese’ mindset.

The Japanese state employed similarly draconian tactics to crush the pre-war JCP. Between 1928 and 1934, some 57,000 people were arrested on suspicion of violating the Peace Preservation Law, which made it illegal to support a group that wanted to overthrow the state. Charges were ultimately brought against only 8.4 per cent; this was harassment rather than full-scale oppression, and it continued after suspects were released.
To deal with more belligerent post-war threats, the state concentrated more and more resources in the Kidōtai ‘mobile’ riot police—with membership rising throughout the 1960s and 1970s. During the height of the student campus strikes there was a large spike, from 5,700 in 1967 to 9,700 in 1969. The number of police officers that can be deployed against radical threats in Japan was proportionately much higher than in Germany. While the kōban system, as effective as it was, went into decline—decreasing from over 20,000 in 1968 to around 16,000 in the 1970s—overall police ranks were massively reinforced from 178,000 in 1969 to 246,000 in 1979. Strength in numbers was the motto.

But the police proved ill-equipped to contend with incidents when they came from unexpected sources, such as Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen or the Aum cult in 1995. After a period of monitoring and raiding campuses, the police swooped suddenly on the nascent Sekigun-ha and arrested a large number of the corps at Daibosatsutōge, who had gathered there to train for an attack on the prime minister’s residence. However, it only captured the faction’s leader by chance and then was still caught by total surprise when the radicals hijacked a JAL plane a few months after the mass arrests. (When arrested, Takaya Shiomi had on him a notebook with jottings of the hijacking plan, though the police had not been able to decipher what ‘HJ’, written in the Roman alphabet, signified until after Yodogō). Japan did not even have a law against hijacking at the time of the incident.

The Japanese judiciary also evolved. Until early 1969, it was common practice to hold protestors for a couple of weeks and then release them until their trial and sentencing. As the protests intensified, so the state adapted. Activists were held for one or two years until their trial had ended. It is frequently the case that defendants end up spending more time in prison on remand, often incommunicado, than their final jail sentence. At the conclusion of their trial they may simply be released.

The prosecution relies on confessions as evidence and has a conviction rate of around 99 per cent. Once arrested, you disappear into a so-called ‘substitute prison’ (daiyō kangoku), a special police detention cell where you can be held for up to twenty-three days (easily extendable by re-arrest) without charge. Cut off and vulnerable, detainees are often questioned twelve hours a day continuously for weeks until they provide a confession. A lawyer is not permitted to be present during interrogations. The system that exists today is a direct legacy of the tactics the police and judiciary evolved and refined in the 1970s to deal with New Left political offenders.
Lay judges and limited recording of interrogations have only been belatedly introduced very recently.

Trials are conducted jointly and piecemeal—short sessions once or twice a month, in which the prosecution can produce evidence and documents without advance warning—guaranteeing a protracted process. Many of the most serious and high-profile trials of radicals did not end until the late 1970s, with appeals continuing into the next decade. The trials of the top suspects in the Shinjuku riot of 21 October 1968 lasted sixteen years.\textsuperscript{12}

Convicted offenders are given no respite behind bars. Visits are tightly controlled and always supervised by a prison guard. Reading matter and correspondence is restricted and censored. Takaya Shiomi was held incommunicado for eighteen months after his arrest and permitted only brief visits with a lawyer or direct family. After twelve years on remand in solitary confinement, he then spent eight years at Japan’s highest security prison, during the first eighteen months of which his very physicality was constrained. He was forced to sit alone on his knees on the floor for eight hours a day folding paper bags and permitted to change his body position only every two hours.\textsuperscript{13}

Demos are also strictly managed by police. A protest march is required by law to be pre-registered with an official sponsor. Uniformed riot police—often in disproportionate numbers—marshal demos, constantly channelling people along, telling them to stay in lane. The permit system means the police know where people are gathering, ostensibly to provide security and traffic control for the route. New Left protestors may wear helmets and cover their faces as per the old days; Kidōtai officers in full riot gear will also certainly be on hand. Security police will gather in their scores near the rally, and then follow the protest route. These plainclothes cops—immediately obvious by their mannerisms and their ‘casual’ wear—make handwritten notes about protestors: who is present; how many; what is being said. Others will photograph participants to record their faces for future reference.

The police have refined tactics for physically restraining leftist protests, including kettling and separating groups, or making sure that the demos happen far from the sites they actually want to target. Protestors are not averse to retorting. The ‘polite’ and ‘orderly’ Japanese will answer back to the officers urging them to move faster or shout at the security police snapping photographs. This almost repartee-like process is part of the performance of the protest; the participants know they are utterly controlled and bridled, and they are allowed this much at least as a way to verbalise their distaste for the situation.\textsuperscript{14}
THE OTHER EXPORT

But all this was at home. While Japan proved adept at controlling domestic dissent, its record with expatriates was far less impressive. When you have a problem that you cannot deal with yourself, often the easiest thing is to pass it to someone else. For a time in the 1970s it seemed like Japan was doing that with its militants. Japan was sending so many extremists and radicals abroad that it led one journalist to ponder if Japan was not only exporting electronics and cars, but also terrorists. ‘Does Japan now plan to export hijackers in addition to automobiles and high technology?’ the reporter asked a government spokesman. It was only half a quip.

Of all the myriad incidents and groups covered in this book, without doubt the most famous is the Japanese Red Army, for the simple reason that it operated on the international stage. The Japanese Red Army (Nihon Sekigun), sometimes called the Japan Red Army, had no relation to its contemporary, Germany’s Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction), and started as an offshoot from Sekigun-ha. The JRA is an organisation for which euphemism usually goes out the window and the label of ‘terrorist’ is applied without hesitation. Is it justified? It certainly perpetuated ‘terror’. But the term is too simplistic. It disregards the aims of the JRA; it is too newsy, nabbed from a lazy headline. Its leader was also aware of its association merely with sensational events. ‘To say “Japanese Red Army” evokes the numerous “incidents” from the 1970s,’ she once said. But the JRA was more than just a band of armed men and women running into embassies and on to aircraft, guns blazing. Having decided that Japan alone was not a viable station for launching revolution, it aimed to initiate simultaneous global revolutions in multiple countries, with its base in the Middle East.

The ‘leader’ (note the inverted commas) likely needs no introduction. There are ordinary radicals, the faceless foot soldiers of the cause. There are damned radicals, the villains and fanatical masterminds. And then there are star radicals: people so famous, mythology has replaced any attempt to get to the reality behind the face everyone knows; where the world is content with status rather than mundane fact. Fusako Shigenobu is one such celebrity radical. Her name and visage are more notorious than any other left-wing activist in this book.

A Sekigun-ha veteran, she departed Japan in 1971 to embed herself in the Palestinian cause in Lebanon. This is not as incongruous as it sounds, since Sekigun-ha viewed itself as part of a series of worldwide revolutions in which it could take part by going abroad, training and then returning. It was also not unknown at the time to go to the Middle East to volunteer as a nurse or in some other capacity. However, the reasons for why she and
other Japanese made their home in the Middle East is not simply that obvious leftist *cause célèbre*; Shigenobu was not initially anti-Israel, despite accusations by some that the Left in Japan from the 1970s was endemically anti-Zionist. Far from springing out of a deep-rooted leftist anti-Semitism in Japan, the Arab world was merely a convenient fit for the ideology of Sekigun’s international dreams. (The Japanese were not alone. Members of the Rote Armee Fraktion had already begun training in Jordanian PLO guerrilla camps by this time.)

It is ironic that Japan’s most notorious revolutionary was female, given that, like in many nations, the New Left was dominated by men. This was partly for obvious reasons—it’s link to the labour movement, the violence—and perhaps also due to a patriarchy that was ‘Japanese’. Sekigun was not immune to this, and most female members were relegated largely to answering telephones in coffee shops while the men did the ‘real’ work. Shigenobu’s departure marked her coming into her own. With Tsuneo Mori guiding Sekigun-ha in new directions inside Japan, Shigenobu wanted to follow in the footsteps of the Yodogō hijackers and head overseas to establish posts that could create a linked global revolution (*kokusai konkyochi-ron*, the ‘international base theory’). In the early 1970s, the most vital region to do this was in the Middle East.

Her aspirations were dramatic, her departure not so. It was only later that she started to acquire a reputation, when she was labelled as leader of the Japanese Red Army. There is an unsavoury aftertaste to her fame; it is often chauvinist. Shigenobu, the men would have us believe, was not just a terrorist, she was a femme fatale. She was beautiful, that much is clear, but other adjectives are also frequently applied: ruthless, promiscuous, fanatical. She was ‘Queen of the Red Army’, a ‘mistress of mayhem’. However, we should be sceptical about how much ‘masterminding’ she actually did—especially in the early stages.

Her father was an ultra-nationalist shopkeeper in Tokyo, linked to a failed pre-war coup d’État. Despite their ideological differences, they respected each other and he never apologised for his daughter’s actions, no matter how many threats or telephone calls he received. ‘That would be rude to my daughter,’ he said. While still in Japan and living with her family in Tokyo in 1970, Shigenobu was confronted by police outside the house. Just at that point her father came home, but rather than be angry that his leftist daughter was about to be arrested, he told her, ‘Well, hang tough. Don’t worry about anything at home.’ The media often put pressure on the families of radicals. In the same way, the parents of Masashi Daidōji found themselves hounded
THE OTHER EXPORT

by a journalist after their son had been arrested. ‘Don’t you think this is the place to apologise to the world as the parents of a son who committed such a big incident? Isn’t it natural that you should let us interview you so you can apologise to society through television?’

If her father’s stubbornness in the face of the dogged press hints at where his headstrong daughter got her strength from, his own ideological vision, though on the other side of the political hemisphere, may have been the root of her own romanticism. This assertion has been made by Takaya Shiomi himself, who knew a thing or two about romanticism. ‘The nucleus of Sekigun-ha was romanticism,’ he admitted ruefully. Shigenobu’s father did not want his daughter to be an activist, let alone go overseas. He hoped she would be a teacher but out of respect did not oppose her departure. He also only heard of her marriage after she had left, though she continued to write home regularly from the Middle East.

Everyone seems to remember Shigenobu in the early days. ‘She was called an enchantress, a Mata Hari,’ Shiomi recalls. She has been accused of having many lovers in the ranks of the Sekigun and elsewhere, and even that she worked for a time in Ginza as a stripper. Did she even prostitute herself to get ahead in Sekigun or acquire what the faction’s needs dictated at the time?

This kind of rhetoric emerged after Shigenobu and the JRA became sensations around the world, and so must be taken with several pinches of salt. Certainly she was popular with her contemporaries and regarded as chic, attractive and effective. She was independent—she put herself through university at night school while working full-time—and was very adept at earning and raising money for Sekigun, having got involved with the group at Meiji University in the late 1960s and joining their early protests. She was a ‘typical Japanese girl’ after graduating from high school, but at Meiji she was galvanised by a chance encounter with a student demo in 1965 against rising tuition fees. As someone funding her own education and having experienced poverty in childhood, this was an issue close to the heart and her participation in the campaign led to involvement with the core Sekigun-ha team. She was dedicated, working as a hostess and passing her earnings on to the organisation.

One ex-activist remembers tagging along with someone who was meeting Shigenobu at a coffee shop in Shimokitazawa:

She was sitting alone, her little finger stuck out; in between her fingers a cigarette, smoking idly. At the time, her hair came down to her shoulders, with burning eyes—she was quite a looer. In today’s lingo, we would say she seemed like a career woman; she had the feel of a woman who was grounded.
She was, though, frustrated, and while the Sekigun went through its post-Yodogō transition with Mori as de facto leader, she made the monumental decision to go to the Middle East to volunteer with the Palestinian liberation movement. She married Tsuyoshi Okudaira from the Kyoto Partisans to get his name and use it as a cloak with which to leave Japan, since he was not known to police like she was. Seen off by Kazuko Shiomi (Takaya’s wife) and Meiko Tōyama, she arrived in Beirut on 1 March 1971, having travelled for twenty hours via Hong Kong, Bangkok and Mumbai. She was twenty-five years old.

Okudaira was already in the country. Through an introduction, they would meet with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), with whom Shigenobu would foster a relatively long partnership—one that went beyond the political, it seems. It has been suggested she had a relationship with George Habash, the PFLP leader. She had a child in 1973 who became a well-known journalist in Japan after years of statelessness while her peripatetic mother moved around the desert. Shigenobu called her daughter Mei (or May), drawing on mei from kakumei (revolution) and also memorialising the first incident by Japanese revolutionaries in the Middle East, which had taken place in the May prior to the birth. It is important to remember, though, that Shigenobu herself did not participate in any of the militant incidents. She was clearly the spokeswoman and public visionary, though her role as supreme orchestrator and military commander is quite likely a media and police myth that she embraced for convenience.

When the leftist filmmakers Kōji Wakamatsu and Masao Adachi were returning home from screening two ‘pink’ (softcore pornographic) films at the Cannes Film Festival in 1971, they stopped in Beirut in order to shoot a documentary about Palestinian freedom fighters. They had some earnings from a hit and, being fellow travellers, they wanted to use them to make a contribution to the cause. Fusako Shigenobu served as their interpreter and was also interviewed in the final film, *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War*. The film, co-edited by the directors’ hosts, is an unashamed piece of propaganda showcasing the life of the resistance fighters, though made in an oblique way, mixing silent tracking shots of landscapes with interviews. The result has a hypnotic quality that is underlined by its didactic narration and intertitles. It begins with news footage of the Yodogō hijacking, the music of *The Internationale* and narration about other recent revolutionary incidents. A title card then declares: ‘The best form of propaganda is armed struggle.’

In between shots of guns and ammunition, and baked scenery filmed from moving cars, the interviews with a smiling, enchanting Shigenobu
stand out, partly as she is almost the sole Japanese subject to be inter-
viewed and also for her quick, direct and lucid speech. She is assured but
never aggressive. ‘Awareness of questions about the stage of the Japanese
class struggle in the scale of world revolutionary development, and what
we in Japan share with the Palestinian struggle, has been insufficient,’ she
says. The priority is to build a ‘World Revolutionary War United Front’ to
overcome differences.

Shigenobu was not completely unknown when she was interviewed. The
Japanese police were aware of her and had detained her when she was in
Japan. She had also been outed after arriving in Beirut by a Japanese jour-
nalist who met her by chance and connected her to the person police had
announced as having left the country through a false marriage. He pre-
tsented her with the opportunity to give her side of the story about her
mission in Lebanon and she obliged him with a scoop. She was already
displaying her savvy for publicity—over the course of her career she would
frequently permit interviews when it suited her aims—and when the article
was published in Japan, her cult began.

Screenings of the one-hour Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War
were underground. Instead of being released in mainstream cinemas, it
toured Japan in a minivan driven by Adachi. Screenings took place at uni-
versities organised by young activists, some of whom would later go on to
play parts in the narrative of Japanese radicalism. One was Mieko Tōyama,
shortly before she met her terrible death in the mountains. The film was
seen by and had an influence on many young activists in Japan, its fantasy
of revolution under the sun with Kalashnikov rifles and bold statements
appealing to the earnest wannabe insurgents. ‘Revolution and war are
nothing more than their internationality and violence,’ an earnest narrator
intones in the film. ‘We are beginning to grasp and substantialise some-
thing going beyond mere theory in the form of a borderless army.’ As pro-
paganda, it was box office gold and encouraged more Japanese to head to
Lebanon. Adachi was ultimately seduced by what he saw in Golan and
progressed from sympathiser to outright member of the JRA in 1974
(though he never actually carried out any ‘terrorist’ acts).

Unlike modern Hollywood and its use of terrorist ‘baddies’, the connec-
tion between New Left politics and film in Japan is neither accidental nor
frivolous. For people like Wakamatsu and Adachi, cinema was both a sin-
cere tool to explore and share ideology and part of their fundamental philo-
osophical reinvention of cinema itself. Masao Matsuda, a film critic and
collaborator with Wakamatsu and Adachi, was also a leftist activist, while
Haruo Wakō worked for Wakamatsu Productions before getting involved with the JRA directly. ‘For me,’ said Adachi, ‘the issue of the political situation and the issue of making films were closely entwined. From the students’ perspective, when you are up against forces backed by army and police, what else can you do but take up weapons and fight?’

Pink cinema became a potent genre of political expression. Wakamatsu produced *Schoolgirl Guerrillas* in 1969, directed by Adachi, which mixed exploitation with radical politics. In *Season of Terror* (1969), a man has sex with two women before going on to suicide bomb Haneda Airport in an attempt to stop the prime minister from travelling to America. *Sex Jack* (1970) depicts a group of would-be hijackers fornicating—this is the film Wakamatsu and Adachi had shown at Cannes before heading to Lebanon. *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War* was followed by *Ecstasy of the Angels* in 1972, once again interlacing the erotic with the increasingly nihilistic revolutionary acts of a radical cell.

A Sekigun-ha donor and fellow traveller whose offices were frequently searched by police, ultimately Wakamatsu would make peace with his own ‘complicity’ with his remarkable faction film, *United Red Army*, released in 2008.

Shigenobu was attached to the PFLP’s offices under George Habash and worked on an English-language bulletin. Okudaira, an engineer, was quickly sent off on military training. He and the other Japanese were being managed as part of the Palestinians’ ‘Outside Work’ bureau under the command of the PFLP’s Wadih Haddad (Abu Hani). They were now preparing for something that would prove more shocking than the Yodogō hijacking, and even the Rengō Sekigun tragedy just three months before. They recruited from the Sekigun-ha heartland in Kyoto, such as from the Kyoto University Partisans, the non-sectarian group under the influence of demagogue Osamu Takita. They took an Arabic *nom de guerre* after filtering over to the region in 1971. Their PFLP patrons had a potential mission for them, and they waited and trained, during the course of which one of them died in a swimming session.

The replacement was a real fish out of water. Kōzō Okamoto had failed to get into Kyoto University and had instead been based in the far south at Kagoshima University. Okamoto’s older brother, Takeshi, had studied at Kyoto University and joined the early Sekigun-ha. He had then become one of the perpetrators of the Yodogō hijacking. (Terrorism can be a family affair: Okudaira’s brother Junzō would also in time join the Japanese Red
THE OTHER EXPORT

Army.) However, Kōzō himself had shown few signs of early radicalism at Kagoshima other than some involvement in the local chapter of Beheiren, and though he had contact with Sekigun, most people did not know him and he was not a member. He was requested to arrange for Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War to be screened at his university but his own ideological commitment was vague. However, others must have sensed that this youngster harboured dreams of being a guerrilla, since in September 1971 he was invited to Beirut for military training. Partway through, he was informed of his mission and by now he had fully assumed his new role.31

Following the botched Sabena Flight 571 hijacking in May 1972 by Black September that saw all the hostages rescued by Israeli commandos and the terrorists killed, the PFLP decided to avenge their fallen comrades with an act as unexpected for superficial reasons as for sheer violent audacity. But the Palestinians were not going to do it themselves.

Surely no one could have suspected anything untoward on 30 May about three Japanese men arriving at Tel Aviv’s Lod Airport (now Ben Gurion International Airport) on a flight from Rome. Their tickets said they were en route to Tokyo. The trio must have seemed like businessmen going home from a sales trip. They were Okudaira, Okamoto and Yasuyuki Yasuda. All were young, though Okamoto in particular looked adolescent with his baby-face features and doe-like gaze.

The best form of propaganda is armed struggle. Having ripped up their passports, the three collected their bags and took out guns and grenades. They began to fire. What happened next is very controversial. The official verdict is that they shot and threw grenades indiscriminately into the crowds. By the time the bullets had stopped ringing around the airport terminal, twenty-six people were dead and over seventy injured. Okudaira and Yasuda were also dead, blown up and shot, either by accident, by security forces, by each other or deliberately by themselves. Seventeen of the dead were not even Jews, let alone Israelis, but Puerto Rican Christian pilgrims with American nationality. Eight Israelis died.

The only Japanese left was Okamoto, who had run out on to the tarmac apparently to blow up a plane (and possibly himself with it). He failed and was eventually apprehended by the security officers. The young radical, with his seemingly permanently dazed expression, became the most incomprehensible part of the whole incident. Okamoto’s bizarre role would be cemented in the ensuing trial in Israel, but for now the world was traumatised by the puddles of blood that festered on the floor of Lod Airport.

Japan was also still reeling from the Rengō Sekigun horrors in the mountains in February. Shigenobu herself had been very upset when she heard
of the purge, especially the death of her friend Mieko Tōyama. 'If I hadn’t lost my best friend in the Rengō Sekigun incident I might well have gone home,’ she said. It increased her separation from Japan. Okamoto once told Patricia G. Steinhoff that ‘without Asama-sansō, there would have been no Lod Airport massacre’.

While the Japanese radicals supported the Palestinian cause, the attack on the airport had not only been carried out in solidarity with their Arab comrades. It was a statement to announce that they too had arrived and a world revolution was coming. As opposed to the lunatic self-destruction of the bastard child of Sekigun and Kakumei Saha in the mountains of Japan, these three Japanese wanted to show the world how revolution is done properly. It could easily have been another target, another country, if the orders had been different. It was a group action; Okamoto said he was not participating as an individual.

Many question marks remain about the Lod Airport massacre, which was greeted with elation by Israel’s Arab neighbours and is described with genteel understatement as the ‘Lod struggle’ by Shigenobu and others in their memoirs. Though the media has painted the picture as one of three terrorists murdering tourists indiscriminately, Okamoto has claimed the Israeli security forces were the ones who killed the pilgrims. Israel refused a UN inspection, despite the objections from some that the bullets of the PFLP soldiers were different from those in the bodies of the victims. The PFLP maintained that the innocent bystanders had been shot by the Israelis. ‘We had been trained and shot at the security forces as planned. They panicked and shot at the tourists,’ said Okamoto. The original plan, it has been claimed, was for the three radicals to capture and occupy the control tower, not murder innocent civilians. Certainly the three Japanese were not very well armed, despite having apparently killed so many people, and would have been massively outnumbered. Takaya Shiommi was likewise sceptical about the official verdict: ‘I don’t think they shot the civilians indiscriminately.’

It is also uncertain if at least one of the terrorists killed himself on purpose or by accident. The three Japanese knew the mission was probably fatal but it remains to be proven that this meant it was the suicide mission as many have portrayed it, a version of the ‘Banzai charge’ made infamous during the war. However, Osamu Maruoka, another Kyoto Partisans graduate in Lebanon, had been asked to take part in the mission and has testified that there were no delusions about how the operation would be one-way. Were the three Japanese mere patsies for the Palestinians? Okamoto, when
THE OTHER EXPORT

interviewed by Patricia G. Steinhoff, denied the PFLP had exploited him and his comrades as ‘Kamikaze’ fighters. But he did use the word gyokusai, the honourable suicide associated with the notorious wartime Banzai charges, and even made an analogy with cherry blossom, a common metaphor for the Tokkō Tai units.\(^4\) Takaya Shiomi does not pull any punches: ‘Okudaira, Yasuda and Okamoto’s Lod incident was gyokusai-ism.\(^4\)

It is clear, though, that Okamoto was a romantic and his views on death were more fanciful than brutal. ‘The killer Kōzō Okamoto was lyrical but not moral,’ as Shūji Terayama once described him.\(^4\) Death was neither something good nor bad. It simply happens as part of the human condition; it is not an individual concept:

When I was a child, I was told that after people died they became stars. We three Sekigun soldiers wanted to become Orion when we died. It calms my heart to think that all the people we killed would also become stars in the same heavens. As the revolution goes on, how the stars will multiply!\(^4\)

On the roof of Kyoto University’s West Auditorium are three stars depicting Orion’s Belt, said to be in memory to the trio of Japanese militants who carried out the Lod attack.\(^4\) In 2012, a two-day series of events was held at Kyoto University on the fortieth anniversary of the Lod attack, attended by over 6,000 people.\(^4\)

‘Has my father committed suicide yet?’ Okamoto asked when captured. This was not a flippant question when we consider that Kunio Bandō’s father had killed himself after the Asama-sansō incident, and the Okamoto family now had the shame of two international terrorists for sons. (His father had already resigned his job as a social worker after Takeshi’s hijacking.)

Okudaira wrote a letter to his parents from Rome before he left for Lod Airport:

For us soldiers, death is an utterly everyday affair—yet it saddens my heart now to think how you two will grieve for me. Today in Vietnam many thousands of young soldiers are dying … We are just some of the soldiers attempting to die for the revolution; you are just one of the thousands and thousands of fathers and mothers crying for them. Please always remember how our blood and tears are making something with value.\(^4\)

The Japanese government’s response was to pay a small fortune in compensation to the victims’ families and send an emissary to Israel to apologise to them in person. (And in an early indication of their pusillanimity, they then sent a second emissary to Arab nations when they objected.) Though the three Japanese were heroes to many Palestinians, others called
for a boycott of Japanese and Arab goods (but then some Arabs boycotted Japanese products in response to the government’s decision to pay compensation to Israel).

Osamu Maruoka, who had arrived in Lebanon in April 1972, went out to buy his morning paper the day after the attack. The twenty-two-year-old was in the Middle East to receive military training from the guerrillas and had initially been asked to take part in the Lod mission. Maruoka turned it down so he could return to Japan to continue the struggle there, though he ended up staying on. ‘You don’t need to pay,’ the vendor told him. Maruoka was confused and then the local showed him the front page, beaming. Likewise a taxi driver would not accept a fare to show his gratitude for what Maruoka’s compatriots had done. Shigenobu was also told when she was leaving hospital after giving birth to her daughter in 1973 that she did not need to pay any fees. It was not until the PFLP leader personally rang the hospital that they agreed to take her money. Israel, meanwhile, reacted to the Lod attack by bombarding Lebanon, and Shigenobu went into hiding under the protection of the PFLP in Baghdad. Maruoka was named as a co-principal in the Lod attack and was placed on an international wanted list.

The authorities denied Okamoto his desire for death by not executing him, ensuring he did not become a martyr for the Palestinian banner. His subsequent trial collapsed into absurdity, with Okamoto ‘correcting’ the charges as they were read out and refusing to cooperate with his own defence counsel, who tried valiantly to get his initial confession revoked (Okamoto had made it with the proviso he be allowed to kill himself—but the gun they gave him turned out to have no bullets) and brought in a psychiatrist to evaluate Okamoto’s mental condition. During his trial, Okamoto appeared lost, incongruous in a sea of Israeli faces. The truth, though, was that he was not insane. He was simply, in the words of his appointed lawyer, ‘working for the prosecution’. When the attorney realised that the prosecution had not recorded Okamoto’s age, he saw a legal loophole whereby he could argue that he was a minor and thus should be saved the death penalty. Okamoto immediately stood up and told the court he was twenty-four years old.

Makuya, a Japanese Christian group, took an interest in the peculiar revolutionary and their leader often visited him in prison. The group also gave money to Israeli students to study in Japan and even visited the victims of the attack in hospital. Okamoto’s mental imbalance became a cause for concern. He had had no history of psychiatric illness and came from an
THE OTHER EXPORT

average middle-class family. But the strain of his actions and ideology, together with the ordeal of solitary confinement, tipped him over into a fantasy world. He converted to Makuya’s branch of esoteric Christianity and later even attempted to circumcise himself with the only suitable implement he had in his cell, a pair of nail clippers. The result was a messy, painful disaster.

Okamoto was one of the political prisoners that the PFLP demanded to be released when it seized an Air France plane in June 1976 during the Entebbe crisis. At one point he found himself seemingly about to be released but it was just a ruse while the Israelis launched their famed commando raid on the Ugandan airport to free the hostages. Okamoto always seemed to be a pawn in things bigger than him. He was finally set free in a prisoner exchange in 1985, and found himself feted as a hero by Palestinians who welcomed him on their shoulders. Shigenobu was there to greet him: “Thank you for staying alive ... Let’s fight again side by side.”

After Shigenobu had initially joined up with the PFLP, she attempted to facilitate an alliance between Mori’s Sekigun and her hosts, but problems with communication hindered realistic cooperation between the groups, and also left Shigenobu isolated. Letters took a month to go back and forth, and there was no direct telephone connection between Lebanon and Japan. A telephone call needed to be ordered, which took an hour and was expensive—not to mention the fact that the call was unlikely to be private. Whereas Shigenobu was setting up ways to train as guerrillas on an international front, Mori was focused on his domestic revolution and uniting with Kakumei Saha to achieve this. The tragic mountain purge was then the final nail in the coffin and to all practical intents and purposes Shigenobu and her peers were alone by the time of the Lod incident.

Media reports originally said that Okamoto and his comrades were part of the ’Red Star Army’ or ’Japanese “Red Army”’, though in fact no such group existed. Shigenobu had emerged as the apparent leader (more on this issue later) and would be put on an international wanted list. Okudaira had supervised the Lod attack, though, and we can perhaps speculate that in the unlikelihood that he had survived, he may have continued as public commander. (Shigenobu’s daughter also believes her mother’s and Okudaira’s relationship was warmer than just a paper marriage for the cause. If Okudaira had not gone on the Lod mission, he and Shigenobu may perhaps have lived as husband and wife). How much did Shigenobu know about the airport attack beforehand? She did seemingly have some inkling,
as she sent letters to friends in Japan predicting that an historic event for
the struggle would take place in May.\textsuperscript{52} But according to Maruoka,
Shigenobu was still with Habash doing legal PR tasks and not even part of
the PFLP’s Outside Work bureau.\textsuperscript{53}

Either way, Lod was a catastrophe for the nascent JRA in terms of person-
nel, since they lost three operatives. Another had returned home with the
body of the member who had died in the swimming accident. (This is one
more reason to suspect the Lod attack had not been intended as a suicide
mission but had simply gone very badly wrong.) But others were arriving.

In July 1973, a JAL Boeing 747 heading from Paris to Tokyo with mostly
Japanese passengers was hijacked over the Netherlands. The takeover of
Flight 404 had started disastrously when the cell leader accidentally blew
herself up as a grenade dropped on to the floor while she was still in her
seat. (She may then have deliberately covered it with her body in order to
save the aircraft).\textsuperscript{54} Following this premature and bloody beginning, the
four other terrorists—three Palestinians and Osamu Maruoka—sprang into
action, forcing the plane to divert to Dubai, where it sat under the scorch-
ing desert sun for three days. It then flew to Beirut but was denied landing
permission, so limped over to Libya. The hijackers’ demands for a huge
ransom and the release of their imprisoned comrades were not met by the
Japanese government, so everyone was let out at Benghazi and the com-
mandos blew up their captured aircraft in a symbolic act of victory. For
show, Colonel Qaddafi had them arrested and nominally imprisoned until
1974 while Shigenobu negotiated their release. The operation had been a
failure, even as propaganda. Maruoka himself conceded that Wadih Haddad
regarded the so-called Dubai Incident as a defeat.\textsuperscript{55}

The Japanese next participated in a mission in Asia, where Haruo Wakô,
Yoshiaki Yamada and two Palestinian guerrillas were involved with sabo-
taging an oil refinery in Singapore on 31 January 1974, a protest against
Shell’s contribution to the Vietnam War. The attack was only partially
successful and was followed by a boat chase after the group took hostage
some passengers on a ferry. When the boat ran out of fuel there was an
aquatic stalemate, with the police unwilling to board the ferry and the
saboteurs refusing to surrender until they had been granted safe passage to
South Yemen. As the deadlock dragged on for days, a group of PFLP com-
mandos stormed the Japanese embassy in Kuwait. The Japanese govern-
ment was forced to act and they did so in a way that would define their
response to international terrorism in the years to come: they gave in. On
7 February, they sent a JAL jet to Singapore, picked up the four oil vandals,
then flew to Kuwait to collect the Palestinians, and finally went to Aden.
THE OTHER EXPORT

Growing dissatisfied with the Palestinian tactics of top-down leadership that had led to a series of bungled operations, the Japanese volunteers in the Middle East started to band together to form their own group. Part of this involved the ‘Translation Mission’, a plan to kidnap a Japanese businessman in Europe and collect the ransom. To this end, Yoshiaki Yamada was sent to France by Shigenobu to work with a network of operatives there. But again it went wrong. Yamada was arrested at an airport in July 1974 and the cell was exposed when the police went through his papers. Film critic Masao Matsuda had been deported to Japan along with other contacts in France, and Mariko Yamamoto, a Paris shop assistant and covert agent, escaped to Lebanon.

In September, Carlos the Jackal orchestrated three future JRA members—Haruo Wakō, Jun Nishikawa and Junzō Okudaira (Tsuyoshi’s younger brother)—in seizing the French embassy in The Hague. The operation was hastily arranged in reaction to the arrests of their peers and they were armed with only two pistols and three grenades. Regardless, they held the French ambassador and other staff hostage, wounding two police officers in the process. To help break an impasse during negotiations, Carlos ordered a grenade to be thrown into the crowded Drugstore Saint-Germain one Sunday in Paris, killing two and injuring thirty-four. Eventually Yamada was released and a ransom paid—albeit at a large discount on the $1 million originally demanded—and a plane provided, which took them to Syria. Adachi was living in Paris as a filmmaker at the time and became the JRA’s spokesman during the crisis. He also now fled to the Middle East to join Shigenobu.

After styling itself as the ‘Arab Sekigun’ for a time, the Japanese Red Army was formally created in December 1974 as an organisation independent of its PFLP hosts, though the two groups still cooperated. From its half-a-dozen or so operatives at the start, the JRA would grow to have some thirty-to-fifty apparent members, and many more supporters.

JRA agents were soon cropping up everywhere. Kazuo Tohira and Nishikawa were arrested in Sweden in 1975 while scoping out embassies, and deported to Japan. However, seizing embassies and planes seemed to be the most effective way to get money and liberate comrades.

In August 1975, five JRA revolutionaries—including Okudaira, Wakō and Toshihiko Hidaka—stormed the AIA Building in Kuala Lumpur (which houses both the US consulate and Swedish embassy), shooting a security guard and taking over fifty hostages, including the American consul. They demanded the immediate release of seven imprisoned radicals: the two JRA
DISSENTING JAPAN

activists, Tohira and Nishikawa; two other Sekigun activists arrested for robberies in 1971; former Rengō Sekigun soldier and Hiroko Nagata’s ex-husband, Hiroshi Sakaguchi; Asama-sansō and Sekigun-ha veteran Kunio Bandō; and Norio Sasaki, the odd man out from Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō SenSen. Incredibly, when we consider the tough no-negotiation rhetoric spouted by governments today, the Japanese authorities agreed, though Sakaguchi refused to go, disagreeing with the JRA’s tactics, and one of the bank robbers also declined, since he was currently out on parole on health grounds. Today, there are posters advertising wanted fugitives all around Japan in stations and kōban. Sasaki and Bandō are invariably among the gallery of mugs, risibly so given that it was the Japanese government that capitulated, willingly releasing and flying the prisoners to Libya.

A similar situation arose in September 1977 when JAL Flight 472 was hijacked en route to Tokyo from Paris by Osamu Maruoka, Haruo Wakō, Norio Sasaki and Kunio Bandō (and possibly Kazuo Tohira or Jun Nishikawa). The plane was redirected to Dhaka, Bangladesh, and a ransom of $6 million demanded, which was paid by the reliably obliging Japanese government. The incident also netted the extra-legal release of six more radicals, though three others whose liberty was requested turned down the chance to be freed, including Kō Chinen, who had been one of the crown prince’s would-be assailants in the Himeyuri no Tō incident in Okinawa in 1975, and Yasuhiro Uegaki, of Rengō Sekigun. Those who were released and flown to Algeria comprised two further members of Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō SenSen (Yukiko Ekita and Ayako Daidōji), two convicts serving sentences for murder who had been active on behalf of prisoners’ rights (Hiroshi Sensui and Akira Nihei), a Sekigun activist caught during the group’s bank robbery spree (Tsutomu Shirosaki) and Junzō Okudaira, who had been caught in Jordan and deported. (Toshihiko Hidaka had also been caught but was allegedly murdered during interrogation.)

It had arranged for their emancipation, but the Japanese Red Army did not support Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō SenSen’s Mitsubishi bombing since it resulted in the deaths of ordinary workers, though it saw them as fellow comrades-in-arms. Likewise, asking for members of Rengō Sekigun to be released did not mean the JRA approved of the purge in the mountains. (When he met Shigenobu after being freed, a remorseful Bandō tearfully pleaded to be put on trial in a ‘people’s court’ for what he had done). The JRA was attempting to create a new pan-sectarian army that could get beyond the restrictions which had strangled the Japanese New Left domestically.
While to some the JRA were ‘terrorists’, to the Arabs they were ‘heroes’. (Shigenobu said both interpretations were simultaneously truth and myth).\(^{57}\) There is a distinct characteristic to their acts of ‘terrorism’, though. Almost all were done for practical purposes: to secure the extrajudicial release of comrades and raise funds. (However, it is significant that the group never asked for the liberation of Takaya Shiomi or Hiroko Nagata. They had made a break with their past ideologues.) The Japanese government’s willingness to bend over backwards to terrorist demands, though admirable for its circumspection when faced with threat to human life, earned them much mocking. It was then that a journalist made the quip about Japan ‘exporting’ terrorists.

Some of the Japanese public also responded unfavourably. A survey in September 1977 asked ‘What do you think of the government’s handling of the Japanese Red Army?’ A third of those surveyed said that the government could have negotiated harder. However, the trauma of the 1945 defeat still affected the psyche of the nation and there was certainly none of the gung-ho brio common to American attitudes towards using force in terrorist situations. Nearly half of those surveyed thought the government acted unavoidably in order to save lives and newspaper editorials were likewise split as to whether the government had bungled the incident. Only a relatively low 15.4 per cent were convinced the government should not have given into the demands.\(^{58}\)

The JRA then went through a kind of middle act. From 1977 it committed itself only to struggles that were for the masses; during the 1980s its main causes were global capitalism and imperialism.\(^{59}\) The Israeli invasion of Lebanon meant Shigenobu and her peers were forced to flee to Libya. They made statements in the media that they were giving up ‘terror’ as a means, though were nonetheless linked to a series of incidents over the next few years that seemed to contradict this.

JRA involvement has been suggested in the car bomb in front of the Canadian embassy in Jakarta in 1986, plus the mortar rounds that were fired at the embassies of Japan and America. Likewise, there was an unsuccessful rocket attack on the US ambassador in Madrid in April 1987, and rocket and car bombs on the UK and US embassies in Rome in June. It was also claimed later that a 1986 kidnapping of a Japanese businessman in the Philippines was carried out with assistance from the JRA. At the height of the JRA paranoia, people suspected it was cooperating with Libya’s Colonel Qaddafi and carrying out anti-American attacks at his behest.
In 1988, Yū Kikumura was arrested at the New Jersey Turnpike by suspicious state troopers. He had three homemade bombs in his car. He had been in the United States for a few weeks, during which time he had travelled thousands of miles, deliberately taking a serpentine route to avoid leaving a trail. He was sentenced to thirty years for plotting to blow up the US Naval Recruiting Station in New York. Although touted as a member of the Japanese Red Army, this has never been proved.

The fact of the matter is that the JRA did not claim responsibility for any incident after 1977 and Shigenobu later claimed the ‘army’ had wanted to engage in legal activism but was stuck with its label. The two incidents it did directly carry out were to free activists. It may well have been involved with other operations as a partner but its status as a daring network of terrorism is fictitious. The hyperbole helped portray Japan in a better light when it had seemed weak before, and the JRA was as complicit in its own mythologising, since it had retroactively claimed responsibility for the Lod attack. And then misinformation in the media and popular culture only further aggrandised the image.

The operatives were now not the young soldiers they once were. Other militants were calling them old and tired veterans who drank too much and went to bed early. And they appeared to be missing Japan. Yoshiaki Yamada turned himself in one day in May 1986 in his native land; he had been in Japan undetected for months. Osamu Maruoka, hyped by the press as the ‘Number Two’ in the JRA, was found in Japan on a false passport. Arrested at an airport coach terminal in Tokyo in December 1987, he was held incommunicado for three years, as was standard for political offenders. Maruoka had had a reservation for a flight to South Korea. Was he going there on an operation to coincide with the 1988 Olympics? Police said he had been planning to set up a new group in Japan and it later turned out he had visited several times in the past.

During his subsequent trial he insisted on his innocence in the hijackings and crimes, and denied the state’s authority to try him, though his rhetorical posturing was somewhat undermined by how he appeared to be choking as he read out his statement. Patricia G. Steinhoff, who was present, later asked his friend Kōyū Himori what had been going on. Himori told her that Maruoka was simply trying to keep from laughing the whole time. Maruoka was a bit of a prankster and wrote a humorous book from prison shortly after his apprehension in which he went into much detail, often mocking, of his interrogations and treatment by the police. He would die behind bars in 2011, shortly after reversing his stance and admitting
how his revolutionary beliefs ran counter to the tactics of hijacking airplanes full of innocent civilians.

The unexpected discovery of clandestine international terrorists back in Japan was both an embarrassment and a galvanising event. The police moved into action, conducting wide searches of JRA supporters and putting up wanted posters in the hope of tracking down the militants long abroad in Asia and the Middle East. At the heart of this was a fear that the underground radicals were coming back to Japan to wreak havoc on the nation.

Such a series of arrests would ordinarily be cause for handing out congratulations to the police forces. In fact, the arrests in the late 1980s caught the Japanese police by surprise and were essentially flukes, or, as with Kikumura, successful because of the assistance of vigilant overseas law enforcement officers. (Operative Hiroshi Sensui had also been arrested in the Philippines in June 1988, where two years before the Japanese businessman had been kidnapped allegedly with help from the JRA.) The police response had been to work on cutting off JRA funds and play a waiting game—banking on the terrorists getting old and lazy. It would be wrong to credit the Japanese police with alacrity in how they dealt with the JRA; it waited until 1988 to set up a proper special anti-terrorism unit! (It was around the late 1980s when police started to re-label the JRA and others as ‘terrorists’ rather than kagekiha.) Of course, out of sight is out of mind.

When the JRA was storming embassies in other parts of the world, there was a large amount of chagrin that lingered with this ‘export’ but the real consequences of the problem were safely beyond the shores of Japan. Coupled with tension after the attacks on the G7 summit and elsewhere in 1986, these middle-aged revolutionaries being discovered back in the country or in Asia worryingly close to the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul led to concern that a domestic JRA incident was imminent. It was also clear in 1988 that Emperor Hirohito was dying, throwing the nation into a very delicate, politically sensitive, state. Finally, after many years of dithering, the police made a full request to Interpol for cooperation in hunting for the members of the JRA. This was not counter-terrorism; it was NIMBYism.

And it was about this time that we began to uncover what had happened to the original Sekigun radicals who led that misconceived charge overseas on board the Yodogō. In the wake of their departure, they had issued self-criticisms and openly turned away from their previous ideas. Takamaro Tamiya declared that their slogan of a simultaneous worldwide revolution had been brave but nonetheless opportunistic. Ostensibly they had moved on to new nuances of ideology.
DISSENTING JAPAN

Apparently they were also either getting homesick or off on new missions, since they were no longer all in North Korea. Yasuhiro Shibata was arrested in Japan in June 1988, after living incognito there for a year. He had been a minor when he took part in the hijacking and as there was no law against the hijacking in Japan until after the incident, he could only be charged with passport violations and crimes related to the Sekigun guerrilla training in Daibosatsutōge, from which he had had a narrow escape when the police came calling. Since he had been so young in 1970, he was harder to identify and could sneak back into his homeland. Then Yoshimi Tanaka, one of Shibata’s co-hijackers, was apprehended in South East Asia, extradited to Japan and imprisoned for twelve years, where he died.

But this is the point at which the story starts to become more bizarre. Shibata’s wife, Megumi Yao, also turned out to be back in Japan, running a bar in Yokosuka, and estranged from her husband—and the North Korean authorities. Until now, the common belief had been that the Yodogō hijackers were living quietly in North Korea and this was partly true. They wanted for nothing; they had comfortable apartments with expensive cars and staff to help them. But this came with a catch—juche. This is the very particular North Korean branch of ethno-nationalist communist ideology, and the Yodogō Group were indoctrinated into it through isolation in a thought camp.

After some time, the North Korean state agreed to a request from the bachelor hijackers: wives. And so its tentacles stretched to Japan and young women participating in juche study groups. Lured to North Korea on false pretences, they soon realised their predicament and faced indoctrination. Once they had given birth to young children in the late 1970s, they were sent on missions to Europe (with their children left behind, looked after by the other members of the Yodogō clan). This time they were tasked with enticing fellow Japanese men and women to North Korea. Far from using the opportunity to flee, their Stockholm Syndrome was so complete that they worked hard to achieve the goals they had been set. One of the wives even had a breakdown in Paris because she feared she had failed in her duty; the Japanese consular authorities sent her ‘home’ to Japan but she then left and went to North Korea. There were also some connections in Europe between the Yodogō Group and the JRA, and Shigenobu allegedly visited North Korea at least once to try to sound out collaboration.

Much of this sensational story was painstakingly pieced together by a journalist who goes by the pen name of Kōji Takazawa. Takazawa had been associated with Sekigun for years, especially in an editorial capacity.
helping with their publications. He travelled to North Korea to meet and interview the Yodogō Group, and was close to Takamaro Tamiya, the former Sekigun’s second-in-command. However, he came to realise that he was being manipulated by the hijackers and their wives as part of an orchestrated cover story. He began to investigate when he found discrepancies in their accounts, and, following the trail to Europe, he uncovered snatches of a web of intrigue involving abductions in London and Spain. But when he published a book about it, he was ostracised by his old friends on the fringes of the Sekigun movement. His book won a major non-fiction prize, yet in the process he was shunned as a traitor. His friend Tamiya had died by now and the remaining Yodogō members denied direct involvement in the conspiracy.

The problem was that Takazawa was not the only one who was making these accusations. Shibata’s wife was spilling the beans too, not least because she wanted help in getting her children out of North Korea (sadly, the more she said, the less the North Korean authorities were willing to put her kin on a plane to Japan). Megumi Yao admitted that, after being lured to North Korea on a study tour, she had been indoctrinated and (unhappily) married off to Shibata. Then she had been sent to Europe to assist in the next wave of abductions.

It also matched with what the Japanese government had suspected separately. They had been watching some Japanese women in the late 1980s whose activities and contacts with North Koreans in Europe seemed suspicious. As we saw, Japan was highly alert at this time to a possible terrorist attack and so it revoked the women’s passports, not knowing initially they were connected to the Yodogō hijackers. The parts of the plot were joined together after Kim Il-sung’s public comment in 1992 that the Yodogō Group had wives.

At the turn of the century, more of the Yodogō members’ spouses returned, including Takako Fukui (who had married Takahiro Konishi), Emiko Kaneko (wife of Shirō Akagi), Tamiko Uomoto (wife of Kimihiro Abe) and Kyōko Tanaka (wife of Yoshimi Tanaka)—and were promptly arrested for passport violations. Through the assistance of supporters like Kyūen Renraku Sentā, they brought with them many of the children, the results of this most peculiar of international dramas.

Takazawa’s research and other clues also point to the early death of one of the Yodogō hijackers, Kintarō Yoshida, in contrast to his ‘official’ death in 1985. The exact circumstances of his demise remain murky but it was likely much earlier, possibly as a result of resistance to the indoctrination process. Even more chilling is the disappearance of Takeshi Okamoto and
his wife, reported killed in an ‘industrial accident’ but perhaps actually an escape attempt.

The other surviving Yodogō members have expressed the wish to repatriate. They claim the whole saga is politically motivated propaganda to prevent them returning to Japan. They are weary of exile, but in Japan they would face arrest, though ironically they might not be charged with hijacking since they carried theirs out before there was a law in Japan against it. There are other charges that could be brought against them, though, and the reality is they sealed their fate on that daring but misguided day in 1970. It seems sometimes truth really is stranger than fiction.

Whether or not it had been planning a major offensive or not, given the Japanese Red Army’s pedigree and the heightened tensions in the late 1980s, it might have been reasonable to expect it to launch an incident in order to facilitate the freeing of their operatives, not least senior ones like Osamu Maruoka. Though some anticipated such an incident as inevitable, it never happened. Times were changing. When the sun had set on the Cold War, the world looked very different the next morning. The JRA was not insouciant to how the international situation was changing. It formed a new ‘party’ in 1991—in fact, just a reorganisation—and despatched scouts to various corners of the globe.

Unfortunately, the authorities were watching. JRA associates were arrested in Romania in 1995 (Yukiko Ekita), Peru in 1996 (Kazue Yoshimura), Nepal in 1996 (Tsutomu Shirosaki) and Bolivia in 1997 (Jun Nishikawa). Ekita’s arrest in Bucharest and subsequent deportation to Japan meant she was apprehended again after being originally liberated by her own government. Back home, she faced a lengthy prison sentence. She was repentant at her trial in Tokyo, apologising for her actions which had harmed human life. Yoshimura’s arrest in Lima set off an interesting chain of events revealing the human side to life as an international revolutionary. Yoshimura had been looking after a young teenaged boy in Peru and her sudden arrest by local authorities meant the child was stranded. Deported back to Japan, she immediately sought help from the network of supporters who play a very important role for activists. The child was actually Ekita’s, and with both biological and surrogate mother languishing in prison—and the father, an unnamed JRA operative, on the run—the network successfully sprang into action to have the stateless boy found and repatriated, legally identified and even cared for in a supporter’s home until his mother was released. Yoshimura also had her own daughter back in Lebanon, as did Shigenobu.
THE OTHER EXPORT

By this time, though, the core of the JRA found their hosts clamping down and attacking their Lebanese bases in 1997. Five members were arrested on passport violations: Kōzō Okamoto, Masao Adachi, Haruo Wakō, Mariko Yamamoto and Kazuo Tohira. They served jail time in Lebanon on passport charges before four were extradited to Japan in 2000 to stand trial for The Hague and Kuala Lumpur incidents. The Japanese government organised what was effectively a rendition, flying them to Amman in Jordan blindfolded and at gunpoint. An Australian airline refused to take them on to Japan as deportees, so the Japanese chartered a Russian plane instead. Although the prosecutors in Lebanon were initially against extradition and wanted to send the five to a third country, Japan had secured Lebanon’s cooperation through a $120 million loan.

Wakō, who had actually left the JRA in 1979, was sentenced to stay in prison until he died, while Adachi got a much lighter two years. After a public outcry, Okamoto, the eternal waif, was granted political asylum and not extradited. Some 250 lawyers volunteered to assist Okamoto. University students organised demos in Beirut in support of their hero and his four peers. While the actions of 1970s radicals might have seemed a distant past in Europe and America, at the turn of the century in Lebanon, even the young still felt connected to it. A petition calling on the country to give him status as a political exile is said to have attracted 40,000 signatures—or 1 per cent of the entire population. Okamoto apparently still remains in Lebanon, once again isolated from his comrades. Jun Nishikawa was also deported from Bolivia, arrested at Narita Airport in 1997 and sentenced to life in prison. Shirosaki was eventually deported to America, where he stood trial for the 1986 Jakarta rocket attack.

Shigenobu herself only just avoided the Lebanese crackdown when she fled. There was speculation that she was hiding in the former Yugoslavia. However, she actually went where she was likely least expected—Japan. She arrived on false papers and settled in Osaka, hoping to study the country and how she could renew her struggle for revolution without arms. It was her first time in her homeland since she had left in 1971. But a tip-off from a suspicious neighbour led police to put her apartment under surveillance. She was arrested on 8 November 2000 in a suburb of Osaka.

The wanted posters had paid off; public scrutiny—the Japanese policing themselves—and state surveillance had bagged the country’s most eminent fugitive and international terrorist. Not surprisingly, her arrest was a media sensation. (It was not her first detention, though. Before she departed Japan, she had been arrested twice and held during crackdowns on sus-
pected Sekigun members, though both times released without charge.) She was put on a bullet train to Tokyo and arrived to a barrage of camera flashes, her first public appearance since 1971. The news and police literature had used a stock picture of an attractive Shigenobu with long hair at the start of her career. In the other images that emerged of Shigenobu in later years through the careful relationship she curated with certain elements of the media, she was almost always disguised in some way, which only added to her mystique. What could such a notorious international criminal look like? It turned out she was a fifty-five-year-old woman who wore glasses. She looked ordinary. Far from a cowed renegade of a defeated army, the cameras captured a smiling Shigenobu, doing the thumbs-up with her handcuffed hands as she was taken off the train.

She performed a remarkable volte-face in court, though, by announcing on the first day of her trial that her group had ceased its operations and had been non-violent for years. However, given its reputation, a peaceful JRA working as an activist group was unimaginable. This rather anti-climactic end to the underground organisation was as shocking to supporters and sympathisers as it was to the police and the press.

In April 2001, she formally disbanded the Japanese Red Army in a faxed statement. She was held incommunicado until the end of her first trial, allowed only short visits from her daughter. After a nearly five-year trial, the former revolutionary who was now in her sixties was found guilty in 2006, ostensibly of passport violations. Shigenobu was also rather dubiously named as a co-defendant in the Nishikawa and Wakō trials over The Hague incident, where they had stormed the French embassy in 1974. However, both Wakō and Carlos the Jackal strenuously denied her role in The Hague operation, and the judges for Nishikawa and Wakō’s trials found her innocent of the charge.

The evidence for her ‘terrorism’ is actually scant. Was she really the ‘mastermind’ commanding border-crossing missions? Or was she more of a spokeswoman, the savvy publicist who edited the JRA’s publications and steered its image? (Let us not forget how talented she had always been at organising, fundraising and publicising, both for Sekigun-ha and the PFLP.) It was a case of reputation defeating habeas corpus, where her responsibility as supposed leader of the band was accepted prima facie. The government was determined to convict this public ‘villain’ who had for so many years humiliated its international stature, especially at the height of its economic power. Bureaucratic misdemeanours like passport violations were not enough. She was convicted for what she and the JRA were imagined to be, rather than what could be proved she had done.
THE OTHER EXPORT

Her former colleague testified that she was not involved in the concrete military planning of the JRA or the PFLP missions, and that she was not even regarded as the leader by the other founding members. However, from 1976, after the team was bolstered by the likes of Norio Sasaki and Kunio Bandō, Shigenobu did take on an overall commander’s role in the army responsible for the organisational committee. The leadership was collaborative, though, and the military commander was apparently Maruoka. The state, through convenience and ignorance, continued to push an image of the JRA as a hierarchical, dangerous organisation, and in the end the group became its own image.

Shigenobu received a twenty-year sentence, far more than she should have received for the passport offence, though the judge was effectively convicting her for attempted murder in The Hague incident of 1974 in her capacity as ‘leader’, despite having no evidence. Both defence and prosecution appealed twice (there is no double jeopardy law in Japan and prosecutors can appeal if they feel a sentence is too light), though the original conviction was upheld. In a statement read out in court in May 2005, Shigenobu said: ‘As the one bearing the political and moral responsibility for the Japanese Red Army, I wish now to consider my responsibility for the past and what is to come. With that thought, I deeply apologise to all those we harmed in the immaturity of our struggle.’

Shigenobu’s arrest and the release of Kōji Wakamatsu’s film about the Rengō Sekigun purge prompted a resurgence of interest in what many would have dismissed as a product of a bygone age. A documentary was made in 2011 about two daughters of famous radicals. It was called Children of the Revolution and one of the women was Mei Shigenobu, who by then had gone from over two decades of statelessness to being a journalist in Japan. Al Jazeera also made a documentary about the JRA in 2012, while artist Eric Baudelaire created a film called The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years without Images, focusing on the analogy of cinema, imagery and radicalism. In it, Adachi draws an explicit comparison between filmmakers and guerrillas: they both research and observe their surroundings, scout locations, and shout ‘action’ before starting. And when Yukiko Ekita was arrested in 1995, she was found with drafts for a manifesto for a new organisation that would be domestic. It contained a prescient phrase: “The scenario of a revolution must be written in the manner of a film script.” Adachi himself has gone back to making films since his release from prison, directing a low-budget feature about Kōzō Okamoto in 2007.
How do you move on with your life after committing yourself to such grand schemes—and then, essentially, failing? The spirit dies hard in some cases. On 30 March 2002, distressed cherry-blossom viewers contacted police to tell them a man was on fire near the fountain in Hibiya Park in central Tokyo. An officer used a fire extinguisher to dowse the flames but Kōyū Himori, a former proto-JRA activist, died an hour later. He had used a lighter to kill himself by self-immolation at the site where he had previously held demonstrations for the Palestinian cause. Himori had invited Osamu Maruoka to join the Japanese radicals in Lebanon and had been in charge of repatriating the body of the activist who drowned prior to the Lod Airport attack. This inadvertently saved Himori from taking part in operations such as Lod, though by no means did he abandon the Palestinian cause. His suicide at fifty-four demonstrated the legacy of his comrades’ campaign and the strength of his conviction to make the ultimate of protests.

He left a suicide note:

To the Palestinian People, occupying states are not necessary. I support the unconditional resistance to Zionism and Sharon’s incursions and massacres, to the discrimination against the Palestinian people ... To the demise of Israel and all occupying states! To the demise of Zionism and all systems of slavery! In solidarity with liberation!

It was reported in the media at the time as a ‘revolutionary who had lost his dream—and chose a harsh death’.75

Former Sekigun leader Takaya Shiomi worked as a car park attendant for some years after being released from prison in 1989. He had to adjust to life with a spouse he had barely lived with during their early marriage and a son now in his twenties he had not seen grow up except for monthly visits to his prison abode. Though during his two decades behind bars he reflected on what he did and regretted his actions, he still maintained that Marxism is the best ethos for the young.76

Following his release in 1979, former Kakumei Saha leader Tsuyoshi Kawashima returned to Gifu, where his family ran a business collecting human excrement in places that lacked sewers. He ended up becoming the company president and getting involved with local activism against Gifu’s conservative environmental development cooperative.77 He died in 1990.

Life can be tough for retired terrorists. Mariko Yamamoto, who had been convicted of conspiring to obtain a passport under a false name, was arrested in January 2005 for shoplifting food from a supermarket. Rengō Sekigun’s Yasuhiro Uegaki ended up running a bar. Did Shigenobu have regrets? ‘I have had a life picking up what was thrown away,’ she said in 2009. ‘But I want to live out my fate positively.’78
Though analogies between the German Baader-Meinhof gang (Rote Armee Fraktion) and the Japanese Red Army are invariably tempting—not least because of their similar names—one key and lasting distinction is how there are few public apologists for Shigenobu and her comrades. They are dismissed as terrorists and fanatics or, at best, products of another era. Reading memoirs or left-leaning newspapers, you rarely encounter empathy with their cause or even nostalgia. Where there should be excited debate and astonishment about Japan’s ‘other export’, there is largely silence. In stark contrast, Baader and Meinhof live on in the present, committed glamorously to celluloid in various TV documentaries and films.

Though constructive, intellectual discussion about the JRA is absent, the wanted posters are still displayed at stations and kōban around Japan. At the time of writing, warrants are active for the surviving Yodogō hijackers thought to remain in North Korea: Shirō Akagi, Moriaki Wakabayashi, Kimihiro Uomoto (né Abe), Takeshi Okamoto (brother of Közō, though suspected to be dead) and Takahiro Konishi. Warrants have also been issued for the remaining two wives of the Yodogō hijackers still in North Korea, Sakiko Wakabayashi (née Kuroda) and Yoriko Mori, in connection to alleged abductions of Japanese citizens in Europe. The Japanese Red Army was disbanded by Shigenobu but the police believe its last members have reformed into a new group called Rentai Movement. The veracity of this—and the consequences, even if true—have yet to be seen. The activists remaining at large are: Kunio Bandō, Norio Sasaki, Hisashi Matsuda, Junzō Okudaira, Ayako Daidōji, Akira Nihei and Közō Okamoto. And what of Okamoto? Perhaps the only person still alive who really knows what happened at Lod, he was reported some years ago to be living communally with several Lebanese and Japanese youngsters, who were taking care of their fragile hero.
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

During the 1970s there was a revolution, but not a political one. It was a revolution of consumption. The period gave birth to a phrase: *shōhi wa bitoku*, consumption is a virtue. The population was very virtuous. The decade saw a shift towards the new Tokyo urban centre of Shibuya and rising consumer consciousness. As the nation purchased televisions and cars in ever-greater numbers—automobile owners exceeded 10 million in 1967— it also cemented mainstream culture. But mainstreams engender subcultures and countercultures.

The avant-garde and counterculture movements in Japan did not start with the heightened consumerism, but they enjoyed a queasy symbiotic relationship, each feeding off the other—one for inspiration and audiences with money, the other for the kudos and entertainment that ‘edgy’ plays, films, art and photography brought. Counterculture is by its definition ‘counter’, an act of rebellion, though that need not preclude compatibility with established culture to a certain extent. After all, the nail that sticks up will be hammered down, as the Japanese adage goes. The trick is to stick up just enough to get noticed but not go too far.

The landmark national events of the ten years after Anpo—the Summer Olympics in Tokyo in 1964 and the World Exposition in Osaka in 1970—are touted as the banners around which the country consolidated and celebrated. They were part of the ‘official’ version of Japan, presented in films by the likes of Akira Kurosawa or Yasujirō Ozu, in the clean, international-looking graphic design of the Olympic posters, or the graceful ‘Japanese’ literature of Nobel laureate Kawabata.
It was natural that the anarchic counterculture and experimental arts reacted against this homogenised world. And yet, in a way it too became a familiar ‘mainstream’ fashion of sorts. One former student activist recalled glancing at a fellow activist’s bookshelves, packed with all the trendy tomes that were expected of any budding radical: something by Jūrō Kara, Nagisa Ōshima’s *Night and Fog in Japan*, other angura texts, Takaaki Yoshimoto … All the usual suspects. ‘I didn’t know if they had been read or were just there for show.’

Claims for a zeitgeist, mainstream or counterculture are often retrospective and it is worth remembering how much and how quickly Japan’s social landscape was changing at the time. In 1962, Tokyo became the first city in the world with a population over 10 million, while the nation itself exceeded 100 million in 1966. All these people meant a lot of manufacturing and consumption, and Japan’s GNP had overtaken West Germany’s to become the third largest by 1969, with Dentsū claiming the title of the biggest advertising agency in the world in 1973. It is little wonder that 100 million people gave birth to a vibrant, diverse cultural scene, and naturally it was the younger generation that was spearheading it.

When the Beatles visited Japan in 1966, there were threats from ultranationalist groups because the Fab Four were using the Budōkan, a martial arts stadium built for the Olympics, as the venue for their newfangled pop music. At the time, this was seen by conservatives as an act of sacrilege, though today concerts regularly happen at the arena. In 1964, *LIFE* magazine photographer Michael Rougier and correspondent Robert Morse covered Tokyo’s ‘youth in revolt’, reporting on a local Beatles cover band and visually documenting the exploits of pill-popping teenagers and motorcycle gangs. They introduced American readers to youth enthralled by rock and jazz music, who took their apparel and glamour very seriously, and enjoyed all-night beach parties.

Images of rebellious kids have become a cliché of the period, even in ‘conformist’ Japan. But there is little new here: Japan has always had delinquents. On the evening of 1 August 1927, a contingent of Tokyo police detectives stormed Ginza, blocking the area off and arresting all the young dapper men they could find. How were the criminals rumbled? Their flared trousers; 150 such ‘modern boys’ were taken into police custody. A similar scene took place in Asakusa a few nights later, this time targeting hundreds of pickpockets, vagrants and deviants. Being hip was suspicious—and being flamboyant was as much of a giveaway as being a ruffian, as the *kabukimono* of the Edo era also showed. Deriving from the same verb as
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

the theatre form, kabuku, meaning to deviate or be outrageous, these were young misfits during the Tokugawa era, typically rōnin or the servants of warrior households. They wore their hair long, with sideburns and beards. Their scabbards were decorated, their swords larger than normal.5

As Japan industrialised and formed a modern national police force, it found even better ways to survey and contain what it classed as delinquency. Tokyo police detained as many as 4,000 people under the age of twenty in 1924 for being malefactors of some sort or other. Five years later, this had doubled. The watchful police had blacklists with the names of 30,000 youngsters they felt warranted surveillance. In the 1930s, when Japan was a militarist state, the number of juvenile offenders was said to be higher than in most American cities.6

The advocates of the nihonjinron have done a fantastic job of creating a myth not only of harmony and coherence to hierarchy and order but also one of a classless paradise. The fantasy has it that all Japanese are born with equal chances and unique ‘Japanese’ characteristics—and that everyone in Japan is inherently middle class. This is as risible as it sounds; social disparity has been growing since the 1970s. Japan has never been especially impressive in terms of welfare. The proportion of GDP Japan spends on welfare is typically lower, along with social mobility, than countries with perhaps the worst reputations, America and Britain. Data even suggests that, from 1965, the rate of blue collar and upper-tier white-collar father-son succession was much the same as it was in the UK.7

The affluent Sun Tribe (taiyōzoku) of the Ishihara brothers and friends was succeeded in notoriety by the motorcycle gangs, which first appeared in Japan in the mid-1950s and soon became known as kaminarizoku, the Thunder Tribe. Since motorbikes were expensive at the time, these gangs were initially made up of the sons of wealthier families and mechanics, who had easier access to vehicles.

The kaminarizoku later evolved into the more famous bōsōzoku, the Runaway Tribe, who were associated with lower-class yankī males (and females). The bōsōzoku were at their height in the late 1970s and early 1980s; over the 1973–83 period, the numbers of youngsters affiliated with motorcycle gangs rose from around 12,500 to 40,000, according to police estimates. The vehicle numbers were also very high, up to some 24,000, both motorbikes—usually modified to go faster—and cars. Over that time arrests almost doubled, climbing to more than 54,000, of which the majority were traffic offences. An incident in Toyama in 1972 involved a mob of
3,000 motorcyclists and spectators, leading to 1,000 arrests. After this, the media got interested and the name bōsōzoku (literally, ‘violent driving tribe’) stuck. They morphed from a nuisance, an indulgence of spoilt kids, into a social disturbance. The police began to do their first surveys of these new villains and proceeded to keep a very close eye on them, which they maintain to the present. Further large-scale confrontations between gangs and the police occurred in Kanagawa in 1974 and 1975, before climaxing with an infamous incident in Kobe, where as many as 10,000 people attacked taxis and police cars in 1976. Eventually a police truck was pushed over and a cameraman killed.8

Where would we be with radicals in Japan if there were no cliques or sectarian infighting? The bōsōzoku were not free of this taint, of course, and the gangs, when not being chased by the police, were brawling with each other. But unlike the protracted and bitter rivalries and civil wars that typified the political radicals, the delinquents were not motivated by ideology. This was the 1970s, and the value of everything was measured not in ideas, but in things—in this case, vehicles, modified engines and clothes. Far from genuinely wanting to cause social unrest and mischief, the bōsōzoku were more interested in self-display. From the deliberately loud and glorified noises of their guzzling engines to the flags, elaborate clothes and esoteric names they gave their gangs, the bikers were seeking to stand out and be noticed. As the numbers of bōsōzoku grew, the media became fascinated by the caravans of bikers, up to 100 at a time, that would ‘terrorise’ the highways. The public was inundated with newspaper articles, books and magazines about the new delinquent fad. The boys were happy to cooperate with journalists and pose for pictures. Bike meet-ups and races also invariably included a large number of hangers-on and spectators; the gangs craved an audience—it was a communal act, a performance. As the media hysteria escalated, the bōsōzoku even tipped off TV news crews about their latest mass bike rides through cities or rural highways in order to secure maximum publicity, even if it increased the chances of arrest.

The public and media panic made much of the pedigree of the gangs and that they were mere stepping-stones to the Yakuza crime world. This is not necessarily the case and frequently bōsōzoku would ‘graduate’ from their gangs and go on to lead respectable lives. Although the bōsōzoku were indeed usually of lower-class origin, their class did not define or influence their deviancy per se. It had started as a bourgeois, materialist form of rebellion and was affluent in its superficial appearance. It was more about locality and establishing identity in the area for a gang than actual class.
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

And it was codified, just like the helmets and the staves of Zengakuren, and
the long hair and swords of the kabukimono. The clothes of the bōsōzoku
were expensive and planned, sometimes resembling the uniforms of the
wartime Kamikaze pilots. These costumes would be emblazoned with
arcane kanji characters spelling out the name of the gang—Black Emperor,
Hell Tribe and so on. The use of ideographs was playful and idiosyncratic,
with unnatural combinations or obscure characters, sometimes read pho-
netically to spell out foreign words like ‘tarantula’. Many of the linguistic
eddies were nationalist or even neo-fascist in tone, but this was deceptive.
The bikers felt no affinity with uyoku groups; if anything, they profoundly
rejected them. The apparent ultra-nationalism was yet another shock tactic,
another way to make their ‘self-display’ starker along with the speed, noise
and numbers of vehicles.

Self-display, affections and an obsession with style. Such paraphernalia of
rebellion were not new. Meiji- and Taishō-era Japan had its own fashionable
delinquents in the form of rakes, the nanpa, who would skip school to visit
brothels or geisha houses, or otherwise attempt to pick up girls—and always
in their best kimono and student cap. (The word nanpa survives today, mean-
ing to pick up girls, typically on the street.) Not to be outdone, at the other
end of the spectrum were the ‘ruffians’, the sōshi, with their torn clothes,
high geta sandals and thick clubs, perhaps topped off by a hat. Rather than
chasing floozies, they preferred to brawl or sing in the streets, and give off a
cultivated political air. The police were not impressed, though, and catego-
rised them as social villains of the same extraction as gamblers.9

For the bōsōzoku, the loud, fast races were like carnivals. It was the speed,
the thrill of the mechanics that exhilarated. The police and the main bloc of
society were just nuisances which, in contrast to what many Japanese com-
mentators thought, were not the object of rebellion.10 This was consumerism
as delinquency and one that was shaped and nurtured by the voyeuristic
panic of the mass media during the 1970s. The symbolism of rebellion actu-
ally waned and was made redundant by the very consumerist forces that
gave it zest.11 The bōsōzoku phenomenon reached such heights that it began
to feed back into the pop cultural cycle from which it had originally pumped
its gasoline. Rock music started to imitate the fashion and hairstyles of the
bikers, in particular the band Carol in the early 1970s. They also spawned
various bōsōzoku-influenced products and fashion accessories that ordinary
young consumers purchased greedily. The 1980s manga and anime Akira
featured a protagonist who was a member of a violent cyberpunk motorbike
gang. And at the height of the bōsōzoku movement there was an even more
direct film, *Godspeed You! Black Emperor* (1976), a documentary showing the eponymous biker gang and their exploits, with occasional glimpses into their domestic lives—still living with their parents—and bickering matches with each other. Sometimes this explodes into quite shocking moments of brutality, as rookie members are kicked in the face by senior bikers. They peddle on the street to earn cash to pay for their vehicular adventures and seem devoted to the lifestyle, rather than specific rebellious aims or ideals. ‘Try to avoid trouble with the police but keep your pride. We aren’t thugs or gangsters. We are Black Emperor.’

The police were less convinced of their harmlessness, however. The government issued regulations against high-school students riding bikes in the early 1980s. Garage owners were urged by unions not to modify bikes, and placards and posters were placed everywhere. The legislation and vigilance worked. *Bōsōzoku* bikers are today at their lowest numbers since police surveys began in the mid-1970s, down to less than a quarter of their roughly 40,000 peak.\(^{12}\)

We cannot talk of counterculture without talking of hippies, and nowhere in the 1960s was safe from the long-haired, laidback types—not even ‘conformist’ Japan. To many, the hippies were the *fütenzoku*, the ‘insane’ or ‘vagabond tribe’, a catch-all lobbed at dishevelled no-goods who hung around the city, getting into trouble, sometimes taking drugs or just doing nothing—in itself, a bit radical in the economically accelerating late 1960s and 1970s. The stereotype of the *fütenzoku* (or just *füten*) was a pacifist youngster without much in the way of employment or standing in society. They preferred having fun or helping American army deserters to slaving away for the corporations building the Japanese Miracle.

Let’s go take a look at some. They were easy to find if you were near Shinjuku Station in 1967 or 1968, lounging around on the patches of grass outside the east side of station. They call it their ‘greenhouse’. From the evening these hirsute slackers gather, playing music or taking drugs. Some are reading *San Francisco Oracle*. Some might even be asking passersby for money. Their stomachs and wallets are empty, but their minds are free and their mouths full of philosophy. In May 1968, NTV tried to make a TV show about them but so many stormed the live broadcast that the riot police were called. The irony of the TV show’s name, *The Norio Kijima Happening Show*, cannot have escaped some observers. More than just posers, the *füten* were seen as a dangerous and subversive social group. In late June 1968, reports said a group of *füten* attacked a police substation for ‘no reason’.
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

The media went wild about these youngsters—especially the promiscuous women—but to others, they were not the true hippies. Real free spirits like the people affiliated with the Buzoku (literally, ‘Tribe’) group would not give the Shinjuku fūten the time of day. Buzoku was a motley bunch of artists and activists. They ran ‘bum academy’ events and grew marijuana in a commune in Kokubunji, west Tokyo, that got raided by the cops.

Gary Snyder—the American essayist, lecturer, and environmental activist—was associated with Buzoku for a while and the hippies even published their own magazine in the autumn of 1967. Rather than wasting time outside stations, they were holding art shows, writing and building communes all over Japan. The members of Buzoku were so alternative they were occasionally refused admission to Tokyo’s hippest (and hippie-est) hangout, Fūgetsudō. One of the most famous fulcrums of the Japanese counterculture movement, Fūgetsudō was a bohemian coffee shop in Shinjuku where students, anti-war activists, gays, poets like Shuntarō Tanikawa, avant-garde artists like Shūji Terayama and foreigners would all gather to listen to the café’s formidable LP collection.

Shinjuku was probably the closest equivalent Tokyo or Japan had to Haight-Ashbury or Greenwich Village. With its Golden Gai cluster of bars, the Nichōme gay district, the popular Kinokuniya bookshop, arty haunts like Fūgetsudō and Ungra Pop, cinemas and music venues—Shinjuku was the place to be. Though today it remains a massive metropolis in its own right, it is no longer the centre for fashion, art or exciting new trends in culture it once was. The media contributed a lot to shaping its role as the nucleus of counterculture. The Asahi Shimbun proclaimed ‘Tokyo’s Shinjuku, the angura [underground] town’ in March 1968. They hyped it up, spurred on by their love of incidents and scandals. The media called it ‘Shinjuku, the giant amoeba’, ‘the Shinjuku jungle’, ‘Shinjuku, the town on the brink of exploding’. Home to a black market after the war, commerce and danger thrived side by side in Shinjuku, as well as creativity. Art Village, a venue for the post-war dance movement Ankoku Butoh, was located in the heart of Kabukichō, Shinjuku’s red light district. Other Shinjuku sites like Hanazono Shrine, as we shall see, became major loci for explosions of cultural radicalism. ‘In Shinjuku it’s not appropriate to talk about the past,’ someone once wrote. ‘It’s a town where only the present is important.’ ‘Only in Shinjuku,’ said an actor, ‘is a film with authorial independence given recognition ... In that sense it’s like a place I trust. Drinkers in Shinjuku are different from those in Ginza by their own account. Only in Shinjuku can you meet a “down-beat” hippie who even at over fifty
years old can still make easy conversation." It is no coincidence that Shōmei Tōmatsu’s 1969 series of images of rebellion on the streets was entitled Oh! Shinjuku.

The unique role of Shinjuku in the vibrancy of the time is celebrated most singularly in the Nagisa Ōshima 1968 film, Diary of a Shinjuku Thief, part fictional film and part record of the avant-garde actors and street artists who could be found in the hub. The title is an allusion to Jean Genet and follows the eponymous shoplifter as he steals intellectual tomes from Kinokuniya, only to be caught by a beautiful female bookseller. The protagonist is played, very appropriately, by Tadanori Yokoo, the young graphic designer who would be one of the central figures behind the spectacularly wild visuals of the angura theatre movement (he also did the poster for the film). One of the leaders of angura (which literally means ‘underground’ but typically refers to the underground fringe theatre scene), Jūrō Kara, also appears as a street performer, and indeed much of the film consists of sequences of plays and theatrical revelries, or erotic scenes acted out among the shelves of Kinokuniya. As the editing and structure is jerky and irregular, so is the atmosphere liberated and brazen, the film unashamedly wallowing in the zeitgeist. It likely did more than any other major work of fiction to cement the status and glamour of Shinjuku as the iconic cradle of counterculture.

There were also plenty of communes in Japan. Though the ones that appeared from the 1950s onwards were not the country’s first, as the era rolled into the later 1960s, the smell of something more ‘hippie’ grew stronger. A map published in the May 1977 issue of counterculture media Namae no nai shinbun (The Nameless Newspaper) listed over 200 hippie communes all over the Japanese archipelago, or Japonesia, as the hippies called it.

Shinsuke Ogawa, the left-wing documentary filmmaker whose recordings of the Sanrizuka struggle did much to bestow the legacy of the conflict, set up a collective in Yamagata in northern Japan for agriculture and filmmaking. Ogawa Pro films were immersive docudramas, including the experience of the creators by having them live and work alongside the farmers at Narita and Yamagata. That Yamagata City today hosts Japan’s flagship documentary film festival is a legacy of Ogawa’s work in the prefecture.

There was also a hippie commune on Suwanosejima—‘Island of LSD!’—set up by Buzoku on the volcanic island south of Kyushu. After establishing their paradise of primitive living in the 1970s, they had to fight Yamaha—ironically, the same company that was manufacturing the guitars of
Japanese Flower Power—who wanted to turn Suwanosejima into a resort. Buzoku also had a commune in Fujikōgen, near Mount Fuji, and many other places. A member, Kaiya ‘Pon’ Yamada, set up another commune on Amami Ōshima, an island in the far south, to obstruct development of the land for oil. It was even harassed by right-wing thugs in the late 1980s.

Yamada, who lived a remarkable itinerant and artistic life, was linked to all kinds of activism, including a support group for the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen members on death row—though he disapproved of their violent methods—and also advocated Amami’s secession from the rest of Japan. Along with his cohorts, he was put under police surveillance for his associations with New Left extremists and for being a constant thorn in the side of the corporations, and eventually imprisoned briefly in 1983 on trumped-up charges of harbouring a fugitive.

The south always does things a bit differently from the rest of Japan. Kyushu was also the location for Gan Tanigawa’s Circle Village, his magazine and network of artists and activists that aspired to create communities steeped in an independent agrarian and ‘purer’ peasant mentality. Tokyo was the centre of Women’s Lib in Japan, though. Its first demo had taken place in 1970 as part of the anti-war protests in Ginza, and the movement then produced communes such as Tokyo Komu-unu, established in 1972 for women to live with their children, and, more famously, the Ribu Shinjuku Centre, a major Women’s Lib focal point and commune which also functioned as a shelter for runaway girls.

Other communes had religious origins. Ozaki Masutarō set up his Shinkyō commune in Kasama in Nara Prefecture after he and his wife were ostracised from the Tenri sect of Buddhism. Initially, he and four other families went to Manchuria to build a new life, but they returned after the war and had more success with a rush mat factory. They began to live and work together, ostensibly sharing everything. They worked long eleven-hour days but this resulted in ample income, giving them the economic margin that could ensure there was no need for self-centred theft. Everyone in the community had access to the petty cash or little luxuries like cigarettes, snacks and beer. Masutarō was certainly at the ‘top’ but there were no overt signs of status or rank. The business was taxed, meaning there was no interference from the government, who let them get on with their own independent way of living. Actual property and vehicles were legally registered under people’s names, but to all practical purposes they belonged to everyone and were completely shared, along with food and money. Children would sleep in the homes of other parents and bathing was rigorously mixed sex.
However, by far the most notorious, even nefarious, of communes was Yamagishi-kai. Founded by philosopher-farmer Miyozō Yamagishi (1901–61) in 1953, the first egalitarian community was created in 1958. It has gone through some different names and applied various labels to its activities over the years, but at its heart is an unlikely utopianism originating from Yamagishi’s ideals of chicken farming in Mie Prefecture. The path to perfect happiness can, it seems, be found in eggs. Yamagishi-kai survived an early scandal when Yamagishi was arrested for confining members in 1959, and concentrated on setting up a network of farming communities around Japan. In these ‘villages’ there was no money, no leader and no commands. No one was paid a salary and everyone worked for the better of the movement. You joined by taking a course in the Yamagishi philosophy (known as kensan) and committing your assets to the cause.

After progressing without much fanfare during the 1960s, Yamagishi-kai became more successful in the next decade when its eggs and other products were valued for their natural quality as opposed to regular factory farming’s, and when the 1973 oil crisis affected their rivals adversely. (Yamagishi-kai, of course, had no salaries to pay so it could afford to be more competitive.) This ushered in prosperous years for the organisation and its numbers had also been bolstered in the decade by people tired of fast capitalist and consumerist lifestyles. It printed messages on its milk cartons or propounded slogans such as ‘Eggs laid by Yamagishi’s harmonious hens are real eggs, abundant in the power of life’.

A parallel is often drawn between the post-Zenkyōtō generation and the rise of new religious movements in post-war Japan. Though not a religion, Yamagishi-kai is perhaps one of the prime reasons for this, since it became known as a salvaging ground for disillusioned student activists still looking for utopia and attracted even elite University of Tokyo graduates.

The reality of the kibbutz was more entrepreneurial. It was expansionist, buying land all over the globe and operating dozens of farms. It grew to have multiple sites in many countries and thousands of members. A paradox lay in how a commune movement that professed to reject the concept of money and labour as a salaried occupation was actually making billions of yen in sales in the 1980s. The underside of the communitarianism was very much less than idyllic, with individual farmers in charge of over 1,000 birds and toiling every day without a break, overall something like twice the average working hours. Less a commune, some critics said Yamagishi-kai was just slave farming.

And then the scandals hit, with the movement’s reputation seriously damaged by suicides, accidents and deaths through neglect, accusations of
brainwashing and ‘cultish’ activities. It was sued by former members who wanted their assets back and was also disgraced by an investigation by the Japanese tax authorities that ruled it had not been paying its full dues for years. Its behaviour was increasingly bizarre and cult-like, with a communal cemetery built at enormous expense in 1993 in honour of their original founder, who had taken on a messianic mystique for some members.

The Aum incident in 1995 was the coup de grace. Now strange utopian groups with communal lifestyles were *persona non gratae* in Japan. In the previous years, the public had been beguiled by the apparent felicity that this organisation had created, promoted very forcefully and astutely by its PR machine. Many thousands became associate members still living in regular society, giving money to the organisation and entering their children into its ‘villages’ and schools, an act which effectively meant they were cut off from their families. The repercussions for thousands of children were severe. Those that lived in the ‘villages’ would get up at 5.30 a.m. and start work tending the animals under their personal charge. They would then prepare to go to school at 7.30. There was no breakfast. At school they were not allowed to mix with regular kids from other schools and after returning to the farm by 3.30 p.m. they would start their work again. Weekends also featured classes at school and more manual labour. At times, they were so busy they would have to go to school without washing properly after finishing their farm tasks. While their parents no doubt sincerely thought that entering their offspring into the Yamagishi-kai system would be good for their upbringing, the brutal daily reality was that they might have only two meals a day. The children would be so hungry they would eat tissue paper, weeds or things they found on the road. The children of the revolution were, despite their ostensibly healthy outdoors lifestyles, underweight and less than average size.

All of this led to a deluge of media coverage, with numerous books by journalists and former members appearing from the late 1990s. Yamagishikai was a victim of its own success: the more people it attracted, the more suspicion it aroused. It continues to exist today as a network of ‘intentional communities’ farming livestock and produce in several countries, though its ranks and finances are greatly reduced. That being said, there are still almost thirty sites in Japan and around 1,300 full members. The immense flowering of the economy also yielded a corresponding blossoming in the arts—from literature to film, photography, performance and the visual arts. Since parliamentary politics had let them down so badly
during the Anpo struggle in 1960, young people had turned to direct action on the streets. In the same way, art was another way they could attempt to make an impact on society, though as we shall see, not all were convinced of its effectiveness.

The economic success Japan was experiencing led to the growth of a stronger ‘mainstream’ society, but its corollary was a labour shortage, which meant an endless supply of part-time jobs for actors and artists while pursuing projects that went against the flow of the Japanese national juggernaut. The artists were not mere parasites casting their critical gaze on all they saw; they were participants and contributors to the system. The ambiguous symbiosis then came full circle with the audiences. The fiscal boom gave disposable income to younger people for the first time, to be spent on edgy entertainment and making themselves ancillary supporters to the development of new modes of culture in the 1960s and 1970s.27

The *angura* alternative theatre scene, though not as famed overseas as the movers and shakers of Japanese cinema, art or photography, nonetheless also cultivated many devotees. *Angura* is largely remembered in isolation rather than as part of a wider movement to create art in opposition to the mainstream. It is even sometimes omitted from discussions of the period’s avant-garde and experimental arts altogether.28 In this respect, as with fringe theatre today in Japan, *angura* was a subculture. Shûji Terayama actually preferred the term ‘anti-establishment’ to ‘counterculture’ or ‘*angura*’.29

The scene emerged from university drama groups at Waseda, Meiji and elsewhere. Its leaders, and their respective troupes, were Terayama (Tenjô Sajiki), Jûrô Kara (Situation Theatre), Makoto Satô (Theatre Center 68/71, later Black Tent Theatre), and Tadashi Suzuki (Waseda Small Theatre). Just as the New Left was rebelling against and challenging the ideals of the Old Left, so too was *angura* a reaction to *shingeki*—the ‘new theatre’ realist drama movement that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in imitation of European naturalism, and the Japanese theatre artists who had been mere tributaries to this Western style. The attack on the conservative and indolent art forms was as militant and aggressive as the guerrilla groups were in the political arena. One theatre company issued a press release in September 1969 with a provocative call to arms: ‘Ultimately it is our intention to destroy *shingeki* as an art, *shingeki* as a system and in its place to present before you a concrete alternative contemporary theatre.’30 *Shingeki* adopted Western realism in its universal humanism, its linear historicism and its proscenium arch staging. *Angura* sought to explore new and freer forms, taking theatre into unusual spaces, creating

244
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

drama with outrageous motifs and structures of chaos. However, it was not simply a rejection of the establishment for the sake of it (i.e. a ‘Western’ model of rebellion against the mainstream). It was seeking out something distinct and new, a third path that was not ‘Japanese’ (or the Japanese who had emerged in the post-Anpo regime) or ‘Western’. In other words, it was doing what politics had failed to do for the country. It was no fortuitous or charitable whim that led Jûrô Kara to tour the Middle East and Asia instead of Europe. Many of the artists of angura believed that Japan should align to new territories rather than the existing choices of the Cold War.

Tenjô Sajiki’s name means ‘upper balcony’—the cheap seats—but is a reference to the Japanese title for Marcel Carné’s Les Enfants du paradis. It was set up in Tokyo by the Aomori-born Terayama with a group of collaborators (including Tadanori Yokoo) in 1967 and had already debuted in Europe by 1969. Iconoclastic, controversial, erotic, grotesque, playful, taboo-breaking, pastiche-loving—its productions were, to say the least, divisive. It was the first contemporary theatre troupe in Japan to achieve real international success and also the most European. However, the results of this hybrid were not always well received. In the Netherlands, the company set cars on fire during street performances and gave sleeping drugs to audience members. Actors were thrown on to spectators in Tokyo, breaking the nose of one. In Germany, Tenjô Sajiki were compared to Nazis for their tactics where ‘invisible’ black-clad stagehands of the kind used in traditional Japanese stage arts would fight the audience.

The stage directions for the play Heretics instruct that these stagehands are an ‘allegory for power’ and should be trained in ‘combat drills’ for a month to ‘use provocative actions against members of the audience in order to violently cut through outmoded routines and to destroy habitual expectations of everyday reality’.

Terayama knew how to generate hype and controversy, and enjoyed the notoriety as much as the acclaim. Berlin audiences were treated to a locked auditorium of madness for performances of Heretics in 1972. The anarchy exasperated one critic so much he attempted to leave but was forcibly prevented from doing so. Der Spiegel ran the headline ‘Hitler Was Better’. Neither were American critics enamoured by Terayama’s antics. ‘Nothing more than pornography decorated with pretensions ... Deeply misogynist,
it glorifies violence’ was the judgement of one reviewer on the 1980 production of Directions to Servants at La Mama.36

Though Terayama was praised for his literary output, his theatrical endeavours were often disregarded as vulgar. Admired today through the sedentary comfort of retrospection, it is easy to forget just how complex Terayama’s reputation was in his lifetime. He received invitations and commissions from major festivals and theatres, but then was shamed when he was arrested in 1980 after being caught peeping into houses in Tokyo. In 1969 he and members of his troupe spent two nights in jail for getting into a brawl with rival Jūrō Kara’s company, who had recently set up a venue near Tenjō Sajiki’s in Shibuya. (Rival factions of an underground movement fighting each other: does this sound familiar?) Terayama was such a celebrity, though, that someone impersonated him in Kyoto to try to get out of paying at cafés. Like all artists with a sense of their own talents and status, things had the habit of slipping into self-aggrandising at the drop of a hat. People curious to know how Terayama defined his own multi-hyphenated profession were told, ‘I am Shūji Terayama.’37

Terayama is as important (counter)culturally to the period as the philosopher Takaaki Yoshimoto was intellectually. In contrast to his angura peers, though, Terayama was already known by the time he founded Tenjō Sajiki. Significantly, Terayama was several years older than his fellow artists and had not been a student during the first Anpo crisis—he had written poetry and radio plays by then—and his output was apolitical, for better or worse. ‘Tenjō Sajiki’s primary goal in creating theatre is to revolutionise real life without resorting to politics,’ he wrote.38 Though Terayama was associated with Beheiren and went into the barricaded campuses during the student movement to speak with the college kids, he also made an experimental film in 1970, Emperor Tomato Ketchup, which satirises revolution in its depiction of children becoming dictators, embellished with pornographic interludes. In the same year, he was also dismissive of Mishima’s ‘coup’ and suicide, saying he should have done it in the more symbolically suitable cherry blossom season rather than the autumn.39

If not concrete politics, what was important for Tenjō Sajiki? Even if not advocating a particular ideology, theatre could still be subversive. ‘We consider the theatre to be a crime,’ the troupe’s manifesto said. ‘We are not working towards the revolution of theatre but we will whip the world with our imagination and theatricalise revolution … Take power with imagination.’40 At its heart, theatre was a chance to have new encounters going back in time in history. Though Terayama’s influences included Japanese writers
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

like Edogawa Ranpo and Kyōka Izumi, there was also a healthy—possibly dominant—dose of European ones, especially French: Marcel Carné, Georges Bataille, Comte de Lautréamont and Antonin Artaud. More than politics, Terayama was interested in popular songs, comics, boxing, horse racing, and historical bands of outcastes, of whom he saw his troupe as being the modern descendant. His films and plays were populated with drag queens and dwarves. Tenjō Sajiki and its ranks of collaborators were filled with dropouts and misfits. As much as a theatre group, it was a circus troupe.

And like a circus master, Terayama had a way of building a cult. Having lost his father in the war and then been left by his mother when she moved to Kyushu in the distant south for work, Terayama felt a strong sense of abandonment during his childhood. He was often ill and hospitalised for lengthy periods. This led him no doubt to value freedom, combined with an uneasy relationship with an unstable mother often absent or who, when present, was domineering and controlling. Terayama essentially ran away to Tokyo to pursue a bohemian career. A book he later wrote actively encouraged youth to abandon home and reportedly sparked a craze for runaways. The disaffected youngsters might well then turn up at Terayama and his wife’s home. Terayama ended up becoming a legal guarantor for more than thirty such absconders and some stayed at his house. He gave them positions at Tenjō Sajiki and their stories became parts of his tract *Throw Away Your Books, Go Out into the Streets*.41

His most famous work is, with a typically Terayama-esque dash of heteroglossia, a book, film and stage play, all of which are different, not just adaptations. The original Japanese title, *Sho o suteyo, machi e deyō*, might also translate as ‘throw away the books, go out into the town’, though ‘town’ is more often rendered as ‘streets’.42 It makes clear how he differs from other radicals, rejecting dogma, Luddite rural dreams and elitist intellectualism in favour of pure, free interaction with the outside world, which reaches its zenith in the streets of the city.

The 1971 film version is a representative example of Terayama’s bricolage. In direct contrast to the logical linear narrative of *shingeki, angura* was all about montage and disorder. Theatre and film were fragmentary, the lines destabilised. In live performances, everyone became a performer, participant and spectator simultaneously. Scripts were nugatory, just one element in the total theatrical experience. This was true for Terayama as much as for Satō and Kara, so in this respect they cannot be regarded as true literary playwrights in the sense that Kōbō Abe and Minoru Betsuyaku were, though Kara and Terayama were also accomplished writers of fiction and
non-fiction. Terayama once wrote that ‘playwriting is like mapmaking ... The playwright’s problem is how much detail to include on the map. If conversations are totally written, the actors will be “transported toward a plotted encounter” rather than “invited on a journey of encounter”.”

The film of _Throw Away Your Books, Go Out into the Streets_ is a musical meta-film consisting of fragments of autobiography—its protagonist Eimei even looks like Terayama. It begins with Eimei exhorting the audience to be free, to put out their hand and grope the person next to them. The vignettes and leitmotifs are shot in different filters, mostly directed and edited at a frenetic pace and to a pulsating musical soundtrack. It can be read as a swirling mass of Terayama’s primary obsessions—frustrated youth, sex, sports, liberty. There is an awkward visit by a young virgin to a brothel; a disturbing sequence in which a football team gang-rape a girl while Eimei is locked outside; and a girl enjoins people at a busy crossing to punch a phallus bean bag until confronted by police—it is never certain if this is staged or a genuine event—and eventually the penis is hung from a traffic light and the young pranksters take turns smacking it. The driving theme throughout is freedom and the fight against the suppression of the individual. ‘Don’t grant freedom to the enemies of freedom,’ as one line has it.

_Death in the Country_ (1974) is based on a collection of poetry by Terayama and is more mystical and poetic in tone. A piece of dream cinema, it is set in Terayama’s home region of Aomori, whose female mediums of Mount Osore, the ‘Mountain of Fear’, make a hypnotic appearance. Another grotesque sequence features a circus dwarf tending to the physical needs of his fat wife by blowing her up with air. The whole film is surreally and vividly filmed, and is probably Terayama’s most attractive work on celluloid. The protagonist is a young fatherless boy, who lives in a house with only one way to tell time, a broken clock. In a typically Terayama hang-up on female sexuality, the boy becomes infatuated with a local woman and convinced she will run away with him. Instead she kills herself in a suicide pact with her communist lover. The film abruptly cuts to the ‘director’ of the film in Tokyo, who questions the veracity of the ‘autobiography’ he is making. He returns to Aomori to meet his younger self and with that the layers of fiction, biography, past and present begin to intertwine. The film is self-referential, deliberately deceptive rural folklore, an idyll enquiring into its own falsehood. The characters in the ‘memory’ are theatricalised, wearing stark white-face make-up. The older Self engages in a conference of chess with the younger Self, but the walls of fiction fall down at the end to reveal they are in the middle of bustling Shinjuku.
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

Terayama and Tenjō Sajiki were leaping out of the boundaries of customary performance into the Tokyo urban space in other ways at this time. They created a genre of ‘city’ or ‘street’ theatre experiences known as shi-gaigeki. The first main foray was in Shinjuku in 1970 with Solomon: The Man-Powered Airplane (the man-powered airplane is a motif that also features in Throw Away Your Books, Go Out into the Streets). Audiences were recruited to the performance by giving away free tickets designed to look like airline tickets to anyone who joined in a song about Ken Takakura outside a Shinjuku cinema that often screened the popular actor’s films, or by asking random pedestrians in Shinjuku survey questions. Those who opted to participate in these mini street theatre vignettes were rewarded with a ticket and asked to meet at one of three places in Shinjuku to join the start of the play: two different exits at Shinjuku Station or on the second floor of the Kinokuniya bookshop.

Shigaigeki was an attempt to revolutionise and occupy the urban space, to break down barriers of space and spectator. But this was not merely a physical extraction out of the internal venue space—the theatre building is ‘drama’s prison’, Terayama once wrote—but a metaphysical act of sabotage, of ‘removing the borderline between fiction and everyday reality’. This reached its zenith with Knock, a thirty-hour occupation of the Kōenji area in Suginami, west Tokyo, in April 1975. It saw blindfolded audiences being transported by bus around the locale, alighting and scattering into the district to wander from encounter to encounter. These might be in parks, a bathhouse, or inside a crate that you volunteered to be boxed into and taken somewhere.

Who were the actors? Who were the audience? Who were mere onlookers? And should we stick to these supposed definitions of role anyway? These had been obsessions in the Japanese social space since Anpo and Sasebo, and Knock was an area-wide carnivalesque attempt to shake it up. Tired of the hackneyed series of media-created illusionary ‘pseudo-events’, in the phrase of Daniel J. Boorstin, that modern living had become, the shigaigeki experiment was about generating new immediacy. The scripts that were prepared by Terayama and his collaborators were mere guidelines that the actors bounced off like Dadaists, exclaiming non sequitur after non sequitur. Dialogue was numbered, not assigned. The arbitrariness extended to audience selection as well. Random people were sent official-looking letters telling them to come to a certain place and claim something they had lost—Terayama called this ‘letter drama’, an attempt to force the foreign into reality and create new intimacy and connections. The police were called and the play caused a minor local scandal, with the newspapers
treated as a social disturbance. However, there was no revolution and the longed-for spontaneous audience participation did not happen.

Other angura theatre artists were also changing the performative space. Kara’s Situation Theatre set up performances in a tent in Hanazono Shrine in Shinjuku in 1967, incurring the wrath of officials for his ‘lewd’ drama in a sacred place. Kara wanted to take theatre back to the level of beggars and the lower classes. Edo-era Tokyo teemed with carnivals, street theatre and mise-mono (‘showings’) at the so-called sakariba (‘lively places’, the bazaar areas like Ryōgoku where crowds gathered for entertainment and commerce), and, of course, Kabuki. The public space was occupied by theatre as an act of rebellion, an expression of freedom for the poorer urban residents in an age of intense stratification and suppression by the feudal authorities. Kara was attempting to do the same in post-war central Tokyo. The original Kabuki actors and other performers were pariahs. Kara wanted his performers to assume the same social function and as such, staged a play on the same spot where Okuni had started Kabuki in Kyoto centuries before. His plays were set in sites like a public toilet or an underground café. They were populated by oddballs and misfits. Likewise, the physical settings and environments he used mirrored this, uniquely utilising in-between public places like Hanazono Shrine and the construction site for the Parco department store in Shibuya. A performance staged in a park got him arrested in 1969.

Makoto Satō’s Theatre Center 68/71 (Black Tent Theatre) also, as their name suggests, engaged with performances in tents, including the famed 1970 production of The Dance of the Angels Who Burn Their Wings, an epic allegory of revolutionary dreaming. The experimental outdoor performance featured a motorcycle gang of angels acting out the assassination of Marat—a riff on Peter Weiss’s Marat/Sade—implying an analogy between Japan and the French Revolution. A repeated refrain is ‘We’ll be all right if we don’t dream.’ To dream is to dream of prelapsarian revolution, which can only end with an Icarian fall. The play is especially prophetic when we consider that it was only just after the height of the student movement and many of the young were still engaged at Sanrizuka or in violent struggles. Although post-Zenkyōtō cynicism had set in, it was before the nadir of Asama-sansō and the gruesome discovery in the snow of the purged comrades. Nonetheless, for Satō, although drama itself has to be regenerated— ‘theatre must be revolution’, as a slide declares—the play also acknowledges the double bind that ‘it is impossible for theatre to be revolutionary’. Like the political radicals, artists are faced with the infeasibility of truly making an impact on society. Theirs is a mere lunatics’ dream of failed but cyclic
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

revolution—rebellion that is literally ‘revolving’—a chaotic and loud ‘age of assassination, not an age of revolution’.⁴⁷

During the 1970s the urban space was shifting. As the *shimin* were active citizens, blurring the line between *yajiuma* onlookers, protestors and volunteers, so too were they consumers and audiences for cutting-edge plays and films. If the defining *sakariba* of the post-war period was Shinjuku, that began to change during the 1970s. Shibuya was born. This was not a mere matter of malls and marts; the counterculture of Shinjuku began to secede from the Shinjuku area and head south to new climes in the lower valley where Shibuya is located. The Seibu Theater (later the Parco Theater) opened in the new Parco department store in 1973 and it quickly rose to snatch the talents of subversive arts away from their ramshackle environments and offer them nicer facilities. Parco proved a valuable patron to Tenjō Sajiki, who established themselves as having one foot in both districts—the wacky verve of Shinjuku and the consumer convenience of Shibuya (its own theatre space, designed by Kiyoshi Awazu, was also in Shibuya).

*Angura* has to be grateful to the so-called Saison Culture that emerged, hosted by the Saison Group in Shibuya, and the artists did reap rewards, though the long-term benefit for the arts is debatable. Can we still call such practitioners ‘avant-garde’ when they are presenting their work to snugly seated audiences who have paid twice the price of fringe venue tickets for the privilege? Terayama had no qualms about staging work in more amenable surroundings towards the end of his short life, and there is an argument to be made that it might be more effective to be subversive from the inside than the out.

While the performance spaces were growing tamer as ‘cultural halls’ sprung up to dot the landscape, counterculture still had another home: the streets of the city were theatre, and not only through the antics of Tenjō Sajiki. Zengakuren itself was *shigaigeki*, staging the theatre of protest, the drama of agitation. Just as an artist expresses his ego and ideas through a performance, so too were the students expressing their *shutaisei*, their agency, as well as playing a role in a mass spectacle. The struggles of the young protestors in their campus sieges, ‘liberating’ certain zones and exploding into riots and their own inevitable infighting that all spilled out into the public realm essentially transformed Tokyo and other places in Japan into a giant site-specific theatre festival—and one where audience participation was actively encouraged.

The politicised city theatre was physical. Just as dancers like Tatsumi Hijikata were transcending the previous conceptions of the bodily vessel
and using it to rebel—Nikutai no hanran, ‘revolt of the flesh’, as Hijikata’s famed 1968 dance was called—the radicals were moving in wholly new ways. Their zigzag snake dance (jiguzagu) was chaotic and exuberant, protest as a gambol. The carnivalesque triumph of the Shinjuku folk guerrilla concerts also turned the public space into something radical, unfettered and horizontal. These counterculture gigs were as rampant as the output of angura and they were literally ‘underground’, as they were held in the semi-subterranean passageways of Shinjuku Station where thousands gathered to listen, sing and deliberate. The plaza became a real city theatre.

This urban revelry of angura and politics would have been familiar to historical residents of Tokyo and other cities of Japan. Matsuri festivals were chances to let go, for social strictures and rank to be thrown into the ether and for chaos to rule for as long as the carnival lasted. The authorities knew the benefits of this; it is why they permitted local festivals—letting off steam allowed the social order to prevail the rest of the year and not rupture permanently. The Kanda Festival was a historical Edo event in which local townspeople would dress up as lords and samurai, pulling huge floats of mythical characters. This topsy-turvy make-believe was even allowed to process through the precincts of Edo proper, normally off-bounds to the commoners. Likewise the yonaoshi riots that perennially wreaked havoc across the rural regions were at times genuinely dangerous but often no more than temporary eruptions of pent-up anger that needed release. They functioned as levelling festivals for the have-nots to punish the have-gets by smashing up property, forming a kind of self-purification for the community so it would be able to accept its lot and carry on, since full-scale revolt was impossible.

Ritualised folk dance also brought physical release. This is perhaps none better represented than in the traditional summer Awa Odori, the ‘dance of the fools’ that originated in Tokushima. Dancers chant—‘The dancers, fools! The watchers, fools! Fools alike, so why not dance?’—in time to increasingly frenzied movements and drumming. The Awa Odori and other such Bon season dances were permitted despite the risks that crowds gathering entailed, though the authorities did take care to ban samurai from attending. There was drinking, debauchery and brawling aplenty, but it served as an astute means of loosening the valve of unrest. After the few days of clowning were over, the leftover waste would be cleaned away and the swords of the authorities’ soldiers continued to reign.

Another phenomenon swept over Japan in 1867–8, ee janai ka (translating literally as ‘How about it?’), a series of impromptu carnival-like mass gatherings, a sort of historical flash mob in which thanksgiving celebrations
gave way to mania. These were liminal times, just as the Tokugawa Shōgunate was about to lose its grip on power against a backdrop of political and social disturbances in cities and rural areas. The authorities were frightened by the classless rabble and issued edicts banning them. The pretext for the ludic dancing was pennies from heaven: paper charms apparently falling from the skies. But the hoi polloi were eager for any excuse to revel and ee janai ka became their larking refrain. For some, the anarchy and mayhem was tied up with hopes for yonaoshi insurrection. Thus, while triggered by religious symbols, the movement was not millennial. Despite episodes of religious fervour, there had actually been no mass revolt based on a shared theological or spiritual belief since the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637–8.

The disorganised yet nonetheless potent nature of the Saturnalian ee janai ka orgies recalls the more politicised yet equally organic snake dancing of the twentieth-century student activists. And like a true Bakhtin carnival, these were not mere spectacles to be enjoyed from the sidelines, but a dynamic riot that consumed the nonpori and the yajiuma bystanders in a kinetic moment of social revolt. The Rabelaisian sense of the carnivalesque is central to post-war counterculture and experimental arts too, since people like Terayama deliberately tried to upset the established hierarchy, creating ‘freak shows’ with drag queens and dwarves akin to historical misemono side shows. While obviously not as directly politicised as the radicals, Terayama’s theatre itself was a feast of fools (one of Tenjō Sajiki’s later productions was even called The Ship of Fools) that overturned and profaned much like folk and mass modes of disturbance. The disorder and abundance of arts and hippies in entire areas like Shinjuku can be seen as a prolonged ee janai ka carnival, a flowering of wild colours and energies.

But the state does not give up territory without a struggle. In 1970, Shinjuku created the first ‘pedestrian paradise’ zone in Tokyo, followed by others elsewhere in the city. What initially seems like a positive, traffic-free reclamation of public space becomes more sinister when we consider how the districts had rules banning singing, performing, demonstrating, filming, petitioning and hawking. To curb street protests and counterculture, the authorities cleverly let consumers usurp the liberated zones from the radicals. Likewise, asphalt replaced paving stones around Tokyo to take away potential ammunition for protestors.

Seemingly every area of the arts in Japan was experimental during the 1950s and 1960s: the music of Tōru Takemitsu; the contributions to the
Fluxus movement by AY-O and Takehisa Kosugi; the new urban landscapes envisioned by the architects of Metabolism; the cryptic literature of Kōbō Abe; and the new art schools of Gutai and Monoha that sought to change the way we view form and material. A new generation of bold graphic designers emerged, including Tadanori Yokoo, Kiyoshi Awazu and Aquirax Uno, while photographers such as Daidō Moriyama turned their lens to images that refuted glossy, easy optical comestibles. Even the traditional arts were at the forefront of this new explosion, with the Sōgetsu Art Center at one point the leading hub for the contemporary arts while it was run by the head of the Sōgetsu school of Ikebana flower arrangement, Hiroshi Teshigahara, also a film director.

After a time of fertile formal experimentation by the likes of Jikken Kōbō—remarkable performances of futuristic ballet and cross-cultural stagecraft—things became more anarchistic from the end of the 1950s.

The Yomiuri Indépendant annual exhibition, sponsored by a major newspaper, had been an incubator for emerging artists, but its take-over by ever more avant-garde exhibits led the venue, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, to impose stricter rules, which essentially caused the event to peter out after the 1963 edition. The exhibition spaces had become increasingly chaotic, with food and artworks that literally spilled out of the venue. Visitors in 1963 encountered an artwork by Hi-Red Center’s Jirō Takamatsu, a plastic rope with ‘scraps’ of objects attached that he had uncoiled and pulled all the way from the museum across the park to Ueno Station. The artists were invading the streets.

This rejection by mainstream structures and facilities as platforms for presenting their work, and producing work that was ultimately uncontrollable within any framework, are two key tropes running common to three of the major counterculture art units, along with the use of the body as a site for publicity and spectacle. Formed around 1960, Neo-Dada was an early collective of artists, including Shūsaku Arakawa and Genpei Akasegawa. They were pioneers of anti-art guerrilla actions in public. A typical example would be walking around the streets of Ginza dressed as an advertisement for an upcoming exhibition.

When leaders like Arakawa went overseas, Neo-Dada faded away, though its role as the agitator in the scene was soon taken by two further important groups. Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension) was originally based not in Tokyo but in Nagoya, and was active from 1963 to 1972. The performance art group specialised in creating nonsense happenings in malls and department stores, the rising temples of consumption. They mixed nudity, por-
nography and motifs of rituals. The group shifted to Tokyo, where it caused scandals with physical performances in Hibiya, Shibuya and Shinjuku, at public parks and shrines, and more. Part of their *modus operandi* was essentially anti-social behaviour and shock tactics, deliberately tasteless and lunatic. They rolled around on the ground or lay on futons on the floor of a gallery, staring for hours at erotic *shunga* prints on the ceiling. Naked women walked over naked men on the ground. Naked men moved together as a human caterpillar. When they would bring themselves to wear clothes, it might be a gas mask or luggage label. They could recruit members easily since no training or choreography was required. Above all, the ritualistic was vital. They challenged definitions of vulgarity and propriety, and forced passersby to witness their physical stunts. No space was sacred, whether it be a gallery or the streets.

Though frequently reported on in salacious and sensational tones by the weekly tabloids, their doctrine was sincere. They wanted to ‘rape the city’. ‘When the naked mass started to run,’ the group leader Yoshihiro Katō later said, ‘the entire city in pursuit of high economic growth—cars, people and buildings—gradually stopped its moves like a slow-motion movie, startled at the sight of the beautiful human bodies. My body looked straight into those spectators. When we ran, everything in the city also exposed its naked face.’51 Katō was actually a regular businessman with a secure income; it was the group’s ordinariness that defined its deviancy. What was necessary was a temporary breach from normality, a renunciation of time and ego—a return to the dimension of zero.

Hi-Red Center—the name derives from English translations of the first characters of the three members’ surnames—combined stylistic experimentation with caustic social commentary that voiced genuine anxiety. Its first happening in 1962 saw guests invited to a suburban banquet on the anniversary of the 1945 defeat. After paying, the guests were then humiliated and spoofed by the performers, who ate, danced and brushed their teeth all around them. Later that same year, the group staged a famous guerrilla stunt on the Yamanote Line. One of the founders rode the busy train in white face, carrying everyday but here incongruous sundry items inside transparent shells, and which he hung on to the strap-handles. He spilt paint and uncoiled Takamatsu’s long rope on a station platform, yet otherwise the agitation was more conceptual than anything else. The watches, eggshells, rope, hair and necklaces—these innocent artefacts became profane components when introduced to the business-minded seriousness of the loop line. Hi-Red Center had sent invites to the happening to 700 artists
and poets, and people chosen randomly from the telephone directory, and they also gave out invites to passengers on the actual day. It inserted the anarchic street theatre of historical Edo back into the stiff, refined post-Anpo Tokyo. Hi-Red Center was engaging in ‘direct action’ (this anarcho-syndicalist label was deliberate), art not so much as clear-cut protest but as disorder. However, because they brought along a cameraman to record the event, the happening lost a lot of its impact as to passersby it simply resembled a location shoot for a science-fiction movie.

In the year of the 1964 Olympics, the authorities launched a big cleaning-up campaign to make the city fit for hosting the prestigious games. Hi-Red Center were not convinced by the government’s sincerity and mocked it with a seven-hour public performance in which white lab-coated unit members physically cleaned the streets of Ginza with brooms and rags. Concern over space-age technology and its potential misuse led Hi-Red Center to publish a series of leaflets in 1964 asking readers to question the coincidence of Kennedy’s assassination timing with the first satellite TV broadcast from America to Japan, and other ominous co-occurrences. The tone of the flyer is deliberately alarmist and tabloid, though it is tongue-in-cheek only in part. The same year also saw the famous Shelter Plan happening, where Hi-Red Center took over a plush room in the Imperial Hotel and invited bohemian and artist guests to ‘evacuate’ in the face of the coming nuclear holocaust. On the eve of Japan’s triumph, the acerbic reality of the new world order was being ruthlessly sent up. Guests were measured and photographed, and offered chances to purchase variously sized tailor-made one-person bomb shelters. If you only had limited financial means, you had to make do with a quarter-size shelter. Evacuation was ultimately merely absurd with the threat of mutually assured destruction around the corner.

Other happenings and artworks reverted to the contemporary interest in the physical, in turning the performer’s body into the vessel of presentation—the ‘anarchy of the body’ in one researcher’s phrase. Hi-Red Center member Natsuyuki Nakanishi walked around central Tokyo with his face obscured by hundreds of clothes pegs while holding a clutch of balloons.

Ironically, Hi-Red Center’s most significant or memorable legacy was not an art project. One of its principal members produced likely the biggest cause célèbre of the Japanese art world at the time after Genpei Akasegawa created copies of monetary bills for an exhibition in early 1963. The ‘counterfeit’ notes were printed with information on the show and were clearly not proposed as false tender. Throughout 1963, Akasegawa continued to experiment with this fake cash motif by making an outlandishly enlarged version for the
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

final *Yomiuri Indépendant*. Eventually police arrived in 1964 to confiscate his work. He was ultimately charged the next year under an 1895 statute, alongside his printers and against a backdrop of other criminal counterfeiting incidents in the early 1960s. Significantly, he was not indicted for counterfeiting but for the much more ambiguous crime of ‘imitation’—accused of challenging the state by making a simulacrum, a copy that is aware of its own replicative nature. The subsequent trial lasted years.55

Akasegawa used the occasion to argue for the integrity of art itself; the artworks were copies, models—not forgeries. Here reproduction was being posited as anti-art. The establishment was bewildered by his flights of intellect, and their response was so risible that Akasegawa found himself supported by a host of thinkers and artists. Typically, the ever-playful Akasegawa turned the whole protracted trial into a series of provocative and cheeky artworks referencing the absurdity of such obviously fake notes being taken as real. The challenge of oppression represented the opportunity for more artistic ‘direct action’. The final ruling in 1970 fudged the situation and decreed Akasegawa both an innocent artist and a criminal. On top of being a huge waste of public resources, the case had literally put art on trial.

Akasegawa went on to focus on writing and satirical manga. Such fluidity between media was typical of the counterculture artists; they were rarely tied down to standard boundaries of discipline or genre. The carnivalesque gives way naturally to intermedia encounters. In this way, we have experimental composers like Toshi Ichiyanagi and Tōru Takemitsu producing ‘graphic scores’ in place of regular notation. Similarly, documentation and the avant-garde were blurred. In films like *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* it was frequently unclear what was real, what was staged—and what was meta-film.

The push was always for experimentation but not always in the direction you might expect. If intermedia took things sideways, there were also many going ‘backwards’—manifest in a preoccupation with the primitive and the ethnographic. It began with Tarō Okamoto and his fascination with ancient Jōmon-era pottery, but then also stretches through Metabolism, photography and the revival in interest in folklorist Kunio Yanagita’s work. Playwright and director Makoto Satō drew heavily on primordial Shintō tropes and imagery, penning a complex fantasy about Nezumi Kozō Jirokichi, the Robin Hood-like burglar who has entered Tokyo mythology. Such was the interest in the primordial and ancient among *angura* artists at the time that the theatre scholar David G. Goodman called it a ‘return of the gods’.56 Far from being merely regressive or nostalgic, this enquiry into rituals, mythical figures and the animistic was a response to the failures of
protest and revolution in the present. Faced with the disillusionment of the post-Anpo and post-Zenkyōtō world, people had no choice but to look to the pre-modern. Yet this was atavism as a positive, bold and subversive movement, not reactionary or nationalist.

Likewise, Ankoku Butoh, the ‘dance of utter darkness’ that was first created by Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata, developed a new physical language of unorthodox and untraditional dance movements. It celebrated darkness rather than corporeal beauty. Hijikata called his dancers terrorists; he may have even killed a live chicken on stage. Butoh was dance as shamanism; it was voodoo choreography. Hijikata said to dance Butoh was ‘to make gestures of the dead, to die again, to make the dead re-enact once more their deaths in their entirety—these are what I want to experience within me ... Although I’m not acquainted with Death, Death knows me.’

The physical and the raw were being pushed to new boundaries in the world of cinema as well. As we have already seen, ‘pink’ softcore porn films were sometimes among the most politically radical and challenging works to be released during the counterculture period. Distinctions were blurred between art, entertainment and titillation—and this alone was provocative and rebellious. And then when directors started throwing leftist messages into the mix, you had a very potent medium indeed. The experimentation with the erotic climaxed, if you will excuse the pun, with Nagisa Ōshima’s *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976), the film about Sada Abe and her lover, and which, with its unsimulated sex scenes, still makes it probably the most controversial Japanese film of all time. Condemned and commended in seemingly equal measure, Ōshima’s response to his offended critics was pure counterculture: ‘Nothing that is expressed is obscene. What is obscene is what is hidden.’

‘It is a special characteristic of Japanese culture that artists don’t get involved in politics,’ the museum director and curator Fumio Nanjō once claimed. The statement is patently ridiculous as any glance at even the cinema from the 1960s and 1970s will reveal: Ōshima’s output such as *Night and Fog in Japan*, pink cinema, or *Pitfall* (1962), the film about miners by Hiroshi Teshigahara and written by Kōbō Abe. Ōshima’s seemingly apolitical *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* was actually co-written by Masao Adachi, and we know how his career turned out.

It is true that some prominent figures were apolitical. Daidō Moriyama photographed anti-war protests in Shinjuku in his jagged style, but from the sidelines. He revelled in the shabby headiness of the atmosphere, yet
would never have joined in. But conversely, there is also the more overtly politicised photography of Shōmei Tōmatsu in his *Protest* series (1969) or his images of *hibakusha*.

To tar post-war counterculture and arts with the brush of the apolitical is to ignore the explicit activism of some of the main practitioners. Artists and writers such as Abe were directly involved in trying to organise workers and agitate. The performance art was not mere provocation; it was often politically sincere and many happenings were deliberately staged on May Day. In 1967, *Zero Jigen* performed as part of Kurohata’s (Black Flag) *National Memorial Ritual for the Late Chūnoshin Yui*, parading with gas masks in Shinjuku. Yui had been the elderly peace demonstrator who committed suicide in protest at the prime minister’s collusion with America in the conflict in Vietnam. Kurohata continued its requiem protest for Yui by re-staging his self-immolation with an effigy at Shinjuku Station’s West Exit. *Zero Jigen*’s members also once wore plastic masks modelled on busts of Agrippa and walked through Ginza waving Japanese national flags, lampooning the country’s amnesia as it re-established a national holiday in February with imperialist connotations.61

Radical politics were also present in music, such as rock bands like Zunō Keisatsu (Brain Police) and Les Rallizes Dénudés (whose bass player Moriaki Wakabayashi was one of the Yodogō hijackers), and even the popular *Sazae-san* manga by Machiko Hasegawa, while a thoroughly mainstream publication, still made efforts to explore social themes nearly 30 per cent of the time in 1970.62 From the 1950s, Hiroshi Nakamura’s paintings had portrayed directly political subjects, such as US bases in Japan, while Akasegawa’s cartoons and posters were caustically satirical, taking no prisoners on the Left or Right. Akasegawa also designed the vibrant cover for the first edition of a collection of Osamu Takita’s polemic in 1971 and created a poster for the propaganda film *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War*.

Tenjō Sajiki was declamatory apolitical (recall its aims, ‘to revolutionise real life without resorting to politics’), but other troupes in the *angura* scene certainly were not. Yoshiyuki Fukuda’s *Legend of the Witch* (1969) tells the story of two anarchists who allegedly plotted to kill the Emperor Meiji. Jūrō Kara’s *Shōsetsu Yui* (1968) took a famous anti-Tokugawa rebel from the seventeenth century and re-imagined him as a post-war dissident. Meanwhile, Kara’s *Matasaburō of the Wind* (1974), based on the Kenji Miyazawa novella, was performed in Syrian and Lebanese refugee camps at the behest of the PFLP, giving an anti-Zionist dimension to the play.63 Makoto Satō’s *The Killing of Blanqui, Spring in Shanghai* (1979) looked at
the Paris Commune and 26 February Incident. *Ismene* (1966) examined American power politics via the motifs of Coca-Cola and Antigone. *Find Hakamadare!* (1964) by Yoshiyuki Fukuda portrayed medieval peasants pretending to be a famed ‘social bandit’ in order to foment yonaoshi, since they realise they cannot rely on the real person to come. In the same way, the New Left was inventing its own new ideologies since the Old Left had let them down at Anpo. But in Fukuda’s prophetic play the peasants end up betraying their own rules and turning into deluded murderers.

The main leaders of the avant-garde had an uneasy relationship with the establishment. Some embraced mainstream opportunities and recognition when they came, either from commercial corners like Parco or from public coffers. The latter in particular threw out a big cash cow when it came to planning and devising the World Exposition in Osaka in 1970. The Banpaku, as it is abbreviated in Japanese, exposed the delicacy of the bond between state, corporations and art. It was a massive event and one with the resources to provide the unfettered visions of Metabolist architects and artists like Tarō Okamoto with enviably expansive parameters. But would publicity and generous fees come at the expense of integrity, through participating in an event deemed capitalist for its corporate sponsorship? The Expo was a national event and thus an extension of the Eisaku Satō administration, and was opened by the crown prince. By taking part, you were effectively aligning yourself with Anpo, the Vietnam War and imperialism.

The rise in individual consumerism established a precedent in the splurge that was the Expo. Built at a cost of an estimated $2.8 billion ($2 billion of which came from the public purse), most of the structures were torn down after the event was over. The park itself, though, was only a fraction of the cost—some $580 million—with the remaining budget spent on beefing up Osaka’s infrastructure to cope with the visitors to the smorgasbord in the Senri Hills. But at what a price: over a million tons of steel and half a million tons of ready-mixed concrete; 90,000 tons of water and 15 kilovolt amperes of electricity every day, not to mention the estimated 170 cows, 140 pigs, 300,000 eggs and 50,000 cups of ice cream consumed on a daily basis.64 ‘Peace and Progress for Mankind’ was the slogan. But was such expenditure ‘progress’?

The Banpaku ended up dividing the artistic community, with those who accepted commissions being seen as traitors to the true experimental causes, while others seized the chance to express their ideas on a budget unimaginable until then. Our ever-reliable provocateur Osamu Takita urged his disciples to rush the ‘hegemony’ of the Banpaku and occupy the
WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM

whole of the north Osaka area where the event was to be held.65 The Kansai wing of Beheiren, meanwhile, organised the Hanpaku (Anti-Expo) at Osaka Castle Park for five days to draw attention away from the spectacle and back to the suffering in Vietnam. A pacifist alternative expo, the few days over which its folk music, teach-ins, theatre performances and film screenings were held in August were ultimately a whimper to the roar of the actual Expo’s success the following year. Not only did the Banpaku prove a national phenomenon attended by tens of millions, it was arguably the greatest gathering of avant-garde art and architecture ever assembled and given mainstream limelight in Japan.

It did not pass without mishap, however. On 27 April 1970, the police were seen chasing a naked man around on the grass outside Okamoto’s Tower of the Sun, the landmark of the Banpaku. The streaker was a counter-culture artist called Kanji Itoi, or Dadakan, whose inspiration for his act of anarchy came when he read a newspaper article on a train as he passed through Osaka. The article explained that the tower was being occupied by a man who had barricaded himself inside wearing a helmet with Sekigun insignia. To show solidarity with the lonely rebel stuck up in the eye of the tower, Dadakan decided spontaneously to strip off. Itoi had also performed a similar protest for the Tokyo Olympics by pretending to be a torchbearer and running naked through the streets.66

Though there are arguments to be made that the participation of artists and architects was a case of ‘selling out’, the presence of genuinely forward-thinking artistic creativity at the fair is indisputable, and it can also be seen that the contributions of certain artists were actually a clever demonstration of how to smuggle highly provocative messages and formats into a mainstream event.

Debates over the institutionalisation of the arts continue to rage today, when festivals and public venues can do as much damage in containment as they can do good through patronage. As Tokyo’s arts transformed into counterculture for sophisticated consumers, some began to think beyond its periphery. Tadashi Suzuki, one of the leading figures from the angura scene, retreated to the mountains of Toga in Toyama. The unassuming small village suddenly found itself hosting Japan’s first international performing arts festival in 1982, an incredible bonanza of talent including Terayama, Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson, Tadeusz Kantor and many others. It is all the more remarkable when we consider that this was organised before the auspices of various government ministries or foundations began to finance arts events. In an era bereft of subsidy, this new sacred site for a purer artistic experience
flourished in the years that followed. While the veterans were pioneering a new *temenos* in the mountains, the ascendancy of Shibuya continued unabated with the opening of the Bunkamura—the ‘village of culture’—in 1989 as Japan’s first large ‘multi-purpose cultural facility’.

The death of Terayama in 1983 forms a neat point at which to cease a discussion of post-war experimental arts and counterculture. Needless to say, things did not just stop. Some of the participants took up sinecures but many are still active today, venerable elder statesmen of the arts, though whose output is viewed more with gentle nostalgia than genuine anticipation. And yet, there is a disquieting irony in how Jūrō Kara is now allowed to stage tent performances at Hanazono Shrine in Shinjuku and elsewhere not only without facing arrest by the police but with the full support and pleasure of the authorities for the cultural branding and prestige he brings. Tadanori Yokoo, the Shinjuku thief, is also now courted by officialdom and even has his own public museum—the stamp of respectability.
‘A nation of creators has become a nation of consumers,’ the writer and Japan observer Donald Richie remarked in 1992. The Bubble was a long goodbye to the era of struggle and strife, and Japan seemed to sink into apathetic smog—there was no need for mass movements when everyone was doing so well. Revolution was for the extremists of the 1970s, the fringe hard-core who refused to let go. Radicalism became the sanctuary of the oddball.

This was the economy’s halcyon days, the likes of which it would never know again. The Nikkei 225 stock index trebled in the forty-five months up to its zenith in December 1989. Japanese stocks were valued at $4 trillion, over 40 per cent of the equity market in the entire world. And then, it all crashed. In 1990, property values fell by as much as 60 per cent; in 1991, the value of stocks dropped 36 per cent. Things never bounced back: by the turn of the century, the stock exchange was still worth a phenomenal 80 per cent less than at its peak.

But the start of the so-called Lost Decade—actually an incredible misnomer, since it has now lasted over twenty-five years—did not bring a return of political anger and radicalism. Instead it engendered pessimism, timidity, pusillanimity; the deflation mindset became entrenched. The idea of the population being galvanised enough to take to the streets to protest the state of affairs seemed not merely a product of another age but a whole other country.

The start of the Lost Decade coincided neatly with a changeover on the Chrysanthemum Throne. Emperor Hirohito died in 1989 and was succeeded
by his son, Akihito, thus beginning the Heisei era. The Japan he would rule (in name, at least) was a different place. The common narrative has it that the collapse of the Bubble brought with it a demise of economic and social norms: no more jobs for life, a rise in temporary contract workers, property values plummeting to a fraction of their worth. The nation was a fiscal basket case and ‘What Happened to Japan’ a portent dangled by other governments in front of electorates whenever their latest economic pet strategy was criticised. This tidy arc has been questioned of late and certainly the casual visitor will find few signs that Tokyo today is ostensibly in its third ‘lost’ decade.

At one time, things had indeed looked bleak. The suicide rate soared; incidences of domestic violence and child abuse increased. Even the divorce rate went up and, to top it all off, the population was ageing. In the mid-1990s, the media went into a panic over delinquency; this time not the bōsōzoku but enjō kōsai, ‘compensated dating’ between schoolgirls and older businessmen. Crises beget miracles, and the malaise even led to a non-LDP government, a brief window snatched from the decades of conservative administration. But neither that coalition nor the returning yet intransigent LDP was able to stem the economic haemorrhage, or do anything effective to combat the chronic gaps in the welfare state that were emerging.

The myth of lifetime employment dissolved and an ‘ice age of employment’ set in, with younger people (the ‘lost generation’) finding it harder to land secure jobs. A new precarious class of so-called freeter was born, underemployed workers who hold uncertain and poorly paid positions. Japan’s economic collapse had produced a new species of working poor, including university graduates. Even worse, there were ‘internet café refugees’, whose income was so low and employment status so tenuous they could only afford to stay overnight in one of the micro booths that service netizens.

‘Traditional’ poverty and homelessness also increased, since day labourers were dependent on construction jobs and these were among the first to be curtailed when the economy wobbled. Areas like Kamagasaki in Osaka or Sanya in Tokyo are depressing slums, full of dosshouses and homeless guys sleeping rough. The districts had long been notorious, to the extent that Kamagasaki had even been renamed Airin in the 1960s in a naïve attempt to ameliorate social conditions (in much the same way that the Burakumin were rechristened ‘new citizens’ at the start of the Meiji period in the belief this would spell the beginning of an enlightened modern Japan without castes). Living standards in the flophouses remain dire; Kamagasaki is exploited by the mafia, who run the accommodation, construction crews and local gambling dens for the day labourers to lose their earnings.
During the 1970s, New Left activists were embedded among the *Lumpenproletariat* in Sanya and Kamagasaki. The underclass was a pet crusade of certain radicals who saw them, like the Ainu and Okinawans, as members of Japan’s wretched of the earth. According to Ryū Ōta’s *kyūminkakumeiron* theory, these oppressed peoples were ripe facilitators of future revolution.

As we saw in Chapter 9, Yoshimasa Kurokawa and Hisaichi Ugajin of the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Senzen’s Sasori cell had been part of Teihen Inkai, which produced pamphlets to propagandise and support the *yoseba* inhabitants. Another associate of Teihen Inkai, Shūji Funamoto, was placed on a police wanted list in 1974 after a bombing in Kamagasaki. He went underground, eventually committing suicide in 1975 by self-immolation in front of a US base in Okinawa, ahead of the crown prince’s visit to the prefecture.4

Masanori Wakamiya was a Sekigun member arrested in the police raid on Daibosatsutōge in 1969. He later claimed responsibility for the botched bomb attack on a police facility in Tokyo in October 1969. After serving nearly two years in prison, he turned from Marxism to anarchism and opened a noodles restaurant in Kamagasaki as a revolutionary base. ‘Sekigun Ramen’, the media dubbed it. Funamoto was a regular. Wakamiya was arrested again in 1972 for carrying out a bombing on a police substation in the area with his girlfriend. Released in 1986, he travelled to Peru but his picaresque life came to end in a random village when he was killed by guerrillas in 1990.5

An activist called Mitsuo Satō began to make a documentary about Sanya at a time when a right-wing gang was violently exerting its dominion in the ghetto, leading to confrontations with workers. Satō was stabbed and killed by a gangster on the streets of Sanya soon after he started filming in December 1984. The murderer then promptly went and surrendered himself to police. Satō had been a veteran of the University of Tokyo’s last stand at Yasuda Hall. He came to learn of the plight of the day labourer class in Sanya through activism in support of the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Senzen.6 In 1985, another activist, Kyōichi Yamaoka, completed Satō’s film, *YAMA—Attack to Attack*. Yamaoka was himself shot dead by a gangster in Shinjuku in early 1986.7

These dalliances by New Left activists had little long-term effect on the slums. The economic collapse at the end of the 1980s took away what little the underclass of day labourers had. Discontent boiled up in the 1990s with fresh riots, although these may have been instigated by the Yakuza to pun-
ISHISH the interfering police. The situation today in Kamagasaki remains an overlooked travesty.

Before there was 2011, there was 1995. January in this *annus horribilis* saw the Hanshin earthquake in Kobe claim more than 6,000 lives. The state and municipal response to the disaster was inept. The Self-Defence Forces and emergency services were outdone by the Yakuza, who opened the first soup kitchens in the destroyed city. It is even said the prime minister only heard about the catastrophe when he was told to turn on the television news.

But amid the destruction there was a glimmer of hope: the disaster galvanised a civil society that had been growing since the post-war period, and we finally witness the full flowering of post-Anpo ideals of the active *shimin* in the 1 million volunteers who poured into Kobe to assist in recovery operations. Much of this volunteering was thanks to the work of the burgeoning numbers of non-profit organisations in Japan. The government recognised the untapped potential of this new civil society and passed a law in 1998 to give NPOs legal status. Now such groups are leaders in activism, welfare and the arts. Civil disobedience has been active throughout the Heisei era over issues related to American bases, the construction state and the control of information, both public and private. The establishment only grudgingly gave into the campaigning for the latter by civic groups. After finally passing the Freedom of Information Law in 2001 the Defence Agency was then shockingly found to be abusing the new system to compile dossiers on 142 requestors of public information as part of surveillance of the ‘troublemakers’ who had wanted to see what the government was doing.

And then, after Kobe, came 20 March. Perhaps no other event has struck so chillingly into the everyday life of the Japanese. It hit commuters; it was brutal in its arbitrariness. It recalled the 1974 Mitsubishi Heavy Industries bombing, but it was even more callous. It was the attack on the Tokyo subway by Aum Shinrikyō.

That Monday morning should have been the start of an easy week; the next day was a national holiday. Five members of Aum, armed with sharpened umbrellas, dropped bags filled with the chemical agent sarin on to the floor of five subway trains on three lines in central Tokyo, piercing the bags during the height of the rush hour. The perpetrators then evacuated the trains safely, but in the following minutes other passengers and station attendants who came to help began to feel ill due to the effects of the released agent. Over 6,000 were injured, many permanently. Thirteen eventually died.
Aum launched this coordinated attack on Tokyo’s citizens and the government district of Kasumigaseki—through which some of the trains passed—because it was backed into a corner. Under threat from civil suits, investigation, TV attention and an upcoming police raid, it acted in a preemptive attack. Was it trying to ignite Armageddon? The cult had become obsessed with a future apocalypse, stockpiling chemicals and testing them as far away as Australia. It had purchased a Russian military helicopter and was attempting to procure nuclear arms, and even more worryingly, fifty-eight members of the Self-Defence Forces were found to be members of Aum. But despite Aum’s shocking crimes, its actions were often amateurish. The subway gassing was carried out with umbrellas and the helicopter could not even fly. The hastily organised Tokyo attack was more likely a desperate ploy to distract the authorities about to pounce on their headquarters. Most of its thousands of members, even the hard-core ones, knew nothing of its chemical arsenal.

Conservatives saw in the Aum incident the legacy of Zenkyōtō and 1968. Amid a media frenzy, the cult’s actions were pinned on New Left scapegoats, not least the ultimate self-destruction of Rengō Sekigun and the commune-like lifestyle of Yamagishi-kai. Though there is a precedent for millennial religious sects from before the war, there are certainly some comparable elements echoing the ‘drama’ of Rengō Sekigun—communal living, punishment and cruel asceticism, kidnapping and murdering apostates—and this parallel has been the subject of books and articles. Author Haruki Murakami said that Aum reminded him of the student movement—rebels who were rejecting the establishment: ‘the cult members were also saying “no” to Bubble-economy Japan and its superficiality.’ In fact, though, a better analogy than student radicals might be Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen, which like Aum essentially set out to destroy the fabric of Japanese society.

Except for one bodged election campaign, Aum was a non-political cult or religious sect rather than an ideological movement. Focused almost exclusively around its guru-like leader Shōkō Asahara, it had developed from being an esoteric yoga group to take on Indian Buddhist influences and then finally sought out something even more ambitious. It spent millions on the political campaign in 1990 and canvassed voters in Tokyo with dancing members in white robes, but its candidates overwhelmingly lost, garnering only a thousand or so votes each in constituencies with electorates of hundreds of thousands. This confirmed it as a thoroughly fringe group, even among fellow so-called ‘new religious movements’ (shin-
It retreated more into its own concocted fantasies and turned its attentions to pushing overseas to Russia, America, Taiwan and Europe, though it had only mixed success.

Francis Fukuyama’s famous pronouncement of the End of History in 1989 seems corroborated by Aum’s actions, which are characterised by nihilism rather than grand narrative. But the sociologist Shinji Miyadai disagreed with the analogy between Rengō Sekigun and Aum, emphasising two eschatological worldviews he felt had manifested in Japan in the late 1980s: a ‘post-nuclear war community’—growing in the popular consciousness through post-apocalyptic manga and anime—and the ‘never-ending everyday’. The latter condition was a hard one, since it was simultaneously both utopia and dystopia. This can be extended into the 1990s dichotomy between sarin and schoolgirls: banal Armageddon versus banal sexual exploitation. However, for all its uncertainty and unsettling elements, Miyadai champions the never-ending everyday as superior to redemption-by-endgame, as envisioned by Asahara. The ‘manual’ for getting over the inexplicable attack by Aum was to embrace today’s ‘immoral’ subcultures in all their Lost Decade ambivalence. ‘What is necessary for us is knowledge for living the never-ending everyday; within the never-ending everyday, not understanding what is good, the knowledge for living vaguely with a conscience.’

The 1970s and 1980s in Japan were infused with fantasies of Armageddon, most notably tales by the likes of science-fiction novelist Sakyō Komatsu. Many of his yarns were filmed, including Japan Sinks (1973), which depicted Japan’s total destruction by natural disaster. Despite its economic boom years, Japan seemed to seesaw from triumphs like the Osaka World Exposition—Komatsu was involved as a producer—and the futuristic-looking Metabolism movement, to more seismic and disturbing national experiences like the Yodogō hijacking and Asama-sansō. This oscillation of celebration, mass consumption and grandiose visions intermixed with trauma and the inexplicable seemed to create an appetite for uneasy minds buying up products branded as apocalyptic.

Usually classified as endemically irreligious, Japan does nevertheless have plenty of people looking for spiritual havens and connections, and Aum was noteworthy for its large number of young renunciates in its ranks. The logic goes that Aum and its harrowing attempt to insert a deus ex machina into daily life in Tokyo came about as a result of disaffected youth finding refuge with a guru at a time of uncertainty in the fallout from 1980s consumerism, against a backdrop of growing New Ageism, yoga and new
ARMAGEDDON IN TOKYO

religious sects. In short, cults had usurped the vacuum following the collapse of the New Left and political radicals, and likewise not filled by any other meaningful mainstream form of lifestyle. Of course, this interpretation is woefully simplistic and the development of the movements was a varied and nuanced process.

It is true that there had been a rise in spiritualism in the 1970s, so much so that translations of the prophecies of Nostradamus reached the best-seller lists, and the middle of the decade had seen the birth of the ‘new new religions’ (shin-shin-shūkyō)—a disputed categorisation which is used by some to label the second generation of modern religious movements, most notably Kōfuku no Kagaku (Happy Science). Aum is usually included with these groups, though in fact earlier ‘new religions’ had also surged and made large fiscal inroads, in particular Sōka Gakkai, previously persecuted during the wartime period. There was even a briefly popular ‘dancing religion’, Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō, led by a farmer’s wife. A 1951 law allowed religions to become special incorporated bodies with tax breaks and property, and this led to tens of thousands of organisations that were ostensibly ‘religions’ owning schools, hospitals, businesses and universities. Sōka Gakkai is notorious for its influence over the private sector, allegedly holding stakes in many major corporate groups, on top of its aggressive proselytising and political creeping.

The post-war new religions actually drew many of their followers from poorer and less privileged classes, as these people felt left behind, materially and spiritually. Aum, though, shocked because it recruited among graduates of elite universities—and from the young—who were disenchanted with mainstream society. It was distinct from its counterparts not only by its unique terrorist ambitions but also its demographic; the average age of the ‘full’ member—those who renounced all their worldly possessions—was twenty-seven years old, with 75 per cent of those holding this status being in their twenties and thirties. There were also many older members, of course, including doctors and professionals. And yet it is too easy to jump to pat conclusions about Aum. That it offered an alternative in the political and social void to potential dreamers and revolutionaries may have some truth, but surely only for a minority. The appeal of Aum for essentially ordinary younger people was no doubt comparable to other religions, and similar to situations in other countries, where religious followings furnish something better than lives in the rat race. Yet we should also recall that Aum, though expanding and determined, was significantly smaller—a mere 10,000 members—than fellow new and new-new religious
groups like Sōka Gakkai, Shinseikai, Agon Shū and Kōfuku no Kagaku. The direct and oft-cited link between millennial terrorism and utopianism with the student radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s is far too convenient. (Sōka Gakkai, for example, was rapidly expanding its youth membership in the early 1960s, long before students turned truly militant.) There can be no lucid explanation for behaviour and beliefs which defy straightforward analysis. Asahara, after all, was a nearly blind man who claimed he could levitate and that his blood was sacred. Everything about the guru and his movement resists an exact answer.

Commentators like Murakami have emphasised the very ‘ordinariness’ of the conditions from which members were enticed, rather than any explicit lust for revolution or enlightenment. The banality of the members (and victims) is what is most revealing in Murakami’s collection of interviews with people connected to the attack, *Underground*. It suggests we are all in search of solace in some form. The nihonjinron approach would then posit that the absence at the time (and perhaps still) of a viable platform for people to seek out non-mainstream and alternative lifestyles led them towards such groups as Aum. However, it is worth remembering that Aum had partial success in Russia, which Asahara had targeted aggressively in the early 1990s with tours and by opening offices. (It claimed to have 30,000 ‘members’ there, though this figure is highly suspect.)

More than any evidence of ‘Japanese-ness’, what is most striking about Aum is its absurdity. Asahara was fond of singing and even recorded full musical numbers, including a ‘counting song’ with rather prescient lyrics: ‘I did not do it, I am innocent. Liar, do not deceive me.’ Aum also loved manga and anime, and published its own comic books and produced animation films as tools for proselytising. That this cartoonish world of wacky levitating gurus could then hoard doomsday weaponry and carry out attacks is made the more disturbing for its very ridiculousness. And in an echo of the televisual assassination of Inejirō Asanuma in 1960, Aum science minister Hideo Murai was stabbed to death by a gangster soon after the Tokyo subway gassing, right in front of news cameras. There are allegations that the hit was carried out on orders from Aum itself, as Murai knew too much.

The cult probably committed its first murder in 1989. In the same year Aum also approached a broadcaster and demanded it cancel a damning documentary it was set to air featuring a lawyer who had crusaded against the group. They instead offered a curated interview with Asahara. The broadcaster accepted, and the lawyer and his family were later kidnapped.
and murdered. The police were slow to look into it and the broadcaster kept silent until a proper investigation in 1996. Meanwhile, defectors were punished and killed. Other members were deprived of sleep, confined to cubicles and forced to listen to recordings of Asahara’s lessons. Sometimes drinks were laced with LSD. (We should not exaggerate, though. The majority of members were not residing in the communes and those who did mostly stayed happily at the voluntary centres.)

Aum made several small, abortive chemical attacks on state targets in the early 1990s. The police did not initially link Aum to a sarin attack at a district court in Matsumoto in 1994, which killed eight, even though the court had been conducting a trial challenging Aum’s land purchases. Residents near Aum properties where chemicals were being produced had also complained. Not only does this show that the police response to domestic terrorism from unexpected quarters was once again found lacking, it also tells us that far from being a ‘doomsday cult’ seeking to initiate Armageddon, Aum tended to act defensively. When threatened, it attacked.

Needless to say, in the aftermath of the Tokyo incident, the police reaction was more decisive, putting into effect its earlier planned raid. Thousands of police swooped on Aum facilities two days later, but there then followed a limbo of intense speculation about the group’s responsibility. While Aum continued to deny involvement and claim an anti-Aum conspiracy, yet again it went on the offensive. Murai was killed. Police chief Takaji Kunimatsu was shot and there was another attempted gassing at Shinjuku Station. It also allegedly sent a mail bomb to the Tokyo governor’s office. Putting on a show of force, the police deployed 60,000 officers on the streets and began to arrest hundreds of members as part of a methodical process of investigation. Even former and minor members might be called in for interrogations and asked if they would trample on images of Asahara, just as Japanese Christians had been made to step on icons of Christ and the Madonna by the Shōgun’s police. Eventually it culminated in the arrest of Asahara in May.

The government responded as well, later that year making Aum the first religion to be stripped of its corporate status and privileges, bankrupting the organisation. It then cracked down on religions, penalising and investigating at least one other ‘suspicious’ religion while also passing two new laws to allow the authorities to control worrisome groups like Aum better, and enforce greater financial transparency. Police had previously been hesitant about investigating religions due to the taint of pre-war persecution, but this was far less the case now. It was the end of the age of innocence for Japan’s new religious movements.
DISSENTING JAPAN

Law and order were established again, one might think. Despite the state repression and its members being shunned by the public—with children unable to attend regular schools—Aum survived. It continues to exist, shorn of its religious corporation status and with a new name (Aleph), and is still attractive to some. It was running businesses and shops soon after its nadir in order to recover solvency. Some older members are even said to have returned to the fold. Aleph and a further splinter group remain under police surveillance, though the police’s earlier reign of incompetency in regards to Aum did not terminate when they eventually bagged the leader. Several senior Aum figures remained fugitives for years. One, Makoto Hirata, tried to surrender himself to police but was actually turned away and forced to visit another Tokyo police station before someone would take him into custody. This embarrassing episode was countered with another massive show of force of officers in stations and on the streets, culminating in a civilian tip-off that led to the arrest of two final fugitives in 2012, after they had been leading ordinary lives on the run for nearly two decades.

The OECD reported that inequality in Japan rose 13 per cent between the mid-1980s and 2000, with a 5 per cent increase in absolute poverty. Poverty has gone up a further 15 per cent since 2000. As welfare recipients hit a new sixty-year high in 2011, the pension fund-draining ageing society and corporate salary-guzzling Baby Boomers (older employees automatically get better wages) exacerbated cash flow for both state and private sector. The LDP’s neoliberal deregulation of the labour market also aggravated disparity. By 2007, the number of working poor earning ¥2 million or less—the poverty line, less than half an average salary—had risen to over 10 million, out of a work force of 65 million.

In 2004, some people started the first Freeter May Day rally, a sort of indie demo-cum-street party, ostensibly to raise awareness of the plight of freeter in Japan on the traditional day for labour protests. In contrast to conventional May Day union events, the mood was positive; they danced behind a music truck on the street rather than chanting angry slogans, and it finished with a boogie at a nightclub.

It is an example of the so-called freeter activism that had emerged in the late 1980s and then blossomed during the next decade. The precariat, let down by the collapse of social norms when the nation woke up from its Bubble dream, began to search for alternative lifestyles and, alongside this, they also invented new forms of protest free of the dogma and taint of the New Left. Distinct from the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s as
ARMAGEDDON IN TOKYO

well as the civic movements, freeter activism was typified by ‘sound demos’, a term which first appeared in 2003 to describe music- and dance-based protests. There is genuine dissent under the music trucks and floats, but the vibe of the events is fun rather than accusatory. This was irreverent slackerism; counterculture with only loose political trappings. And whereas the previous generation had a fixation on manga comic books and pop songs, freeter protestors’ penchant was dance, rave music and anime. A freeter demo would invariably feature a healthy dose of cosplay among the participants, though dressing up need not lessen the sincerity of their actions. They were performing the protest.23

The New Left, marked as it was by ideology and hierarchy, would look at the freeter and compare them to the singing and dancing JCP Minsei, though freeter activism cannot be disparaged as non-radical—it is just a very different kind of radicalism. Less Minsei, its spirit is closer to ee janai ka and other historical forms of social unrest and protest through dance and music.24 Though its mindset might at times be far removed, it still occupied the public space like student groups in the 1960s and 1970s. Freeter squatted on campuses or held hunger strikes to protest labour conditions. Freeter activism could also be very provocative. The anarchist punk band Aki no Arashi (Autumn Storm) played guerrilla gigs at Harajuku, a centre for cosplay subculture and youth fashion which also borders Meiji Shrine, a site with strong imperial connections. Just after Hirohito had died in early 1989, Aki no Arashi performed anti-emperor songs here, becoming the target for rightists and police in the process.25

Numerous independent freeter unions and counter-spaces sprang up to meet the needs of this unconventional working class, a new Lumpen proletariat, though typically it was as celebratory as combative—a cultural movement rousing people behind the banner of their poverty and alterness. When Shibuya ward controversially sold the naming rights to Miyashita Park in central Tokyo to Nike in order to upgrade the park into a classy sports facility, it provoked anger from the homeless residing there and also responses from concerned young bohemians fluidly mixing art, music and protest. Activism was now creative.

The 2008 global economic crisis then brought renewed hardship in Japan. The downturn in the economy hit the day labourers and temps first, and bearing the brunt meant sleeping outside and potentially freezing to death in winter. This was manifest most spectacularly in the Haken Mura (‘Despatch Worker Village’), a veritable village of the damned that was erected over New Year in 2008–9. The tent village and soup kitchen in Hibiya

273
DISSENTING JAPAN

Park was staged and orchestrated by twenty non-profits and other organisations for maximum publicity to highlight the plight of the homeless and working poor, people so wretched they had nowhere to stay during the traditionally family-oriented time of year in Japan. It was a media sensation and forced the government to push ahead with stopgap measures.

Though it remains methodically watched by authorities and always appears in the annual police white paper (and was even bugged during the late 1980s), the Japanese Communist Party has thrown off the yoke the middle word in its name consigns. With its history as a suppressed party, it naturally assumed certain lobbying roles: champion of the precariat, constant supporter of the pacifist Constitution amid calls to have it revised, crusader for Okinawa against US bases and opponent of consumption tax hikes to pay for the ageing society.

Now matured into a fully mainstream political entity, the JCP’s branding proved auspicious in the climate of social fear. Subscriptions to the party newspaper, Akahata, peaked at 3.5 million in 1980 and then fell, but bounded back to 1.6 million by 2008. The Lost Decade and the new global economic meltdown were steering people to what was now a very realistic and accessible left-wing party. Membership jumped to 410,000; at one point in 2007 it was gaining 1,000 new members per month, and mostly from the under-thirties. The LDP, on the other hand, though over twice as large, was down to a fifth of its height and populated by senior citizens. The JCP also reported membership rises in late 2013, no doubt a benefit of growing discontent with the policies of Shinzō Abe’s government.

As Japan seemed to be sliding into a brave new world of social disparity and civil powerlessness, there was a renaissance of interest in the bygone era of political activism. Das Kapital was adapted into a manga in 2008, while Communist writer Takiji Kobayashi’s 1929 proletariat novel about fishermen exploitation, Kanikōsen (The Crab Cannery Ship), despite being written in an impenetrable vernacular and with its political colours worn bluntly on its sleeves, seemed to speak to the disaffected post-Lehman readers. It was re-issued in 2008 and became a surprise bestseller, shifting 600,000 copies. It was later adapted into a comic book, and a new film version released in 2009, followed by an updated English translation.

The rediscovery of the 1960s and 1970s was prominent in the success of Kōji Wakamatsu’s film about Rengō Sekigun. Wakamatsu was not the first to turn the self-destruction of the radical group into cinema, but he was by far the most qualified director of his generation to do so, given his intimate,
ARMAGEDDON IN TOKYO

arguably complicit connections to the New Left. Disgusted by a previous film that showed the events of the Asama-sansō siege only from the police perspective, he set out to make his magnum opus, a three-hour semi-documentary epic that traced the formation of the group, their retreat into the mountains and the final reckoning at the lodge. To do it, he sold his cinema in Nagoya and used his own home for filming. Wakamatsu’s United Red Army came out around the same time as several related films, including adaptations of My Back Pages (2011) and 69 (2004).

Outside of celluloid, the post-Bubble interest in the previous period of radicalism can be seen in revivals of Betsuyaku’s Zō in 2010 and 2013 at the New National Theatre, Tokyo, while the same venue staged a play, Enemy (2010) by Ryūta Hōrai, themed around former Sanrizuka protest veterans facing up to how their fortunes have worked out four decades on from their spell of activism. Naoki Yamamoto wrote a manga, Red (2007–14), inspired by Rengō Sekigun, while sociologist Eiji Oguma’s monumental two-volume 1968 won the Kadokawa Culture Promotion Foundation Academic Award in 2010 and became a bestseller. Former Zenkyōtō activists formed organisations and alumni groups to make records of what had happened forty years before. Mountains of books were published; everyone had a memoir in them, though many books were also written by people born long after the Zenkyōtō movement and bring fresh perspectives to the history.
The manifold strains of Japanese ultra-nationalism did not die when Yukio Mishima stuck a blade in his belly in 1970. At the turn of the century, there were said to be by police as many as 100,000 members of some 1,000 ultra-nationalist organisations, plus many more ‘invisible’ members. The far-right groups themselves are anything but invisible. The *uyoku dantai* (right-wing groups) are frequent sights in public places, especially on certain anniversaries and holidays. Conspicuousness is central to their existence, since they have few concrete political aims. They are agitators in the most oral of senses. Their large all-black propaganda vans (*gaisensha*) are like carnival floats that roar through large cities, blaring out traditional anthems and loud slogans railing against the cause of the day. Major streets like Midōsuji, which runs from north to south across central Osaka and culminates at the Korean consulate, become parade grounds, with the vans audible long before finally coming into view. In 2013 alone there were some 680 propaganda vans mobilised in demos against the government, and over double that in protests against China.

Making themselves heard all the time creates a nuisance, known as *meiwaku* in Japanese, a more offensive act than in other cultures. Causing *meiwaku* to your neighbours or to your fellow passengers on a train, for example, is frowned upon. The *uyoku dantai* are troublemakers who not only do not care about *meiwaku*, but actively seek it out. Due to this, the rightists are relegated to a fringe subculture, a known but unpopular minority group. They are poltergeists. Even the word *uyoku*, which strictly
speaking means only ‘right wing’, has come to convey extremism, as opposed to simply right of centre. Their meiwaku is tolerated by the public since confrontation would merely necessitate argument. Ignoring the uyoku is easier than complaining. The ultra-nationalists themselves are not oblivious to this. ‘The people on the streets,’ one remarked, ‘almost all of them aren’t listening to me. But who cares? It’s fine if just the people who understand get it.’ During 1995, the rather prim citizens of Kyoto only called their city office four times to grumble about noise caused by gaisensha. However, there were many more calls about frogs croaking loudly. When the meiwaku is judged to have gone too far, the police act. Gaisensha are stopped for noise pollution misdemeanours dozens of times a year. (The ultra-nationalists’ sound trucks also have a mainstream counterpart: ordinary election campaigning in Japan is dominated by vans which drive around the streets, endlessly promulgating slogans and the candidate’s name through speakers to voters inside their homes.)

The truth is that the police more or less condone the far Right, as they know the disunity of the groups keeps them weak. There is no threat of a full-scale right-wing revolution. Some 30 per cent of attacks have been laid at the doorstep of the rightists since 1945 but the number of arrests among left-wing radicals and activists was higher by a ratio of 3.59 in 1975 and 1.97 in 1980. Significantly, though, while the population of leftist groups fell, the number of uyoku groups actually increased in the 1980s from 550 to 840 (overall membership itself did not necessarily grow). And it is not just the police. When a leading politician is discovered to have embarked on a scheme that is tantamount to treason, most people at the least expect him or her to face repercussions. However, Justice Minister Tokutarō Kimura, who had attempted to form a 200,000-strong secret neo-nationalist army with gangsters and uyoku thugs, was not disgraced when he was exposed in the 1950s. Quite the contrary, he was made head of the Self-Defence Forces in 1954.

Only a fraction of extreme rightists make their living solely from their activism. These are the people who organise the trucks to parade around the cities, or who provide other ‘services’ such as bodyguards or debt collectors. Most rightists are part-timers, working a regular job alongside their contributions to uyoku enterprises. These kinds of rightists are often employed in the construction, transportation, real estate and sex industries. As many of these overlap with the domains of the Yakuza, it further heightens the association between the two in the eyes of ordinary citizens.

The make-up of the uyoku has changed as the older pre-war leaders died off. Since the 1970s, a new far-right movement emerged with fewer connec-
tions to the criminal world and new agendas. Whereas the radical leftists largely self-destructed in the early 1970s, these rightist groups continue to deliver intermittent shockwaves to Japanese society. In 1977, Keidanren, the Japanese Business Federation, was attacked by rightists with shotguns and swords protesting corporate profiteering, especially business cooperation with the USSR. This incident marked the full arrival of the shin-uyoku, the ‘New Right’. Developing out of a right-wing element of the student movement known as minzoku-ha (ethnicists, a label sometimes used interchangeably with shin-uyoku), which was distinct from the regular right-wing sports students who battled the far-left activists, it is best represented by younger and more media-friendly figures such as Kunio Suzuki. Suzuki is an intellectual who has befriended and worked with those on the Left, including even Ryū Ōta. He gave up activism to work for a newspaper but was inspired to return after the suicide of Yukio Mishima in 1970 (he had known Masakatsu Morita).

The Keidanren attack shocked the business world; it was the first incident of its kind by the Right and no one had expected it. Whereas previously the uyoku could be neatly pigeonholed, now their targets were converging with the Left’s: they were attacking the establishment. Until the minzoku-ha, the far Right had all mostly supported the post-war institutions as the lesser of two evils in order to shore up Japan against the threat from the Left. In the post-war period there had been some ninety incidents by rightists. But other than a handful of individual attacks on politicians and some suicides, most had been directed at the Left. Certain ideologies remained constant between Old and New Right: shin-uyoku ultra-nationalists were committed to fighting communism and Russia’s sovereignty over the Northern Territories, as well as promoting the purity of the Japanese race and the emperor. But they were also opposed to the post-war system imposed by America and to flagrant capitalism. Now the leftists were in decline, the foes were corporate exploitation and political corruption.

Shūsuke Nomura, the leader of the Keidanren attack, received a six-year prison sentence. He and his three accomplices took hostages for several hours but were eventually persuaded to surrender by Yukio Mishima’s widow. (Two of the raiders were former members of Tate no Kai.) Nomura had previously served twelve years for an arson attack on the home of politician Ichirō Kōno in 1963, when he had been just eighteen years old. Nomura’s reputation as a dangerous loner was put in stone by the finale of his life. When the left-leaning Asahi Shimbun mocked him in a cartoon, he went to the newspaper’s offices for a meeting with the executives in 1993.
After chatting together congenially, the staff tried to round up the encounter. Nomura said quietly: ‘I didn’t come here today just for such frivolous things.’ Then he took off his coat and extracted two pistols. He sat in the classic Japanese seiza seating position on the floor, facing the Imperial Palace, and then shot himself twice.9

The year before the Keidanren attack, it emerged that the American military aircraft company Lockheed had paid millions of dollars to the offices of Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka as bribes for major contracts. The Lockheed scandal is made more complex, though, by the involvement of Yoshio Kodama, a senior member of the ultra-nationalist world. Kodama represented the previous generation of uyoku, which moved very freely between the Yakuza and ultra-nationalism. A regular but sinister go-between figure, Kodama was hired to broker deals between mafia families and he even worked with the CIA at one point. It was Kodama whom the LDP had turned to when they needed help with Eisenhower’s security during the Anpo crisis. Kodama had also received large amounts of money from Lockheed as a consultancy fee to aid with securing the contracts. Kodama had helped disrupt shareholder meetings, and planted rumours to discredit the head of All Nippon Airways, who was against a deal with Lockheed.

Kodama was never prosecuted for his role in the scandal, but when it became public that he had evaded a small fortune’s worth in taxes he faced criticism even from nationalists of the same generation. Kodama did not care about sincerity or politics when there was money at stake. One response to Kodama’s involvement in the intrigue once again throws up the leitmotif of the absurd. Mitsuyasu Maeno, a porn actor with nationalist sympathies, had hired a small plane from an airport on the outskirts of Tokyo. He arrived at the runway wearing the uniform of a Kamikaze pilot, complete with headband and Rising Sun insignia. But Maeno’s target was not an American battleship in the Pacific theatre of war but Yoshio Kodama’s home in Setagaya, west Tokyo. Outraged at Kodama’s behaviour, the eccentric thespian took off and then succeeded in crashing his plane into the house. However, his suicidal bid to take out the wrongdoer was in vain, since the elderly Kodama was miraculously unhurt in the incident, though one suspects his reputation, what was left of it, went up in flames along with the plane.

The rightist threat continued through the height of the Bubble years. In 1987, two branches of Sumitomo Bank were attacked, and in the same year Taro Ando, chairman of Sumitomo Realty & Development, was attacked at his home. Ando later infuriated his three assailants who were arrested by
claiming their motives had been merely financial. Though some accused the rightists of riding on the bandwagon of environmental activism, in their eyes they were sincerely protesting Sumitomo’s aggressive purchasing tactics and its pursuit of a property empire that was destroying the Japanese countryside. Like the Keidanren raid (and, of course, the Mishima incident), the perpetrators and their contemporaries were always aware of the futility and ineffectiveness of their actions; it was self-sacrifice in order to make a statement in as public a way as possible.

The left-wing press remained a frequent target, such as the Asahi Shimbun in 1987. Both the headquarters in Tokyo and a dormitory for Asahi staff in Nagoya were attacked, while the assault on the Hanshin bureau left one journalist shot and killed, and another seriously injured. Asahi was well known as no friend of the ultra-nationalists, but even leading figures from the New Right such as Kunio Suzuki have stated that the Asahi attack was not genuine rightist extremism. This he characterises as being ‘tearful terrorism’ ending typically with suicide, whereas the perpetrators of the Asahi murder came from the underworld (yami) and disappeared into it. It was an indiscriminate targeting of lowly journalists, aiming to kill, rather than a more considered strike at the top, which was the usual strategy of the Right.¹⁰

More direct political attacks are perennial favourites: in 1978 there was an attempt on the life of former Prime Minister Masayoshi Ōhira, an arson attack on the Kobe US consulate in 1981, and other attacks on the Osaka Soviet mission in 1983 and the US embassy in 1984. Former Prime Minister Morihito Hosokawa, the first Japanese statesman to issue a national apology for Japan’s wartime activities, was attacked in 1994. In 2006, the politician Koichi Katō’s home was attacked and the rightist responsible ended up stabbing himself. However, other than a series of incidents in 2003 and 2004 by one armed uyoku group that led to ninety-one arrests, there have been few serious right-wing incidents in the current century classified by the police as ‘terrorist’ or ‘guerrilla’, typically less than ten a year and relatively minor disturbances. The numbers of arrests are also fairly stable, though much higher (under 2,000 per year), including minor crimes like disturbing the peace.¹¹

By far, the most infamous of these sporadic flare-ups of violence, though, is the attempted assassination of Hitoshi Motoshima, the mayor of Nagasaki, who was shot after stating that Emperor Hirohito bore some responsibility for the war. He said this at the most sensitive of times when the emperor was dying and the nation was in a limbo period of self-restraint called jishuku (a
similar situation followed the 2011 earthquake and tsunami). Motoshima was a small man, a conservative and a Christian. This unlikely dissident found himself suddenly under police guard and living off instant noodles, he and his family unable to go about their normal lives. But he refused to apologise or retract his statements, instead making new ones that were even more explicit. Right-wing black vans blared through Nagasaki promising retribution but he also received support from the public. Some 300,000 letters were sent to him, overwhelmingly in agreement, and some of them were collected into a book and published, becoming a minor bestseller. A further 370,000 signatures were collected in support.

In January 1990, just after the year of mourning for the emperor had come to an end, and also his police protection, Motoshima was shot in the back. He survived and stood for re-election in 1991 without the backing of his previous conservative overseers, winning narrowly. The accidental hero who got caught up in a maelstrom retained his plucky outlook. Commentators and opponents argued that it was his Catholicism that meant he was willing to stick his neck out. But that the mayor of Hiroshima at the time, who was also a Christian and whose city had suffered even more than Nagasaki, refused to defend or second his brethren’s stance indicates that this was more an act of spontaneous personal moral outrage.12

To call Yasukuni Shrine in central Tokyo contentious would be an understatement. The solemn shrine, which houses millions of Japanese war dead, including convicted war criminals, and also a highly revisionist museum, is the most controversial place in the country. It became especially incendiary during the regime of Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi, who chose to pay official visits of worship to the shrine, to the horror of Japan’s Asian neighbours, who had suffered immensely during its former days of empire-building.

Yasukuni has become a sacred place for the far Right, a sanctum for their myths of sacrifice and militarism, the mystique of Japanese blood. Contrary to popular perception, Japan has at times issued official apologies for its record during the war. But the unique melange of holiness, memorial and reverence denoted by Yasukuni continues to make it abhorrent to Korea, Taiwan and China, and places a strain on foreign relations even more than the to-and-fro of trade agreements.

And so any documentary called YASUKUNI was always likely to cause trouble, but when it is also directed by a Chinese man, the hornet’s nest is going to be well and truly stirred. Long-time Japan resident Ying Li made
his film over several years with a Japanese crew and, incredibly, subsidies from public bodies.

When, after much delay, it was released amid immense controversy in 2008, what was so shocking about the film was its relative neutrality. Aside from a flurry of archive film and photographs at the end linking the Shōwa emperor, the invasion of China and the shrine today, the film does not seem to take a full stand. There is no narration and it merely purports to feature objective footage of Koizumi visiting the shrine one day, and on another, protestors from Japanese and Taiwanese groups, and even a Buddhist man asking, very politely, for the shrine authorities to remove his father’s soul from the sanctum.

Militarist figures appear, especially on 15 August (V-J Day), though the older men marching and flag-carrying appear austere and ritualistic in contrast to the brash and aggressive screeching of the younger rightists. When a protestor tries to disrupt a ceremony, he is attacked by ultranationalists. It quickly becomes a free-for-all as they bray and chase the intruder out, accusing him wrongly of being Chinese (meanwhile, Li is filming). The young man, bloodied and shouting, is carted off by police into their waiting car, taken away to an uncertain fate.

V-J Day is always a pantomime at Yasukuni. You can spot them from afar, dozens of rightists dressed up in jump suits, sweat dripping from their shaven heads in the harsh Japanese summer sun, nominally restrained by police as they threaten to beat up anyone who dares turn up to protest against the shrine. There are rules to this game. Just as when they line the route of a leftist demo, they let themselves be held back by the police as they feign violence. Only in extreme circumstances would their performance stop and an actual attack begin. For the most part, they are content to make a lot of huff and puff, scream at the desecrator, but never cross the line. There is an unwritten understanding between the police and the uyoku at these events. Something of an icon of the rightist thug recently has been Shinichi Kamijō, beefy and jump-suited, and whose fury on 15 August is notorious. He certainly looks the part, with ‘DEATH’ (in English) and ‘4’ (in Japanese, which also means death) tattooed on the back of his shaven head. He may even have Nazi insignia on his uniform for good measure.

Older men dressed up in military uniforms and drilling are a common sight at Yasukuni, though one that feels more Dad’s Army than genuine ultra-nationalism. I was once at the shrine in the evening and stumbled upon such a group of gentlemen, none of them spring chickens but also not old enough to have actually fought in the war. One man was trying out
poses for holding his flag in the correct position. Our eyes met and it seemed there was an awkward moment of mutual recognition of just how silly this all was. Like Yukio Mishima, they were playing soldiers.

Cosplay is a famous element in Japanese youth subculture, but it seems to feature in right-wing personalities as well. Not all uyoku are old and not all are men either. Rightists can come in a variety of guises in Japan, even the form of cosplay female rock singers. These days known as a writer, campaigner for the working poor and precariat, and regular columnist for the Japan edition of The Big Issue, Karin Amamiya used to work as a hostess while pursuing her real passion at the time: ultra-nationalism. She was the singer in the band The Revolutionary Truth with Hidehito Itō. Together they would perform dressed up in uniforms and other costumes in front of large Japanese flags, shouting out didactic lyrics against a cacophony of guitar noise. What could be heard were phrases like ‘Love Live the Emperor!’ and ‘Pearl Harbor was our only choice!’ In addition to their musical activism, which frequently saw them kicked out of venues, the pair would give speeches in the streets, ignored by passersby.

The odd couple was the subject matter for another film, Atarashii kamisama (The New God) in 1999, shot on a shoestring by Yutaka Tsuchiya, a director who had previously made a documentary about the emperor’s war guilt. Not a match made in heaven, one would think, but the documentary intriguingly charts the relationship between the artist and his two subjects, and in particular between Tsuchiya and Amamiya. A curious love triangle develops, with Amamiya realising that the director has a crush on her and by the end she also feels the same way about him. Tsuchiya, despite differences in ideology, comes to be a firm supporter of the band and, after the film was finished, he and Amamiya even got married.

These are ultra-nationalists who are human, fragile but very likable. A rightist once speculated that marriages among members of uyoku dantai were shorter and divorces more frequent than average. Itō confesses that he joined a rightist group to ‘quit being a nerd’, while Amamiya is vulnerable and suicidal, admitting she is ‘easily brainwashed’. (She was also initially attracted to the Aum cult.) After some time she starts to feel that she is not needed by the uyoku dantai they belong to (Issui-kai, founded by Kunio Suzuki), and leaves it to focus on their music. Amamiya and Itō seem more like by-products of post-Bubble Japan than hard-core fascists, alienated from the society around them and seeking out a sense of community in political maxims. The needy Amamiya believes she was ‘saved’ by the right wing; it handed her the only way to live in ‘rotten’ Japan. In such
insecure times, the young people require a means to escape their lives, somewhere to belong. With the emperor now a mere human like them and Heisei-era Japan offering no succour, they need a new god.

As the political climate changed, so the traditional anti-Soviet attitude of the rightists naturally disappeared. The groups do continue to be ethnocentric and use any occasion to protest against the Koreans and Chinese. (And yet there are persistent rumours that uyoku groups themselves are populated by Korean Japanese, like local derivatives of the Self-Hating Jew.) Arguably, the stances are more political than racial. There are rightists who argue that blood is not as crucial as the essentialness of the imperial court.

After all, in ancient times, there were Korean immigrants to Japan, and certainly plenty of other tribes who assimilated with the people who became the modern ‘Japanese’ (and even the emperor acknowledged in a speech in 2001 that the Imperial Household has some Korean lineage). The archenemies of the far Right (shin-uyoku or traditional uyoku), then, are today leftists like internationalist socialists, the teachers’ unions which refuse to support the singing of the national anthem in schools, or anti-emperor campaigners.

The rise of social media platforms like Twitter—extremely popular in Japan—and bulletin boards like 2ch has meant that radicalism has gone cyber, the crucibles of public condemnation and hounding carried out in the digital auditorium. The increase in nationalist sentiments hauled in by the administrations of Junichirō Koizumi and Shinzō Abe, and the tensions over the Senkaku Islands and other territorial disputes between Japan and her neighbours have further stoked the cinders of xenophobia among netizens. A new term was coined, netto uyoku, cyber right-wingers: people who pour out rightist venom exclusively and ferociously online. Offline too, media outlets have noted a rise in ultra-nationalist activism by ordinary citizens protesting perceived Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese territorial incursions. At such demos, the customary black trucks of the extremists may not be visible, replaced by the banality of the everyman’s racism. Concurrently, new uyoku hate groups like Zaitokukai and Ishin Seitō Shinpū have emerged. Though obviously still very much minority and fringe groups, they are changing the cosmetic and ideology of the far Right, if not its genuine reach and influence.

These groups have been met by anti-racist counter-protests. There is another way to combat them, though. Minoru Torihada is the stage name of a comedian (the surname literally means ‘goose pimples’) who is a rare example of dissident and political lampooning. He dresses like an ultra-
nationalist and appears to live his act. Even his website is mocked up in faux rightist calligraphy, the selection of promotional video clips labelled in the menu as ‘propaganda’. His comic style being not only dangerous but decidedly non-mainstream in Japan, Torihada’s success is limited to cult status. Nevertheless, in his flippant and irreverent use of wartime militarist slogans and the lexicon of the far Right, he breaches taboos that few media commentators or newspaper editors dare, given the violent reprisals that have continued to occur since the post-war period. In a nation whose court never had a jester and a contemporary media that lacks satirists, Torihada serves as the bravest and most acerbic fool today.
The Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami on 11 March 2011 was a disaster on a scale almost akin to the apocalyptic scenario imagined in *Japan Sinks*. It destroyed 500 kilometres of coastline and 120,000 buildings. In the first few weeks that followed, there were over 15,000 dead and 8,000 missing; 150,000 were homeless and 4,000 roads devastated. Seventy-one bridges were gone and 580,000 residents displaced. The whole of Honshū, Japan’s largest island, was shifted 2.4 metres to the east. The costs of the damage were estimated at around ¥17 trillion ($211 billion) or even higher. And then there was Fukushima, the world’s worst nuclear power disaster since Chernobyl, which sparked global panic and the evacuation of 80,000 people living within 20 kilometres of the plant.¹ Japan had not experienced trauma like this for over sixty years.

But not only catastrophe, not simply heart-wrenching death and destruction; the disaster demonstrated civil society’s coming of age in terms of volunteering and activism, not to mention widespread protests the likes of which not seen since the 1970s. The precedent was Kobe. Between January 1995 and January 1996, 1,377,600 volunteers arrived in Kobe to help in the recovery, mostly in the first three months; 34 per cent were in their twenties; 33 per cent were university or college students; 52 per cent had no previous volunteering experience.²

Volunteers were also crucial to cleaning up the Nakhodka oil spill in 1997 off the coast of Japan, with some 274,600 helping out.³ The lessons of Kobe had been learnt and the government response to the 2011 crisis was effec-
tive this time. The coordination by the Self-Defence Forces, supported by the US military, oversaw a vastly improved and speedier rescue operation than the amateurish performance in 1995. The major difference, though, was that this disaster was not only natural; it was a manmade blunder too. The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant was one of Japan’s oldest atomic power plants and poorly maintained. Like all of Japan’s fifty-four reactors, it was located on the coast and vulnerable to quakes. More than the devastation of Mother Nature, it was this incompetency that came to define the Tōhoku disaster.

Up until 2011, 29 per cent of Japan’s electrical needs were supplied by its battalion of nuclear reactors. The story of Japan and nuclear power goes back to the World Exposition in 1970. Tsuruga Power Station in Fukui was Japan’s second atomic power plant and opened in time to supply electricity directly to the Osaka bonanza. The Exposition was, after all, a celebration of ‘progress and harmony’, and what could symbolise this better than the new clean energy? Fukushima followed in 1971, and then the so-called ‘nuclear village’, a chicane of relationships between power companies, government, civil servants, media, finance sector and universities, binding them all together in the profitable myth of safe atomic energy.

Who were the people who built this empire of energy during the 1970s? The ‘nuclear power gypsies’ were exploited construction workers subtracted multiple times, with cuts taken out of their wages by several power companies. Yakuza syndicates had their fingers in this very lucrative pie and the workers were often drawn from the Buraku class of untouchables, just as their forefathers had been relegated to tanning and other ‘dirty’ occupations. As the nuclear nation marched on, the use of subcontract labour for this dangerous work massively increased, from 1,670 in 1970 to 53,000 in 1986, 90 per cent of the workforce. This allowed the power companies to rotate workers who had reached their radiation dosage limit. Cancer-related mortalities for these workers may have been as much as six times above the norm.

After the disaster, a July 2011 poll indicated 77 per cent of the nation wanted nuclear energy phased out. It was the end of the dream. But the government has not listened. TEPCO, the power company responsible, still exists, and the reactors, though turned off initially, are slowly going back into operation. TEPCO is now a byword for corporate incompetency and invidiousness. It deliberately obfuscated during the height of the disaster and held back information from Prime Minister Naoto Kan, continually trying to discredit
the leader. The company already knew that Kan previously wanted to introduce renewable energy measures; he was a threat. This was confirmed when he announced Japan should phase out nuclear power. However, TEPCO’s sabotage had worked, and Kan’s administration, beset by infighting in his party even before Fukushima, only lasted a few more months. For Kan, a rare prime minister in Japan hailing not from a political dynasty but from grassroots campaigning, his greatest strength was also his greatest weakness. Precisely because he was not from the world of the bureaucrats or the politicos, he was unable to navigate the backroom reefs. And if Kan’s government had not seemed in charge of the situation, it was because no one was. TEPCO concealed important information about the meltdowns until the end of May, and it turned out they were not using the appropriate measuring equipment to record radiation. Though much of the global media panic has proved—for now, at least—unjustified, we would do well to remember that the government retained a blueprint for an emergency evacuation of Tokyo. Three years on, TEPCO had still not contained the leakages of radiated water flowing out into the sea.

In the face of such a disaster movie scenario, the nation seemed to rally around a slogan fed to it by the authorities. *Ganbare nippon* or *ganbarō nippon* (*Hang in there, Japan!*') soon became ubiquitous, appearing all over the public sphere. Government and business were quick to adopt the clarion and muster everyone for this tacit common cause. Language changed with the events of March 2011; almost overnight, everyone everywhere was talking about *shinsai* (earthquake disaster) and ‘3.11’ (11 March). *Ganbarō nippon* registered some 23 million Google search results six months after the disaster. And yet the slogan is a false one: it is the rhetoric of reconstruction and recovery—not revolution. The contradiction is right there in the lexicon; people were yearning for radical change. Japanese Google searches for ‘*saisei*’ (rebirth) and ‘Great Eastern Japan Disaster’ brought 27 million hits nine months after the earthquake, while ‘*kaikaku*’ (reform) produced even more, 261 million. Online and offline are different worlds, though. This was prominent when the LDP came back into power in 2012; their election slogan was ‘*nippon o torimodosu*’—‘bring back Japan’. The shibboleth of *ganbarō nippon* was one of fabricated unity, sweeping corporate iniquity under the carpet and looking strong again, epitomised by Tokyo’s successful bid for the 2020 Olympics. Not surprisingly, the slogan was later hijacked by anti-China protestors and other nationalist groups.

Cutting through the layers of buzzwords, the true success story of the recovery lies in the civil society, which was assisting victims within days.
Funds, donations and volunteers were immediately organised by non-profits and charities, and there was very clear communication between groups in order to avoid ‘nuisance’ volunteers. People used networks rather than turning up unsolicited.\(^7\) Cities established volunteer centres, staffed by NGOs. Prior to the quake, there had been just twenty-four such organisations in Iwate; six months later this had jumped to 360. Volunteers were streaming in from the start, with April seeing 150,000. Within the year, 935,000 volunteers had been to Fukushima, Iwate and Miyagi.\(^8\) The numbers of volunteers were actually lower than Kobe, but this was a very different disaster, far more remote from major cities.

There are issues with non-profits in Japan; there are too many with small memberships. Before the disaster, 67 per cent had fewer than twenty members and 50 per cent had fewer than twenty staffers, with just a fraction of groups engaging in nationwide activities.\(^9\) That said, by the turn of the century, there had been a threefold increase in volunteering in Japan since the 1980s. One in three Japanese were said to have volunteered and this surely climbed higher in the wake of the Tōhoku disaster.\(^10\) This is on par with France and the Netherlands, though lower than the UK and the United States. Heisei’s triumph, then, has been Japan’s ‘quiet’ transformation, to use Jeff Kingston’s phrase. Citizens are doing things themselves since the bureaucrats and politicians cannot be trusted to get it done. In such a cynical age, it is a measure of civilian confidence that people felt they could take to the streets to protest TEPCO and the government’s support for nuclear power. The issue is the ballot paper, which offers little viable alternative. As shown by the example of Tarō Yamamoto, an actor-turned-activist in the wake of the disaster, people will vote for someone who stands up for regular citizens’ fears. Yamamoto was elected to the House of Councillors in 2013 on an explicitly anti-nuclear power platform.

People like Yamamoto have been the leaders of a fresh wave of activism that sprung up in the aftermath of the quake, one which does not necessarily fit prior moulds of ‘radicalism’ in Japan but represents an interesting intersection of movements. In the same way that the 1960 Anpo protests engendered participation from unexpected corners and were broader than anything the country had seen until then, the anti-nuclear power protests that began in 2011 were the first such major wide-reaching campaign in decades. Not since the heights of the anti-Vietnam War or 1970 Anpo campaigns have such numbers been roused into demonstrating. The motivations were emotive; the stakes were literally on an unprecedented national scale. Much of it felt young and new, though, like the volunteerism, there
was a fluid connection to what had been developing under the surface for twenty years. For example, some of the non-profits involved in the Kobe recovery had fiercely anti-establishment roots before maturing into full-blown civic groups that were instrumental both in the Tōhoku clean-up and the protests. These include the Peace Boat, now a well-known environmentalist corps, though it and others had more fringe pasts, including links to bōsōzoku.\textsuperscript{14} Such groups were behind the organising of a series of demos between 10 and 12 June, which claimed an estimated 79,000 participants.\textsuperscript{15}

The protest movement took time to grow. An April 2011 sound truck parade at Kōenji attracted 15,000, while a march in front of TEPCO’s headquarters in June on the three-month anniversary pulled in a mere 1,000. It was not until September that momentum and anger had built sufficiently to impress. On 19 September, protestors in a 60,000-strong demo in Yoyogi Park included leading leftist and Nobel laureate Kenzaburō Ōe.\textsuperscript{16} It was the largest such political massing Tokyo had seen in decades.\textsuperscript{17}

And from here the movement began to pick up pace, especially with the re-starting of Ōi Nuclear Power Plant in Kansai keeping the issue burning in the public eye. Some young protestors began a hunger strike in Kasumigaseki, the heart of the government. A tent sit-in protest—nicknamed ‘Tent Plaza’—in front of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry also started in September 2011 and launched a legal challenge against the order to remove it. Umbrella groups like the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes organised successful demos such as the one on 22 June 2012, which attracted between 11,000 and 40,000 people.\textsuperscript{18} A week later, as the Ōi plant went into operation again, tens of thousands of protestors formed a 1 kilometre-long line outside the prime minister’s official residence. It was being touted as the ‘Hydrangea Revolution’. Not just Kenzaburō Ōe, leading figures in the music world such as Ryūichi Sakamoto also came out in support of the anti-nuclear campaign with No Nukes 2012, a concert held over two days in early July. The movement even garnered support from the far Right: Kunio Suzuki spoke out against nuclear power, as did ultra-nationalist mangaka Yoshinori Kobayashi. An Ipos survey found that opposition to nuclear power in Japan jumped 30 per cent in 2011 to 58 per cent, while a BBC GlobeScan poll in September 2011 said that only 6 per cent of the population were still in favour of atomic energy.\textsuperscript{19} Though large protests continued into 2013 and 2014, the movement peaked with the central Tokyo rally on 16 July 2012, which claimed 170,000 attendants.\textsuperscript{20}

And yet, for all this, some saw a conspiracy of silence on the part of the Japanese media, which appeared to downplay the protests. Needless to say,
many mainstream publications did report on the demos, though the way the media is structured around press clubs given exclusive access to government information means few seemed willing to assert too hostile a stance in their coverage. The corollary of this timidity was that no difficult questions were asked when most needed. One freelance journalist commented that he was astonished it took until late March before any reporters asked TEPCO about plutonium leaks.\(^{21}\) (There was a similar reluctance on the behalf of the media to report on the wave of anti-emperor protests that took place in 1990–1).\(^{22}\)

Weekly vigils began to happen on Friday nights outside the PM’s residence (the Kantei), snaking around the narrow hilly streets and stretching down to the corners of several blocks in Kasumigaseki. (The topography of the district and its narrow streets, though, makes it hard to assemble in large numbers, and police regularly restrict access to curb demonstration numbers.) If the miscellaneous mix of the protestors recalled Anpo, so did these vigils, with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda’s stone-faced snub resembling Kishi’s infamous indifference. The protestors were still there more than four years later, though by now the demographic skewed undeniably older, with most participants over forty. (Much of what seemed so novel about the largest rallies in 2012 was how young and ‘ordinary’ the demonstrators had been.) There are plenty of seasoned activists and fringe types, and it nonetheless feels vibrant and healthy enough, with a generous dose of drums, loudspeakers and art.

Music has been essential to the movement, including high-profile supporters like Sakamoto, but also edgier groups like Frying Dutchman. The early rally at Kōenji was significant since the area is known for its music scene and counterculture, and it was organised by the thrift shop Shirōto no Ran. Shirōto no Ran’s name translates as ‘Amateurs’ Riot’, which is as good a sobriquet for the post-Fukushima (and post-Bubble) protest culture as any. Its founders have created a collection of venues in Kōenji, including second-hand goods’ shops, online radio and a bar—a community of arts, retail and social issues. The April 2011 demo, the culmination of years of playful street activism by the ‘amateurs’, was politically sincere but also fun; it was something new—neither New Left nor Old Left, not even the spirit of volunteerism or civic activism of Heisei Japan. It was a continuation of the Freeter May Day, as much a festival and carnival as a rally. It was colourful but casual and inclusive, free of sects or preconceptions. Freeter activism found a natural new milieu in the anti-nuclear power movement, with DJs and rappers leading demo chants. Shirōto no Ran organised more
rave-like street protests. On 11 June 2011, another rowdy sound demo in Shinjuku created a liberated zone of 20,000 dancing protestors.

The new wave of protests was assisted and facilitated by social media, which played an active part in organising demos. Platforms like Twitter meant people were less dependent on traditional activist group structures and free to scan information individually rather than through the previous channels (group newsletters, organs), of which they might not even have been aware. The role of social media during the crisis was championed by numerous high-profile journalists as an example of how the digital sphere can make a real difference in spreading the word and mobilising help. The mayor of one town abandoned in the Fukushima exclusion zone chose YouTube to beseech the country for aid, while journalist Hajime Imai used Twitter to start a petition calling for a national referendum on nuclear power. It was taken on and propelled by people he had never met properly, and ended up collecting around 300,000 signatures—enough to be legally submitted to the governor of Tokyo, Shintarō Ishihara, though the ageing right-winger summarily dismissed it. Social media also proved a vital lifeline for people to communicate in the aftermath of the disaster, not least at times when regular telephone networks were flooded. The day of the earthquake itself saw 1.8 times the average number of tweets in Japan, while posts on mixi (a popular social media site) were eight times higher than normal in the immediate hour following the quake. There were adverse effects too, in what came to be termed shinsai-hai (getting ‘high’ from the disaster); at its best, social media created excitement and buzz, but also aggravated panic, misinformation, rumour, exhaustion and information overload.

The liberated, contagious and democratic nature of social media that made disseminating politicised messages and organising demos so fresh and successful was also, contradictorily, one of the reasons for the decline of the anti-nuclear movement, since it was so decentralised and lacking in standout leaders that it could dissipate with the casualness of an internet user’s whim coaxing them to keep on scrolling down the screen rather than click a link in their ever-updating feed. The absence of the affiliations and the factions that had so consumed the New Left in the preceding decades was both a strength and a weakness, as it fell victim to that now infamous foible of the digital era: people are lazy and easily distracted with so much at their fingertips. (The New Left and protest movements from the decades before Fukushima, on the other hand, never give up, as we have seen.)

The embracing of social media by the new generation of younger activists—no matter how briefly or otherwise—makes for an instructive com-
comparison with the way that Zenkyōtō also produced its own torrent of information, both in the leaflets at the time and then years later, in the mountains of memoirs and writings recounting the protest experience. The new anti-nuclear power movement provided an invigorating opportunity for these veterans to get involved, and New Left rallies today in Japan typically contain at least one contingent campaigning on the issue or related insignia tagged on to other flags and literature. This stretched right back, most memorably perhaps to the Skilled Veterans Corps for Fukushima, led by a graduate from the 1960 Anpo movement, who were willing to volunteer in clean-up work in the exclusion zone since their status now as retirees all but guaranteed radiation would do little to their long-term prospects: their nonchalant logic being that in the worst-case scenario they developed cancer, their lives would end naturally anyway before it became serious. Even nonpori former student protestors such as those from the Nihon University struggle, despite an interregnum unaligned to a specific leftist banner, were happy to rally behind the anti-TEPCO campaign.

Until 3.11, the problem of nuclear power safety had not been a major cause of New Left groups. After Fukushima, Chūkaku-ha presented the issue of nuclear power as part of its constant struggle against imperialism, capitalism and rationalisation. However, it is debatable whether or not the New Left demos and marches on the prerequisite, perennial causes were actually given renewed life by the badges from the anti-nuclear bandwagon. Though sometimes supplemented by freeter demo paraphernalia like drums and costumes, rallies are consistently populated by senior activists, with fresh blood inspired by the struggles of the Fukushima zeitgeist few and far between.

Nevertheless, police presence at New Left demos is still always very high, the riot police standing guard even when the protestors are pensioner age. For Chūkaku-ha rallies, security is also particularly tight on the part of the activists, who arrive muffled in masks and other means to disguise their appearance. In the case of a Chūkaku-ha gathering without a march, when the rally is finished, the participants file out quickly from the venue in elaborately orchestrated staggered departures, hounded the whole time by snapping police agents. They give as much as they get, shouting at the police and sometimes taking their own photos. The various groups then board multiple trains—having bought tickets in advance—changing several times to put the police off the trail. Marshalled by someone in the group, they may not know where they are being led until the exercise is over. In this way, embarking, disembarking and transferring in their dozens, they
evade their surveyors. Stunned *yajiuma* often gaze at wonder at the hundreds of masked men and women, typically over sixty, lining up along the streets to enter a station, harassed by the plainclothes police.

In fact, the addition of the *han-genpatsu* (anti-nuclear power) standard to the mix merely reinforced what had become apparent for years in New Left protests: they were ever more motley and disparate in their make-up. There was a place for everyone now, from Zengakuren student groups to refugees, foreign workers, ethnic Koreans, Burakumin, unionists, and so on. The police had succeeded in forcing the New Left into this circus-like bricolage of social freaks, underdogs and hard-liners through their suppressive tactics at demos over the past three decades, coupled with the inevitable ageing—but not mellowing—of the protestors. The New Left is content to be a persecuted minority since it provides a black-and-white moral compass: every arrest is ‘unjustified’, every raid yet another example of ‘oppression’. Even the language of the demos remains the same manner of strong, thrusting vocabulary, full of nouns pronounced with almost brutal intensity. It always feels so utterly different from the frequently artificial indirectness and gentility of ‘polite’ Japanese. This steadfast passion of the veteran activists would be admirable if not for the niggling fear it is reinforcing their fringe status.

At the major anti-nuclear power demos there had been lots of colourful banners but it had also been refreshing to see a relative unity of message, rather than the patchwork character of veteran New Left rallies today, where every sub-group has its own flag. (The organisers of some *han-genpatsu* demos consciously asked participants to concentrate purely on the anti-nuclear power banner.) The mood was more positive than New Left demos; the focus was on solidarity, on fun and music rather than anger and ideology. For a brief moment in 2011–12 the anti-nuclear crusade seemed like an Anpo-level renaissance of ordinary *shimin* and *freeter* activists being mobilised by new causes and means, but it proved all too transient. It is tempting to say it had a very ‘Japanese’ ephemerality.

When in 2012 Toshinao Sasaki published *Tōjisha no jidai*, it became an instant favourite with the literati. Its title translates as something like ‘The Era of Involved Parties’, though *tōjisha* is a tricky word that lacks an easy equivalent in English. In his book, Sasaki looks at the media and Japan’s failure now to be genuinely ‘involved’, the flaw of conditions such as its system of closed communities, a prime example being the press clubs through which the establishment communicates to the mass media. He
DISSENTING JAPAN

coins a phrase, ‘minority mania’ (*mainoritei hyōi*—hyōi might also be translated as ‘possession’), as a root of this drift away from being *tōjisha*. It is a state where people think they have a role in something but are in fact one step removed from true involvement. Sasaki looks back to the 1970s as a time when the Japanese began to lose their sense of *tōjisha*-ness, and pinpoints the prominent educated activists who were happy to act as spokespeople for silent victims and social minorities (remember also the 1967 self-immolation of Chūnoshin Yui, who was aware that as a ‘non-*tōjisha*’ what he was doing might be ‘derided’, but still had to act to protest Japan’s complicity in the Vietnam War). The activists took on the legitimacy to attack others while not actually being a genuinely concerned party in the issue. In turn, this became the situation today where social media platforms like Twitter can be used for good (organising civic activism) and bad (‘lynching’ people).

Sasaki traces this interest in minorities back to the initially uneasy relationship between the New Left and racial minorities, especially the notorious clash between Chūkaku-ha and Kaseitō in 1970, but notes how the paradigm changed: they ‘possessed’ the minorities to usurp their position of moral superiority. In particular, the ‘anti-Japan’ campaigns of the likes of Ryū Ōta, Katsuhisa Ōmori and the Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen were extreme cases of ‘minority mania’, though more pervasive forms are still with us today, indelibly integrated into the media. The corollary was when reportage after 3.11 took the stories of the victims in the north-east and usurped them over to ‘their side’ to be entertainment for the whole nation. He contrasts the attitude of the reporters for the national dailies with the real *tōjisha* journalists, that is, those from local and regional media in Tōhoku.

Sasaki does not offer any clear answers for how the Japanese can become fully ‘involved’ again, though his interpretation, if a little fond of quotable neologisms and extended metaphors, does seem to strike at the heart of a major identity crisis in Japan, and the disquiet that people felt towards the media in the wake of the crisis. It was, after all, like 9/11, an immensely visualised and digitalised experience, with the mass media coverage and online images and texts creating a double bind: everyone was affected but not necessarily directly; you were ‘involved’, yet not a ‘victim’.

This leaves artists in a serious conundrum: how can we respond? Some are overtly positioning themselves as activists. The street artist 281_Anti Nuke’s politicised stickers began to pop up in the backstreets of Shibuya some time after the disaster. He has been interviewed and profiled by the
overseas media—where he appears masked to hide his identity, adding more layers to his magnetism—but without doubt, the most headlines were achieved by art unit Chim Pom, whose name is a play on the Japanese word for penis. No stranger to goading the authorities and defining themselves as counter-culturists and scandalmongers, they had previously provoked hostility by ‘drawing’ a manga onomatopoeia for an explosion in the skies above Hiroshima in 2008.

Chim Pom now decided to perpetrate an act that was part artistic sabotage, part homage. Tarō Okamoto’s masterful mural The Myth of Tomorrow is exhibited in a section of Shibuya Station. It depicts a nuclear holocaust, inspired by the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the fallout suffered by the tuna fishing vessel, the Daigo Fukuryū Maru, when it sailed close to an American hydrogen bomb test in 1954. It has all the pain and anger of Guernica. Chim Pom ‘added’ a new picture at a part that is missing from the mural. The addendum to Okamoto’s masterpiece was, inevitably, cartoonish depictions of the crippled Fukushima reactors and ominous toxic clouds billowing out, complete with menacing red eyes.

Chim Pom videoed this guerrilla act of ‘art-jacking’ and exhibited it at a gallery show along with other videos, such as one where they went to Fukushima, spray-painted a red Rising Sun motif on to a white cloth to make the Japanese national flag, and then converted it into the nuclear symbol. They then waved this makeshift standard in front of the camera, with the Fukushima plant looming in the background.

Their stunts created a storm, even more than their previous exploits. The problem is that the point Chim Pom was making was very basic; it was attention-seeking in the most literal sense—‘Look at Fukushima!’ At this time, though, attention on Fukushima was so acute that their guerrilla art ultimately fizzles out.

Chim Pom frequently employs nudity and scatological motifs. Its members are unschooled in art and incorporate this as part of their identity (and marketing). Shock tactics are nothing new and not enough in themselves anymore. And as was the case here, such ‘counterculture’ frequently collaborates with the vessels of consumerism. Chim Pom did very well out of their Fukushima exhibition, being interviewed by the world media, holding a larger exhibition at Parco in Shibuya, and taking part in other shows around the globe.

There is a more serious problem with Chim Pom’s appropriation of Okamoto’s The Myth of Tomorrow. Putting aside issues of ownership of an acknowledged masterwork—it is, after all, displayed in public and so
‘belongs’ to everyone—and whether it was a media stunt to promote their careers or a sincere, if shallow, politicised act, the conflation of Okamoto’s target with Fukushima was a symptom of a more general delusion. After the disaster, it became almost a cliché to bring up the legacy of Japan’s other atomic tragedies, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And yet Okamoto was attacking humanity’s quest to destroy itself through nuclear weapons. Fukushima was a tragedy on many levels and manifests corporate opprobrium, incompetence and national complacency, but it is not the same as war. The parallels stop at the raw science. It is not necessarily offensive, juvenile or even disrespectful to do what Chim Pom did, but it is inaccurate, since to commandeer an anti-nuclear war artwork for an anti-nuclear power message is ultimately flawed.

This error was all too easy to slip into. Activists frequently compared Fukushima to Hiroshima—so tempting with that shared final—shima—and even regular citizens seemed confused. The artist Meirō Koizumi made a project for a residency programme in 2012 and 2013 where he interviewed people about their knowledge of the war, but only filmed their mouths. Over the course of creating Oral History he found that many ‘mouths’ would make a verbal lapse of saying genpatsu (nuclear power) when they meant genbaku (nuclear bomb). Collective memory had been falsified by hysteria.

Chim Pom is a result of Saison Culture, a consumerist mode of counter-culture that fits with what the media can easily process and audiences digest. The avant-garde and the fashionable always converge at some point, though it seems the biggest post-Fukushima bang has been made by those catering towards the hipster crowd. Architect, photographer, artist and activist Kyōhei Sakaguchi is another example. The thirty-something was already well known in Japan and abroad before Fukushima, but it was after the radiation scare that he made his boldest move, declaring himself prime minister of an independent country in Kyushu in southern Japan. To circumvent any legal interpretations of his propaganda as a coup d’état, he ostensibly calls his secession an ‘art project’. Prior to his 2012 declaration, he evacuated to Kyushu and in 2011 set up the Zero Center in Kumamoto City, a makeshift dwelling for self-declared refugees—like himself and his family—from the fear of radiation in Tokyo. It functions almost like a commune and is part of his wider Zero Yen project encouraging people to occupy and re-use abandoned property or structures in Japan. Within one month of being founded, over 100 people had evacuated down to Kyushu to join Sakaguchi.27

Sakaguchi previously attained minor fame and publicity for his photography and architecture projects in this vein, such as ’zero yen’ housing.
Starting from his eulogising of the shelters built by Japan’s inventive homeless folk, he found a legal loophole allowing one to construct a mobile home and keep it on the road for free officially as a vehicle, even though one might covertly use it as a residence.

‘The revolution is already happening,’ proclaims Sakaguchi. While his championing of the shacks and frugal but far from deficient lives of the homeless may well have some interesting implications for economics and ecology in mass consumer society, there is something unfortunately patronising here, and fundamentally wrong: he is missing the point if he only highlights the architecture and lifestyle benefits of a ‘zero yen’ life, no matter how innovative the improvised homes indeed are. Even when he is right, he is wrong, since Sakaguchi’s cultivated slacker joie de vivre is admirable but not as rebellious as he or others might think. This is counter-counterculture, using the mechanisms of consumer culture to promote his separatist ‘state’. He adopts a cheeky, lackadaisical, comic jester-like tone in his publicity and writings, apparently not taking himself too seriously: ‘I haven’t changed since my elementary school days,’ he confesses. He describes himself as a photographer, singer, public speaker, storyteller, writer and ‘architect who does not build’.

And yet, though we cannot doubt the sincerity (and novelty) of his ideas and campaigns, there is often the nagging suspicion that someone like Sakaguchi is more posing hipster than full-blooded hippie, however strong his penchant for playing the guitar at events. Setting up a ‘refugee’ centre and working towards a self-sufficient lifestyle is radical, but to write books about it and strive to identify yourself as an activist artist (or artistic activist), elevating yourself to the rank of visionary, however laidback, is more troubling. The true revolutionary seeking to retreat from the failures and squandering of mainstream society would surely just go ahead and do it, rather than concern themselves with making a song and dance about it, which is literally the case with Sakaguchi.

He is very media-savvy and earns a good salary, as he openly admits. In other words, though his supporters would believe the promotion helps spread his message to other wannabe revolutionaries, ultimately he is getting all the benefits of Tokyo and mass consumerism—books, the internet, music, exhibitions—while ostensibly rejecting them in his creed. His major Tokyo exhibition at the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art in 2012 no doubt did much to raise awareness of his mission among Aoyama gallery-goers, but it also simply reinforced the cult of celebrity. And this is not the instrument of change that post-Fukushima Japan needs.
If this assessment of Sakaguchi and Chim Pom seems harsh, it is because the stakes have been so high: 3.11 was a chance for a new nation; it was the opportunity to transform government and create new green infrastructure, smart cities and renewable energy technology. As the Google search results showed, there was an almost tangible craving for rebirth, not just rebuilding. The post-disaster was thus like the post-war, a game-changer that did not happen.

In an echo of how Prime Minister Ikeda’s income-doubling scheme facilitated the nation’s Anpo amnesia after only a few months, expunging the bad taste of Kishi from the public’s mouth, newly re-elected LDP Prime Minister Shinzō Abe had his own divertissements to distract voters, namely his ‘Abenomics’ fiscal programme and jumping on the bandwagon for the Tokyo Olympics bid. It worked, as his government’s approval ratings were strong. (Abe and Ikeda are not, though, exact parallels for many reasons, not least the fact that Abe is actually Kishi’s grandson.)

If this has been more of a coda than a final chapter, it is because this part of the story of Japan’s radicalism and counterculture is still very much in progress. Rumours of the demise of the anti-nuclear power campaign have been exaggerated; it goes on today. Artists and countercultural folk are continuing to work out their responses to Fukushima, although much of the reaction so far has been mediocre. And yet, if we were to fill this book with commentary on every film, play, book or manga that has already reacted to 3.11, its length would double.

Much has been made of how the Japanese failed to answer their government and TEPCO’s mutual incompetence and venality with enough ferocity. Foreigners, in particular, are quick to point out the apathy of voters. And yet, there needs to be a viable alternative on the ballot paper. What, then, is the legacy of 3.11 and Fukushima? In itself, the disaster did not prove the tipping point so many assumed it would. Policy and polity are little changed; in fact, things have gone back backwards (nippon o torimodosu, as Abe campaigned). The loss in trust in government effectiveness and big business ethics is surely irreparable for a generation or more. But remember, in the post-war period, every generation has seen government trust further eroded by scandals or disillusionment: Anpo and Vietnam in the 1960s, Lockheed in the 1970s, Recruit in the 1980s, Sagawa and the haemophiliac infection in the 1990s. The endless malfeasance of bureaucrats and politicos has destroyed the reputation of Japan’s dubious democracy.

Arguably, despite Naoto Kan’s best intentions, the Democratic Party of Japan proved as incompetent and leaderless as the LDP, scuttling the
chance of a genuine two-party system. It has split further and the LDP returned in 2012 with renewed political wind, though voter turnout was a record low. Their opponents can take some comfort in the undeniable certainty that LDP membership has massively declined and will continue to do so as the geriatric population dies off.

The collapse of the New Left and the dilution of the Old Left have occurred not only in Japan but around the world. The result is that Japanese voters, like those in Britain, France, Germany and America, can no longer see any way to change society. One key and humiliating difference is that the current political system was initially shaped and designed by the CIA in the aftermath of the war to neutralise left-wing influence. This is a chicken-and-egg situation. Until the state loosens the grip it maintains over protest, there can be no movement from the bottom up, and until there is perpendicular movement, the state will not change.

While the ‘collective trauma’ remaining from the ‘collapse’ of the New Left is perhaps too often overstated—many, many still campaign today—it is true that committed activism was stigmatised for a generation or more of nonpori. But with the growth of freeter activism and mass protest again in the wake of the anti-Iraq War and anti-nuclear power movements, dissent has been normalised again. Protest is no longer the preserve of the radical. Student activism is a shadow of its former self but there has been a renaissance at certain universities and through groups like the non-sectarian, media-savvy SEALDs (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy-s).

We must take some hope that citizens finally have the confidence in the model of civic activism developed over the last few decades to head to Tōhoku to volunteer in their thousands, run arts festivals and community projects through non-profits, and for 900 ordinary men and women to sue Prime Minister Koizumi in 2001 for breaching the Constitution by visiting Yasukuni. Those housewives in Suginami coming together in the mid-1950s led to a million volunteers in Kobe. The 1969 folk guerrillas became Aki no Arashi’s punk concerts in Harajuku belting out anti-emperor numbers while the nation mourned the monarch. And in the wake of Fukushima we saw the healthy vibrancy of the Kōenji anti-nuclear power demo-cum-carnival. Dissent is alive. It might not be revolution in the way imagined by Fusako Shigenobu, and certainly not by Yukio Mishima, but it must be embraced for all it offers.
CONCLUSION

SOME LEITMOTIFS

What may well have been convoluted and protracted enough for some has actually not done justice to the complexities of Japanese radicalism and counterculture.

We have skated over the main events and players, but the ‘story’ is ending in medias res. Residents’ fierce opposition to US bases continues today in Okinawa in the form of protests and civil disobedience (one rally in 2010 alone reportedly attracted 90,000). And as the final parts of this book were being written, thousands were demonstrating against Shinzō Abe’s controversial state secrets bill in late 2013, a cause which saw Old and New Left united along with the mass media, nonpori activists and ordinary citizens. While not ‘radical’, it was another example of Japan’s new protest maturity. In 2014, Abe’s push to change the Constitution and allow Japan to participate in ‘collective self-defence’ with her allies brought out tens of thousands of demonstrators, and even compelled a man to attempt self-immolation one busy summer Sunday afternoon in the heart of Shinjuku. The man survived, though another activist, Susumu Nitta, did not, dying by self-immolation in Hibiya Park on the anniversary of Chūnoshin Yui’s 1967 protest-suicide. Mass protests against Abe’s security bills continued in 2015.¹

This ‘narrative’ has omitted much. The appearance of the experimental arts is cursory, the music scene almost nonexistent. I merely scratched the surface of Japan’s grassroots and civic activism, labour movement and Women’s Lib, and neglected anti-US base campaigns in Okinawa, freeter counterculture and campus squatters in the 1990s and 2000s, small anarchist groups, minority rights activism and so many other political causes. The
interpretation of ‘radicalism’ can only be stretched so far for one book and
this was never intended as an exhaustive account of Japanese protest move-
ments and activism in general.

But far from being just a curated sequence of incidents and personalities,
tropes have recurred. They certainly are not ‘essential’ characters that add
up to a grand theory. Let’s call them leitmotifs. And they might serve us
well as a workable definition of Japanese radicalism.

While certain cosmetic and ideological aspects have changed, Japanese
protest movements past and present remain very well-organised affairs, in
terms of scheduling, march grouping, logistics, communication and support
networks. Demo marches are usually still preceded by rallies featuring a
series of truculent speeches for one or two hours. The snake dance is gone
but sound demos have triumphed, with carefully planned music, dance and
visuals. It is ordered dissent.

Political movements can fracture anywhere, but the Japanese New Left
was internecine from its very conception. This tendency to self-divide came
to define and destroy its reputation. The rift between New and Old Left was
also particularly incorrigible in Japan, aggravated by the 1960 Anpo cam-
paign and how the Japanese Communist Party had some mainstream politi-
cal kudos.

And yet, alongside this shocking proclivity which led to such tragic vio-
ence, there is something else, something far more oblique: absurdity. From
the meaningless sound and fury of the right-wingers’ trucks to Mishima’s
suicide and the declaration of the Yodogō hijackers comparing themselves
to a comic-book hero, laughter creeps queasily into horror, beggaring belief
as much as explanation. First as tragedy, then as farce, as the Marx adage
has it. With Japanese radicalism, these were often simultaneous.

Another of the more impenetrable aspects of Japanese radical movements
is their linguistic fetishism. While the global New Left has always been
prodigious, even noisy, in its output, there seems something peculiar about
the language of Japanese radicalism and its obsession with code words.
From the far Right to the bōsōzoku motorcycle gangs, many strains of coun-
terculture and radicalism in Japan seem to wallow in abstruse argot, to
decorate themselves with recherché rhetoric. This reached an apogee with
Sekigun-ha and Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen and their preoccupa-
tion with sacred concepts such as kyōsanshugika and creating arcane names
for operations. Radicalism became esoterica.

Ivan Morris identified the nobility of failure in Japanese history. We
might also call it that ‘love of (being) the underdog’, hōganbiiki. While
CONCLUSION

labelling this a perennial ‘motif’ may smack of an outsider’s perspective, there is an undeniably chronic refusal among radicals to face facts. Rather, they persevere with surely impossible crusades, never surrendering an inch to the might of the state. Past defeats (Anpo, Sasebo, Yasuda, Sanrizuka) are worn like badges; historical struggles and traumas are treasured as vindicating laurels, and no concession is made to reality or constructive strategies. Integrity and commitment are valued above all else. Such attitudes are admirable but not always astute, and ultimately can draw a cause off towards the margins, which is just what the authorities hope.

The initial fervour of phenomena like the student movement can also be explained by the carnivalesque; they were cleansing social tensions through a temporary release that allowed the younger generation to ‘play’ at being manic, at reversing social orders. Such rituals of topsy-turvy, as we saw, have historical roots in Japan, and also manifested themselves in the arts and concurrent counterculture scene. The spectacle nature of radicalism in Japan and, even more so, its performativeness, have frequently been noted. What are often called kata are prevalent: the ‘signs’ of Zenkyōtō and Zengakuren (helmets, staves, face masks, snake dances); the sound trucks of the uyoku and bikes of the bōsōzoku; the uniforms of the riot police and even the conspicuous plainclothes security police. Many of these patterns, such as the ritual of raising fists in the air at rallies, continue in the public realm at demonstrations and rallies today.

But unlike others, I do not believe that such a tendency towards the performative negates the sincerity of the struggle. Whether or not this is part of a ‘Japanese’ predilection with sign over substance I leave to the various experts to debate. The carnivalesque is not mere burlesque; it is creative and can produce results. It is immersive, participatory theatre but this need not fade once the cycle has been ended by the authorities. Traces remain with genuine effects.

The paramount mission of this book has not been only exegetical. The hope was to challenge the commonly held delusion that there are no grassroots political movements, protest or radicalism in Japan, and that the people are inherently conservative.

Critics will argue that a focus on extreme forms of radicalism proves nothing and it is time to face up to a persistent anxiety. This book harbours an undeniable contradiction: many of the episodes elucidated on these pages have no doubt actually contributed to, or even confirmed, certain ideas of the nihonjinron, not least of all the nature of social structures that focus on groups over individuals. These movements of radical dissent, far
DISSENTING JAPAN

from demonstrating that not all Japanese are harmonious and conformist, are possibly mere exceptions that prove the rule. On the other hand, the argument that Japan is a fundamentally group-oriented society and that non-conformity also exists among Japanese citizens aplenty need not be mutually exclusive.

There is also the danger of overcompensation. For all the leitmotifs of the Japanese radical movements, factionalism and self-destruction were also hallmarks of political groups in other countries, even if they likely did not always plumb the same depths of tragedy as uchi-geba and Rengō Sekigun. Even a cult like Aum was not unique to Japan. The absence of a tradition of liberty or democracy in Japan, like in Italy, is sometimes cited as an explanation for the ferocity of the post-war violence. And yet America’s past paeans to freedom did not dissuade Weatherman from its bombings. Japan has experienced only around half the number of domestic terrorist attacks as in Germany, despite having twice the population. However, unlike in other countries, there is little leftist nostalgia or apologist obfuscation when it comes to Sekigun et al. They are remembered as being ‘wrong’, or simply not remembered at all.

A book still remains to be written paralleling the New Left in Japan with its counterparts in Europe and America, though it is likely an impossible project to compare across nations. Ingrained into the Japanese ultranationalists, for example, is an imperialism which is utterly unique and cannot be understood easily by outsiders. Likewise, the New Left, though with some superficial similarities, is quite discrete from the American and German movements. Sympathy towards the Cuban and North Vietnam causes, as well as an anti-establishment character, are fairly universal enough, but the Japanese New Left’s animosity towards the JCP, as well as the USSR and China, are highly contextual and resist simple pigeonholing. Another notable stumbling block to border-crossing analogies is the different personality of the New Left in Japan, especially to that in America. Whereas in the United States we associate radical leftists with hippie culture, drugs and hedonism, the Japanese New Left was fiercely ideological—we might even say, excessively so. They had no time for acid and pot; they were austere and serious, resolutely ascetic and ethical. Masakazu Yamazaki, a playwright and scholar who taught at Yale during the height of the New Left movement, was better qualified than many to put the situations in both countries side-by-side. ‘The revolt of the students in the United States,’ he said, ‘is a revolt in search of cultural principles, such as in philosophy and in world outlook; while that of the
students in Japan is a self-assertion against social uniformity and similarity. So much, so true of Zenkyōtō, perhaps, but surely the dogmatic factions went way beyond existentialism.

If comparisons will not bear fruit easily, what is to be done? The task is closer to home. The myth that the Japanese are inherently conformist must be challenged. Conformity and conservatism exist in no short supply, but I believe it is fundamentally the result of top-down repression.

Was a post-war revolution ever possible in Japan? Probably not. Many still grope for reasons for the failure of the New Left and social movements in Japan to go beyond the subjective (and militant), to become institutionalised and bridge causes. The answer does not lie in any intrinsic docility in the Japanese or even deficiencies in the movements themselves, so much as the highly effective machinery of the authorities to suppress and limit the radicals, especially those on the Left. The judiciary and the police stayed within the letter of the law but their tactics ensured that arrested protestors stayed off the streets for lengthy periods while they awaited trials, which themselves were protracted affairs. This meant they could decapitate organisations, taking away leaders and key members. In public too, the groups were harassed and ring-fenced. The state-sponsored stigmatisation and marginalisation of protest groups, coupled with increased police management and suppression from 1960 to the 1990s, and still now post-2011, have rendered many radical movements ineffective. But even mass movements like Beheiren ultimately failed to stop Japan’s participation in the Vietnam War. The advance of neoliberalism has also gutted labour in Japan, dramatically reducing the influence of unions.

What is consistent is that the LDP and other governments have always ignored any large-scale protest movement, no matter how serious—from Anpo to Sanrizuka, Beheiren and Fukushima. They brook no opposition; they offer no compromise. There is merely a delay until the movement has been allowed to lose steam. The government has displayed perpetual contempt for its citizens, precluding their voices from debates and pushing ahead in the face of protest and anger because they ‘know best’. The Iron Triangle of LDP government, bureaucracy and big business rules supreme—and flounders when faced with a crisis, whether political, economic or natural.

Something radically new is needed on the ballot, since essentially every government since the end of the occupation has let the Japanese people down. If the age of revolutionary idealism as envisioned in the 1960s and 1970s lies beyond our grasp today, democracy must be made better and more profound.
DISSENTING JAPAN

In late 2013, government minister Shigeru Ishiba described the crowds peacefully protesting the new state secrets bill as ‘terrorists’. With amnesia like this even at the heart of government, now more than ever we need to correct the damage done to Japan’s post-war narrative, and learn from the lessons it offers.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION: DEFYING THE CULT OF TRANQUILLITY

5. Ibid., p. iv.

1. ENDURING THE UNENDURABLE

NOTES


5. Ibid., p. 121.

6. Ibid., p. 302 passim.


20. Ibid., p. 177.


2. VOICES OF THE VOICELESS

2. Ibid., p. 96.
6. Interview in *ANPO: Art X War* (2010), directed by Linda Hoaglund
14. These kinds of numbers are never going to be truly accurate. Packard records the figures as the organisers’ claims, and that government authorities placed them far lower. (All numbers cited in this book are at best estimates, reflecting discrepancies, sometimes minor, sometimes not, visible between sources.) On 27 November, it is likely there were at least 24,000 demonstrators at the Diet. Packard, *Protest in Tokyo*, p. 164.
15. Ibid., p. 166.
17. Ibid., p. 176.
18. Ibid., p. 177.
22. Ibid., p. 239.
23. Ibid., p. 251.
24. In Japanese his response was: *seikyoku ga bimyō da kara*. *Bimyō* can also be translated as ‘delicate’ or ‘subtle’.
27. Interview in *ANPO: Art X War*.
NOTES

30. As with Anp/Amo, the minor vagaries of Japanese Romanisation allow variations for certain words. Michiko Kanba’s surname may alternately be written as ‘Kamba’.
34. Ibid., p. 200.
38. Ibid., p. 302.
39. Ibid., p. 270.
40. Ibid., p. 224.
41. The strike ended with the originally dismissed workers having their termination rescinded, but according to the terms of the deal they then ‘voluntarily retired’. Coal mining in Japan went through a major and deliberate decline during the 1960s, falling from 682 to 102 mines in the decade. Aside from the tens of thousands who lost their jobs, the effects of the rationalisation were shortages and poorer conditions, and thus tragic accidents. Just three years after the collapse of the strike, the Mikawa colliery at Miike exploded, killing 458 miners. See John Price, ‘The 1960 Miike Coal Mine Dispute: Turning Point for Adversarial Unionism in Japan?’ in Joe Moore (ed.), The Other Japan: Conflict, Compromise, and Resistance since 1945, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997.
43. Packard, Protest in Tokyo, p. 262.
44. Hosaka, Rokujūnen anpo tōsō no shinjitsu, p. 149.
49. Packard, Protest in Tokyo, p. 327.

3. THE CLOWN’S COUP

NOTES

8. Ibid., p. 319.
10. Ibid., pp. 44–5.
11. Hiroshi Take, *Uyoku to iu shokugyō* (The Occupation of the Rightist), Tokyo: Bunko Gingadō, 2013, p. 16. Take, a former senior rightist himself, says that the people in the gaisensha ultra-nationalist trucks often cannot read the kanji characters to be read out over the loudspeaker and need them written in the syllabic script.
13. Ibid., pp. 91, 169, 188, 365.
14. Akao’s first name is usually written as ‘Bin’, though it appears to be a nickname derived from an alternative reading of the ideograph. His actual name was Satoshi.
16. Again, we have the thorny numbers game. To take two historians’ different calculations, Morris puts 1960 right-wing group membership at 80,000–90,000, around the same as the JCP (Nationalism and the Right Wing in Japan, p. 201), while Packard goes even higher and counts the number in 1961 as 100,000—out-numbering the JCP—but records police estimates of only 400 genuine ultra-nationalist organisations. As a point of illustration of the growing ferocity of the groups, 217 extreme rightists were arrested in 1961, up sixty-three over the previous year, which of course featured the Anpo clashes (Packard, *Protest in Tokyo*, p. 323).
20. Nathan, *Mishima*, p. 279. Stokes recounts that Mishima did not ‘fail’ to write the character—it was supposed to be the character for ‘sword’, no less—but that he rejected the brush before he even began to stab himself (Stokes, *Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*, p. 47).
21. Or there were three strokes, depending on which account you prefer. One suspects that by this point, his intestines pouring out of his body, Mishima himself at any rate was not counting accurately.


4. 1968 AND ALL THAT

2. Oguma’s mammoth two-volume book has been criticised by participants in the movement for being based solely on textual research.
3. Churlish nitpicking aside, Kurlansky does include some observations about events in Japan that are, if not quite howlers, a touch bizarre. He talks about Walter Cronkite covering the Eisenhower visit to Tokyo and how the Anpo movement was hindering it: ‘so many Zengakuren had turned out to protest the visit that Eisenhower decided not to land’. Another reference states falsely that the Zengakuren snake dance was a kind of Japanese martial arts. Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World*, New York: Random House, 2004, pp. 83, 274.
5. Ibid., p. 246.
7. Ibid., p. 80.
8. Ibid., p. 81.
9. Ibid., p. 84.
NOTES

19. Ibid., p. 191.
22. Ibid.
23. Takemasa Andō, Japan’s New Left Movements: Legacies for Civil Society, London: Routledge, 2014, pp. 68–76. Andō emphasises the activists’ negative interpretation of the ‘everyday’. He characterises the Nihon University struggle as being about self-liberation, while the University of Tokyo movement was more one of self-reflection.
26. In one survey in the early 1960s, over half of students chose Marxism as a system to which they were sympathetic, and a majority said that they turned to Marxism as a result of reading Marx’s writings, rather than peer pressure or being carried away by the zeitgeist. Marxism was attractive to students for its scientific and humanistic approaches. Kazuko Tsurumi, ‘The Japanese Student Movement II: Group Portraits’, Japan Quarterly, 16, 1 (1969), pp. 25, 33.
28. Takagi, Zengakuren to Zenkyōtō, p. 113.
30. Ibid., p. 254.
36. Andō, Japan’s New Left Movements, p. 69.
43. Certainly there was a high correlation between study circle membership (but not sports clubs) and interest in activism in the early 1960s. Tsurumi, *Japanese Student Movement I*, p. 443.
45. Patricia G. Steinhoff, ‘Student Protest in the 1960s’, *Social Science Japan*, 15 (1999), pp. 4–5. The figure here is 250 students arrested during the 1960 Anpo campaign, though 325 is also sometimes cited.
47. From 1968 to 1971, a total of 31,852 students were arrested. Patricia G. Steinhoff, ‘Doing the Defendant’s Laundry: Support Groups as Social Movement Organizations in Japan’, *Japanstudien*, 11 (1999), p. 73.
48. Sixty-two high schools were barricaded in 1969 and 602 high-school students arrested in demonstrations (Dowsey, *Zengakuren*, p. 191). Since the high-school disputes were mostly suppressed quickly and many were viewed as imitations of the university conflicts, their legacy has not endured as much. In 1968, though, JCP Minsei-affiliated high-school students numbered some 12,000, while there were some 3,000 associated with other factions. High-school students participated in the major protests of the decade, such as at Sasebo and Haneda, and despite the 1969 high-school incidents being criticised as merely a rehashing of the college campus happenings, similar events had already sprung up in 1964 and 1967. Eiji Oguma, *1968: Hanran no shūen to sono isan* (1968: The End of the Revolt and Its Legacy), vol. 2, Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2009, p. 11 passim.
53. Ibid., p. 181.
54. Ibid., p. 182.
56. Fukashiro, ‘Student Thought and Feeling’, p. 150.
58. Steinhoff, ‘Student Conflict’, p. 175.
59. Ibid.
62. There are dozens of other factions and this book would swiftly become an encyclopaedia if it tried to introduce them all. The Glossary includes the main radical groups. There are rarely official English names.
66. Ibid., p. 29.
69. Fukashiro, ‘Student Thought and Feeling’, p. 150.
70. Miyazaki, *Toppamono*, p. 69.
73. Ibid., p. 144.
   It is hard to obtain reliable numbers as sources vary. Possibly only a minority were University of Tokyo students.
79. Steinhoff, ‘Student Protest in the 1960s’, p. 6. Steinhoff gives figures of 653 police, 141 students and six bystanders injured, and 819 arrested over the two days.
80. Dowsey, *Zengakuren*, pp. 159, 162. Takagi, *Zengakuren to Zenkyōtō*, p. 128. The numbers game again. There are slightly varying figures of arrests and indictments for the two-day battle in January. Something like 300 students were arrested at the final Yasuda siege itself (Kurata, Takagi and Takazawa, *Shin-sayoku nijūnenshi*, p. 124). Steinhoff quotes figures of 630 arrests, including 374 at Yasuda Hall (only seventy of whom were actually University of Tokyo students). Patricia G. Steinhoff, ‘Memories of New Left Protest’, *Contemporary Japan*, 25, 2 (2013), p. 146.
84. Interview with participant.
86. Shima, *Yasuda kōdō*, p. 43.
90. Private interview.
93. Ibid.
NOTES

94. Tomono, Zengakuren to Zenkyōtō, p. 194.
97. Andō, Japan’s New Left Movements, p. 15.
100. Takaši, Zengakuren to Zenkyōtō, p. 129.
101. Ibid., pp. 133–4.
104. Used to describe the behavior of a person attempting to induce an authority figure, such as a parent, spouse, teacher, or supervisor, to take care of him or her.
106. Etō Jun, 'Gokko’ no sekai ga owatta toki (When the world of ‘playing make-believe’ has ended) (1970)
107. For example, see Masao Nakano’s memoir of his time as an activist, Gebaruto jidai Since 1967–1973, which is littered with such criticism.
108. Andō, Japan’s New Left Movements, p. 25. Dowsey, Zengakuren, p. 223. I am yet to find an American source verifying that the Japanese influence was a direct one.

5. AN ANGRY ELEPHANT

5. Havens, Fire Across the Sea, p. 67 passim. Oda has also been accused of anti-
NOTES


10. Ibid., p. 48.

11. Ibid., p. 96.

12. Ibid., p. 121.

13. Ibid., p. 127.


15. Ibid., p. 133.


17. Ibid., p. 76.


27. There were 345 arrests, more than the entire 1960 Anpo movement. Patricia G. Steinhoff, ‘Student Protest in the 1960s’, *Social Science Japan*, 15 (1999), p. 4.

28. Original press release materials in English (resource at Takazawa Collection, University of Hawai‘i).

32. Ibid., p. 225.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 118.
38. Shō Usami writes there were just twenty-seven arrests, although over 100 were injured. Shō Usami, ‘Zengakuren’, *Japan Quarterly*, 15, 2 (1968), p. 236. The details in the account of 17 January 1968 are also drawn largely from Usami’s.
39. Ibid., p. 236.
44. Havens, *Fire Across the Sea*, p. 166.
45. Ibid., p. 169.
51. Takagi, *Zengakuren to Zenkyōtō*, p. 130.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p. 147.
59. Havens, *Fire Across the Sea*, p. 189. Lower estimates put the numbers at 467,000.
62. Ibid., p. 196.
NOTES


65. Saying that, there were perhaps nearly 700 arrests on 23 June, though if we consider the sheer number of protestors and the militancy that took place at other protests, it was remarkably calm. A particularly fierce confrontation with police took place at Meiji Park and involved Hansen Seinen Iinkai. Ōmori, ‘June 1970’, p. 385. Havens, *Fire Across the Sea*, p. 211.


6. A HIJACKING AND A SIEGE


NOTES

16. Ibid., p. 730.
17. Ibid., p. 731.
20. Shiomi, Sekigun-ha shimatsuki, p. 57.
25. Takazawa, Shukumei, p. 194 passim. Also see Chapter 10.
27. Steinhoff, Nihon Sekigun-ha, p. 89.
37. Ibid., p. 160 passim.
41. Ibid., p. 45.
42. Ibid., pp. 11–12.
43. Fusako Shigenobu, *Ring no ki no shita de anata o umō to kimeta* (I Decided to Give Birth to You under an Apple Tree), Tokyo: Gentōsha, 2001, p. 205.
57. Takazawa, *Shukumei*, p. 121
60. A lecture Yoshimoto gave on Rengō Sekigun, which has been published more than once. Takaaki Yoshimoto, *Ima wa mushiro haigo no tori o ute: Rengō Sekigun jiken o megutte* (Now Rather Shoot the Bird Behind: On the Rengō Sekigun Incident), Yokohama: Rubikon Shobō, 1972, pp. 7, 20 (resource in Takazawa Collection, University of Hawai‘i).
61. Ibid., p. 665.
62. Ibid., p. 658.
64. Ibid., p. 212.
67. Ibid., p. 167.
71. This also involved members and leaders currently imprisoned. Even during Mori’s tenure, other Sekigun-ha members not underground were attempting to rebuild elsewhere. Sekigun Purōkaku-ha (Red Army Proletarian Revolutionary Faction) was one further incarnation.
7. THE STRANGE DEATH OF THE JAPANESE NEW LEFT

4. Ibid., pp. 5, 45
11. Kagekiha jikenbo 40-nenshi (40 Years of Extremist Incidents), Tokyo: Tachibana Shobō, 2007, p. 89. There are varying statistics on this, and it is often hard to be fully accurate, given that the definition of uchi-geba is partially subjective. There were 1,782 incidents and 4,388 casualties between 1969 and 1976, including forty-seven deaths. White Paper on Police, 1977, p. 256.
16. Ibid., p. 22.
19. Ara, Shin-sayoku to wa nan datta no ka, p. 194.
22. Ibid., pp. 94–6.
24. Ibid., pp. 87–9.
25. In 2013, one veteran member of Chūkaku-ha, Hiroya Arakawa, was allegedly to have been a police informant for thirteen years after he was released from prison.
27. This author attempted to interview Kakumaru-ha to gain insights into the group’s status and ideology today. My request was summarily rejected since they believed, through online research, that our ‘opinions’ were not aligned.
NOTES


31. Patricia G. Steinhoff has long argued this point as well. She describes the remains of the radical New Left protest movements as Japan’s ‘invisible civil society’.


35. Andō, Japan’s New Left Movements, pp. 111–12.

8. SANRIZUKA


7. Ibid., p. 189.

8. Hane, Peasants, Rebels, and Outcastes, p. 251.

9. Ibid., p. 265.


11. Ibid., p. 15.

12. Ibid., pp. 18–20.

13. Quoted in Hane, Peasants, Rebels, and Outcastes, p. 33.

16. Ibid., p. 246.
19. Andō, Japan’s New Left Movements, p. 167. The residents’ movement at Uchinada was another example.
20. Apter and Sawa, Against the State, p. 82.
25. Apter and Sawa, Against the State, pp. 82, 85. Masayuki Takagi, Zengakuren to Zenkyōtō, p. 94.
27. Apter and Sawa, Against the State, p. 104.
29. Kitahara, Daichi no ran Narita tōsō, p. 81.
30. Ibid., p. 205. Ultimately, though, due to lack of evidence and the difficulty of proving individual criminal actions within a mass riot, none served actual prison sentences.
31. Ibid., p. 69.
33. Ibid., p. 200.
34. Apter and Sawa, Against the State, pp. 28, 93
35. Kurata, Takagi and Takazawa, Shin-sayoku nijūnenshi, p. 219. Hantai Dōmei handbill at Takazawa Collection, University of Hawai’i. Police figures put the rally at 12,000.
36. Apter and Sawa, Against the State, p. 107.
38. Ibid., p. 5. There was another Senki-ha, which was a splinter of the original Bund.
NOTES pp. [179–197]

42. *Kagekiha jikenbo 40-nenshi*, pp. 115–16.
45. Ibid., p. 258.


4. Ibid., pp. 32–3.
5. Ryū Ōta, *Henkyōsaishinbu ni mukatte taikyaku seyo! Nijūichiseiki e no daichōsei* (Retreat towards the Remotest Frontier! The Longest March to the Twenty-First Century), Tokyo: Sanichi Shobō, 1971, pp. 8, 20 passim. Ōta was not alone. There were many other Japanese activists involved in related movements for the Lumpenproletariat, and Okinawan and Ainu independence, notably the anarchist Rō/Tsutomu Takenaka, Sekigun-ha’s Tsuneo Umenai, and critic Masaaki Hiraoka, as well as activists from the south and the north themselves.
11. Siddle, ‘*Ainu*’, p. 31.

16. See Patricia G. Steinhoff, ‘No Helmets in Court, No T-Shirts on Death Row: New Left Trial Support Groups’, in Patricia G. Steinhoff (ed.), *Going to Court to Change Japan: Social Movements and the Law in Contemporary Japan*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies Series, 2014, for more on the treatment of the bombers during their trials and imprisonments, plus the role played by their support groups. The author thanks Professor Steinhoff for providing the paper ahead of publication.


23. *Kagekiha jikenbo 40-nenshi*, p. 82.


10. THE OTHER EXPORT


2. Ibid.


4. Ibid., p. 172.


NOTES


13. This anecdote and other insights above regarding incommunicado treatment of political offenders are courtesy of Patricia G. Steinhoff, ‘Political Offenders in the Japanese Criminal Justice System’ (unpublished paper). Cited with permission of the author. Professor Steinhoff very generously supplied this and other unpublished or forthcoming papers.

14. Many of these observations are based on personal experiences, though also informed by Patricia G. Steinhoff’s records of her fieldwork following the anti-emperor demos in 1990–1. See Steinhoff, ‘Radical Outcasts versus Three Kinds of Police: Constructing Limits in Japanese Anti-Emperor Protests’, *Qualitative Sociology*, 29, 3 (2006).


23. Mei Shigenobu, *Himitsu: Paresuchina kara sakura no kuni e, haha to watashi no 28-nen* (Secrets: From Palestine to the Country of Cherry Blossoms, 28 Years with My Mother), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2002, p. 126. Also see the article Sueo Shigenobu wrote about his daughter for *Shūkan Bunshun* in August 1972 in which he affirms his respect for her, despite their differences and what she had done (document in the Takazawa Collection, University of Hawai‘i).
24. Shiomi, Sekigun-ha shimatsuki, p. 54.
25. Farrell, Blood and Rage, p. 105. We should not discount the likelihood of a misunderstanding on Farrell’s part of what a ‘hostess’ does in Japan.
26. As described by her daughter, Mei/May Shigenobu in Children of the Revolution (2010), directed by Shane O’Sullivan. Shigenobu, Ringo no ki no shita de anata o umō to kimeta, p. 37.
28. Farrell, Blood and Rage, p. 106. Certainly the father of her child was a Palestinian activist but he has never been officially identified.
29. Shigenobu, Ringo no ki no shita de anata o umō to kimeta, p. 136. The mei from kakumei can also be read inochi, meaning ‘life’.
30. The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, and 27 Years without Images (2012), directed by Eric Baudelaire.
32. Shigenobu, Ringo no ki no shita de anata o umō to kimeta, p. 187.
34. Ibid., p. 32.
35. This coding of history by use of ‘struggle’ (tōsō) in such cases is typical—both as a catchall euphemism and also to imply it was part of the wider cause. In a similar way, ‘incident’ (jiken) is frequently applied to any minor event or date to conjure up a tapestry of achievements.
37. Ibid., p. 153.
38. Interview in Children of the Revolution.
42. Shūji Terayama, Sekigun heishi Okamoto Közō no minagaroshi no uta’ (Song for Sekigun Soldier Közō Okamoto’s Massacre), Gendai, August 1972, p. 309 (resource in Takazawa Collection, University of Hawai‘i).
44. Shigenobu, Kakumei no kisetsu, p. 277.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., pp. 157–8.
47. Ibid., p. 256. Maruoka, Maruoka Osamu jijutsu, p. 30.
NOTES

56. Ibid., pp. 140, 356, 441.
57. Shigenobu, *Ringo no ki no shita de anata wo umō to kimeta*, p. 47.
61. Personal correspondence with Patricia G. Steinhoff.
62. To be fair, the police had made a request in 1975 to Interpol for the JRA’s actions to be recognised as criminal offences, resulting in five leaders being placed on a wanted list. This was renewed with a longer list of twenty-six names specifically due to fears of an attack during the 1988 Seoul Olympics.
68. Mei Shigenobu, *Himitsu*, p. 188.
69. For example, the image in the March 1993 issue of *Hanashi no tokushū* to mark the twentieth anniversary of the JRA, in which Okamoto stands beside Shigenobu, her face is almost entirely hidden by a *keffiyeh*. In earlier days she agreed to be photographed, such as in an interview with the *Yomiuri Shim bun* in May 1975. (Resources in Takazawa Collection, University of Hawai’i.)
NOTES


72. Ibid., pp. 286–7. The third commanding member, responsible for the ‘political committee’, was Masao Adachi. Wakō also describes Shigenobu as the JRA’s ‘commander’ (shireikan) and that Maruoka was in charge when she was absent (Wakō, Nihon Sekigun to wa nan datta no ka, pp. 20, 99, 171).

73. Shigenobu, Nihon Sekigun shishi, p. 479.


75. Shigenobu, Kakumei no kise, pp. 230–1.

76. Koarashi, Nihon Sekigun!, p. 57.


78. Shigenobu, Nihon Sekigun shishi, p. 481.

79. Shigenobu, Ringo no ki no shita de anata o umō to kimeta, p. 237.

11. WE’LL BE ALL RIGHT IF WE DON’T DREAM


5. Ibid., p. 11.


14. Ibid., p. 56.

15. ‘Angura no machi, Shinjuku’ (Shinjuku, Angura City), Asahi Shimbun, 3 March 1968.
NOTES pp. [239–246]

18. ‘Waido tokushū, Shinjuku janguru’ (Wide Special Issue: Shinjuku Jungle), *Sunday Mainichi*, 19 May 1968, p. 26 (resource in Takazawa Collection, University of Hawai‘i).
21. Ibid., p. 199 passim. The charges related to a woman who lived in the Amami commune for a time in 1978 and who was later linked to an ‘anti-Japan’ campaign.
24. Its formal name today is the Kōfuku-kai (‘happiness association’) Yamagishi-kai, while the ‘villages’ are called Yamagishism Life Jikkenchi.
28. This is a touchy subject. The underground theatre scene tends to get short shrift—either through ignorance or owing to disdain for its importance—from major introductions to the experimental arts of the time. See the *Tokyo 1955–1970* exhibition at MoMA in 2012.
33. Ibid., p. 45.
34. Ibid., p. 228.
36. Ibid., p. 18.
37. Ibid., p. 3.
NOTES

39. Ibid., p. 43.
42. Terayama borrowed the title from a phrase in the afterword to André Gide’s *Les nourritures terrestres* (The Fruits of the Earth) (1897) and may even also be referencing a 1925 proletariat text by philosopher Ōdō Tanaka. Ridgely, *Japanese Counterculture*, p. 116 passim.
44. I prefer the translation ‘city theatre’ for *shigaigeki*, though it is sometimes rendered as ‘street theatre’. However, it was indoors as well as out, and its urban nature was as important as its public-ness. Terayama also explicitly drew a distinction between his theatre and ‘street theatre’ in an interview in the Netherlands (Sorgenfrei, *Unspeakable Acts*, p. 293).
53. Ibid., p. 236.
57. These days, the genre, for want of a better word, is usually called simply Butoh. The original name *butō* was a play on *buyō*, a traditional word for dance in Japan, with the same first character (stage) but then the second being ‘step’ rather than ‘dance’. (I have used the spelling ‘Ohno’ rather than ‘Ōno’, as it is the way Kazuo Ohno was known around the world.)
NOTES pp. [259–271]

64. Yoshirō Kunimoto, ‘Expo ’70’, Japan Quarterly, 17, 2 (1970), p. 80 passim. The figures are estimates from before the Expo began, though as visitor numbers exceeded expectations, we can assume that consumption was even higher.

12. ARMAGEDDON IN TOKYO

3. The definition of ‘freeter’ and when the ‘class’ emerged is a matter of some debate. Certainly their discussion as a mass phenomenon, normally couched in negative terms, came in the Heisei period.
5. Ibid., p. 311 passim.
6. Ibid., pp. 300–1.
13. Ibid., p. 114.
15. Ibid., p. 51.
16. Ibid., p. v.
NOTES

22. Ibid., p. 91.
24. Ibid., p. 76. *Freeter* activists and those in the wider precariat movement often compare themselves to *ikki* and historical forms of protest.
25. Ibid., p. 50.
27. Ibid., p. 78.

13. THE NEW GOD

1. Commonly cited figures, with some variation. It has also been said that overall membership numbers have hardly changed since 1945.
6. Ibid., p. 73.
7. Take, *Uyoku to iu shokugyō*, p. 64 passim.
13. Take, *Uyoku to iu shokugyō*, p. 82 passim.

14. FUKUSHIMA

3. Ibid., p. 60.
10. Avenell, ‘From Kobe to Tōhoku’, p. 70.
15. Kawato, Pekkanen and Tsujinaka, ‘Civil Society and the Triple Disasters’, p. 82.
17. We should be careful not to overstate this. The anti-war demonstrations in 2003–4 also mobilised very large numbers.
20. Samuels, *3.11*, pp. 194, 231. Perhaps as many as 200,000 people also protested at the Diet on 29 July 2012.
24. It nonetheless attracted a range of participants, including hippie types and younger demonstrators. See two examples from the 1980s in Carl Cassegård, *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan*, Leiden: Global Orient, 2014, p. 48.
25. Steinhoff makes much the same point in her paper reporting on fieldwork following the anti-emperor protests around 1990. See ‘Radical Outcasts versus Three Kinds of Police’.
28. Ibid., p. 221.
29. Ibid., p. 169.
30. Ibid., pp. 3–5.
pp. [299–307]

NOTES

31. Ibid., p. 3.

CONCLUSION

1. On 30 August, possibly as many as 120,000 protested outside the Diet, including the photogenic student group SEALDs.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Betsuyaku, Minoru, *Zō (The Elephant) (1962)*, in David G. Goodman (ed.), *After*
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ino, Kenji, Nihon no uyoku (Japan’s Right Wing), Tokyo: Chikuma Bunko, 2005.
Kitagawa, Michio, Yamagishizumu gakuen tenmatsuki (Yamagishi-ism School, a Full Account), Tokyo: Warabi Shobô, 2005.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY


———, *Ringo no ki no shita de anata o umō to kimeta* (I Decided to Give Birth to You under an Apple Tree), Tokyo: Gentōsha, 2001.


—— ‘Political Offenders in the Japanese Criminal Justice System’ (unpublished paper).


—— Waga senkō 4000-hi (My Underground 4,000 Days), Tokyo: San-ichi Shobō, 1983.
Take, Hiroshi, Uyoku to tu shokugyō (The Occupation of the Rightist), Tokyo: Bunko Gingadō, 2013.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

INDEX

26 February Incident, 31, 52, 58, 260
abductions, xx, 125, 126, 130, 131, 152, 154, 156, 159, 219, 221, 223, 224–5, 231, 267, 270
absurdity, 12, 47, 55, 62, 117, 216, 256, 257, 270, 280, 304
Abe, Shinzō, 274, 285, 300, 303
Adachi, Masao, xiii, 193–4, 210–12, 219, 227, 229, 258, 332
Ainu, xiii, xvii, xix, 187–93, 195, 199, 200, 265, 327; activism, 191, 193, 200
Akao, Bin (Satoshi), xiii, 48, 51, 55–6, 102, 110, 164, 170, 313
Akasegawa, Genpei, xiii, 124, 254, 256–7, 259
Akita, Akehiro, xiii, 76, 90, 96
Amamiya, Karin, 284
anarchism, 94, 134, 259, 265, 273, 303, 327
angura, xvii, 234, 240, 244–7, 250–2, 257, 259, 261–2, 333
Anpo protests (1960), xiii, xxiii, 6, 7, 19, 21, 26–46, 47, 48, 49, 54, 56, 57, 58, 65, 67–8, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 79, 80, 93, 95, 96, 100, 104, 129, 148, 149, 169, 171, 233, 244, 245, 246, 249, 256, 258, 260, 266, 280, 290, 292, 294, 295, 300, 304, 305, 307, 313, 314, 316, 319
Anpo protests (1970), 7, 46, 57, 60, 66, 69, 70, 92, 104, 114, 118, 119, 120, 121, 175, 260, 290
anti-nuclear movement (nuclear disarmament), 20–1, 32, 46, 102, 108–9, 121, 297–8, 301
Asahara, Shōkō, xiii, 267, 268, 270, 271
Asahi Shimbun, 34, 44, 114, 144, 239, 279, 322; attacks on, xxiv, 281
Asama-sansō siege, xxiv, 5, 142–4, 214, 215, 220, 250, 268, 275
Asanuma, Inejirō, xxiii, 47, 48, 50, 56, 145, 270
Aum Shinrikyō, xiii, xxv, 185, 205, 243, 266–72, 284, 306
Bandō, Kunio, xiii, 141, 143, 145, 215, 220, 229, 231
Beheiren, xiii, xvii, xxii, xxiv, 7, 100–3, 106–9, 111, 112, 114–20, 167, 172, 192, 213, 246, 261, 307

349
INDEX

Betsuyaku, Minoru, 67, 247, 275, 314
Bloody May Day, xxiii, 18–9, 27, 30
bōsōzoku, xvii, 235–8, 264, 291, 304, 305
Bund, see Kyōsandō
Butoh, 239, 251–2, 258, 334
Buzoku, 239, 240, 241

campus strikes/protests, xxiv, 57, 60, 66, 67, 70–1, 72–8, 81, 82–4, 84–96, 97, 98, 99, 113, 114, 121, 123, 125, 136, 137, 150, 152, 160, 205, 246, 251, 273, 303, 316
censorship, 15, 21, 53, 206
Chim Pom, 297–8, 300
civil society, 44, 45, 46, 100, 106, 143, 146, 167, 168, 266, 273, 287, 289–90, 291, 292, 296, 301, 303
civil disobedience, 266, 303
civil society, 44, 45, 46, 100, 106, 143, 146, 167, 168, 266, 273, 287, 289–90, 291, 292, 296, 301, 303
civil disobedience, 266, 303
civil society, 44, 45, 46, 100, 106, 143, 146, 167, 168, 266, 273, 287, 289–90, 291, 292, 296, 301, 303
civil disobedience, 266, 303
cosplay, xvii, 2, 76, 159, 273, 284
coup d’état, xxiv, 5, 9, 31, 50, 52, 57, 58, 60, 61–2, 208, 246, 298
Daidōji, Masashi, xiii, xvii, 2, 76, 159, 273, 284
cosplay, xvii, 2, 76, 159, 273, 284
coup d’état, xxiv, 5, 9, 31, 50, 52, 57, 58, 60, 61–2, 208, 246, 298
Daidōji, Masashi, xiii, xvii, 2, 76, 159, 273, 284
cosplay, xvii, 2, 76, 159, 273, 284
coup d’état, xxiv, 5, 9, 31, 50, 52, 57, 58, 60, 61–2, 208, 246, 298
Daigo Fukuryū Maru, xxiii, 20, 46, 297
deserters (US military), 106–8, 238
dhaka Incident, xxiv, 220
Doi, Takeo, 2, 97, 309
Dōrō-Chiba, 151, 179
drugs, 70, 238, 239, 240, 271, 306
Dubai Incident, xxiv, 218
de jana ka, xvii, 252–3, 273
East Asia Anti-Japan Armed Front, see Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen
Ekita, Yukiko, 186, 196, 220, 226, 229
feminism, 73, 136–7, 144, 145, 167, 241, 303
festivals, 43, 77, 174, 240, 250, 251, 252, 253, 261, 292, 301
folk guerrilla concerts, xxiv, 116–17, 252, 301
Fourth International Japan, xiii, xv, xvii, 80, 110, 111, 114, 132, 137, 148, 176, 177, 187
freete, xviii, 264, 303, 335; activism, 272, 273, 292, 294, 295, 301, 336
Fukushima crisis, xxv, 7, 8, 109, 120, 161, 287–90, 292, 293, 294, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 307
Füryu mutan incident, see Shimanaka Incident
fütenzoku, xviii, 238–9
gelabó, xvii, 74, 75, 76–7, 86, 87, 94, 104, 106, 110, 126, 136, 237, 305
general strike, xxiii, 16, 37, 38, 53
Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, xxv, 7, 282, 287–8, 289, 290, 293
Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, xxv, 7, 266
Haneda Airport clashes, xxiv, 33–4, 37,
INDEX

38, 55, 66, 77, 103–6, 118, 132, 136, 152, 168, 316, 319
hannichibōkokuron, xviii, 188
Hanpakū, 261
Hansen Seinen Inkai, xviii, 111, 113, 115, 120, 150–1, 153, 171, 172, 321
hate groups, 285
Hi-Red Center, 254, 255–6
Higashi Ajia Hannichi Busō Sensen, xiii, xv, xviii, xxiv, 183–201, 205, 220, 241, 265, 267, 296, 304
Himeyuri no Tō, xxiv, 198, 220
Himori, Kōyū, xiii, xxv, 222, 230
hippie movement, xviii, 107, 108, 238, 239, 240–1, 253, 299, 305
hōganbiiki, xviii, 4–5, 23, 61, 105, 111, 143, 179, 182, 304–5
Honda, Nobuyoshi, xiii, xviii, xxiii, 105, 148, 149, 155, 157
Hōsei University, 33, 73, 98, 109, 151, 153, 156, 158, 160, 187
Hoshino, Fumiaki, 154, 204
hunger strikes, 83, 116, 197, 273, 291
Ikeda, Hayato, 41, 44, 50, 300
International Anti-War Day, xxiv, 103, 106, 107, 112–14, 116, 117, 119, 120, 126
Intrepid Four, xxiv, 106–7, 109
Ishihara, Shintarō, xiii, 21, 22, 23, 28, 37, 56, 100, 101, 235, 293
Itoi, Kanji (Dadakan), 261
Japanese National Railways, 17, 158, 159; privatisation, 151, 157, 179, 180
Japanese Red Army (Nihon Sekigun), xiii, xiv, xv, xviii, xxiv, 144, 160, 193, 196, 207–231, 329
jichikai (student councils), xvii, 27, 69, 76, 80, 81, 82, 83, 86, 89, 96, 98, 124, 136, 151, 152, 158, 159, 161
jiguzagu (zigzag snake dance), xviii, 42, 74, 84, 98, 105, 113, 116, 118, 252, 253, 304, 305, 314
justice system, trials, 88, 113, 171, 182, 197, 205–6, 228, 229, 257, 307, 310; miscarriages of justice, 134, 154, 200, 257
Kabuki, 15, 61, 235, 250
Kakumaru-ha, xiii, xv, xviii, xix, xxiii, 80, 86, 93, 104, 112, 137, 148–59, 161, 170, 324
Kakumeiteki Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Kakukyōdō/Kakkyōdō), xiii, xv, xvii, xviii, xix, xxiii, 28, 137, 148, 149, 151, 159, 187
Kakurōkyō, xv, xx, 150, 153, 158, 159, 177, 178, 179, 180
Kamagasaki, 199, 264, 265, 266
Kanba, Michiko, xiii, xxiii, 34, 39–40, 49, 69, 105, 115, 119, 121, 312
kanpa, xix, 44, 74, 109, 111, 113–14, 131 153, 181, 209
kanzen mokuhi (kanmoku), 196, 204
Kara, Jūrō, 234, 240, 244, 245, 246, 247, 250, 259, 262
kata, 76, 305
Kawashima, Tsuyoshi, xiii, 135, 137, 146, 230
Keidanren attack, xxiv, 279, 280, 281
Kidōtai, xix, 73, 76, 77, 78, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 90, 91, 92, 94, 104, 106, 110,
INDEX

111, 113, 115, 116, 117, 118, 120, 126, 134, 151, 152, 153, 154, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 178, 182, 205, 206, 238, 265, 294, 305

Kikumura, Yū, xxv, 222, 223
Kishi, Nobusuke, 26, 29, 30–46, 49, 50, 55, 56, 59, 104, 119, 121, 292, 300
Kodama, Yoshio, xiii, 49, 280
Koe Naki Koe no Kai (Voiceless Voices Association), 36, 45, 46, 100, 167
kokusai konkyochiron, xix, 128
Korea-Japan Treaty, 83, 105
Koza Riot, xxiv, 153, 154
Kuala Lumpur Incident, xxiv, 219, 227
Kuroda, Kanichi, xii, xviii, xx, xxiii, 148, 149
kyōsanshugika, xix, 140, 141, 143, 144, 146, 304
Kyōsanshugisha Dōmei (Kyōsandō) (Bund), xv, xvii, xix, xx, xxiii, 27, 28, 29, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 79, 80, 94, 124, 125, 131, 138, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 155, 161, 177, 326
Kyūten Renraku Sentā, 95, 196–7, 204, 225
kyūminkakumeiron, xix, 188, 265
Lebanon, xiii, 207, 211, 212, 214, 216, 217, 219, 221, 226, 230
Liberal Democratic Party, 29, 33, 35, 36, 41, 44, 55, 65, 96, 102, 161, 175, 179, 264, 272, 274, 280, 289, 300, 301, 307
Lod Airport massacre, xiii, xxiv, 160, 213–18, 222, 230, 231, 329
Lumpenproletariat, xix, 87, 139, 192, 195, 265, 273, 327
Marugakudō, xv, xix, xx, 80, 104, 148, 149, 151
Maruoka, Osamu, xiii, xxiv, 126, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 226, 229, 230, 319, 331, 332
Maruyama, Masao, 14, 44, 45, 97, 100
Marxism, 7, 27, 69, 70, 71, 72, 129, 130, 149, 187, 188, 192, 195, 230, 265, 315
Meiji University, 28, 33, 73, 82, 91, 159, 209, 244
Miike mine, xxi, 31, 41, 49, 72, 108, 149, 312
Minsei Dōmei, xv, xix, 27, 74, 80, 82, 85, 86, 87, 94, 113, 273, 316
minzoku-ha, 279
Mishima, Yukio, xiii, xxiv, 5, 57–63, 88, 97, 246, 277, 279, 281, 284, 301, 304, 313, 314
Mitsubishi Heavy Industries headquarters bombing, xxiv, 183–6, 191, 192, 194, 195, 197, 200, 201, 220, 266
Miyashita Park protest, 273
Miyazaki, Manabu, 74, 84, 96
Mori, Tsuneo, xiii, 131, 134–41, 143, 145, 208, 210, 217, 323
Morita, Masakatsu, 60–2, 279
Morris, Ivan, 5, 304, 313
motorcycle gangs, see bōsōzoku
Motoshima, Hitoshi, xxv, 281–2, 336
Murakami, Haruki, 57, 267, 270
Murakami, Ryū, 66, 74, 108
music, xxiv, 13, 21, 29, 30, 34, 43 70, 73, 74, 88, 93, 115–17, 174, 210, 234, 237, 238, 239, 240–1, 247, 248, 252, 253, 259, 261, 270, 272, 273, 284, 291, 292, 293, 295, 299, 301, 303, 304
Nagata, Hiroko, xiii, 134–46, 220, 221
Nakasone, Yasuhiro, 178, 179

352
INDEX

Neo-Dada, 254
neoliberalism, 98, 151, 158, 179, 272, 294, 307, 312
netto uyoku, 285
Nihon Kyōsantō Kakumei Saha
Kanagawa-ken Jōnin Iinkai
(Kakumei Saha), xv, xix, xx, xxiv, 132, 134–5, 137, 138, 146, 214, 217, 230
Nihon University, xiii, xxiv, 73, 76, 87, 89–93, 95, 133, 136, 153, 294, 315
nihonjinron (nihonron), xix, 2, 6, 68, 75, 101, 189, 204, 235, 270, 305
nonpori, xx, 73, 92, 93, 99, 103, 116, 124, 125, 253, 294, 301, 303
North Korea, 124, 128, 130, 138, 224, 225, 231, 322
nuclear power protests, 7, 120, 167, 290–5, 300, 301, 337
Oda, Makoto, xiii, 100, 101, 318–19
Ōe, Kenzaburō, xiii, 37, 48–9, 60, 100, 291
Ogawa, Shinsuke, 240
Okamoto, Kōzō, xiii, 212–17, 227, 229, 231, 331
Okamoto, Tarō, 100, 103, 257, 260, 261, 297–8
Okinawa, xiv, xix, 18, 19, 20, 29, 46, 49, 100, 102, 104, 110, 112, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 120, 124, 133, 150, 188, 189, 195, 199, 265, 274, 303; protest in, xiv, 20, 120, 153, 154, 176, 198, 199, 220, 265, 303; independence move- ment, 188, 189, 327; Okinawa Day, xiv, 114
Okudaira, Tsuyoshi, xiii, 210, 212, 213, 215, 217, 219
Ōmori, Katsuhisa, 199–200, 296
Ōshima, Nagisa, xiii, 48, 129, 234, 240, 258
Ōta, Ryū, xiii, xviii, xxiii, 137, 148, 187–8, 193–4, 196, 199, 200, 265, 279, 296, 327
Parco, 250, 251, 260, 297
performance art, 254–6, 259
performance, protest as, 70, 76–7, 115, 236, 251–2, 259, 273, 277–8, 284, 305
PBM sakusen, xx, 131
peasant uprisings, xxi, 4, 129, 164, 260, 336
PFLP, 210–219, 228, 229, 259
pink cinema, 210, 212, 258
political art, 19, 20, 258–60, 296–8
precariat, xviii, 272, 274, 284, 336
Red Army, see Sekigun-ha
Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War, 210–12, 213, 259
religion, attacks on religious sites, 180, 192–3, 200–1; new religious movements, see shin-shūkyō

353
INDEX

riots, xix, xxiii, xxiv, 4, 6, 7, 16, 18–19, 34, 77, 83, 92, 98, 103, 105, 106, 111, 112–15, 117–18, 120, 126, 153, 204, 206, 251, 252, 253, 265, 326
sabotage, 17, 179, 192–4
Sakaguchi, Kyōhei, 298–300
Sanmu Incident, 50
Sanpa Zengakuren, xx, 80, 104, 111, 112, 149, 172
Sanrizuka, see Narita Airport protest movement
Sasaki, Norio, xiv, 184, 185, 186, 195, 196, 200, 229, 231
Sasaki, Toshinao, 146, 295, 296
Sasebo protests, xxiv, 66, 108–11, 112, 113, 151, 152, 172, 175, 249, 305, 316
Satō, Eisaku, 61, 88, 91, 102, 104, 105, 106, 109, 118, 119, 120, 121, 126, 260
SEALDs, 301, 338
security bills protests (2014–15), 303, 338
Sekieigun, xx, 133
self-immolation, xiii, xxv, 106, 199, 230, 259, 265, 296, 303
Senki-ha, xv, xx, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 198, 326
Shagakudō, xv, xix, xx, 27, 74, 80, 104, 110, 111, 114, 117, 124, 126, 151
Shaseidō Kaihō-ha, xv, xx, 80, 86, 104, 110, 111, 150, 153, 158, 159, 177, 178, 180, 181
Shibuya, 16, 120, 133, 153–4, 200, 204, 233, 246, 250, 251, 255, 262, 273, 296, 297
Shibuya Incident, xxiii, 16
Shibuya Riot Incident, xxiv, 120 153, 204
Shigaigeki, xx, 249, 251, 334
Shigenobu, Fusako, xiv, xxv, xxvi, 69, 126, 137, 138, 139, 143, 207–14, 216, 217–22, 224, 226–31, 301, 319, 330, 331, 332
Shimanaka Incident, xxiii, 50–1
shimin, xx, 45, 46, 72, 103, 117, 118, 167, 251, 266, 295
shin-sayoku, see New Left
shin-shūkyō, xxi, 96, 242, 267–70
Shiomi, Takaya, xiv, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 138, 140, 146, 148, 205, 206, 209, 210, 215, 221, 230
Shirōto no Ran, 292–3
shutaisei, xxi, 44, 70, 71, 251
Singapore Incident, xxiv, 218
Sōhyō, xviii, 27, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 40, 56, 57, 65, 102, 110, 113, 117, 118, 119, 150
sōkatsu, xix, xx, 139–41
sound demo, 273, 291, 293, 304
state secrets bill protests (2013), 303, 308
Steinhoff, Patricia G., 144, 214, 215, 222, 317, 325, 331
strikes, xxiii, 3, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 26, 29, 31, 37, 38, 40, 41, 49, 53, 66, 71, 72, 74, 75, 79, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 95, 97, 103, 196, 108, 113, 115, 118, 119, 125, 149, 150, 176, 179, 205, 312
INDEX

Subversive Activities Prevention Law, 53, 79
suicide, xiii, xxv, 5, 9, 10, 12, 48, 57, 58, 59, 60–2, 63, 69, 86, 90, 94, 97, 106, 142, 145, 147, 196, 197, 199, 212, 214, 215, 218, 230, 242, 246, 248, 259, 264, 265, 279, 281, 296, 303, 304
Sunagawa protests, xxiii, 20, 28, 30, 112, 152, 171, 175
Suzuki, Kunio, xiv, 279, 281, 284, 291
Tachikawa (US military base), xxiii, 20, 28, 30, 112, 152, 171, 175
taiyōzoku (Sun Tribe), xxi, 22–3, 28, 56, 235
Takakura, Ken, 22, 23, 97, 249
Takita, Osamu, xiv, 123, 124, 133, 159–60, 212, 259, 260
Tamiya, Takamaro, 127, 129, 130, 131, 223, 225, 322
Tanigawa, Gan, 163, 168, 241
tenkō, xxi, 67–9, 70, 96, 145
Terayama, Shūji, xiv, 13, 37, 100, 215, 239, 244, 245–9, 251, 253, 261, 262, 334
terrorism, police definition of, 207, 221, 223, 281
The Hague Incident, xxiv, 219, 227, 228, 229, 332
Tokyo G7 summit attack, xxiv, 158, 179, 223
Tomura, Issaku, xiv, 169, 172, 174, 175, 177
Torihada, Minoru, 285–6
Trotkyism, xvii, xviii, xxiii, 81, 124, 137, 148, 187
Tsuchimoto, Noriaki, 124
Tsurumi, Shunsuke, 14, 36, 44, 45, 97, 100
uchi-geba, xxi, xxiv, 57, 75, 81, 93, 125, 137, 138, 147–61, 236, 304, 306, 324
Ugajin, Hisaichi, 186, 194, 195, 196, 197, 199, 265
ultra-nationalism, xiii, 47–63, 237, 277–86, 304, 313
University of Tokyo, xxiv, 39, 60, 66, 71, 76, 79, 84–9, 91, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98, 107, 114, 142, 152, 242, 265, 315, 317
United Red Army, see Rengō Sekigun
US occupation (of Japan), xxiii, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 30, 52, 53, 190
uyoku, xxi, 9, 31, 34, 37, 39, 41, 47–63, 75, 77, 90, 91, 93, 102, 110, 145, 170, 237, 241, 265, 273, 277–86, 304, 305, 313
volunteerism, 95, 108, 167, 203, 266, 287, 290, 292, 301
Wakamatsu, Kōji, xiv, 63, 138, 210–12, 229, 274, 275
Waseda University, 33, 73, 74, 82, 83, 91, 92, 93, 94, 98, 104, 117, 129, 136, 151, 152, 154, 156, 158, 244
Women’s Liberation, 136, 137, 145, 167, 241, 303
yajiuma, xxi, 97, 110–11, 251, 253, 295
Yakuza, 16, 17, 22, 40, 46, 54, 56, 57, 74, 84, 93, 109, 155, 166, 195, 236, 264, 265, 266, 278, 280, 288

355
INDEX

Yamada, Kaiya, 241, 333
Yamamoto, Tarō, 290
Yamamoto, Yoshitaka, xxiv, 71, 76, 85, 86, 87, 89, 92, 96
Yasukuni Shrine, 282–3, 301
Yodogō hijacking, xv, xxiv, 127–31, 138, 192, 205, 208, 210, 212, 223–6, 231, 259, 268, 304
Yokoo, Tadanori, 37, 240, 245, 254, 262
yonaoshi, xxi, 4, 164, 252, 253, 260
yoseba, 187, 195, 199, 264, 265
Yoshimoto, Takaaki, xiv, 45, 68, 71–2, 97, 129, 143, 234, 246, 323
Yui, Chūnoshin, 106, 259, 296, 303
Yūki, Shōji, 193–4
Zaitokukai, 285
zendankai busōhōkiron, xxi, 124
Zenkyōtō (Zengaku Kyōtō Kaigi), xxi, xxiv, 70–95, 98, 115, 119, 123, 124, 126, 130, 136, 139, 151, 152, 161, 242, 250, 258, 267, 275, 294, 305, 307
Zero Jigen, 254, 259