The British Commonwealth and its Contribution to the Occupation of Japan, 1945-8

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Personal Reminiscences of the Early Months of the Occupation: Yokosuka and Tokyo, September 1945 – March 1946

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An Australian's Experiences of BCOF: Kaitaichi and Hiroshima, 1946-6

Sir Hugh Cortazzi, GCMG, British Ambassador to Japan, 1980-4

Britain and the Occupation of Japan: A Personal Experience and Some Comments

Bruce Kirkpatrick, Australia - Appendix

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Preface

The Suntory-Toyota International Centre held an all-day symposium on 'The British Commonwealth and its Contribution to the Occupation of Japan, 1945-8' on 5 July 1991. The three speakers covered the early years of the occupation, Professor Beasley dealing with the period from September 1945 to March 1946, Professor Millar from February 1946 to August 1947 and Sir Hugh Cortazzi from June 1946 to August 1947. Moreover, their experiences took them to different areas which were part of the British Commonwealth responsibility, Professor Beasley to Yokosuka and Tokyo, Professor Millar to Hiroshima prefecture and Tokyo and Sir Hugh Cortazzi to Yamaguchi and Tottori prefectures.

Readers wishing to pursue this neglected area of research may care to consult the article by Walter Millar, 'Some British Reflections on the Occupation of Japan' in STICERD pamphlet IS/91/224, and the earlier pamphlet 'The British Commonwealth and the Occupation of Japan' (IS/83/78). Other aspects of the British Commonwealth contribution are discussed in Roger Buckley, Occupation Diplomacy: Britain, the US and Japan 1945-52 (Cambridge, 1982); Ann Trotter, New Zealand and Japan, 1945-52 (Athlone, 1990); and Ian Nish, 'The Occupation of Japan: Some personal recollections' in Gordon Daniels (ed.), Proceedings of the British Association of Japanese Studies, vol.4 (i), (Sheffield, 1979).

Ian Nish
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My first experience of living and working in Japan was as a junior naval officer during the first six months of the occupation. The experience gave me a view of events which differs from that which is to be had from government archives. I was serving at the level at which policy was implemented, not that at which it was formed. Hence I was able to observe what people at these levels actually did, not what their seniors hoped they were doing. And in commenting on this, I should emphasise that I have no personal records for that period. Nor have I made any attempt to check the public accounts in any detail, since that would seem to be contrary to the nature of the exercise. These are therefore my present recollections, dulled and distorted by time. They are no doubt as unreliable as memoirs usually are.

In the last weeks of the war I had been in the Pacific islands, interrogating Japanese naval prisoners (who were very rare and never seemed to possess important information). Late in July 1945 I was ordered to join the flagship of the British Pacific Fleet, H.M.S. King George V, so as to be available for duty in Japan, if needed. Presumably my superiors had some knowledge of the coming atomic bomb, though, if so, they did not confide the information to me. At all events, by
the time I reached the fleet the first atomic bomb had been dropped. I was therefore just in time to be present in Tokyo Bay during the surrender ceremony.

I did not attend the ceremony aboard U.S.S. Missouri. Instead, like most members of the task force, I listened to the radio commentary provided for ships in the anchorage. Soon afterwards I landed at Yokohama as one of a group of British representatives from all three services, who set up offices in the British consulate general. An immediate task was helping to evacuate civilian internees and prisoners of war, but in other respects activity was chiefly directed towards bringing more men and equipment into the allied beachhead. It is often forgotten how different the situation in Japan was from that in Germany. When Germany surrendered there were already large allied land forces in the country, complete with supply lines, communications, interpreters. In Japan there was nothing of the kind. The Japanese surrender had been sudden. Few forces, other than the fleet, were immediately available to be sent there. There had been discussion about surrender terms in Washington and London, but in other respects most of the planning had been for invasion, not occupation, that is, invasion of both the Japanese home islands and Japanese-held areas in Southeast Asia. As a result there was an air of makeshift about almost everything that was done in the immediate aftermath of surrender. An American airborne division moved into Tokyo, presumably briefed and certainly competent. By contrast, the shores of Tokyo Bay were taken over by men landed from the fleet: American and British marines, who had some training for what they were doing; a large number of sailors, who had not. Transport consisted of a handful of jeeps, requisitioned from reluctant
aircraft carriers, plus vehicles commandeered from the Japanese. In these circumstances it was thought to be a matter of urgency to consolidate the military position, since there was great uncertainty about possible Japanese reactions. And putting the occupation on a more organised footing took time. Some parts of Japan were to remain unoccupied for several weeks for simple logistical reasons. I remember going with American colleagues to inspect a radar station in the Izu peninsula, only to find ourselves outside the occupied zone, somewhere between the Eighth and Sixth Armies. The mayor of the town offered to surrender the district to us.

There was another aspect of lack of preparedness. The allied forces had come ready for fighting, if there were resistance, but not in the full sense for civil administration. Throughout Southeast Asia there were Japanese forces, whose surrender had to be secured, and territories where government had to be established. This put an enormous strain on administrative resources throughout the region. In Japan, for example, there were few allied personnel who could speak and read the language. Military government officers, when they began to put in an appearance, proved in large part to be men with a background in American politics, who had been given only a sketchy knowledge of things Japanese. Even typists were at a premium. One result was that from the beginning there had to be a considerable dependence on Japanese staff. Those who rightly believe that the political aspects of occupation made a slow and uneven start should bear all this in mind.

For my own part, once the first flurry of activity was over, I moved to the newly-created U.S. naval headquarters at
Yokosuka as the self-styled British Naval Intelligence Liaison Officer (one had to have a title of some kind in order to be acknowledged to exist). There was a certain amount of interpreting to be done; there were post-box duties, forwarding American queries to appropriate British authorities; and for a week or two there was the task of correcting our highly inaccurate information about the facilities of the dockyard. Otherwise I joined in the work of my American colleagues, with one or two of whom I had trained in the United States. A summary of some of our activities might serve to illustrate what this phase of the occupation entailed for those who were outside the main stream of military government.

One major undertaking was demilitarization. The Japanese army and navy were promptly demobilised after the surrender, but in a large establishment like Yokosuka dockyard there remained quantities of weapons, ranging from swords and rifles to torpedos, midget submarines and hydrofoil attack boats. There was also ammunition of many kinds (some of it British naval ammunition from Hong Kong and Singapore, apparently removed to Japan after the capture of those bases in the winter of 1941-2). Arms and ammunition had to be destroyed, usually by being dumped at sea, or rendered safe, or removed for technical study. In addition, there were many tunnels in the cliffs which ringed the dockyard, used for stores and equipment. All these had to be examined. They contained a number of machine shops, installed there to enable work to continue on building midget submarines, or effecting urgent repairs to ships, despite the frequent air raids in the closing stages of the war. There was an operations room from which the naval sector of the air defences of Tokyo had been controlled. On
its wall was a large chart on which the positions of aircraft were marked by lights (used, so one of the former Japanese air controllers told me, when I expressed doubts about its value, chiefly to impress politicians). Exploring these tunnels was not a welcome duty, since they were infested with fleas. It was also handicapped at first by the absence of people who could remember where things were: instant demobilisation had removed the relevant Japanese staff. There were no usable lists or inventories.

The contents of the tunnels included, as one would expect on a naval base, a good deal of food, clothing, and bedding. In view of the desperate shortage of such things among the Japanese population, it was GHQ policy that they were to be turned over to the civil authorities. Properly this was a function of army military government, which soon found itself facing evidence of local corruption in the matter, apparently involving both the mayor and the chief of police. The navy became involved because the corruption extended also to the provision of Japanese labour for the dockyard. A related problem was the black market. Yokosuka was a main port of arrival for American supplies. It transpired that large-scale thefts were taking place from ships in the harbour of tobacco, chocolate, soap and other goods for which there was a ready, if illegal, sale in Tokyo and Yokohama. This time many of those responsible turned out to be foreigners resident in Japan, or members of the American forces.

Security was also a matter of concern in the early months. Many members of the occupation forces, especially those with combat experience, were suspicious of the apparent quiescence of the Japanese people. Their fears were fuelled by regular reports from the Counter Intelligence
Corps of the discovery of secret arms dumps, or resistance groups, or even on one occasion a supposed plot for a Japanese rising. Since many of America's seasoned troops were melting away, qualified to go home by reason of long service, there was an element of doubt about whether those who remained could react effectively to a crisis. All the same, by Christmas these alarms were almost all forgotten: nothing had happened, after all; and the young men who came to replace those going home lacked the memories of Guadalcanal and Okinawa. In fact, the occupation was settling down to what was to be normality, the age of the pan-pan girl and candy.

As individuals we seem to have had greater freedom at Yokosuka in meeting local Japanese residents than did those who were stationed in the British Commonwealth zone round Kure. It was possible, for example, to get advice from people living in the city and nearby about aspects of Japanese life and culture which interested us. I began to learn something about Japanese prints and painting at this time. Sometimes we in turn were approached for help by Japanese groups who saw the surrender as an opportunity for 'democratic' political activity - they were not always sure of the meaning of the word - or who wanted to improve their English, believing it was the language of the future in Japan. On some occasions the two motives came together: there was a society calling itself the Pupils' League which met to discuss political questions in the English language. It turned out that the title was meant to be People's League. As this misunderstanding illustrates, several years of official disapproval had done much to lower standards of English, especially among the young. Resuming the teaching of it in schools clearly posed problems. In the autumn of 1945 one
one was occasionally greeted in English by enthusiastic
groups of tiny children, who appeared to be in some
confusion about the difference between 'hello' and 'goodbye'.

When not on duty it was possible to move about the area -
as far as Kamakura and Hakone, at least - by Japanese
public transport. The chief difficulty about doing this, in fact,
was what might be called the feudal separatism of military
bureaucracy. In Yokosuka one needed passes from the
U.S. Navy (for the headquarters area), the U.S. Marine
Corps (for the dockyard), and Eighth Army (for nearby
districts not under naval control). To travel farther afield
required travel orders, though we found that it was possible
to write them for each other. By comparison, we
encountered few obstacles about staying in Japanese hotels
or ryokan, provided we took our own food.

From these comments it is probably evident that life in
Yokosuka had as much in common with what was described in
Teahouse of the August Moon as with what is to be found
in SCAP summations of non-military activities. In December,
when I moved to Tokyo, I found myself in a very different
world. I joined the staff of the United Kingdom mission. It
was housed in the British embassy, which had been
commissioned as H.M.S. Return, flying the white ensign and
mounting a marine guard: a step officially described as being
necessary for logistic reasons, unofficially held to have been
taken in order to ensure supplies of duty-free alcohol. Since
it was not possible to have formal diplomatic representation
in an occupied country, the head of the mission was a
lieutenant-general, serving as the Prime Minister's personal
representative to General MacArthur, Supreme Commander
for the Allied Powers. He had a small liaison staff under a
brigadier (John Profumo). In addition to this there was a political section, provided by the Foreign Office, three service sections, and eventually other staff to deal with economic matters, war crimes, etc. By the time I returned to Japan in 1950 the organisation had grown to a considerable size and had shed its quasi-military character.

Its main function in the initial stage was to act as a channel between SCAP, the Commonwealth occupation force, and London ministries. It also served as a source of independent information about Japan: independent, that is, of the United States. My own duties were nominally concerned with naval intelligence, but for all practical purposes there was none, so I spent most of my time collecting political and economic information for the regular reports to London. A little came from American colleagues at GHQ, but far and away the most useful portion was taken from Japanese newspapers. Trying to resolve their contradictions and discrepancies proved in later years to have been a valuable training for a potential historian.

In Yokosuka it had been impossible to be unaware of American inter-service rivalries, a peacetime phenomenon almost as obtrusive as those between the Japanese army and navy before surrender. In Tokyo, as befits a capital city, it was differences between states which were most conspicuous, notably those between former allies. The disagreements between the United States and Russia are too well documented to need underlining here. The conflict of interests between an America anxious to limit its own commitments and those countries which hoped to recoup some of their wartime losses by means of reparations from Japan also became a familiar theme. Then there were the
broad differences between Washington and some European governments about the future of colonial territories in Southeast Asia, though this issue was not in the forefront of discussions within Japan, at least any of which I was aware. Closer to home, there was a good deal of manoeuvring for position by representatives of the victor countries, including Britain, as they sought to re-establish prewar links - sometimes personal ones - with groups and individuals in Japanese government and politics. One reason for this was that the international bodies through which SCAP was supposed to be advised or controlled, that is, the Far Eastern Commission in Washington and the Allied Council in Tokyo, were often deadlocked. Another was the resurgence of national self-interest among the allies once the war was won. As far as I could judge, the principal effect was to provide Japanese officials with opportunities for occasional mischief-making.

Looking back to the past was still more evident in Japan's domestic politics, despite the radical nature of institutional reforms. During the winter of 1945-6 most of the features of the postwar political settlement were taking shape. In September there were the first arrests of major war criminals and the publication of the document on initial post-surrender policy. In October the formation of the Shidehara cabinet provided MacArthur with a 'respectable' instrument through which to work, obviating the need for direct military government: military government teams were chiefly to have the role of checking on Japanese officialdom. The new administration was promptly ordered to initiate 'democratic' policies with respect to the position of women, trade unions, education, and the economy. In January came a New Year rescript which was universally assumed at the time to
represent an abdication of the emperor's divinity, though that interpretation has been questioned since. It was followed within a few days by an announcement of the purge of former nationalists and militarists from public positions, including membership of the Diet. In February GHQ began to prepare its own draft of a new constitution, dissatisfied with the progress being made by the Shidehara cabinet. The election law had been revised in December. A general election was announced for April 1946.

Standard accounts of this period concern themselves as a rule with discussion of the nature and effectiveness of these measures, but to someone present at the time the overwhelming impression was of the resulting confusion. Japan's wartime politics had been much less monolithic than those of Germany. As a consequence, the country entered the occupation period with what one might call the ghosts of prewar parties still in existence. Most members of the Diet at the end of 1945 had belonged to one or another of them. These men at once set about the task of establishing for themselves, whether as groups or individuals, a place in the postwar order. This involved on the one hand denials of complicity in wartime decisions, coupled with some destruction of records (American officers were already engaged in a trawl for war crimes evidence). Many claimed democratic credentials, not always convincingly. The corollary was moves to cement potentially useful alliances, which, it was hoped, might secure American patronage, and to seek political funds. From all this there emerged a number of parties, having new names - or old ones resurrected - but familiar faces. As one of my colleagues remarked, we had conservative Liberals, reactionary Progressives, and Social Democrats comprising one part
moderate socialists, one part professional politicians who had failed to get into the two right-wing parties. What we did not have were recognisable programmes or policies. It was not difficult to be cynical on the subject.

The purge directive, it proved, applied to a large number of these men, mostly on the right of the political spectrum, but a good many in the centre, too. Some of those who were banned were leading party figures. This not only made the election campaign which followed fairly ill-organised, but also led to the recruitment of new leadership from the bureaucracy or other circles outside the ranks of professional politicians (e.g. Yoshida Shigeru), thereby setting a model for the future. However, some of those who might have been called upon at this time, such as Kishi Nobusuke, were not available because they were under investigation as suspected war criminals. In fact, it was to be some time before patterns of party leadership and membership settled down. All the same, my residual impression is of a substantial change in personalities, if not principles, in the early months of 1946. A postwar political generation was beginning to emerge.

The confusion was made greater by the decision, which had been announced at the beginning of October 1945, to release from jail all prewar and wartime political prisoners. One result was to provide recruits for two large leftwing parties, the Socialists and Communists. The former, embracing a wide and varied range of ideas, lacked cohesion, as the socialist movement had done before the war, and found it difficult to agree on a central leadership. The Communists had fewer difficulties of this kind, especially after Nosaka Sanzō returned to Japan in January 1946, but
faced substantial public distrust. The existence of these two parties, added to those of centre and right, confronted the electors with a choice between five major groupings, all having organisational weaknesses of one kind or another.

What is more, many of those released from jail had no clear affiliations with any of the five, contributing instead to the activities of local, self-styled 'democratic' groups like the Pupils' League in Yokosuka. Lacking organisation, funds and coherent ideology, often ignorant of what was needed in fighting an election, they rushed to declare themselves to be political parties. To them one must add others who represented particular local interests or a personal power base, often the kind of people who in later years won election as conservatively-inclined independents. At this stage many of them chose party labels of their own. Thus by the official count over 300 parties entered the general election of the spring of 1946. I tried to keep notes on them during the campaign, but in the end I not only failed to keep track of all their names, I even lost count.

Against this background there was brisk public debate on a number of themes: old ones, like the position of women; new ones, like war crimes and reparations, or the emperor's responsibility for the war. Interestingly, I did not encounter any questioning of the ethics of the atomic bomb, at least in personal conversations. It was most often referred to as if it were a natural calamity, like an earthquake. This may, of course, have reflected nothing more than reserve, or political caution. Nor do I recall any expressions of Japanese scepticism about the attempt to impose democracy through military diktat. This was perhaps for similar reasons, though it may also have reflected the general muzziness of political
thought in existing conditions. Certainly, whatever may have been the nature of debate among the Japanese themselves, they behaved as model students in their political dealings with the occupation forces. The press and radio were censored, of course. This meant that their comments did not throw much light on Japanese objections to what was going on. And since GHQ and its subordinate echelons lacked the qualified staff to run convincing tests of Japanese opinion, there was little means of checking what was said on the subject by Japanese official sources. I always had the feeling that our knowledge of what was happening beneath the surface of Japanese politics was altogether too random and anecdotal. Subsequent scholarship seems to have borne this out.

I spent quite a lot of time trying to secure information about the Japanese economy, but achieved no results that would now be worth stating. In that first winter after the war the most obvious economic facts were that very little was being produced by industry, that farmers were making large black market profits from food, and that many people in the cities were nearly or actually starving. It was inconvenient to me personally that no two sets of statistics ever seemed to agree, but the Japanese people were suffering much more than inconvenience. It is possible to argue that bringing some order into this situation justified the gradual strengthening of authority in the year or two which followed, whatever the loss in terms of democracy, but I cannot claim to have seen the force of this at the time. My chief reaction was a certain impatience with countries which were calling for reparations from Japan, when all that seemed available to provide them was disused weapons and battered factories. Clearly I acquired no insight into Japan's industrial
future.

I did not much enjoy that winter in Tokyo. There was a lurking sense of inadequacy: if I counted as an expert, we were singularly ill-equipped to decide the fate of a country. In addition, I was disturbed by the relative comfort of the embassy and the stark hardship outside it: the shanties springing up in the heavily bombed areas; the crowds of people on trains going into the countryside, carrying possessions which they hoped to barter for food; the drabness of a city in which nearly everyone was wearing khaki, or something close to it; above all, the human evidence of defeat, seen in bowed heads and dragging feet. I left in March 1946 with no regret and no intention of ever going back again.

I did go back, of course. It was 1950. I was there in a different capacity, as a lecturer in history, carrying out post-doctoral research at Tokyo University and trying to convert my knowledge of Japan into a properly academic one. And Japan was different, too. No longer was there an air of makeshift. Indeed, bureaucracy was triumphant, the addition of American bureaucracy to the homegrown Japanese civil variety having produced an extremely formidable combination. To get access to some Tokugawa-period material in the *Naikaku Bunko* (the pre-modern Cabinet Library, housed within the precincts of the imperial palace) I had to secure permits from the International Section of the National Diet Library, the Diplomatic Section of GHQ, and the Imperial Household Agency (through the Foreign Ministry).

The Diet had come through its period of confusion to take on
what has since been its familiar form: a conservative majority, a fragmented opposition. There was talk of a peace treaty. The economy, though not yet fully recovered, had improved enough to remove most signs of outright poverty. Housing was scarce in the cities (there were still shanty towns in places), items like rice and charcoal were rationed, electric power cuts were frequent, but it was possible to sense an atmosphere of greater confidence, despite the nearness of the Korean War. There was also an evident willingness to take part in community affairs at the local level - perhaps a legacy of the political enthusiasms of five years earlier - which was a far cry from the widespread apathy and despair of Tokyo in 1946. This time I was glad to be there.
It was entirely appropriate that Australia should take part in the occupation of Japan. Australian forces had been involved in the war from the very beginning, in Malaya, Singapore, and then in the island chain between Asia and Australia, as well as in the various oceans in which the Japanese navy had operated. After a succession of startling victories, Japan sustained her first land reversal of the war in July 1942 at Milne Bay on the southeast coast of New Guinea, when Australian troops defeated Japanese units. The Australian army fought a bloody war of attrition against the Japanese in New Guinea, New Britain, the Solomons and Borneo, and would have taken part in the invasion of Japan had not the atomic bomb brought an end to the war. Australia was the base from which the American campaign against Japan was launched and sustained. A total of 17,505 Australians died in the war against Japan, including nearly 8,000 while they were prisoners of war in grossly inhumane conditions.

Australia's political leaders had a stronger sense of Australia's part in the defeat of Japan than did the leaders of their allies. General MacArthur, who directed the war in the Southwest Pacific from the comfort of this Australian headquarters, supported the Australian government in its desire to take part in the surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay,
where the Australian General Blamey signed the instrument of surrender along with American and British leaders. For the last 20 months of the war, Australia had resented being left out of the discussions about the terms of the surrender, and repeatedly made known this resentment to the British government. She similarly wanted a say in the postwar settlement, especially in ensuring that Japan would be in no position to repeat her aggression. By dint of a vigorous and somewhat chip-on-shoulder diplomacy, Australia was appointed to occupy the seat of the British Commonwealth representative on the Allied Council for Japan, the body set up to provide guidance to General MacArthur - guidance which he systematically ignored.

When the war against Japan appeared to be coming towards its end, the British government proposed that a British Commonwealth force be sent to Japan to share with the United States the responsibilities for occupying the country. In October 1945 the Australian legation in Washington formally proposed this to the United States government, which promptly accepted the proposals in principle. The four participating Commonwealth governments - the UK, Australia, New Zealand and India - agreed that the Australian Chiefs of Staff Committee, appropriately augmented and known as Joint Chiefs of Staff, Australia (JCOSA) should have overall control of the force, known as the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF). An Australian lieutenant-general was appointed to command it. He was administratively responsible to JCOSA and operationally to the American Supreme Commander, General MacArthur. BCOF was given responsibility for the five western prefectures of the main island of Honshu, and the whole of the island of Shikoku. The Australian
component of BCOF consisted of an infantry brigade (34th Brigade), an artillery battery, and three fighter squadrons of the Royal Australian Air Force, with HQ staffs, and naval units calling from time to time. Later, after the Indian and then the British components left, BCOF was almost entirely Australian.

At the end of the war, I was a young officer with the 2/11th Infantry Battalion, 19th Brigade, 6th Division, serving in the Wewak area of what was then the Mandated Territory of New Guinea. I was 19 years old, having graduated as a lieutenant from the Royal Military College of Australia, Duntroon, the previous December. Fortunately for my platoon, who were all much more experienced than I was, the battalion was resting on the beach, and my main task was to make sure they took their anti-malarial atebrine tablets and were kept reasonably well occupied in recreational activities. The Australian government decided that 34th Brigade should be drawn from formations serving in the Southwest Pacific, i.e. the 6th Division from New Guinea, the 7th and 9th from Borneo, and the 3rd and 5th from Bougainville and New Britain. 34th Brigade had three battalions, 65th, 66th and 67th. The 67th Battalion was to be drawn largely from the 6th Division, although its Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Don Jackson, came from the 9th Division. Officers and men in my battalion were all given the opportunity to enlist in BCOF. I was asked whether I wished for any particular posting, and I asked for and was duly appointed Battalion Intelligence Officer. So far as I can recall, I was almost entirely unfitted for this position, but it sounded rather romantic and in fact turned out to be one of the most interesting appointments in the battalion, especially as I was provided with a first class and very experienced
intelligence section and three Japanese-speaking interpreters.

In late October 1945, as I recall, we were transported by an American Victory ship to Morotai, in the Halmaheras, part of the Dutch East Indies, where the brigade was assembled. We went into a tented camp, and we understood that we would very shortly be shipped to Japan. This, however, was not to happen for some time, apparently because General MacArthur dragged his feet over deploying the British force. As the weeks went by, the Australian troops, many of whom had been in jungle combat for a year or more, became restive, and somewhat vocal, and eventually called a protest parade on the brigade parade ground. When our commanders heard this was to happen, we officers were told to assemble our troops and tell them that they would be disobeying lawful orders if they attended the parade, and could expect to be penalised. This, of course, did not deter them in the least, and on the appointed day the brigade almost to a man marched by companies under command of their NCOs in orderly procedure onto the parade ground, where they were addressed by their leaders and by the Acting Brigade Commander before marching home again in orderly procession. In the event none of them were penalised - how do you put a whole brigade on a charge? - but they were given the opportunity to withdraw from the force if they wished, and a good many did so.

Morotai was a delightful tropical island of which my fondest memory is of plucking papayas (paw paws) off the tree. As I0 I had to give lectures on Japan - a subject of which I was only marginally less ignorant than the troops. In due course the way was cleared for us to go. I was part of the advance
party for the brigade. I do not remember who else was in this party, other than the two other battalion IOs and the brigade IO. We landed (as I recall, on 13 February 1946) at the Japanese naval base of Kure, where we were met by our brigade major, who had flown there a few days ahead of us. The first thing we did was to borrow a jeep from the Americans and drive the 20 or so miles to Hiroshima. We had never heard of atomic radiation, and I do not recall ever being given information about it, then or later.

Nothing could have prepared us for the experience. Hiroshima was a comparatively small city, as cities go, but the devastation was still enormous and appalling - rubble, rubble, as far as the eye could see, with the occasional concrete building standing, burnt out and cracked, with trams thrown yards from the tramlines, twisted and burnt. Later I was to see some of the survivors in a Hiroshima hospital, and this was horrifying, but at the time of that first visit I can only in honesty say that I and (I suspect) also my fellow officers felt above all else a sense of gratitude that this bomb had ended the war. We were subsequently to discover that Japan was in fact getting ready to sue for peace, and making moves in that direction, when the bomb was dropped. Nevertheless we were all part of a force which would probably have been used for the invasion of Japan, and I understand the records show that the Japanese staff had made a remarkably accurate appreciation of where the invasion would come. We felt, rightly or wrongly, that the slaughter of Hiroshima was probably much less than would have occurred if the invasion had taken place, in which we could well have been casualties. During the 18 months I was in Japan, Hiroshima rose like a Phoenix from its ashes; the tragedy was that so much of the rebuilding was in highly
inflammable wood.

The main purpose of the advance party was to reconnoitre the accommodation for the rest of the brigade due to arrive in a few days' time. I do not know who had taken the decision, but we were initially allocated to some rough barrack accommodation with very limited amenities, and we accordingly sorted out the distribution of sheds (for that is all they were) to units and subunits, into which the troops went when they arrived. The weather was fiercely cold, with snow on the ground. There was no hot water, and our pioneers were quick to set up a field hot shower system. None of the units stayed in these barracks for long. I do not know what happened with the others, but our CO, Lt-Col. Don Jackson, set off by jeep to see what he could find. In the course of his peregrinations, he came upon the Nippon Steel Works at Kaitaichi, between Kure and Hiroshima. They had a barracks attached, for their workers. Jackson walked around, with an interpreter, but could find no-one with any authority or apparently with any knowledge. At one point he came upon a door. No-one knew where the key was, but eventually he compelled it to be opened. Inside he found the board of directors of Nippon Steel sitting around the board table. To their chagrin we requisitioned the barracks, which were in excellent condition, and the battalion moved in a few days later. We hoisted the Australian flag on the flagpole in the front. We were to stay in those barracks for the rest of the time that I was in Japan, and longer, and very comfortable they were. We built a non-denominational chapel, for which my intelligence sergeant, in peacetime an artist with the Sydney Sun, painted an excellent stained-glass window, black paint taking the place of the leadlights. Brigade HQ was established at Hiro, near Kure, and Force
HQ on the island of Eta Jima, in the bay, a few miles offshore, in a former naval HQ.

I do not remember seeing any directives issued to our battalion. The records show that BCOF was supposed to implement the terms of surrender in the area of its jurisdiction, to 'maintain and enhance the prestige of the British Commonwealth of Nations by worthily representing it in the occupation', and 'to demonstrate to the Japanese the democratic way of life'. In addition to the Australian force, there was a New Zealand artillery battery, and a British Indian division, as I remember. We did not have a lot to do with the other Commonwealth troops, but I can recall eating my first ever chappati as guest of the Indian officers' mess at a curry lunch hotter than anything I had hitherto experienced. I also recall our receiving orders from brigade HQ one evening that we were to send a platoon to take into custody a section of Sikh troops who were supposed to be on guard duty at the port of Ujina where returning Japanese soldiers were disembarking, but who had been imbibing unwisely and had run wild. My recollection after 45 years is that they were the fiercest bunch of soldiers I had seen; they were all over six feet, bearded, of course, and (am I right?) armed both with rifles and with the curved kukri swords, which they were on oath not to unsheathe without drawing blood - preferably someone else's. They gave us some tense moments, but were eventually corralled and returned to base.

Our duties consisted of getting rid of Japanese military equipment, ensuring the orderly repatriation of Japanese forces coming from overseas, suppressing smuggling, and assisting in postwar reconstruction. The Americans in fact
had already disposed of a lot of military equipment. So far as we were concerned, our main effort in this regard was in disposing of huge quantities of explosive stacked in tunnels in the hills. The Japanese gave us maps of some of these, but we also did a lot of patrolling to search out others that they had apparently forgotten. Reconnoitring them once their location was known always seemed to me rather hazardous. The lighting was never very good, and there was often water seepage onto the tunnel floor. One would walk gingerly down the corridors between the stacks of explosive, and every now and then kick, with one's metal-studded army boot, a chunk of explosive that had fallen off the pile. I had a vision of doing this once too often and bringing down the hillside, but you will be relieved to know that this never happened. After we had located the explosive and calculated how much was there, the troops would load it into vehicles, and it was transported by barge (I think) to a beach on the island of Shikoku where it was systematically burnt. I don't remember what was done with the other arms that were found.

On one occasion we made a raid on the barracks housing the returned Japanese soldiers, looking for drugs or other smuggled goods. As IO I had to brief the subunit commanders. A journalist, I think from the Australian Broadcasting Commission, was present at the briefing. Our battalion duly descended on the immigration barracks in the early hours of the following morning, but we found virtually nothing.

My job as IO involved quite a lot of contact with the Japanese civil administration, police, etc. Public demonstrations were banned, except with special
permission. On one occasion, the chief of the local Communist Party organised a great outdoor rally. When we got wind of this, I called him in and told him that it was not permitted, and that he was to cancel it, or there would be consequences. He ignored this, went ahead with it, and I duly arranged for him to be arrested and put into prison for the night. I reported this to my CO, who became apprehensive of the fallout. He had the man paraded before him the following day, and told him that he was not to do it again. The man was quite unrepentant, and said he was going to report us to General MacArthur. This he duly did, sending a letter also to the Australian force commander, General Robertson, with copies to us for information, complaining against the infringement of his democratic rights. Jackson had a friend high up on MacArthur's staff, who made sure it went no farther. One of my Duntroon classmates was on General Robertson's staff, at a relatively low rank, but high enough to be able to extract the letter before it reached a politically sensitive level. I do not know what would have happened, but a friend in the US Counter Intelligence Corps, to whom I showed my copy of the letter, told me that if it had been written about him he would have been on the next plane home. I, of course, thought I had been doing my duty.

When we arrived in Japan, and for the whole time I was there, the Japanese people were in a pretty desperate plight. Food was short, and rationed. Our relations with them were for the most part orderly and relatively amiable. They provided us with a workforce which never gave us any trouble. The two areas of concern were women, and the black market. We were not supposed to go into Japanese homes, and 'public demonstrations of affection' were
forbidden. But our troops had had very little to do with women for a long time, and we thus had a severe problem with venereal disease. I believe that with reinfections our VD rate was over 100%, although this included only one or two of the officers. The task I enjoyed least was the inspection of local brothels, which I had to do in my turn. By this time I was 20 years of age, and still very inexperienced in the ways of the world. I remember going to inspect the Kaitaichi brothel one evening, together with an interpreter. The Madam had got wind of our coming, I think; in any case we found no Australian soldiers there. The Madam engaged me in conversation, and then turned and chatted to my interpreter. I asked him what she was saying. He was embarrassed, but eventually told me. She said: 'The officer is only a boy'.

One of my duties was to deal with complaints from Japanese about the troops. These were fairly rare, and often involved young women who had become pregnant. In Australian folk history there is a character called Ned Kelly, a bushranger who was hanged in the 1850s for shooting a couple of policemen but who has become by historical distortion a legend, representing the wild romantic defyer of authority. On a number of occasions an irate Japanese father would come in asking to see Private Ned Kelly. Surprisingly we had no soldier of that name. Complaints by the Japanese against the troops were taken very seriously, and properly investigated. I remember having to take evidence from a prostitute who had complained that one of our troops had raped her. The troops did not always behave with courtesy and restraint. On numbers of occasions I had to organise identification parades, with a group of soldiers including the suspect. My recollection is that troops who were accused of
acts of violence or theft were tried in military courts, not in Japanese civil courts.

The black market was another matter, and it is not surprising that soldiers who could buy chocolate or other delicacies in the canteen should want to sell them for favours of one kind or another. We were paid in a special occupation currency - British Armed Forces Vouchers (BAFVs), which acted as some kind of control, and you could not buy very much with Japanese yen. A shop was provided where we could buy Japanese cultured pearls and other art-craft items at a reasonable price, for BAFVs. We did our best to control the black market, but not wholly successfully. I heard of a truckload of sugar that had disappeared - it would have made a millionaire out of someone. On one occasion I came to hear of items, especially spirits, being smuggled out of the officers' mess, and after a good deal of ferreting around I came to the conclusion that it was the mess sergeant, who ran an excellent mess, was a model of politeness and charm, and was highly regarded by everyone. When I confronted him with this and he saw that the evidence was more than circumstantial, he accepted with dignity reduction to the ranks and returned to Australia as soon as he could, taking a job in a posh Sydney night club. I subsequently had a message from him saying he would like to see me there, but I could not help wondering what kind of reception he might have had in mind.

Each year that I was there, our battalion was allocated a month in Tokyo, on guard duty outside the Imperial Palace. This was greatly appreciated. We were rather proud of our crisp parade ground drill, which we compared more than favourably with that of the Americans, who seemed to climb
around their rifles in a series of sloppy movements which their white dress gloves only accentuated. We lived in Ebisu barracks, now the site of the National Defence College. On the first occasion, I had to arrange for additional signs in English to be put up directing vehicles how to get into or out of central Tokyo. We had access to the officers' club in the Marunouchi Hotel. Three of us lieutenants fell madly in love with the same American girl from the State Department. One, I think, actually proposed to her, unsuccessfully. We used to take her out together. One day she said to us: 'Why don't you Aussies break away from the British?' We looked at her in astonishment. 'But we are British!' we told her. No Australian officer today would make such a statement.

During our first tour of duty in Tokyo, there was a hunger strike, or rather a public demonstration, against the size of the rice ration. Many thousands of Japanese turned out and marched towards the Imperial Palace. We were of course deployed to see that they did not get there, and American tanks were also used. The march went off peacefully. My main recollection of it was when they all stopped for lunch, and brought out their mess tins loaded with rice and fish.

In Tokyo the troops had access to American recreational facilities. This produced some incidents. One I remember is when a GI came up to some Australian soldiers and said: 'We've been in Australia. When we were there we took all your girls away from you.' An Australian replied: 'You didn't take them away from us; you just sorted them out.' The officers in our battalion were on occasions the guests of the US Fifth Cavalry Regiment, which could not have been more hospitable.

I have very little recollection of contacts with British, Indian
or New Zealand troops, except when one of the British units was withdrawing in mid-1947, and I and my successor (for I was about to go home) went to Okayama (?) to take over their intelligence information. Flights to Australia left from an airforce base at Iwakuni which was largely RAF. But I suspect the considerable distances between units made regular contact difficult. One exception to this was the British hospital at Hiro, which saw a lot of Australians because of our VD epidemic, and for other occasional medical problems. I was for a time interested in a Scottish sister there, but although she came out with me a few times she assured me that she was already engaged. I never found out whether this was the truth or a defence mechanism or both.

One Saturday afternoon I was duty officer when Brigade HQ rang to say that the British Pacific Fleet was in Kure harbour, and our battalion was about to be visited by a senior British naval officer, Rear-Admiral Woodward. 'He'll be there in ten minutes', I was told. I alerted the CO and the guard commander, and sure enough a few minutes later a cavalcade with motorcycle outriders drove up to our front entrance, and a gold-braided and much-decorated officer emerged, with assorted rather less-braided minions in attendance. The guard turned out, and the CO introduced Admiral Woodward to the assembled officers, took him around the barracks and then we entertained him to tea in the mess. The one incident I remember is when Admiral Woodward asked us when the first cricket test in Brisbane was scheduled. Someone was able to tell him, and he turned to one of his officers and told him to make sure that the fleet would be in Brisbane at that time. In due course he prepared to depart, and before he entered his car our CO
said: 'Admiral Woodward, would you care to sign our Visitors' Book?'

Yes, said the admiral, he would like to do that. He signed, closed the book, handed it back to the CO, got into his car, and to the accompanying of much saluting, including one from the guard, he and his motorcycle escorts departed down through the paddy fields to Hiro. As he drove off, Jackson opened the Visitors' Book and read our distinguished guest's signature: Denis Boyd, Vice-Admiral. Someone had blundered.

Leave facilities were provided, and I remember spending a few days at a requisitioned hotel outside Kyoto, playing tennis, and visiting that lovely city which had been spared the bombing. Tokyo had been heavily bombed, apart from the Diet building, but I recall the train trip from Kure to Tokyo, and the enormous destruction which American bombing had wrought on the long line of industrial development between Osaka and Tokyo.

Some time in the first half of 1947 the Australian government decided to reactivate the Citizen Military Forces, the Australian equivalent of the Territorial Army. I had been in the last class to graduate from the Royal Military College before the end of the war, and Army HQ decided to use this class to provide the adjutants for the units to be raised. We were almost all serving in Japan, and in July 1947 were returned to Australia for a course on how to run a CMF battalion or regiment in peacetime. I left Japan with considerable regrets. I had previously had great respect for the Japanese fighting soldier; but in a country that had had major military victories but was now beaten, exhausted, and
occupied, the military qualities were not especially in evidence. I was much more struck by the Japanese sense of beauty, and by the primitive and highly odoriferous agricultural methods.

A junior officer does not have very much of the big picture, as must be apparent from this paper. The official account of Australia's part in the Occupation has yet to be written, but looking back on it I feel that it was a well-conducted exercise, with remarkably few problems on either side. Whether we fulfilled our objectives is another matter. The Americans seemed to do most of the work of implementing the terms of surrender. I think we represented the British Commonwealth with a fair degree of worthiness, but I don't see that we did much in the way of demonstrating to the Japanese people the democratic way of life. We were almost totally unprepared to be an army of occupation, and were given almost no instruction in what was expected of us. Our formal contacts with the Japanese were very limited; our informal contacts were mainly of an illicitly social nature. Except for the official interpreters, none of us went to Japan able to speak Japanese. I remember buying an English-Japanese phrase book on Morotai and mugging it up, but when I tried out some phrases on the Japanese policeman outside the barracks we went into at Kure, he gave me the classic response, 'Sorry, no spik Ingrishu.'

I have returned to Japan on a number of occasions, and have always felt it tactful not to volunteer the fact that I was in BCOF. On one occasion, however, I was in Tokyo for a conference on naval power, and was interviewed by a journalist from Yomiuri Shimbun. The conversation went like this:
'Journalist: Is this your first visit to Japan?
Millar: No, I have been here many times.
Journalist: When did you first come to Japan?
Millar: Many years ago.
Journalist: When, exactly?
Millar: Actually, it was 1946. I was here in the Occupation.'
End of interview.

May I add a postscript to this account. It is time I owned up to my largest contribution to the history of the world. In early 1950 I decided that there was never going to be another war, and it was essential for me to leave the Army and get an education. I duly applied for transfer to the Reserve. After considerable dithering, the Army replied in the negative. By a technicality, in that in legal terms the war was still on as there was as yet no peace treaty, I still had an obligation to serve. I duly paraded to the GOC of my command, formally requested the matter to be reconsidered, and on 23 June I was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force. Two days later North Korea declared war on South Korea. Although there may be other contributory explanations, it was plain to me that Kim Il-sung was only waiting for Captain Millar to leave the Australian Army in order to launch his invasion of the South. I apologise to all concerned for not having had the wisdom to foresee this.
I began to study Japanese as an aircraftsman shortly after I joined the RAF in 1943 when I was 19. After some 15 months at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, I was posted to India where, after attending an Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU), I was sent to the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (India) (CSDIC(I)) in Delhi. In August 1945 I was a member of No.5 Mobile Sections of CSDIC(I) which was attached to 14 Army. 14 Army was to provide the main force for the reoccupation of Malaya. In the event the Japanese surrender intervened and I arrived in Singapore at the beginning of September in time for the formal Japanese surrender. I was at first on the staff of tactical headquarters 14 Army. Later as a member of Southeast Asia Translation and Interrogation Centre (SEATIC) my duties (in Singapore, Malaya and Sumatra) included interpreting and helping to arrange the withdrawal of Japanese forces, investigating Japanese army air and naval air organisation and history in the war as well as helping to investigate war crimes. I wanted to go to Japan and eventually succeeded in getting a posting to British Commonwealth Air Forces (BCAIR) Headquarters at Iwakuni in June 1946.

The journey by air from Singapore to Iwakuni involved flying in a Dakota (DC3) aircraft. The DC3 was the work-horse of air transport in those days. Its seats consisted of canvas
benches down either side of the fuselage. I had, of course, to wait until a 'seat' was available as I did not have a high priority. After a wait of a week or so I was put on a plane for Hongkong. This involved a night in Saigon after a flight through thunderstorms lasting some six hours if my memory is correct. At Hongkong I had to wait some days before I could get a plane on to Japan. The Dakota was slow and had a limited range. It could not do the trip from Hongkong to Iwakuni non-stop; so we went via Shanghai where I spent a night. This was the time of maximum inflation and corruption in Nationalist China.

The pilot of the plane to Iwakuni from Shanghai encountered heavy low cloud over Japan (it was the middle of the rainy season). This was a challenge as we had not got enough fuel to return to Shanghai. Fortunately he found a way through at almost sea level via the straits of Shimonoseki, but had to abort his landing at Iwakuni because of strong winds and rain. Instead we landed at Bofu (or Hofu, Mitajiri) closer to Shimonoseki than Iwakuni. Bofu was one of the three British Commonwealth Air Bases in Japan, the others being Iwakuni (the headquarters) and Miho (near Yonago in Tottori prefecture). Bofu was run by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). After a night in the mess there I went on by train to Iwakuni and was lodged in the officers mess.

There was really nothing for an intelligence officer to do at this stage in Japan. So I was instructed to join the Provost and Security Flight in Iwakuni. As I was untrained in provost work I was assigned primarily to security duties. I was joined in these duties by a couple of other junior RAF language officers and some RAF and RAAF sergeants who had also received language training. We were all young,
enthusiastic and idealistic. We reduced the distinction between officers and NCOs to the minimum.

Our brief was to say the least vague. The American Military Government had a branch in Yamaguchi and made it clear that they did not want any interference from us. Needless to say from time to time they received reports of over-enthusiastic activities by us and I once had to visit Yamaguchi to explain myself. I also know that a complaint was sent to BCAIR HQ complaining about us.

As there was no obvious security threat we had to look for one. This meant trying to discover relics of militarism, e.g. in schools. It also meant keeping an eye on the local police and watching the pointless efforts to denude the remaining Japanese factories in the area of equipment which might be sent to Southeast Asia as reparations. It was soon apparent to me that, while such investigations were interesting exercises and gave us ample opportunity to travel around the district, they were pretty pointless. So we started to do a survey of Iwakuni district and its society. As we were none of us trained social scientists, the results were probably of little value to anyone. Somewhere in the official archives the results of our labours should have been preserved and may be unearthed one day.

We had the use of an official jeep. So we were not hampered by transport difficulties other than those posed by the appalling nature of the roads round Iwakuni. One Sunday while driving our jeep I encountered Air Vice Marshall Bouchier, C in C BCAIR, out on a picnic with some officers. He was furious and threatened to have me court martialled for misuse of official transport, but he soon
realised that if I was misusing transport so was he. So I never heard any more of that.

On another occasion in August 1946 I was instructed to take a senior Foreign Office official by jeep to Hiroshima and Miyajima which was outside our district. The official was Rob (later Sir Robert) Scott who in the event was the head of Southeast Asia Department in the Foreign Office when I joined the office and was posted to that department in 1949. I shall never forget that visit. The devastation, the burnt hillsides and the dazed looks on people’s faces will remain always in my memory. It was wonderful to go on to the charms and peace of Miyajima.

We regarded the rules against fraternisation with the Japanese as increasingly stupid and irrelevant and ignored them as much as we dared. Our excuse was that we were meeting people to keep an eye out for potentially subversive activities. This was the excuse, for instance, for arranging amateur English lessons and discussion groups during which I made some Japanese friends with whom I kept up for some years. Among those whom I remember with affection were Dr Ichimura (a medical practitioner) and Dr Ichiooka (a dentist).

One day we walked up into the hills with the PR officer at BCAIR Headquarters, a Squadron Leader Stafford Baker who had been a war artist. Our objective was to call on the disgraced elder son of the local ex-daimyo family of Kikkawa. He was certainly no threat and was very surprised to see us but it made a good outing. Stafford Baker was fascinated by the productions at the little Kabuki theatre in Iwakuni. It was, of course, out of bounds but we found
excuses for regular visits to observe what was being put on.

At the new year of 1946/7 we were invited by a local boss who, I understood later, had connections with the communist party to spend New Year's eve and New Year's day with his family some miles up the Nishiki river from Iwakuni. We had a jolly time with lots of sake and tried Japanese new year food for the first time.

The Japanese generally wanted to be hospitable but we were aware of the great shortage of food especially in the cities and were forbidden, as well as being naturally reluctant, to accept meals based on local products as this might deprive Japanese of essential nourishment. I remember once visiting a country school and being given green tea and sweet potatoes which they insisted that we should eat although these were probably part of their meagre rations.

Agriculture in those days was very primitive. There was a shortage of tools and machinery was hardly at all available. This meant that some at least of the rice had to be flailed by hand. The main fertiliser was human excrement. There was a striking absence of birds and one could only suppose that they had been largely trapped and eaten. Once I went out to join a hunt for wild boar armed with a rifle. I am glad to say that we found no traces of any wild boar.

Inevitably we were dragged into provost work, not least to act as interpreters with the local police and to help interrogate witnesses and Japanese accused of crimes against the occupation forces. These were almost entirely petty crimes, the vast majority being connected with the
black market or incidents involving prostitutes.

I recall one major black-marketing case when I was called on to give evidence at the court martial of three senior RAAF officers. They had worked out an ingenious scheme to smuggle sugar into Japan. Sugar was in very short supply and on the black market could fetch about £1 per lb at a time when the £ sterling was worth many times more than it is today. The Australian gang arranged for Australian ships on their way to the British Commonwealth base at Kure to rendez-vous off Iwakuni with a fishing boat. The sugar was unloaded into the boat and smuggled ashore for sale. The Australian gang then bought cultured pearls to smuggle back into Australia for sale at huge profit. We were led to the sugar in a warehouse by an informant and gradually unravelled the whole story. The RAAF officers were found guilty but the penalties imposed by fellow officers who doubtless felt ‘there but for the grace of God go I’ were puny - loss of seniority and demotion. Most of them were waiting demobilisation any way and did not give a damn. I fear that the Japanese involved received terms of imprisonment and that our justice was less than fair in this case at least.

On the whole most members of the BCAIR forces had a pleasant enough time and most were well behaved. The main problem was boredom. Training sorties were flown and aircraft had to be maintained. But there is a limit to the amount of time that can be spent in administering a small force even with all the bureaucratic rules which the Air Force imposed on themselves. As I recall the position, relations between the RAF, RAAF and the few RNZAF personnel attached to the force were pretty good. Of course there were jealousies and the Australians sometimes resented the
more formal manners of the 'poms' but such friction, as there was, was mainly good-humoured.

Between June and December 1946 the only trip outside the Iwakuni area which I made other than to Miho, Hiroshima, Miyajima and Yamaguchi city was one to Beppu where I had to take two Provost corporals to act as duty policemen there as some BCAIR personnel were having periods of R and R (rest and recuperation!) in Beppu in a hotel commandeered for the use of occupation personnel. I did not like Beppu and have not changed my mind since.

I was struck by the beauty of the countryside around Iwakuni especially in the autumn when the colours along the Nishiki river and around the Kintai bridge were at their best. The Inland Sea in the vicinity of Iwakuni was outstandingly beautiful and the people, especially the fishermen and farmers, were friendly. I wanted to see more of Japan and to understand more about Japanese culture.

My opportunity came in January 1947 when the Flight-Lieutenant in charge of the Provost and Security Flight in Yonago was removed for incompetence and eccentricity. Although I had no provost experience I was an acting Flight-Lieutenant and was appointed to command the flight. I made the journey this time via Okayama and the Hakubi line. It took almost 24 hours as I had to spend much of the night on a cold platform in Okayama station. Okayama had been largely destroyed in the allied bombing but it was then the headquarters of the British Indian Division which was part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Allied personnel could only travel on certain specified trains to which a separate carriage had been attached. Journeys by
rail were slow and very dirty as the coal used by the engines was of poor quality. But we were lucky in comparison with the Japanese travellers who were packed like sardines into coaches frequently without proper windows. Many travelled hanging on wherever they could get a hand and foot-hold.

Life in Yonago was different in many ways from what it had been in Iwakuni. At 22 I was in charge of a small unit of some 25 NCOs who with a couple of exceptions were all trained RAF policemen. I was a language officer not a policeman. We were responsible for ensuring that personnel, mostly RAF, from the BCAIR base at Miho (now Yonago airport) and any other British military who might be in the area (there was a British Indian Division supply depot in Yonago) behaved themselves. We were expected to ensure also that all personnel were dressed properly and that all officers were saluted correctly. I did not find this aspect of my work attractive or interesting, but orders had to be obeyed.

More significant from a personal point of view was the fact that I did not have to live on the base. Indeed I was explicitly instructed not to do so. I was accordingly billeted in a Japanese inn, the Tokoen, at Kaito Onsen (hot springs) just outside Yonago on the Japan Sea Coast. In those days the Tokoen was quite small and would be regarded today as old-fashioned. There were some three hot-spring baths and there was a pleasant garden, but there were no water closets and no heating except from hibachi and kotatsu which were fired by charcoal. But the atmosphere was a very pleasant change from the officers' mess in Iwakuni. (The Tokoen was rebuilt in the 1960s and is now a vast hot-spring hotel.)
Because of the shortage of food in Japan I normally ate with the NCOs at the flight mess the food supplied by the RAF. Occasionally, however, I would be offered some local delicacies at the inn. The proprietor’s brother was a Doctor Isaka who grew his own vegetables in a patch outside the inn. I can still remember how delicious the new potatoes were which he had grown and which we ate together on occasions. They were a welcome change from the reconstituted potatoes which were all we got from the commissariat. The food supplied officially was adequate but we lacked fresh supplies and as a result I for one suffered badly from a crop of boils.

My work brought me into contact with many senior Japanese in Yonago some of whom I remember with respect and affection. Dr Isaka Ryonen was one. There was also a friendly lawyer and his family, by name Nishigori. The Mayor, Nosaka, was an able and dignified old man who always wore Japanese dress (haori and hakama). The head of the public health office was a determined and efficient lady doctor, Higuchi Tazu.

The RAF Provost and Security Flight were housed in two concrete buildings near the centre of the city. One of these which we used as our offices had been a bank. The other across the road was used as quarters for the NCOs. One problem was the bad drains. Another was the fact that immediately behind our office was a small paddy field which was a breeding ground for mosquitoes and I had to insist that this field was converted to some other use.

Another problem was that of traffic control. The streets of Yonago were narrow and unsuited to heavy lorries. There
were no buses at the base and airmen coming into town to buy souvenirs etc. had to come the seven or so miles from the base in the back of three-ton trucks. We had to put up traffic signals in English and Japanese including signals at level-crossings instructing drivers to stop, look and listen before proceeding as accidents between vehicles and trains at unmanned level-crossings had occurred. How were these signs to be painted (the paint used quickly peeled) and how were they to be paid for? These were among the issues which took me frequently to the municipal offices along the road from our quarters.

I had to deal with the Public Health authorities to ensure that the prostitutes in the red-light district were examined regularly for venereal disease. The district was out of bounds for service personnel, but inevitably members of the forces found their way there and we could not be constantly patrolling and raiding the brothels. Dr Higuchi was helpful and sensible. I am glad to say that occasionally we could help her. Penicillin was not generally available in Japan at that time but I managed to get some from time to time from the RAF medical officers at the base. I believe that these helped Dr Higuchi to save a few lives.

Crimes of violence involving our personnel were fortunately very rare. I remember once, however, that we had a report that a RNZAF man was loose with a gun and had been threatening Japanese people. We chased him by jeep as far as Tamatsukuri Onsen in neighbouring Shimane prefecture. He turned out to have drunk too much and his gun was an air rifle. So no harm was done.

I shall always remember one bad traffic accident. Late one
afternoon I received a report that a truck from the base had killed two school children on a narrow street. I rushed out to investigate. Alas, the report was correct. The driver had been going too fast and was not authorised to drive a truck as he only had a provisional licence. We collected all the evidence and he was eventually tried by court martial for manslaughter. This led to a sentence of three months imprisonment.

As at Iwakuni the biggest problem was the black market in goods from the occupation forces. Some of these involved the selling by service personnel of their rations of cigarettes and chocolate and items bought from the NAAFI. On the whole this was petty black marketing. More serious were cases of theft either by servicemen or by Japanese employees of official supplies. In these cases we were sometimes forced to search houses and probably some innocent people suffered. The local police cooperated but as at Iwakuni their methods were not always as scrupulous as they should have been and I fear that we condoned these in order to try to stop the black market.

I managed to travel a little in the area. I drove once to Izumo Taisha and two or three times to Matsue in Shimane. We went on a number of occasions to Daisen and some way along the coast towards Tottori. I only once went by train to Tottori when I had to in order to have a tooth extracted by an Indian dental officer at the headquarters of the Indian battalion there (for some reason the RAF dentist a Miho was absent). My friend Dr Isaka and I once went across the strait from Sakai-minato to the shrine at Mihonoseki in Shimane prefecture. We had to go by ferry. (Now there is a bridge across the strait). Sadly I never got to the Oki
islands. I also had five days leave which took me to Tokyo where the British Commonwealth Forces hotel was the Marunouchi. Tokyo in February/March 1947 was still a scene of almost total devastation with people living in huts or under the railway lines.

I was fortunate in having a few young NCOs with language training as a leavening among the policemen. As at Iwakuni we tried to produce a survey of Yonago. I was fascinated by the Japan of the Sanin coast as I got to know it in the months between January and August 1947. I accepted and welcomed the responsibilities thrust upon me, recognising that they provided very good experience. I had got to know and like many Japanese and was sad to leave. But life in the occupation force was privileged and false. It could not and should not continue. By the summer of 1947, with Indian independence achieved in August and the British Indian Division withdrawing, the British participation in the occupation was also approaching its end. I had postponed my demobilisation for six months but it was now time for me to leave the RAF.

I knew that, while my colloquial Japanese was reasonably fluent, I needed to improve my knowledge of the written language. I also wanted to learn more of Japanese culture and history. I had applied to join the Foreign Service, as the Diplomatic Service was then called, but my marks in the written test were borderline and I had to attend a qualifying interview in London. If I passed this I could go on to the two-day board and final interview. This would take time. So I decided to go back to SOAS meantime to pursue my studies of Japanese. In the event I was allowed to take part in the final interviews but I failed on this occasion to get into
the Foreign Service. I was accordingly able to complete my BA honours degree in modern Japanese at London University in the summer of 1949. I then tried again for the Foreign Service. I received the same marks as on the previous occasion (my knowledge of Japanese did not count in my favour). But I was admitted to the service in October 1949 when the qualifying mark was lowered in order to fill the necessary quota.

Some reflections on the British part in the occupation of Japan.

From a personal point of view, the 14/15 months which I spent with the British occupation forces in Japan were a fascinating and valuable experience. They certainly reinforced my interest in Japan. From a national and Commonwealth point of view, it is hard to see what practical purpose was served by the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Our presence was valueless in defence terms. The Soviet threat existed but was not yet properly perceived. The Americans had seen to it before we arrived that Japan was demilitarised. We had no role in military government and were debarred from any actions which might impinge on military government. As a result our security role was really meaningless. As far as the Japanese were concerned, we were a burden rather than a help although in the serious earthquake which hit Shikoku in the autumn of 1946 British forces there were able to help in rescue work.

Our forces were generally well behaved and there were few serious cases of violence or rape. Certainly none came directly to my attention. Actions infringing human rights in
Japan were few and minor. The Japanese were generally cooperative and docile and only occasionally did we come across incidents of deliberate provocation usually by some disgruntled Japanese ex-soldier. The Judge Advocate General was a lawyer who was determined to uphold high standards of justice. In these senses the occupation was generally benign.

It was inevitable that there would be a black-market problem. It is difficult to see what could have been done to prevent it developing. Could we and should we have been more flexible and lenient over minor offences? Perhaps we should but this might only have encouraged more serious offences.

The silliest regulations were those against fraternisation. The British military authorities were probably the strictest in trying to enforce these rules. The rules should certainly have been relaxed more quickly. In one sense it would have been wise to encourage fraternisation. But it is easier to say this 46 years after the end of the war than it was to make such a decision at the time. The British were particularly horrified by Japanese behaviour to prisoners of war and Japanese actions in their occupied territories in Southeast Asia. There were, accordingly, strong suspicions of a possible revival of Japanese militarism and a desire by some to 'punish' the Japanese for their bad behaviour.

The British Commonwealth participation in the occupation has to be seen as a political act designed to impress the Americans as much as the Japanese with our continuing interests in the Far East and our determination that these interests should be borne in mind in relation to occupation policy. As Roger Buckley has shown in his book *Occupation*
Diplomacy, (Cambridge University Press, 1982), it is very doubtful whether British Commonwealth participation in the occupation really influenced the Americans more than at best marginally. So sadly one must conclude that it was generally speaking a waste of precious resources.
Appendix

Comment on Sir Hugh Cortazzi's paper dated 7 June 1991 by Bruce Kirkpatrick of Kew, Victoria, Australia, as tabled by Sir Hugh at the symposium.

I arrived in Japan on Thursday 18 July 1946 after several false starts in Australia from 10 May. It was not until I had completed a number of assignments first with the RAAF at Bofu and secondly with the New Zealand army at Ube that I was then transferred to your unit at Iwakuni in September.

I think you have taken far too bland a view of the role of the Occupation Force and your contribution. I am not denying your view that the whole exercise was a waste of time when one sums up the contribution by the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces to the reshaping of Japan as compared with the influence that the American Forces exerted successfully in the conversion of the Japanese nation from a war-time experience to a new peace-time role.

But the British Commonwealth Forces did, in fact, play quite a significant role in the defeat of the Japanese in New Guinea, in the Islands, with Slim in Burma etc. It certainly was as important in the relationship with the Americans as with the conquered Japanese that the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces should be seen to be a part of the occupying powers; the British Commonwealth components of the Allied countries were indeed responsible for blocking the Japanese forays into Formosa, Malaya, Australia, etc. prior to the outbreak of hostilities when they were after materials such as rubber, tin, iron ore, etc. from those sources.
So much for my view of some background reasons for the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces having a presence in Japan after September 1945. Talking to some of my friends who came up in the Air Force to Japan in late September or early October 1945 to help set up the airfield at Iwakuni and in the army at Kure, they saw their role as a continuation of that on which they had embarked on joining the armed forces in the period of conflict.

So, in summary, I guess that a lot of us went into Japan expecting a hostile reception from the Japanese population and to be involved in the period of reconstruction in something of a supervisory role. The fact that the Americans were not only in charge but also were not wanting interference or competition from their allies did not change the views (as I have described them above from my subsequent discussions with friends like the late Air Marshall Sir John McCauley who headed up the RAAF at Kure at the time) of the Australian component of the BCOF authorities. However, the players in the BCO Force were frequently less than adequate in carrying out this role.