Just Who Reversed the Course? The Red Purge in Higher Education during the Occupation of Japan

HANS MARTIN KRÄMER*

This paper examines the dismissals of allegedly Communist teaching staff at Japanese universities between 1948 and 1950 (‘red purge’) as one example of developments usually attributed to a ‘reverse course’ in occupation policy. It argues that the red purge came about less as a result of a change in US policy than through Japanese initiative. Based on primary source material, this paper shows that anti-Communism had been an integral part of the thinking of the Occupation’s education administrators since 1946. They were, however, careful not to translate this thinking into victimizing action. Rather, a quantitative analysis indicates that, in bringing about an individual’s dismissal, factors such as low academic standing were more decisive than political involvement, implying that the purges were not simply ordered from above. Two case studies of purgees, one a philosophy lecturer from Hirosaki Higher School and the other a professor of anatomy at Kyoto Prefectural School of Medicine, serve to corroborate these findings. Assumptions about a reverse course have led to false conceptions about the respective contribution of US and Japanese administrators to late occupation policies. An accurate assessment of the occupation period requires that historians take into account lower-level events and decisions in order to gauge better Japan’s role in shaping occupation policy.

1. Reverse Course Debate

In June 1950, the Cold War became hot for the first time when North Korean armed forces crossed the 38th parallel and, a few days later, the US responded by joining in the hostilities. For thousands of Japanese, the Cold War likewise became heated in a very personal sense that summer, when they were fired from their jobs for allegedly being members or sympathizers of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). Since the middle of 1949, companies and government agencies had started turning out great numbers of workers and staff for economic reasons in a co-ordinated effort called ‘adjustments’ (きょうせい kiyōsei or がせい gyōsei). These ‘adjustments’, affecting about 12,000 employees at private enterprises, 1,200 public officials, and 1,200 teachers, were also used to get rid of many employees suspected of harbouring leftist sympathies.1 Before the occurrence of these mass dismissals, soon to be called the ‘red purge’ by the press, 24 members of the central committee of the JCP had already been purged, the publication of the JCP’s party organ Akahata suspended, and the Communist trade union Zenrören forcibly disbanded.

The Occupation had come a long way by the summer of 1950. Beginning in September 1945 under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers

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(SCAP), the early phase of the endeavour had been characterized by efforts to achieve the democratization and demilitarization called for by the victorious allies in their Potsdam Declaration. Among other things, the achievement of these goals entailed the removal of ‘undesirable personnel’ from office, the dissolution of the business conglomerates known as zaibatsu, the implementation of land reform, the writing of a new constitution, the introduction of universal suffrage, and the extension of compulsory education and textbook reform. The latter half of the Occupation, however, was dominated by decisions that seemed to contradict these earlier measures, beginning with the reversal of the zaibatsu dissolution and the placing of restrictions on organized labour, and ending in the reversal of the original purge of wartime ultranationalists and the making of a militarised foreign policy that included participation in the Korean War and the continuing occupation of Okinawa.

This policy change, soon to be called ‘the reverse course’ by the Japanese press (Takano 1986: 109–110), in part reflected changes of attitude within the Communist movement. The JCP leaders had been released from prison in October 1945 and, in December, the party was able to hold its first general assembly since 1926. In this early period, the party strove to achieve a ‘popular front’ comprising all forces committed to the establishment of a democratic republic and the thorough application of the Potsdam Declaration. While acridly criticizing the continuation of the ‘emperor system’, the JCP in 1946 also expressed its basic agreement with the new constitution. However, following the anti-Communist declaration of MacArthur’s political advisor Dean Acheson, made in May 1946, and the prohibition of the General Strike, announced in February 1947, the JCP became increasingly hostile towards the occupation forces. By 1950, the party had adopted the rhetoric of ‘national liberation’ from ‘imperialist American rule’, and even advocated resorting to open violence (NKCI 1994: 153–210; Gayle 2003: 78–80).

Whether one follows the JCP party line in arguing that this tactical modification followed the reverse course of the Occupation or agrees with the Occupation’s anti-Communist policy-makers that it was the other way round, one finds that the US is usually held by members of both camps to have initiated and implemented this change in policy. Indeed, little attention has been paid to the fact that actors other than officials of the US government or occupation forces may have had an interest in ‘changing the course’. To be sure, John W. Dower has drawn attention to the continuity between Yoshida Shigeru’s anti-Communist beliefs as a prewar diplomat and as a postwar prime minister (Dower 1979: 274–278). The actual policy measures of the reverse course period, however, are portrayed as resulting from the orders of American occupation authorities (Dower 1979: 295).

Japanese scholarship often depicts the reverse course as a domestic expression of the Cold War, affecting sociocultural phenomena and linked to the rise and long-term political hegemony of the conservative establishment that began in the later years of the occupation period. At least for the time until 1952, however, most Japanese scholars cannot imagine anyone else but the US occupation army with its ‘supra-constitutional powers’ as the author of these changes. Consequently, Japanese initiative has not been accounted for sufficiently by historians considering the nature and degree of political changes taking place between 1948 and 1950. While many Japanese scholars prefer the term tenkan (change of policy) to that of ‘reverse course’, there is considerable agreement that policies of the later half of the Occupation either stood ‘in opposition to democratization’ (Kinbara and Takemae 1989: 279) or that ‘the democratization agenda had been abandoned’ (Dower 1999: 552). Rarely disputed these days, disagreement over whether there was a reversal of the course was much more marked until about 20 years ago. The reasons for these differences of opinion can be traced back to how the early and the late stages of the Occupation have been evaluated.
A Marxist interpretation, as represented by early postwar historians such as Inoue Kiyoshi, Suzuki Shirō or Okonogi Shinzaburō, regarded US policy as fundamentally imperialistic from the beginning and emphasized the continuity of US efforts to integrate Japan into the worldwide capitalist order. One of the more recent explications of this line of argument is visible in the words of Jon Halliday:

[Policy]olicy did evolve and change significantly; yet, from a structural point of view, these changes can be seen as stages in a single process: from destruction to restriction, to stabilization, to promotion … Thus, the periodization implied by the widely used term ‘the reverse course’ may, unless qualified and set in context, mislead. There was no basic change in the nature of the U.S. occupation regime, which reflected and mediated the interests of U.S. imperialism and its overall strategy. (Halliday 1975: 164) [emphasis in the original]

The US interpretation that reigned until the 1970s, perceiving in the Occupation the continuous unfolding of a success story, equally refused to acknowledge a course reversal. This ‘American Democracy’ view, mostly enunciated by former occupationaires, argued that while there may have been a change from a punitive to a constructive phase or one from political to economic considerations, this was a mere shift of policy. The anti-Communist measures of the second half of the Occupation are seen as springing from the same anti-totalitarian concern that motivated the anti-fascist initiatives of the first half (e.g. Reischauer 1977: 105–106).

Members of the far right wing express the major dissenting opinion in Japan, claiming that the US Occupation was an illegitimate infringement upon Japanese sovereignty. In this view, the question of policy changes pales in importance when compared with a tale of continuous, one-sided domination of the Japanese people by an alien occupying force.² In both Japan and the US, however, the dominant opinion in the last two decades has been that of liberal historians, who argue that the democratic practices of the first half of the Occupation were discontinued and replaced by new, repressive measures introduced in the second half. Opinions on when this course reversal took place differ somewhat, but usually agree that it occurred somewhere along a timeline encompassing the suppression of the general strike on 1 February 1947 (Dower 1999: 271), the formal decision of the US National Security Council in May 1948 to declare openly all other occupation goals secondary to that of economic independence (Fujiwara et al. 1986: 72), and the contemporaneous deepening of the Cold War and growing emphasis on economic reconstruction in 1949 (Miyake 1994: 3).

Carol Gluck has addressed the divergence and possible points of convergence between the then hegemonic Japanese perception of a total course reversal and the dominant American view of a mere shift of emphasis. Writing in 1983, Gluck argued: ‘The two scholarly communities agree in general that the origins of the change in US policy, like the origins of the Cold War, consisted of a continuum of turning points that began earlier and proceeded with greater complexity than either of the two heroic narratives had allowed’ (Gluck 1983: 206). In reality, both Japanese and American scholars may have been a little slower in finding common ground than Gluck had anticipated or hoped. At least when examining specific fields such as education, one still finds that most works indeed follow the ‘heroic narrative’, according to which demilitarization, liberation and democratization,
e.g. through the US Education Mission to Japan and the Fundamental Law of Education, shaped the early half of the Occupation, as opposed to the period from 1948 onward when anti-Communist policies and the suppression of people's movements began to dominate. This holds true for the narrower field of higher education, as well, where dismissals for political reasons were of particular significance because they touched on more fundamental questions of academic autonomy and the locus of personnel authority.

Viewed quantitatively, these dismissals may seem to be of minor importance. Indeed, Takemae Eiji and Kinbara Samon argue as much in their survey of twentieth-century Japanese history:

Rather than the workers, it was the university students who faced this red purge most valiantly. Students boycotted classes at an increasing number of universities, until ten squadrons of the police reserve were sent into action at a student assembly at Waseda on 28 September [1950]. Supported by students’ fights such as these, there was practically no purge of university personnel. (Kinbara and Takemae 1989: 279)

While the number of people who had to leave their job immediately may not have been very high, there definitely was a witch-hunt mood on campuses at the time. Among the other casualties were not a few hasty withdrawals from the JCP and refusals by publishers to accept manuscripts from researchers whose names had appeared in the newspapers, together with the decay of the nationwide and sometime powerful JCP-affiliated Democratic Scientists’ Association (Minshu-shugi Kagakusha Kyōkai).

Analysing in detail how the red purge in higher education came about can help to clarify the nature of the reverse course as a whole. Indeed, because it is widely held to be the most convincing proof that a fundamental change in occupation policy took place, the red purge plays a crucial role in discussions of the reverse course as a whole (e.g. Takano 1986: 107; Kinbara and Takemae 1989: 281; Myōjin 1993: 65). Showing that the roots of the purge extended to the beginning of the Occupation and that responsibility for the removal of certain educators did not rest solely with the US will serve to clarify the larger framework of the reverse course. In order to evaluate carefully whose decisions led to what consequences, this paper will begin with a study of the attitudes and actions of occupation personnel towards politically motivated dismissals and then proceed to a quantitative survey of the victims of the red purge. The focus will then shift to two case studies from the period 1949–1950: an incident at Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine and the dismissal of a lecturer at Hirosaki National University.

2. CIE’s Anti-Communism and the Red Purge

The hegemonic narrative as to how the red purge in higher education came about is more or less fixed: On 19 July 1949, Walter C. Eells, Advisor for Higher Education of SCAP’s Civil Information
and Education Section (CIE), gave a speech at the inauguration ceremony of Niigata University. In his address, Eells proclaimed that Communists could be dismissed from universities without violating the principle of academic freedom. He built his argument on the idea that while freedom of thought was ‘basic to the whole spirit of American education’, the fact was that ‘Communist Party members are not free to think. They have surrendered that freedom when they join the Party. Therefore they cannot be allowed to be university professors in a democracy’ (Eells 1949).

Accompanied by Donald Typer, CIE’s Consultant on Youth Organizations, Eells travelled throughout Japan from November 1949 to May 1950, holding lectures similar to that given in Niigata at 27 national universities. Starting in October 1949, and roughly paralleling this round trip, recommendations to ‘resign from office’ (jishoku kankoku) were handed out by university administrators to supposedly Communist professors. Thus, the firings on campuses appeared to have been orchestrated by CIE and, in particular, by Eells, whose name came to be used almost synonymously with the red purge. Handbills distributed by radical students at Tōhoku University in 1950 even carried the slogan ‘No more Hiroshima, no more Eells!’ (GHH 1950: 117).

A thorough reading of the occupation authority’s documents, however, suggests otherwise. To be sure, there is no denying that CIE—responsible for higher education in the division of labour inside General Headquarters (GHQ)—regarded Communism as a problem. Indeed, CIE had turned its attention to that ‘problem’ earlier than July 1949, e.g. by setting up a Special Committee on Communism in February 1949. This committee’s meetings were attempts at understanding ‘factors of susceptibility, appeals and tactics’ (GHQ 5718-15a) of the JCP. Two sides conceiving different approaches to the issue emerged from the discussion: One group believed the integrity of the universities was threatened, while the other believed the problem could be handled (GHQ 5097-1). The conclusion of the section as a whole was that political education, rather than open confrontation, was necessary, displaying an attitude of sincere commitment to anti-totalitarianism in wishing to avoid ‘on the one hand, the danger of violent revolution and, on the other hand, the danger of feudalistic reaction’ (GHQ 5718-15b).

Earlier on, in October 1948, Donald R. Nugent, head of CIE, discussed the direction of the information programmes to be adopted by the section, and promised ‘a stepped-up drive to counter the aggressive campaign conducted by communists’ (GHQ 5223-1). As early as November 1946, Nugent requested GHQ’s secret information service to supply him with biographical information concerning certain educators and added: ‘Of special interest would be any indication of Communist affiliations or pro-Communist activities on the part of the above-mentioned personalities’ (GHQ 5162-20a).

At about the same time Edwin F. Wigglesworth, Universities Officer from September 1946 to June 1947, wrote to Education Division Chief Mark T. Orr in order to discuss Communist cells among university students: ‘It seems feasible to me that a check should be made so that if any subversive teaching is going on at the present time, we at least would be appraised [sic] of it and could consider further action’ (Tsuchimochi 1996: 1-I-20). In April 1947, Philip Shay, another universities officer, recommended the production of staff studies on the historical and social backgrounds of Japanese professors. His explicit aim in doing so was to be able to ascertain more...
precisely the degree of Communist permeation of the Japanese teaching staff (Tsuchimochi 1996: 1-1-4).

All these examples prove how CIE took to observing alleged Communists dating from as early as 1946. Indeed, anti-Communism in the US, as well, did not wait to be invented by Joseph McCarthy in 1950, but had demonstrated its vigour ever since the 1919–20 Red Scare. In the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration formalized protective measures against supposed Communists with the creation of the Special House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1938, and the security programme for monitoring federal employees in 1939 (Fried 1990: 47–52). Nor were university campuses spared the excitement: Indeed, by around 1940, the occasional purge of individual dissenters had given way to concerted efforts to get rid of members of the Communist Party of the USA, resulting in, among other things, the City College of New York experiencing the largest case of a professors’ purge prior to 1953 (occurring in 1941–42; Schrecker 1986: 63, 76). Likewise, at the University of California, where between 1949 and 1952 a controversy over the appropriateness of having professors sign a new oath of allegiance made national headlines, the exclusion of Communists from the teaching staff had been established policy even before the state’s legislature had set up its Un-American Activities Committee in 1941. On 11 October 1940, the Board of Regents of the University of California had passed the following resolution:

They [the Regents] believe, therefore, that membership in the Communist Party is incompatible with membership in the faculty of a State University. Tolerance must not mean indifference to practices which contradict the spirit and the purpose of the way of life to which the University of California as an instrument of democracy is committed. (Garner 1967: 276)

Inside GHQ, sections other than CIE, such as the Economic and Scientific Section (ESS) and the Government Section (GS), were hardly less sensitive about the perceived Communist threat in education. In November 1948, for example, ESS conducted an inquiry into the party affiliation of professors who were candidates for the Japan Science Council (Nihon Gakujutsu Kaigi). As a result of the investigation, 39 individuals were put into the category ‘Known Communist’ and 27 classified as ‘Doubtful Cases’ (GHQ 7431-2). Even during the early postwar heyday of the amicable relationship between the ‘lovable Communist Party’ and the Occupation, advocates of co-operation with the JCP on the US side were well aware that the Communists did not share their ends, but at best merely agreed on short-term means (Oinas-Kukkonen 2003: 31, 37).

Despite CIE’s early interest in matters Communist, the activities of the other sections in GHQ, and the domestic legacy they could build upon, strong doubt has to be cast on the assumption that all this resulted directly in any concrete measures. Further reason for doubting the complicity of occupation authorities in the red purge is supported by additional probing into GHQ documents. In February 1949, shortly before the first purge cases, Donald Typer, much concerned with Communism as CIE’s Youth Organizations Consultant, proposed the following in the context of the Section’s special committee mentioned above:

It may seem trivial but we need to watch our use of terms. We must not become the ‘anti-communist’ branch of SCAP. For obvious reasons we should not be ‘fighting Communism’ as such. We must not become a mere propaganda machine. Suppression has no place in the normal course of events—at least at this stage of the game (GHQ 5718-15c).

The last sentence would indeed allow for the interpretation that CIE was at least considering—if only for later ‘stages of the game’—open suppression, although the discussion here is about students, rather than faculty.
Half a year earlier, several students and a professor from Keiō University came to visit CIE to ask for advice on how to combat Communism in their school—in response, GHQ officials advised them ‘that the best way to refute undesirable propaganda was by statements of truth’ and they were ‘urged to draw up a positive program along democratic lines’ (GHQ 5642-23a). In 1947, CIE had to deal with information provided by local GHQ representatives in Yamagata that known Communists were on the screening board responsible for judging whether teaching staff members were fit to teach in the prefecture. Although the information was collected, the conclusion at that time was: ‘No case opened this headquarters’ (GHQ 5162-20b).

In October 1949, when the red purge attempts on campuses were in full swing, James Gibson, Field Liaison Officer from CIE, reported to the Chief of Education Division from a field trip to Miyazaki, describing in rough outline how the red purge of education personnel was being carried out there in secret. Neither the Cultural Affairs Teams in Kyūshū nor Gibson himself were privy to what was happening, and the report states that the local GHQ representatives were even critical of the events: ‘[T]hey question whether such action is legal … Furthermore it is their opinion that the whole thing smacks of a reorganization of the thought police such as existed before the war’. About the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), GHQ’s secret service, however, Gibson writes: ‘It might be pointed out that CIC is aware that this purge is in the offing’ (GHQ 5701-21).7

That CIE was indeed not even informed of everything going on at Japanese universities in 1949, let alone organized the red purge itself, is most clearly visible in an intra-section memorandum sent to Arthur K. Loomis, Chief of Education Division, by several employees, among them the infamous Eells. Composed one year later, in October 1950, when threats of a red purge on campuses were once again circulating in the media, the memo complained: ‘How does one get a clear understanding of the conditions under which the purge is to be administered? The newspaper is a poor source of information on matters of this kind … What assurance, if any, do we have that the purge will not repeat the mistakes of ten years ago when liberal and progressive professors were liquidated?’ (5642-23b). It is inconceivable that the same people who were responsible for this memo could possibly have themselves conducted the dismissals one year earlier, the very firings that came to be known as the red purge.

Internal disagreement inside the Education Division is attested to by Donald Typer, who in a 1985 interview emphasized Eells’s initiative: ‘I couldn’t get you a numerical figure, but I know several people thought he was going too far. We were trying to work and reconstruct and Eells was stirring up all this fight and getting lots of publicity’ (Typer 1985: 5). Typer’s impression, however, that the desire to fight Communism originated with Eells (‘I always thought Eells initiated it and maintained it’ [Typer 1985: 5]) is proven wrong by the evidence of earlier statements by other people, such as Nugent.

3. Quantitative Overview of Red Purge Victims in Higher Education

In his study on Cold War dismissals of university teachers on US campuses, sociologist Lionel Lewis turns his attention away from ideological concerns and towards other issues, particularly institutional

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7. It would indeed be worthwhile to further pursue what the 441st Counter Intelligence Corps knew and did. Unfortunately, CIC files are not part of Record Group 331 of the National Archives and Records Administration of the USA, the main bulk of which was disclosed for public perusal around 1980. A few sources inside Record Group 331 allow for indirect conclusions; however, correspondence of other sections with the CIC often is among that small part of Record Group 331 material that remains undisclosed even today.
factors. He attempts to explain why professors who had come under suspicion were fired at some institutions and retained at others, and does so by pointing out the fact that ‘non-political factors weighed heavily in what it turns out were political events only on the surface’ (Lewis 1988: 3). Specifically, he looks at profiles of the individuals concerned (considering factors such as age, position, teaching experience) and characteristics of the employing institutions (such as size, public vs. private, rural vs. urban setting) (Lewis 1988: 31). In this section, a similar approach will be undertaken for those Japanese university personnel who were dismissed or threatened with dismissal.

Data have been compiled on 133 individuals who were mentioned as victims of the red purge at institutions of higher education in Japan during the occupation period (Table 1). Of these, actual purges could be ascertained in 35 cases; 62 instructors definitely remained in their posts, leaving 36 unclear cases. Of the 36 JCP members who could be identified, 8 only 16 were purged, while the remaining 20 were spared, indicating that party membership alone did not account for being purged.

Rather, if we compare those who were mentioned in connection with the red purge overall with those who did in fact lose their jobs, the most decisive factors seem to have been the standing or prestige of the institution and of the respective individual inside the institution. Employees of the old-system technical colleges (senmon gakkō) or higher schools (kōtō gakkō) that were soon to be transformed into faculties of new-system universities were substantially more likely to lose their jobs than those at institutions that were already universities before 1949. While 60% of those mentioned

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Table 1. Quantitative Overview of Red Purge Victims at Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mentioned as purgee</th>
<th>Purged in fact</th>
<th>Not purged</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
<th>National average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Old-system affiliation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher school</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical college</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal school</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>33%*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other criteria</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full professors</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average birth year</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*The above four figures do not add up to 100% because a fifth category, teachers at preparatory courses for universities (daigaku yoka), amounts to roughly 1%. This category was omitted because very few preparatory courses were institutionally independent and because no purge cases could be found there.

Source: The author’s data collection derived from various sources (Ministry of Education directories of university personnel, newspaper reports, secondary literature, biographical dictionaries, obituaries, autobiographies, university histories, lists of personnel in individual university archives, parliamentary minutes, GHQ documents, Ministry of Education documents, and interviews); figures in ‘National average’ column are from MOE 1947: 2–3, except for ‘Average birth year’, which is calculated from MOE 1950: 22–25.

8. As party files were inaccessible, this identification could not be based on definite party membership. Rather, I drew conclusions by examining press accounts, GHQ files and diverse biographical material.
as potential purgees came from the old universities, only 22% of those actually purged originated from there. Conversely, while only 16% each of those associated with the purge accounted for teachers at higher schools and technical colleges, 26 and 34%, respectively, of the actual purgees belonged to those categories. The likelihood to be not just singled out as a potential purge candidate but actually dismissed was thus largely dependent on the type of institution to which one belonged. In particular, the prevalence of higher school purgees stands out when one considers that higher school teachers represented a mere 6% of all teachers nationwide.

The fact that the names of many members of old-system universities were circulated in the press most likely reflects their prominence in public discourse. Likewise, the especially visible full professors (kyōju) are overrepresented (55%) among those mentioned in connection with the red purge. The percentage among those actually purged is significantly lower (44%), albeit above the national average (35%). Purgees were not only more likely to have been full professors than those of their colleagues who stayed in their jobs, but they also tended to be younger. The average age difference amounts to four years; also, none of the purgees was born before 1900, i.e. none was over 50 years of age at the time of the purge.

Viewed by faculty (Table 2), the figures for Economics and Literature stand out in the first column (those named, but not necessarily purged in fact), while Literature and Science is the only case in which all those whose purge was attempted were in fact dismissed. Faculties for Literature and Science were the successors of old-system higher schools after incorporation of these into the new-system universities. These eight people were thus former employees of the old higher schools. Similarly, Law, Natural Science and Humanities/Literature were faculties only present at former imperial universities, which explains why there are high figures among those mentioned, although no one from these groups was actually dismissed.

The strong influence of personal and institutional standing is unlikely in a scenario in which a centralized power like the occupation authorities unilaterally ordered dismissals. Rather, the prevalence of these factors points to a more complicated situation that left room for interventions and negotiations. Two examples of actual dismissal cases, selected for being representative of the

Table 2. Number of Red Purge Victims at Universities by Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Purge mentioned</th>
<th>Purge attempted</th>
<th>Actually dismissed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature and Science</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities/Literature</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>The figures are lower than those in Table 1 because information is not available for all individuals.  
Source: See Table 1.
traits analysed above and for the availability of both US and Japanese material, shed further light on this issue.

4. Sekido Yoshimitsu’s Dismissal

One of the red purge victims who shared many of the characteristics shown in the larger sample was the Professor of Philosophy Sekido Yoshimitsu. Born in 1914, Sekido attended First Higher School in Tokyo and graduated from Tokyo Imperial University, Department of Philosophy, in 1940. He worked as an assistant at Tokyo Imperial University for two years during the war and, after a brief spell as Lecturer of Theoretical Sociology at the Medical Faculty of Nihon University in Tokyo in 1946, entered Hirosaki Higher School (Aomori Prefecture) as a regular lecturer in September 1947.

Sekido had been an adherent of progressive political thinking ever since his time at First Higher School from 1932 to 1936. Upon entering the university, he not only became attached to some of the more outspoken leftist professors there, notably Ide Takashi (Greek philosophy) and Watanabe Kazuo (French literature), but also participated in the University of Tokyo Settlement (Tōdai setsurumento), a social work movement where students of the university went to workers’ quarters to impart social education and offer counsel on legal or medical matters. After the end of World War II, Sekido soon joined the ranks of the JCP, becoming a party member on the recommendation of a neighbour in the autumn of 1946. It was not until 1949, though, that a group of students close to Sekido decided to ask him to disclose his party membership, in accordance with the new party line. On 9 February, Sekido followed the precedent recently set by other academics and made his party membership public at a lecture meeting in his school’s central lecture hall. The school authorities had agreed to lend the hall for that occasion, and, besides Sekido, JCP candidates for local elections gave speeches. Later the same month, an officer of the occupation army came to visit Sekido in Hirosaki. Sekido himself remembered this meeting, attended only by himself, the officer and translators, as follows:

This person from CIE or wherever came and told me, in an extremely low-pitched and gentleman-like manner of speaking, that there was not the slightest objection against members of the Communist party being university professors. That was how they did things in the US as well. However, using education for political propaganda would not be tolerated. Having said that, he returned. After that, at first Hirosaki Higher School didn’t do anything at all.

Since Sekido did not engage in political propaganda in the classroom, he thought he had no reason to worry. Sometime later, however, Hasegawa, an English Literature teacher at Hirosaki Higher and Sekido’s translator at the meeting, was called to the regional headquarters of the occupation army at Aomori:

And then, I don’t really know precisely, but I believe Hasegawa was called out there. When he went, he was asked: How has Sekido been doing all this time? When he answered that he [Sekido] was continuing his classes, they were furious. Like, ‘he better reconsider’, they were just furious, but didn’t say what should be done. Hasegawa was perplexed, thought, ‘how strange’, and came back. And then, Hirosaki Higher also thought it had to punish Sekido and couldn’t let him continue his lecture classes, and it all became this great mess.
The ‘great mess’ came about on 29 April 1949. At the faculty assembly (kyōjukai) that day, School President Kurihara Kazuo (who had been dean of the Faculty of Law at Seoul Imperial University before coming to Hirosaki) proposed urging Sekido to resign. One colleague expressed his doubts about the advisability of this step, but the majority of the professors agreed with Kurihara and, in the end, the proposal was approved. The next day, when Sekido declined to accept the proposition, student protests ensued and only abated in mid-June after two waves of punishment had broken the will of the protesters. Sekido himself offered to resign voluntarily if only the students were spared, a gesture that school authorities declined. The exact circumstances of Sekido’s actual dismissal are somewhat obscure; there were conflicting newspaper reports as to the exact date of his contract termination. What is clear, however, is that he ceased teaching in early May and definitely left Hirosaki at the beginning of October 1949.

Sekido had been a promising scholar. He had published articles in Tetsugaku Zasbi and Risō during the war and, while at Hirosaki Higher, co-authored the three-volume Fundamental Problems of Philosophy (1948) as well as The Modern Spirit (1949). His academic career, however, was effectively ruined by his purge. Apart from some translations and minor works he wrote in 1950 when searching for a job, he was not to publish academically for the next 20 years. Beginning in the spring of 1950, he started working on short-term contracts for the publishing house Iwanami. A few years later, he became a regular employee there, working for the dictionary department. Only in 1968 did Sekido take up academic employment again, becoming Professor of Sociology at the minor private college Honshū University (renamed Nagano University in 1974). He published two more articles in his field of specialization before retiring in 1987.

Sekido’s case is typical in that he showed many of the average characteristics of the purgees: He was comparatively young (35 years), a graduate of an Imperial University, at the beginning of a promising career, employed at an old-system higher school, and teaching philosophy. The question of how directly the occupation authorities were involved in his removal from office is difficult to determine. Sekido himself remains convinced to this day that it was ‘the Occupation’ which both indirectly, as well as directly, purged him. Nonetheless, the clear words of the occupation authority representative who spoke with Sekido in February 1949 (and who most certainly was not from CIE, but from CIC) and the behaviour of the professors at the assembly which decided Sekido’s fate in April 1949 would indicate that part of the responsibility for the decision to oust him rested with the university. President Kurihara, who in June 1948 had shown a propensity for dealing harshly with troublemakers when he made Hirosaki Higher a rare case nationwide by punishing students striking against a tuition hike (Michimata 1993: 10), forced through Sekido’s dismissal, and the professors’ assembly had neither the wish nor the power to oppose him effectively. It is also interesting to note that this happened in April 1949, at which point Eells had not even delivered his Niigata Address.

Indeed, the fundamental legal principles upon which the purges were argumentatively based had been laid some time before. When the Japanese authorities gave reasons, they usually referred to Article 8 of the Fundamental Law of Education (Kyōiku kihon-hō). This article reads: ‘Political Education. The political knowledge necessary for intelligent citizenship shall be valued in education. The schools prescribed by law shall refrain from political education or other political activities for or against any specific political party’. The Ministry of Education had, in fact, as early as January 1946 ensured that

10. In the case of Sekido’s purge, while other sources remain undecided over this point, a student handbill from Hokkaidō University dated 15 or 16 May 1950 (English translation in: GHQ 5718-15d) claims that Sekido was dismissed by application of said Article 8 of the Fundamental Law of Education.
Communists could be kept out of education. A notice by the vice minister at that time had stipulated:

Although the Peace Preservation Law has been rescinded and the participation of teachers and students in political associations become non-objectionable, they must not deviate from their obligations in engaging in political activity and, reflecting their respective duties, such activity has to be fair and pure. Particularly political speeches or the support or recommendation (including those in writing) of specific parties or individuals by teachers or students on campus is strictly forbidden. The above is not, however, to be taken to mean that free discussions on politics by students on campus are forbidden. (ND 1948-06-28)

Sekido was dismissed for precisely the reason given in this ministerial notice: ‘political speeches or the support … of political parties … on campus’.

Enough room for arbitrariness in enforcement remained, however, as evidenced in the fact that the school had explicitly allowed usage of the lecture hall for Sekido’s announcement of joining the JCP and in that Sekido was not the first to use school facilities for that purpose, but the first punished for doing so.

5. The Incident at Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine

A later example showing even less evidence of US interference can be found in the case of Adachi Yoichi, Professor at Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine (KPUM, Kyōto Furitsu Ika Daigaku). A detailed inquiry into how the process of his dismissal in October 1949 worked and who was involved in the decision-making will serve to clarify further the nature of the red purge.

KPUM was the third public (as opposed to private or national) school officially to become a university before World War II and only one of two public universities remaining in operation until 1945 (the other being Ōsaka Commercial University [Ōsaka Shōka Daigaku], today’s Ōsaka City University [Ōsaka Shiritsu Daigaku]). Having started as a hospital in 1872 and been promoted to college (senmon gakkō) in 1903, the school successfully seized upon the opportunity to apply for university status opened up by the University Ordinance (Daigakurei) issued in 1918, thus becoming a regular university (daigaku) in 1921 (Yoshikawa 1995).

As with other schools of medicine, KPUM’s transfer to the new university system after 1949 was not effected until 1952. One peculiarity of the old system, however, had already been abolished in 1949. Until then, the teaching staff, although drawing their salary from prefectural coffers, had been employees of the national government (monbu kyōkan); however, Article 3 of the Law for Special Regulations Concerning Educational Public Service Personnel (Kyōiku Kōmu-in Tokurei-hō), which came into effect in January 1949, stipulated that teaching personnel at public schools were to be local public service employees (chihō kōmu-in). Consequently, at KPUM too, the status of all teaching staff was transferred at that time (administrative staff were to follow in April 1950) (KFIDHHI 1974: 236).

Accordingly, the status was also changed in the case of Adachi Yoichi, who had been Professor of Anatomy at KPUM’s Women’s Department (joshi-bu) until that chair was abolished in 1948. He thenceforth employed as a library attendant but, on 8 November 1949, KPUM President Katsu Yoshitaka handed Adachi a recommendation to resign. At noon the following day, Adachi expressed his refusal to accept the resignation, whereupon Katsu decided to bring the matter before the professors’ assembly scheduled for later that day. Meanwhile, a group of students had gathered on the morning of the 9th to adopt a resolution criticizing Adachi’s dismissal; after Katsu refused to answer them in earnest at noon, they decided to attend the professors’ assembly. The presence of the students aroused the anger of some of the professors, who held that their assembly was not
public. When the students refused to leave despite a successful motion to ban them, the meeting was cancelled without even having entered into regular proceedings. One week later, eight students were dismissed for their insolence, an action against which they responded by filing a complaint with the Kyoto District Court.11

While the fate of the students was highly publicized and prompted a long-running campaign for their reinstatement on campus, the cause of the dismissed professors was soon of merely secondary concern. Two days after the failed assembly, not only Adachi, but Nonaka Yaichi and Takezawa Noritaka were also dismissed. Like Adachi, Takezawa was a professor at the Women’s Department and had voted to permit the students’ participation in the 9 November assembly. Nonaka Yaichi had been employed at KPUM since 1938 and as Assistant Professor of Urology since 1946. He was summoned to president Katsu’s office on 10 November 1949, where he was presented with the recommendation to file a resignation. When pressed about the reason for this sudden move, the president would not go beyond stating that the decision was reached by a ‘secret professors’ meeting’. According to Nonaka’s recollection of one month later, the whole discussion took place under unusual circumstances as a policeman in civilian disguise was apparently posted in the next room (KFIDSGS D 131, 19: 2).

Owing to the absence of any other publicly stated reason, the political character of the three professors’ dismissals was obvious. Both Adachi and Takezawa were known to be members of the JCP, while Nonaka had been a prominent leader of the ‘Intramural Mass Meeting’, an organization active on behalf of democratization on campus in 1945 and 1946 (GHQ 5159-18: 1). Even as late as 1953, the university still argued before the court that the students’ protest movement was nothing but a ploy of the JCP to hinder the university’s smooth operation and enhance its influence on campus (KFIDSGS D 87: 54). The fact that the staff dismissals were not a reaction to misbehaviour, but actions well prepared in advance, is attested to by a secret letter president Katsu sent to the Governor of Kyoto on 7 November 1949, two days before the professors’ assembly incident. The letter included a separate document entitled ‘Criteria for Personnel Renewal at KPUM’, which along with enumerating types of misbehaviour such as absence from the workplace or negligence of duties, listed the following points:

1. Persons who do not co-operate with or obstruct the management of this university.
2. Persons who do not obey instructions and orders of this university.
3. Persons who impair the political neutrality of this university or whose teaching gives rise to the fear that they may impair it (KFSSK Shō 29-439/11).

The historian of education Myōjin Isao (1981: 31) mentions similar lists being used by local education administrations in the dismissal of teachers at primary and secondary schools. These lists were apparently utilized in the general ‘adjustments’ of the workforce in 1949; for example, through criteria such as the third one quoted above, political renegades could be included in the group of those relieved of their office. The criteria themselves, as made clear by the exchange of letters between Katsu and the Governor of Kyoto, were co-ordinated between the schools and the regional administration. The ones proposed by Katsu were most likely a modified version of what had been 11. The matter was not settled until a ruling by the Osaka Higher Court in April 1953 which denied the students’ right to protest. The last of the originally dismissed students was finally readmitted to KPUM in 1957; two students, however, never returned to their former university (KFIDHHI 1974: 229–232).
used in Kyoto earlier, when 128 supposed Communists were purged from the public traffic sector in the city in August 1949 (KFIDHHI 1974: 228).

Documents on the KPUM case can be found inside the GHQ/SCAP material—they are, however, limited to reports by the Ministry of Education compiled long after the fact. Both this, as well as the autonomous adjustment of the criteria between school and prefectural authorities, indicates that GHQ was not directly involved in the original dismissals and student penalties.

6. Conclusion

After leaving Japan and touring Asia and Africa, Walter C. Eells, the most visible proponent of the purges, wrote a survey entitled *Communism in Education in Asia, Africa and the Far Pacific* (1954). In the book’s chapter on Japan, he summarized his view of how the red purge in education came about:

> The Ministry of Education in the autumn of 1948 issued mild instructions restricting what it euphemistically termed ‘political movements’ in schools, following these a year later by more specific and vigorous instructions for the removal of known Communists from the staffs of the sixty-nine national universities then existing and for the elimination of student Communist cells. A considerable number of professors known or suspected to be Communists or Communist sympathizers were eliminated from Japanese universities, but usually indirectly and without raising directly the issue of communism. (Eells 1954: 28)

Even if Eells downplays his own influence here, it is important to note that by 1949 Japanese authorities were indeed much more influential than GHQ in shaping policies that affected individuals directly. Although Sagara I’ichi, head of the general affairs section of the Ministry of Education in 1949, claimed in retrospect that the Ministry ‘of course told Eells it couldn’t do that [purge all Communists from the universities]’ (Sagara 1980: 11), there can be no doubt that, as leading CIE member Mark T. Orr put it in an interview in 1980, ‘[t]he domestic situation, that is of what seemed to be the growing influence of the left wing in the school system and the universities, was certainly a matter of concern to the conservative government of Japan and, of course, to a conservative Ministry of Education’ (Orr 1985: 19).

As long as the Ministry does not provide access to its occupation period files, Sagara’s claim can neither be proven nor refuted.12 Certainly, Japanese government officials, regional authorities and university administrations did not have to rely on CIE to cultivate their adversity to Communism. They were not only the executive organs deciding who was to become a victim of the purge but, as continuing post-occupation anti-Communist rhetoric shows, most certainly shared CIE’s basic thinking.

Transplanting certain assumptions from the overall picture of the reverse course to the field of education, however, has led scholars to ignore the role played by the Ministry of Education and overemphasize the open articulation of anti-Communism by CIE members from 1949 onwards. Anti-Communism had been part and parcel of CIE’s worldview from the beginning, but this fact does not automatically mean that it was CIE that put into effect the dismissals which rocked Japan’s

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12. This holds equally true for other branches of the Japanese government. An important object for investigation would be the Special Investigation Bureau of the Attorney General’s Office (*Hōmu-fu Tokubetsu Shinsa-kyoku*), author of two studies on leftist influence in universities and the bureaucracy, dating from 1949 and 1950, which are available in other archival contexts (GHQ 2275BB-2 and SKS IV-32).
education world in 1949 and 1950. Another fact that does not fit well with common ‘reverse course’ assumptions is that a detailed look at who was actually purged shows that JCP membership alone hardly accounted for one becoming a victim. Moreover, there are other aspects which point to a similar conclusion. For example, the staff in CIE changed little after an early reshuffle at the beginning of 1946, so there was overall continuity in personnel. Furthermore, one could consider the repeal of the original purge of ultranationalists. Contrary to the common assumption that the ultranationalists were reinstated all the while the Communists were driven from office, in education, at least, the depurge did not take off until the autumn of 1951 (Yamamoto 1994: 323).

It appears then, that the assumption of ‘a reverse course directed from Washington’ (Dower 1979: 303) can hardly convey the full picture. At least in education, the reverse course not only did not entail much of a reversal, but responsibility in no small part rested on Japanese shoulders, as well. This means that claims by critics who have been wont to blame the occupation authorities for developments viewed as detrimental to the Japanese postwar polity and society lose validity. Rather, they and others will have to confront the definite Japanese contribution to all those events and processes between 1945 and 1952 that involved decisions other than those made at the highest national level.

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