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The fisherman—Matashichi Oishi



Crew member Matashichi Oishi with the fishing boat Daigo Fukuryu Maru

Source: Tatsuya Hagiwara, Kyodo.

The fallout from Bravo was political, as well as radioactive.

After the 1 March 1954 test, the greatest international outcry came from Japan. Public opinion was already raw from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but was inflamed when the United States' largest hydrogen bomb test irradiated the 23 crew members of a Japanese fishing boat *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* (*No. 5 Lucky Dragon*).

Crew member Matashichi Oishi was just seven years old when Japanese military forces attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i, in December 1941, extending the Pacific War, which had been raging in Manchuria and China since 1931. With his family impoverished by wartime privation, he was forced to leave school at age 11, becoming a sailor:

I was the oldest of the four brothers. School was wholly out of the question. If I didn't support the whole family, if I didn't start working immediately, we'd starve. I quit school when I was in eighth grade, and at fourteen, out of harsh necessity, I became a fisherman. I was plunged into a world full of veterans back from the war and all kinds of rough fellows.¹

On 22 January 1954—the day before his 20th birthday—Oishi was aboard the 140-ton wooden vessel *Lucky Dragon* as it set off from its home port of Yaizu in Shizuoka Prefecture. As they sailed towards fishing grounds in Micronesia, the crew members had an average age of 25 (Captain Tsutsui Hisakichi was just 22 years old).

After losing nets as they fished near Midway Island, the crew sailed on towards the Marshall Islands. Weeks later, on the morning of 1 March 1954, the crew were fishing for tuna in waters to the east of Bikini Atoll, north of Rongelap.

At 6.45 am, the western sky lit up with a flash as a 7-kilometre-wide fireball shot up from Bikini Atoll. Minutes later, the fishing boat was rocked by the blast of the detonation. Bemused by the glow in the sky, the captain and crew continued fishing, unaware they were close to the testing site on Bikini, although they were aware of the prescribed danger zone around Enewetak Atoll.

In August 1952, the US State Department had notified the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency that a danger zone had been created around Enewetak, restricting movement by fishing vessels and other craft. In October the following year, the US Hydrographic Office announced that the zone had been expanded eastwards, incorporating waters around Bikini Atoll. However, Captain Hisakichi was unaware of the 1953 extension of the zone, and thought his crew were safe as long as they stayed away from Enewetak.

1 Matashichi Oishi: *The day the sun rose in the west—Bikini, the Lucky Dragon and I* (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2011), translated from Japanese by Richard H. Minear, p. 11.

Even if they had been outside the extended danger zone, the crew would still have been in danger—winds carried fallout well outside the prescribed danger area. By 10 am on 1 March, prevailing winds carried radioactive particles of pulverised coral dust over vast areas, which showered over the vessel. The fishing boat and its catch of tuna were contaminated by the fallout, with the crew suffering symptoms of acute radiation poisoning. Decades later, Oishi recalled:

I noticed that the rain contained white particles. ‘What’s this?’ Even as I wondered, the rain stopped, and only the white particles were falling on us. It was just like sleet. As it accumulated on deck, our feet left footprints. This silent white stuff that stole up on us as we worked was the devil incarnate, born of science.

The white particles penetrated mercilessly—eyes, nose, ears, mouth; it turned the heads of those wearing headbands white. We had no sense that it was dangerous. It wasn’t hot; it had no odour. I took a lick; it was gritty but had no taste. We had turned into the wind to pull in the lines, so a lot got down our necks into our underwear and into our eyes, and it prickled and stung; rubbing our inflamed eyes, we kept at our tough task.²

After they returned to Yaizu, the US Government initially denied that the crew had been exposed to radioactive fallout (although specialist Japanese doctors were well aware of the symptoms of radiation after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Six months after arriving back in port, the oldest crew member—40-year-old radio operator Aikichi Kuboyama—died of secondary infection after acute radiation exposure, leaving a wife and three daughters. Sadly, Kuboyama’s dying wish was not to be fulfilled:

Gensuibaku no higaisha wa, watashi wo saigo ni shite hoshii. [I pray that I am the last victim of an atomic or hydrogen bomb.]³

After months of hospitalisation and unending battles with the bureaucracy to gain financial support, Oishi abandoned the sea and moved to Tokyo to open a laundry. His first child was stillborn and deformed:

2 Ibid., pp. 19–20.

3 Mark Schreiber: ‘Lucky Dragon’s lethal catch’, *The Japan Times*, 18 March 2012.

Suffering from prejudice and discrimination for being a nuclear victim, I fled my hometown and tried to hide in the crowded city of Tokyo. But I couldn't outrun the devil—the radiation that had penetrated deep into my body. It haunted all of us, robbed me of my first child, and took the lives of my fellow fishermen, one after another.⁴

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More than America's first thermonuclear test in 1952 or the Soviet Union's first hydrogen bomb test in 1953, the 1954 Bravo disaster truly catalysed international public opinion against atmospheric nuclear testing. The fate of the Japanese seafarers aboard the *Lucky Dragon* reinforced anti-testing sentiment at home and abroad, increasing calls for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

In Australia, favourable media treatment of the UK Totem test in 1953 was transformed into negative coverage after Bravo. An Australian Government briefing note on 'Press reaction to atomic trials' noted that public opinion was changing 'partly due to the death of a Japanese fisherman injured by radioactive fallout from American H-bomb explosion in the Pacific'.⁵

Antinuclear sentiment had slowly been growing in Japan, as more information became available about the effects of the atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This popular sentiment expanded during the mid-1950s, after the end of the postwar military occupation that lasted from August 1945 until April 1952. The Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) had censored information about the effects of the atomic bombing of Japanese cities, even suppressing visual images of the devastation:

Documentary footage filmed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki between August and December 1945 by a team of some thirty Japanese cameramen was confiscated by the Americans in February 1946 and sent to Washington, with orders that not a single copy was to remain in Japan.⁶

4 Matashichi Oishi: *The day the sun rose in the west*. op. cit.

5 'Press reaction to atomic tests', National Archives of Australia: A6456, R047/011, cited by Elizabeth Tynan: *Atomic Thunder—the Maralinga story* (NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2016), p. 109.

6 John Dower: *Embracing defeat—Japan in the wake of World War Two* (W.W. Norton, New York, 1999), pp. 413–415.

Even as war raged in Korea and Cold War paranoia over spies and subversion made protest difficult, many Japanese began to speak out against nuclear weapons. A growing peace movement sparked a massive cultural transformation in Japan, reinforcing the notion of the country as a victim of the nuclear age and undercutting the memory of Japanese militarism and war crimes throughout Asia and the Pacific islands during the Second World War.⁷

The development of hydrogen bombs—first by the United States, then by the Soviet Union and United Kingdom—gave a focus to inchoate fear and catalysed this public concern.

Soon after the war, under military occupation, the threat of nuclear weapons had been explored in Japanese cinema. *Bells of Nagasaki* (1950) was based on the book *Nagasaki no Kane* by scientist Takashi Nagai, whose wife died in the Nagasaki bombing and who died himself from radiation sickness in 1951. This was followed by other reflective, sombre films such as *I'll never forget the song of Nagasaki* (1952), *Children of the Atom Bomb* (1952) and *Hiroshima* (1952).⁸

For many Japanese, the visceral cultural fear of nuclear testing was best captured by the *Gojira* (Godzilla) movies. Godzilla is a monstrous creature from the deep, which rampages across urban centres in Japan. The first of an ongoing series of Godzilla films began production in 1954, soon after the Bravo test, directed by Ishirō Honda and produced by Toho studios. Through many remakes, the monster has continued as an icon of nuclear horror, a metaphor for the devastation created by US nuclear testing in the Pacific.⁹

7 For details of Japanese militarism, see Yuki Tanaka: *Hidden Horrors—Japanese war crimes in World War II* (Westview Press, Colorado, 1996); Yuki Tanaka: *Japan's comfort women—Sexual slavery and prostitution during World War Two and the US Occupation* (Routledge, London, 2002); and Gavan McCormack and Hank Nelson: *The Burma-Thailand Railway* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993).

8 For discussion of postwar antinuclear cinema, see Michael Broderick (ed.): *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film* (2nd printing: Routledge, London, 2014; Japanese language edition: Gendai Shokan, Tokyo, 1999); and Tony Barrell and Rick Tanaka: *Higher than Heaven—Japan, war and everything* (Private Guy International, 1995), pp. 151–152.

9 Ironically, the rather tacky US remake in 1998—the first Godzilla film to be produced by a major Hollywood studio—relocates the nuclear testing site from the Marshall Islands to French Polynesia. According to Hollywood, France rather than the United States is responsible for the nuclear tests that spawn Godzilla!

This cultural mobilisation extended across the region. In Australia, media reports about Bravo and stories about nuclear testing in *Time* magazine inspired the book *On the Beach* by British-born Australian author Nevil Shute.¹⁰ The book, published in 1957, sold over 4 million copies. The subsequent 1959 Hollywood film by director Stanley Kramer, starring Ava Gardner, Gregory Peck and Fred Astaire, reached a huge audience and reinforced despair over the dystopian threat of thermonuclear weapons.¹¹

Bravo also served as a symbol of life and death for generations of Pacific poets. In 1959, the Māori poet Hone Tuwhare first published 'No Ordinary Sun'. Tuwhare had visited Hiroshima to witness the devastation of the 1945 atomic bombing, but his poem was written in the aftermath of the Bravo test, contrasting the tree as a symbol of life against the devastation of the hydrogen bomb:

Tree let your naked arms fall
nor extend vain entreaties to the radiant ball.
This is no gallant monsoon's flash,
no dashing trade wind's blast.
The fading green of your magic
emanations shall not make pure again
these polluted skies ... for this
is no ordinary sun.¹²

Tuwhare noted that his allegory of 'atomic apocalypse' had a central theme of 'the horror and desolation that an H-bomb would bring, something I feel very strongly ... I am aware all the time of the threat that is hanging over our world'.¹³

After Bravo, the term 'bikini' entered popular consciousness, as both a nuclear sacrifice zone and as a bathing suit. The poet and scholar Teresia Teaiwa wryly noted that 'the Bomb and the bikini are colonial military and neo-colonial technologies respectively'.¹⁴

10 Nevil Shute: *On the Beach* (Heinemann, Sydney, 1957). *On the Beach* is set in Melbourne, Australia, following a nuclear war that has devastated the northern hemisphere, and tracks the moral dilemmas facing the survivors, even as radioactive fallout heads towards the southern redoubt of Oceania.

11 For the cultural and political context around the book and film, see Gideon Haigh: 'Shute the messenger—How the end of the world came to Melbourne', *The Monthly*, June 2007.

12 Excerpt from Hone Tuwhare: *No Ordinary Sun* (Blackwood and Janet Paul, Auckland, 1964).

13 Cited in Elizabeth DeLoughrey: 'Solar Metaphors: "No Ordinary Sun"', *Ka mate ka ora: A New Zealand journal of poetry and poetics*, Issue 6, September 2008, p. 52. Thanks to Michelle Keown for introducing me to Tuwhare's work.

14 Teresia Teaiwa: 'bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans', *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1994, p. 96.

In her performance poem ‘Bad coconuts’, Teaiwa—a Fiji islander of i-Kiribati and Afro-American heritage—echoed Tuwhare to capture the contrast between the irradiated coconut palm as a source of life and death in the Pacific:

An apple a day, keeps the doctor away
 but a coconut a day will kill you
 if you live on Moruroa
 if you visit Fangataufa
 return to Enewetak
 resettle Bikini
 a coconut a day
 will kill you.¹⁵

Marshallese poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner also contrasts local memory and colonial militarism in ‘History Project’, a striking performance on the devastation affecting Bikini and Enewetak:

I flip through snapshots
 of american marines and nurses branded white with bloated grins
 sucking beers and tossing beach balls along
 our shores
 and my Islander ancestors, cross-legged
 before a general listening
 to his fairy tale
 about how it’s
 for the good of mankind
 to hand over our islands
 let them blast
 radioactive energy
 into our sleepy coconut trees
 our sagging breadfruit trees
 our busy fishes that sparkle like new sun
 into our coral reefs¹⁶

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15 ‘Bad coconuts’ (featuring Teresia Teaiwa, H. Doug Matsuoka and Richard Hamasaki) in *Terenesia*, spoken word recording by Teresia Teaiwa and Sia Fiegel: itunes.apple.com/us/album/terenesia/id386191157. Teresia died in March 2017, sadly missed by the many Pacific scholars, students and poets she has mentored.

16 Excerpt from ‘History Project’ in Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner: *Iep Jaltok—Poems from a Marshallese Daughter* (University of Arizona Press, Phoenix, 2017), pp. 20–23. For a live performance of ‘History Project’ at the 2012 Poetry Parnassus at Southbank Centre, London, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIrrPyK0eU.

The cultural mobilisation sparked by Bravo and the *Lucky Dragon* translated into political action across Japan in the mid-1950s. Following the Bravo test, a nationwide signature campaign against nuclear testing was initiated across Japan. Launched in Tokyo on Hiroshima Day 1954, the campaign gathered more than 32 million signatures. In August the following year, the first World Conference against A and H Bombs was held in Hiroshima, beginning a series of peace and disarmament conferences that continue to this day. Inspired by the first world conference, Japanese activists founded Gensuikyo (the Japan Council against A and H Bombs) on 19 September 1955, as a national umbrella body for local peace and disarmament groups. Matashichi Oishi joined *hibakusha* (nuclear survivors) from Hiroshima and Nagasaki to become an advocate for disarmament.¹⁷

While public opinion in the early 1950s was largely focused on the US and Soviet nuclear programs, there was new protest after the public announcement by the Macmillan Government that Britain would test a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific. Given public awareness of the 1954 Bravo test and the fate of the *Lucky Dragon*, the news about Britain's looming test program in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony (GEIC) mobilised widespread public concern.

In the first half of 1957, diplomats from the British Embassy in Tokyo sent regular reports to London, detailing their concern over rising protests against the proposed Christmas Island tests.¹⁸ On 14 February, Japanese Ambassador to the United Kingdom Haruhiko Nishi lodged a formal diplomatic note with the British Foreign Office, stating that:

It is considered unavoidable that ... the Japanese people will suffer psychologically and materially as a result of the tests. The carrying out of the tests will be extremely distressing to the Japanese people, who have been subjected to the calamity of nuclear weapons more than any other nation in the world and are devoted to the peace and happiness of mankind.¹⁹

17 In later years, Japanese *hibakusha* were joined by Marshall islanders, Fijians and other nuclear survivors who attended antinuclear conferences in Hiroshima and Nagasaki each August. Oishi, well into his 80s, is still campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

18 Detailed reports of Japanese protests are included in Telegram No. 75 (5 March 1957) and Telegram No. 79 (7 March 1957) from British Embassy, Tokyo to Sir Esler Denning, Foreign Office, London. CO1036/281. Denning previously served as UK Ambassador to Japan between 1952 and 1957.

19 Diplomatic note presented by to Selwyn Lloyd, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 14 February 1957. CO1036/281.

Popular protest increased. In early 1957, the General Council of Trade Unions (*Sohyo*) and the student network *Zengakuren* both delivered protest notes to the UK Embassy condemning the UK tests (*Zengakuren* was criticised by embassy officials as ‘the noisy, fellow-travelling students’ organisation’).²⁰

The Japan Council against A and H Bombs organised a major protest rally in Tokyo on 1 March 1957. The date was chosen as the third anniversary of the Bravo test but, in a message to London, British Embassy officials complained ‘the whole emphasis was on the forthcoming British tests, which were condemned as an act of violence against the whole world’.²¹

The 1 March rally featured the reading of telegrams from Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Bandarenaike and the USSR’s Marshall Bulganin. Once again, embassy officials complained about the perceived double standard of protests against US and UK tests rather than Russian ones. Their reports railed against a speech to the rally from an Egyptian diplomat, coming soon after the Suez crisis where Britain, France and Israel had tried and failed to invade Egypt: ‘the Egyptian can only have been invited to speak because Egypt is hostile to Britain’.²²

The British Ambassador was convinced that the Japanese Government was encouraging the protests:

I have a conviction, though it is difficult to prove, that the Japanese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, far from damping down agitation (which is the official Japanese Foreign Office line) are quietly stimulating it in order to achieve popularity ... That communists and fellow-travellers should exploit it to the full is only natural. But the press and radio are giving full publicity to all the arguments against us, ignoring any arguments in favour ...

20 Telegram from British Embassy Tokyo to Sir Esler Dening, Foreign Office, London, 5 February 1957. CO1036/281.

21 Telegram No. 75 from British Embassy, Tokyo to Sir Esler Dening, Foreign Office, London, 5 March 1957. CO1036/281.

22 Ibid.

Buddhist priests have continued to bang drums around this [embassy] compound since 1 March and may well go on indefinitely. I am advised that the authorities have the power to stop this nuisance (which is what it is intended to be) if they want to and since they do not use them, one must assume their willingness that the noise should continue.²³

Two days later, on 3 March, the Japan Council announced plans to send a ship into the danger zone to protest against the first UK test.

On 4 March, the Japanese Ambassador to the United Kingdom again met with Foreign Office officials in London to formally call for an end to the tests. That very day, Prime Minister Kishi responded to questions in the Diet in Tokyo, saying the proposals to send a protest fleet to the test zone deserved ‘a cautious study’ as ‘it might have powerful appeal to world public opinion’.²⁴ The Japanese Prime Minister noted:

The British government might not suspend its hydrogen bomb tests even though the Japanese protest fleet carried out a sit down movement. Unless public opinion in Britain makes the British government leaders reconsider atomic bomb experimentation, there will be no way of suspending the nuclear bomb test.²⁵

Facing growing international publicity, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan went before the House of Commons in London to downplay concerns over radioactive fallout, arguing:

The present and foreseeable hazards, including genetic effects, from external radiation due to fall-out from the test explosions of nuclear weapons, fired at the present rate and in the present proportion of the different kinds, are considered to be negligible.²⁶

Kishi continued to lobby publicly for a change of policy. He announced that he was encouraging a delegation of religious leaders to travel to London to call for a halt to the tests on moral grounds. The British

23 Ibid. Kishi—grandfather of Japan’s current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe—was certainly no pacifist. As a Cabinet member in 1941, Kishi had signed the declaration of war against the United States. After the Second World War, he was jailed as a suspected Class A war criminal, because of his role in conscripting forced labour in the puppet state of Manchukuo. In 1948, he was released and rehabilitated by the US occupation forces as a good anti-communist leader. He served as Foreign Minister until his elevation to become the 57th Prime Minister of Japan from 25 February 1957 to 12 June 1958, with a second term from that date until 19 July 1960.

24 Telegram No. 75 from British Embassy, Tokyo to Sir Esler Denning, Foreign Office, London, 5 March 1957. CO1036/281.

25 Ibid.

26 UK House of Commons, Hansard official report, 5 March 1957, Vol. 566, col. 178.

Embassy in Tokyo closely monitored preparations by this delegation, led by Bishop Yashiro of the Japanese Anglican Episcopal Church, with Bishop Makita of the Episcopal Church, Generals Segawa and Uemura of the Salvation Army and Sekitani, the secretary of the non-conformist Protestant churches.²⁷

The Japanese Red Cross also appealed to the International Committee of the Red Cross and national Red Cross societies in Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom to campaign against the H-bomb tests.²⁸

The pressure began to tell on the UK Government. Fearful that Japan might take the United Kingdom to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to stop the Christmas Island tests, the UK Government temporarily withdrew its 1955 declaration accepting compulsory ICJ jurisdiction.²⁹

Grassroots campaigners began direct, public protests against the British. On 25 March 1957, Kiyoshi Kikkawa, Shoichi Minami, Ontetsu Kobayashi and Ichiro Kawamoto began a sit-in in front of the Cenotaph for A-bomb victims in Hiroshima to call for a halt of the first UK hydrogen bomb test. In later years, Ichiro Kawamoto recalled that:

Sitting with our backs against the Cenotaph expressed Hiroshima's message of protest, alongside the A-bomb victims.³⁰

The proposal to send a peace fleet into the danger zone inspired the young Hiroshima protesters, with Ichiro Kawamoto volunteering to board a vessel to travel towards Christmas Island. He later explained:

27 Telegram No. 80 from British Embassy, Tokyo to Sir Esler Denning, Foreign Office, London, 7 March 1957. CO1036/281.

28 'Our H-bomb tests will be "so small"', *News Chronicle*, 28 March 1957.

29 John R. Walker (Foreign and Commonwealth Office UK): *British nuclear weapons and the Test Ban 1954–73—Britain, the United States, Weapons Policies and Nuclear Testing, Tensions and Contradictions* (Ashgate, 2010), p. 22. Sixty years later in February 2017, the United Kingdom again withdrew from the ICJ's compulsory jurisdiction on matters relating to nuclear disarmament. This contemporary display of arrogance followed the unsuccessful case lodged in 2014 by the Marshall Islands to press all the nuclear weapons powers to fulfil their obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. See International Court of Justice: *Declarations Recognising the Jurisdiction of the Court as Compulsory, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Island*, 27 February 2017. For discussion, Sebastian Brixey-Williams: 'UK revokes ICJ jurisdiction over its nuclear weapons', BASIC (British American Security Information Council), 27 March 2017.

30 Tetsuya Okahata: 'Protests against nuclear tests', *Chugoku Shimbun* (Hiroshima), 25 June 1995 (thanks to Akira Kawasaki for translation of this reference).

Mr. Kikkawa invited me to take part, suggesting that we first do what we could in Hiroshima, then saying I could give my life for this cause while on the voyage, if that's what I wanted.³¹

The sit-in by young people sparked wider popular support in Hiroshima and 20 April was designated 'the National Action Day against Christmas Island Nuclear Tests'. The protest that day saw thousands of people rallying in Hiroshima to call for an end to UK atomic and hydrogen bomb tests. In Tokyo, a protest rally was held in Shimizudani Park, addressed by international delegates including William Morrow of the Australian Peace Committee.³²

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As news of these protests filtered back to the United Kingdom, British newspapers reported that Japanese opinion was sceptical about official UK statements that the tests would not cause radioactive fallout. British officials tried to counter public concern about health impacts, but the *Birmingham Post* noted:

Since 1945, the Japanese have been in no mood or condition to listen to official assurances or scientific reasonableness about atomic bombs. They are quite simply frightened of them and remind themselves more frequently about Hiroshima and Nagasaki than about any incident that the Japanese armed forces were involved in.³³

UK reporters also complained that Japan was more focused on the British bomb than Russia's arsenal:

The British program produced frequent mass meetings, protest processions, a succession of diplomatic notes to London and the dispatch of a world tour of Dr. Masatoshi Matsushita as personal envoy of Mr. Nobusuke Kishi, the Japanese Prime Minister.³⁴

31 Ibid. The pledge to give up one's life for disarmament was no idle boast. In 1959, Ontetsu Kobayashi—one of the four sit-in protesters from Hiroshima—committed *seppuku* (ritual suicide by disembowelment), standing before the Japanese prime minister's residence in Tokyo, as a protest against proposals for Japanese rearmament!

32 *No More Hiroshimas, the news of the Japan Council against A and H-bombs*, Vol. 4, No. 9, 30 May 1957, p. 6.

33 'H-bomb tests alarm Japan', *Birmingham Post*, 9 May 1957.

34 Ibid.

British officials had difficulty accepting that there was widespread popular opposition to nuclear testing. After the horrors of the Second World War, marked by Japanese war crimes and the torture of allied prisoners, British representatives to SCAP were openly hostile to emerging democratic forces in Japan. In 1946, one official wrote to London that the Japanese were ‘as little fitted for self-government in a modern world as any African tribe, though much more dangerous’.³⁵

A decade later, as protests over the looming Christmas Island tests increased, UK Embassy officials in Tokyo continued to regard Japanese as both ‘hysterical’ and ‘callous’, as shown in a letter by one diplomat to Sir Oscar Moreland at the Foreign Office in London:

When we first notified the Japanese government on 7 January about the megaton tests, I had a shrewd suspicion that they would exploit the situation—and they have done so. They can, of course, whip up more agitation if they want to, and as the Japanese are a hysterical people, it is never hard to do. But I do not believe that the Japanese people are in the least spontaneously agitated by these tests, nor do I believe them to be any less callous than they were in the past. As for compensation, I think it is a pure racket ...

It is the American guilt complex over the original atom bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki which I consider responsible for the whole Japanese attitude on this question. They found that the Americans were vulnerable on the issue and they have pressed hard ever since.

When I went to Hiroshima early in 1952, I was asked to give a press conference. The first question invariably was what I thought of the atom bomb damage. When I replied—deliberately—that having been in two wars it looked like any other war damage, there was dead silence and the conference fizzled out.³⁶

The problem, however, was that the protests were not limited to Japan. On 15 March, the Foreign Office sent a draft statement about the tests to British High Commissions in Australia, New Zealand and Canada,

35 Historian John Dower cites this and other examples of Western ‘expert opinion’ about Japan in *Embracing defeat*, op. cit., pp. 217–220.

36 Letter from Bill Waring, British Embassy, Tokyo, to Sir Oscar Moreland, Foreign Office, London, 15 February 1957. CO1036/281. Moreland would later serve as Ambassador in Tokyo from 1959 to 1963.

as well as embassies in Djakarta, Peking, Bangkok, Rangoon, Manila and Singapore. The anodyne statement gave little information about what was developing, with London officials noting:

We do not wish to stimulate publicity about these tests, but if there are signs of local misunderstanding and rumours on the subject ... you should draw on the following paragraphs, adhering strictly to the wording given.³⁷

Protests from larger Pacific Rim countries were hardly surprising. There was growing anti-colonial sentiment across Asia—symbolised by the 1955 conference on non-alignment in Bandung, Indonesia, which explicitly called for a moratorium on nuclear testing. At the same time, the postwar strength of Labor and communist parties in Australia and New Zealand had not completely dissipated despite the Cold War, and they joined trade unions and religious and women's organisations to mobilise against the nuclear threat.

37 Telegram from Foreign Office to British Embassies in Djakarta, Peking, Bangkok, Rangoon, Manila, Singapore and Tokyo (copied to all UK High Commissions in Commonwealth countries), Intel No. 48, marked 'Confidential', 15 March 1957. CO1036/281.

This text is taken from *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-bomb tests*, by Nic Maclellan, published 2017 by ANU Press,
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