

## Chapter 2

# Renewed Intimacies

## Hollywood, War, and Occupation

February 28, 1946: Tokyo. On a late winter afternoon, crowds of Tokyoites packed the movie houses for a much-awaited treat. The rumor had spread widely: Hollywood was returning to town! In a city laid low by the air raids and black market chaos, passionate fans crowded the dingy theater spaces, itching to see the new American releases: *His Butler's Sister* (1943), a light-hearted Deanna Durbin comedy, and *Madame Curie* (1944), a sentimental biopic about the Polish-born scientist.<sup>1</sup> Despite bad weather and high admission fees—three times that for an ordinary Japanese film—these two pictures attracted an impressive 350,000 moviegoers during the first ten days, gathering some 1.2 million yen in the box office. After enjoying a strong debut in Tokyo, the prints were quickly circulated to at least twelve other cities, where they were “solidly booked.”<sup>2</sup>

Hollywood's arrival in defeated Japan did not happen overnight. It emerged from a renewed intimacy among the U.S. government, military, and business institutions during the Second World War. As the Axis threat in two continents expanded into a global war, U.S. studios joined forces to support their country's war effort. During the second half of the war, Hollywood developed close ties with the State Department and founded the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA) in 1945. This legal cartel would spearhead the industry's postwar trade in Japan and many other countries.

At the same time, the U.S. government and military worked relentlessly to defeat the Japanese in the Pacific Theater of Operations. As an Allied victory grew more certain, policymakers, advisers, and military officials came together to plan the postwar occupation of Japan. The responsibility fell on General

Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. His SCAP organization implemented a series of sweeping reforms to turn Japan from a warring militaristic state into a peace-minded, democratic ally. SCAP's desire to inject pro-American values into Japanese consciousness led to a controlled reconstruction of its movie culture. The occupiers assisted Hollywood's commercial program through the formation of the Central Motion Picture Exchange (CMPE), the U.S. film industry's East Asian outpost which spread American movie culture across Japan.

Hollywood's cinematic campaign in postwar Japan originated from a close institutional alliance between the industry, government, and the military. It was what diplomatic historians call a “corporatist” partnership, shaped by a convergence of state and private-sector institutions coming together for mutual gain.<sup>3</sup> The war climate created a new bond between Hollywood and the U.S. government, as peacetime norms were dropped to overcome the Axis threat. The blend of intentions inspired a powerful cultural offensive during the war, as well as long-term planning to restore the U.S. film industry's global market in the ensuing peace. Hollywood's postwar offensive was a collaborative response to the international pressures of the World War II era. Without knowing it, the tens of thousands of Japanese fans who caught the first Hollywood movies after the war were enjoying the fruits of America's corporatist union.

### Hollywood Goes to War

Nineteen thirty-nine was a transition year for Hollywood. After successfully recovering from the Great Depression in the mid-1930s, U.S. film companies were celebrating the apex of the studio era with such notable classics as *Gone with the Wind*, *Stagecoach*, and *The Wizard of Oz*.<sup>4</sup> That memorable year, however, also witnessed the beginning of a seismic shift in the movie industry. For one thing, Hollywood was already facing intense scrutiny from the Justice Department, whose antitrust suit against the vertically integrated Big Eight studios eventually forced the divorcement and divestiture of their theaters at the end of the 1940s.<sup>5</sup> U.S. companies also witnessed the birth of television—a new and formidable entertainment medium. On April 30, 1939, the New York World's Fair, dubbed the “the World of Tomorrow,” famously showcased a live telecast of its opening ceremony with a dramatic speech by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A decade and a half later, some 60 percent of American households owned this media novelty. The “tube of plenty” jeopardized the film industry and inspired large-scale changes in Hollywood's business practices.<sup>6</sup>

The biggest problem, though, was the Second World War. The surge of the Axis powers during the 1930s and early 1940s posed a direct threat to the movie business. Hitler's anti-Semitism outraged Jewish and left-wing filmmakers who, in the mid-1930s, formed a "cultural front" to push for U.S. intervention in Europe.<sup>7</sup> Studio executives accurately predicted that the Axis powers would undermine the industry's global operations. As Germany, Italy, and Japan threatened the world with military and ideological force, U.S. companies increasingly confronted protectionist maneuvers that curtailed their business both in and around the Axis states.<sup>8</sup> The Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1, 1939, devastated the European market. The film trade in other regions subsequently veered toward chaos and closure. The U.S. entry into the war precipitated by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The *New York Times* estimated that the industry's annual earnings would decline by \$6 million.<sup>9</sup> The war eventually led to the closure of fifty-eight film markets.<sup>10</sup>

World War II forced Hollywood to alter its way of life. Facing times of extraordinary duress, U.S. companies made significant readjustments in their mode of operation. Unable to continue their normal global business, they focused their resources on available foreign markets (mostly in the United Kingdom and Latin America). At home, studios specifically cut back the output of B films and increased the number of high-end productions, ramped up publicity, and undertook "scientific" surveys to convert the perceived "25,000,000 non-customers" into loyal film patrons.<sup>11</sup> The movie industry also made greater use of independent and unit production. Companies run by David O. Selznick, Walt Disney, and Samuel Goldwyn—the "elite trio" of Hollywood independents—unleashed hits such as *Pride of the Yankees* (1942), *Bambi* (1942), and *Since You Went Away* (1944), respectively.<sup>12</sup>

The industry also jumped on the interventionist bandwagon. Directors, producers, actors, cinematographers, and others in the movie colony—as many of seven thousand of them—joined the military to assist the Allied cause.<sup>13</sup> Those who remained in the colony rallied around the following slogan: "Win the War Now! Anything Else is Chores."<sup>14</sup> Immediately after Pearl Harbor, studio personnel organized the Hollywood Victory Committee and delivered live entertainment to servicemen and women at home and abroad. A month later, Hays founded the War Activities Committee (WAC), which, in the words of its executive vice chairman Francis S. Harmon, aimed to "assist, with all possible vigor, the United States and its allied nations in the successful prosecution of the war, and the winning of the peace."<sup>15</sup> By encouraging the involvement of all sectors of the industry, the WAC generated a wide range of activities, including the distribution of war-related shorts and documentaries

for domestic audiences; the production of training films for men and women in uniform; the selling of war bonds and victory bonds; even the collection of scrap metal.<sup>16</sup>

Hollywood, in addition, patriotized many of its feature-length narratives. Following the breakthrough production of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), an anti-Nazi espionage film, U.S. companies began to churn out war-related films that pumped up the Allied cause.<sup>17</sup> Even though isolationist politicians in Washington vehemently attacked the war movie as "interventionist propaganda," public sentiment was veering in favor of these politicized productions.<sup>18</sup> The output of war pictures increased dramatically in the early 1940s, encompassing a wide range of (sub)genres from combat films (*Bataan*, 1943) to home-front melodramas (*The Human Comedy*, 1943) to musicals (*This Is the Army*, 1943) to comedies (*Miracle on Morgan's Creek*, 1944) to espionage thrillers (*All through the Night*, 1941). These pro-war narratives constituted the most dominant production trend in the first half of the global struggle.<sup>19</sup> Some of them earned high acclaim, such as *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) and *Casablanca* (1943), both of which won an Oscar for Best Picture at the Academy Awards. As late as March 1944, *Variety* boasted that "Grade A war pictures" were "the greatest drawing cards" at the box office.<sup>20</sup>

Hollywood's pro-war turn meshed with the U.S. government's shifting actions in the international arena. As citizens increasingly perceived the Axis surge as a threat to U.S. ideals and interests, the Roosevelt administration took steps to mobilize the public.<sup>21</sup> In October 1941, the president announced the creation of the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) and appointed the Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish, as chief. This new office aimed to inform the public of the ongoing global conflict without appearing as blatant pro-war propaganda. MacLeish specifically referred to the OFF's information campaign as a "strategy of truth."<sup>22</sup> Efforts to influence the international public grew in tandem with such domestic actions. As early as 1938, the State Department had used the Division of Cultural Relations (DCR) to promote spreading information and artistic and cultural exchange abroad.<sup>23</sup> Although originally created to foster "good neighbor" relations with countries south of the Rio Grande, the DCR soon reached out globally to strengthen cross-national relations with its wartime allies in East Asia, Australia, and the Middle East.<sup>24</sup>

The key agency that led the wartime information campaign was the Office of War Information (OWI). A consolidation of OFF and three other government offices, this federal agency, founded in June 1942 under Roosevelt's executive order, assumed the responsibility of disseminating pro-U.S. information and messages to boost the war effort.<sup>25</sup> The effort to build morale at home

was conducted by OWI's Domestic Branch, which made use of newspapers, radio, and other communications media to further the American cause. It also influenced the content of Hollywood's feature films without overtaking the industry.<sup>26</sup> The Domestic Branch soon established an office in Los Angeles for its Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) and requested Hollywood's cooperation on a voluntary basis. Relying on its forty-seven-page "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry," the BMP reviewed scripts, synopses, and film prints, and offered "instructions" and "suggestions" to studio personnel.<sup>27</sup> Even though the BMP's involvement occasionally baffled the movie industry, the relationship between government and industry was overall an obliging one. In June 1943, Will H. Hays went so far as to say that the industry "offered to cooperate completely" with the U.S. government and that the BMP helped render "our cooperation one hundred percent effective."<sup>28</sup>

Meantime, OWI's Overseas Branch spread pro-American messages in the international arena. Determined to boost America's psychological warfare against the Axis powers, this office, led by screenwriter Robert Sherwood, orchestrated cultural offensives outside the United States, excluding the Western Hemisphere.<sup>29</sup> In addition to participating in the war effort, the Overseas Branch aided the political and cultural reconstruction of liberated territories.<sup>30</sup> The mission of building peace gained in importance during the second half of the war; although the OWI on the whole suffered severe budget cuts in 1943, its Overseas Branch enjoyed lucrative financial allocations and was, according to Sherwood, in "excellent shape" to carry out the peace-winning mission.<sup>31</sup> In addition to newspapers, magazines, and radio, this office utilized filmed documentaries, newsreels, and short subjects. Sherwood's office also assisted Hollywood's commercial operation.<sup>32</sup> From this active office emerged the Central Motion Picture Exchange, which served as Hollywood's sole distribution office in Japan through much of the occupation era.

### The Little State Department

Hollywood found the U.S. government's active cooperation reassuring, but it knew that this did not promise its long-term prosperity. As an Allied victory was becoming a certainty, the studio heads found it increasingly vital to prepare for the postwar film trade. Although the war boom had rewarded U.S. companies with an unexpected level of financial success, some in the industry worried that the economic surge of the early 1940s would taper off once the war was over. Others feared that the growth of "nationalistic feeling" in

the wake of the war would lead to a surge of protectionist legislation abroad.<sup>33</sup> Still others were unsure of how to disperse the backlogged films, which were expected to number between 2,000 and 2,500 the year after the war.<sup>34</sup> So anxiety was high at this time. In July 1943, *Variety* ominously predicted that a "titanic struggle" would take place among filmmakers in different societies, as a result of their "first entry . . . into the post-war world markets."<sup>35</sup> In 1945 the Public Information Committee of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), a public relations office represented by the major studios, reported that "our American industry faces the toughest competition in its history and must fight to maintain its supremacy."<sup>36</sup>

The task of relieving this unease rested in the hands of Will H. Hays and Carl Elias Milliken—the latter a former Republican governor from Maine who had served as MPPDA secretary since 1926.<sup>37</sup> Foreseeing mounting challenges in the international arena, the two men decided to act during the height of the war. On October 21, 1943, Hays submitted a confidential memorandum to Secretary of State Cordell Hull in which he argued that the "supremacy" of American cinema was essentially maintained by the "approximate [*sic*] forty percent of motion picture revenues" that flowed from overseas. The government, thus, had a "duty . . . to preserve world distribution . . . [and] retain a truly free screen."<sup>38</sup> Seven months later, Milliken submitted a twenty-five-page memorandum detailing the various trade restrictions that hindered the industry's activities overseas. Echoing Hays, Milliken concluded that a "greater degree of protection" from the government was necessary to facilitate the industry's "dissemination of sound cultural, social and political thought" around the world.<sup>39</sup>

The State Department's response was sympathetic. In a letter sent to diplomatic officers on February 22, 1944, Under Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle acknowledged the "value of the American motion picture to the national welfare" and vowed to "cooperate fully" in furthering Hollywood's interests abroad.<sup>40</sup> Berle's department specifically assigned this task to the newly founded Telecommunications Division, which took on the responsibility of handling radio, telegraph, cable communications, and motion picture policy for international affairs. The chief of this office was Francis Colt de Wolf, who had intermittently served the State Department on matters pertaining to law and communications during the interwar decades.<sup>41</sup> De Wolf was clear about his willingness to work with Hollywood: "American motion pictures as ambassadors of good will. . . . The Department of State and its representatives in foreign countries desire to cooperate fully in the protection of American motion pictures abroad, especially in a difficult postwar era."<sup>42</sup> Hays lauded de Wolf as "peculiarly qualified" to handling motion picture matters.<sup>43</sup>

In the ensuing months, the foreign managers of the movie business, led by Hays and Milliken, periodically met with de Wolf's team to formulate the blueprint for the postwar film trade.<sup>44</sup> What resulted was a plan to approach the international market with a two-tiered strategy. For countries operating under "manageable" business conditions, American studios decided to operate individually. As in the prewar era, trade in these markets depended primarily on studio initiative, as well as what Hays called a "loose cooperation" with the MPPDA's Foreign Department (renamed the International Department by Hays in 1944) to mediate trade difficulties.<sup>45</sup> For countries protected by stringent state policy, the industry desired to mobilize a new apparatus to spearhead studio activities. In March 1945, Milliken called for the "urgent and prompt development" of a trade organization that represented the interests of the industry.<sup>46</sup> The MPPDA secretary's wishes came true three months later with the founding of the Motion Picture Export Association.<sup>47</sup>

The MPEA was not an ordinary business organization. It was a legal cartel formed under the Webb-Pomerene Export Trade Act (1918), which exempted U.S. exporters from the nation's antitrust laws. Although the Justice Department was moving to break up the vertically integrated studios at home, the U.S. State and Commerce Departments fully supported the MPEA as a means of "fight[ing] monopoly with monopoly" in foreign fields.<sup>48</sup> At its embryonic stage, the MPEA consisted of the Big Five and Little Three—that is, Columbia, Loew's MGM, RKO, Twentieth Century-Fox, Paramount, Universal, Warner Bros., and United Artists—and soon welcomed smaller firms such as Monogram and Allied Artists. The association failed to attract many independent companies, which often complained that the MPEA privileged the interests of the majors. But by March 1951, at least twenty-five independents were releasing their products through the association.<sup>49</sup> Owing to its function, status, and authority, the trade commonly referred to the MPEA as "the little State Department."<sup>50</sup>

The person who oversaw the new trade apparatus was Eric Alva Johnston. Then the head of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Johnston ventured to Hollywood in 1945 to replace Hays as "movie czar" of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America organization (he soon renamed it the Motion Picture Association of America). A Republican with broad work experience with the Roosevelt administration, Johnston drew favorable attention as a business leader who, in the words of *Variety*, could "grease the wheels and smooth the road" on the industry's behalf.<sup>51</sup> Johnston was determined to serve the leading entertainment enterprise in the world. In an effort to maintain Hollywood's role as "America's greatest salesman," the new leader of the movie colony vowed to cultivate a "fair share of foreign markets" through political

and diplomatic lobbying.<sup>52</sup> The new movie czar immediately earned the trust of studio executives, who unanimously elected him president of the MPEA.<sup>53</sup> Until his unexpected death in 1963, Johnston promoted studio interests overseas. A Johnston biographer acknowledged that "his big achievement for the industry was to open the foreign market for American films."<sup>54</sup>

Managed by a trusted new leader, the MPEA set out to further studio interests abroad in three important ways. First, it negotiated with foreign governments and industries in countries where individual studios were unable to operate alone. The MPEA acted in the interests of all members by removing unfavorable trade barriers (such as import duties, quotas, remittance taxes, currency regulations) and monopolistic practices.<sup>55</sup> Second, it strengthened ties with the U.S. government. Johnston labored to keep the U.S. State Department and Commerce Department as allies of the film industry. Third, it mediated the interests of member studios. In determining which films to export, the MPEA claimed to act in "good faith" and select the most suitable products from the stockpile of all member companies. The share of each company was not based on the profitability of the individual product. To prevent infighting, the MPEA decided to divide its net profits based on the domestic grosses of each studio. This revenue distribution policy played a key role in sustaining a united front.<sup>56</sup>

To the members of the MPEA, collective action was not an ideal form of business. Rather, it was a temporary arrangement aimed at setting the groundwork for future competition. In the early postwar years, the markets that required the MPEA's assistance included three types. One was the state monopolies that were closing behind the Iron Curtain—namely Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. Another type of market was what *Variety* labeled a "different type of monopoly." This category specifically applied to Holland, a market sustained through two state-supported cartels (a distributor's and an exhibitor's).<sup>57</sup> Finally, the MPEA dealt with countries administered by the Allied occupation. Four countries fell under this category. Japan—along with Germany, Austria, and Korea—soon became a site of the MPEA's rigorous operation.

### From War to Occupation

The plans to create the MPEA were maturing as the Pacific War intensified. The Americans and the Japanese engaged in a dogged military struggle on multiple fronts. The initial advantage went to the Japanese, who stormed across China, the Philippines, and the British and Dutch possessions in Southeast Asia. In the

Pacific, the Imperial Navy advanced its superior arsenal of battleships, cruisers, and fighter planes to the South Pacific islands. The United States initially struggled to compete against the Japanese military, but it quickly redeployed its resources in a powerful counteroffensive. After winning a key battle at the Midway Islands in June 1942, the U.S. forces began to pull ahead with a string of victories in Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan. By the end of 1944, the U.S.-led Allied forces had breached Japan's outer defenses and were eyeing an attack on the main islands.<sup>58</sup>

The Americans sealed their victory in 1945. The Japanese government continued to manage a "thought war" by mobilizing public and private propagandists, but the trend toward defeat was becoming all too evident in the absence of goods and resources.<sup>59</sup> In the island-hopping campaigns, U.S. forces were defeating the desperate Japanese troops in the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Simultaneously, incendiary bombings began to turn cities across Japan to ashes; the infamous air raids on March 10 razed the city of Tokyo, killing some eighty thousand civilians overnight. America's "strategy of annihilation" reached new heights on August 6 and 9, when the newly created atomic bombs hit the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively.<sup>60</sup> Six days after the dropping of the second nuclear bomb, Emperor Hirohito delivered his famous radio speech to the Japanese public, announcing Japan's capitulation to the Allies. Japan's imperial ambitions had fallen apart miserably, leaving behind death, poverty, and humiliation. The entire nation seemed to linger in a state of shock and exhaustion—what contemporaries called the *kyodatsu* condition.<sup>61</sup>

During the final destructive battles, plans to administer Japan were being developed by the U.S. Department of State. It enlisted a cluster of East Asia experts to design the blueprint for postwar Japan and the wider region.<sup>62</sup> During the final months of the war, two top-level organizations, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, finalized the plans for the occupation.<sup>63</sup> Immediately after Japan capitulated to the Allies, the U.S. Army Forces in the Pacific set up military headquarters in Yokohama (soon moved to Tokyo). On October 2, the Military Government Section of the U.S. Armed Forces became the General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP). While its personnel and function often overlapped with the military, SCAP was primarily responsible for managing civilian affairs as they pertained to the occupation. This administrative body directed the six-and-a-half-year reconstruction of Japan.<sup>64</sup>

The occupation government was a hegemonic body that assured U.S. dominance in two ways. First, it provided Americans with central authority over

their allies. On paper, SCAP operated under the supervision of the Far Eastern Commission, a Washington-based policymaking body representing eleven nations. The Allied Council for Japan, a Tokyo-based four-power organization consisting of the British Commonwealth, the Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, also advised SCAP. In practice, however, the United States took charge of the undertaking. Unlike the occupation of Germany, which was governed by four Allied powers (Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States) that each took over a territorial zone, the four main islands of occupied Japan fell under the rule of the United States. An implicit aim was to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining control of the occupation. Skepticism about Stalin's intentions had been mounting at least since the late months of the war.<sup>65</sup>

Second, in addition to trumping the Allies, SCAP wielded overarching power over the Japanese. In facilitating the postwar transformation, the occupiers chose not to break up the existing civil administration but to control it indirectly. In an effort to "reorient" and "uplift" the Japanese, the occupiers circulated directives and memoranda to local leaders and interacted with them in person as well. While doing so, SCAP monitored Japanese plans and practices at all levels (regional, prefectural, and local) and enforced change when they deemed it necessary. At times, General MacArthur's men forced Japanese leaders to comply with their ideas. Even though the indirect governing structure of defeated Japan, on a superficial level, empowered the Japanese, the greater authority always lay in the hands of the conquerors. The occupation was in essence "democracy by intervention."<sup>66</sup>

The chief authority of this American occupation was a single man. Born and raised in a distinguished military family, Douglas MacArthur burst on the military scene as a top graduate at West Point and a field marshal of the Philippine Army. During the Second World War, he commanded the U.S. Army Forces in the Pacific. On August 15, 1945, President Harry S. Truman officially appointed MacArthur as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers—a title that signified both the man and his administrative body. Landing in Japan two weeks later, General MacArthur oversaw the reconstruction of Japan in furtherance of America's ideological and geopolitical interests.<sup>67</sup> Yet the aging general also approached the occupation with a paternalistic attitude.<sup>68</sup> In a Fourth of July message delivered in 1947, MacArthur vowed to "advance" Japanese society beyond its "physical, mental, and cultural strictures of feudalistic precepts—the very antitheses of American ideals."<sup>69</sup> Four years later, the Supreme Commander infamously characterized the Japanese people as a "boy of twelve" when measured by "the standards of modern civilization."<sup>70</sup>

SCAP's program began with the breakup of the Japanese empire. Immediately following Japan's defeat, the occupation dismantled the nation's colonial holdings outside the four main islands and destroyed the weapons used by the Japanese military. Dissolving the wartime empire also required the identification of responsibility. SCAP pursued this by purging politicians and business leaders from respectable positions. Soldiers and officers faced their fates in Allied military tribunals held in Japan and elsewhere. The biggest stage of this legal procedure was the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, dubbed the "Tokyo trials," which sent seven class A war criminals to the gallows. The most controversial decision was to relieve the emperor from legal prosecution. Despite much Allied sentiment to do otherwise, MacArthur and his aides chose not to send Hirohito to court, fearing that doing so would provoke anger and chaos in Japan. The occupiers forced the emperor to renounce his divinity, but he was able to maintain symbolic power throughout the postwar decades.<sup>71</sup>

While demolishing Japan's imperialistic tendencies, SCAP enacted political reform to spread democratic values. The reform impulse of the occupation was strongest during its first two years, when a core group of New Dealers sought to bring "progressive" change to the ailing nation.<sup>72</sup> In this clout of proactivism, the occupiers enthusiastically promoted civil liberties, social equality, and political dialogue across ideologies. The most significant achievement was the new constitution. Determined to replace the Prussian-inspired Meiji Constitution of 1889 with a democratic alternative, MacArthur turned to his own legal team to formulate a foundational document. SCAP's draft was presented to the Japanese who were requested to craft their own draft proposal. The final text, adopted from the American version with minor revisions, contained Article IX in which Japan renounced waging war and possessing aggressive "land, sea, and air forces." It also freed individual citizens from the will of the emperor and granted them "basic human rights" regardless of race, class, gender, and creed. As citizens of a new democratic nation, the Japanese, among other things, gained the right of free speech, free religious practice, and political participation. An unprecedented number of women were now able to participate in elections as voters and candidates.<sup>73</sup>

SCAP's reform also involved economic reconstruction. Starting at the top of the fiscal ladder, SCAP attempted to dismantle the *zaibatsu*, the financial and industrial combines that appeared to play a key role in the imperial war machine. MacArthur ordered these giant institutions to dismantle their holdings to promote competition and small- and mid-sized businesses. This effort reinforced the early attempts to empower the rank-and-file worker. During its

first two years, the occupation actively supported organized labor and workers' action—even as this brought Communist and other left-wing movements to the fore. Farmers in the countryside felt MacArthur's presence through land reform. SCAP parceled out the properties of the landlord class to tenants and small-scale farmers who were exploited under traditional agricultural structures. By 1949 some two million hectares of land were delivered to the hands of independent farmers.<sup>74</sup>

The occupiers, moreover, initiated a series of cultural programs to remold the minds of the Japanese. The aim was to replace the perceived militaristic tendencies with peace-oriented, democratic values. In the field of education, SCAP ordered the elimination of militaristic agendas from textbooks and schools, while developing a new curriculum that underscored respect for individual rights and human dignity.<sup>75</sup> The policy toward religion involved the depoliticization of Shintō practices and the promotion of Christianity (which had limited application). The reform of media and communications also consisted of a dual process. SCAP, on the one hand, allowed publishers, journalists, radio commentators, and others to engage in a greater degree of free speech than they had during the war years. On the other hand, the occupiers employed media censorship to control public opinion.<sup>76</sup> MacArthur later explained the reasons for this contradictory approach. "We could not simply encourage the growth of democracy," the Supreme Commander reminisced in his autobiography. "We had to make sure that it grew."<sup>77</sup>

### Remolding Japanese Cinema

SCAP's dealings with motion pictures belonged to a larger effort to install a democracy by intervention. To the occupiers, cinema was an appealing medium for three reasons. First of all, it was a powerful nexus. In an era before the flowering of television and digital culture, cinema was arguably the most influential medium for reaching the general population. Second, it was a leading enterprise in popular recreation. Because of its ability to draw large audiences, the movies could offer release and fulfillment to a population crushed by the war. Finally, cinema appeared an effective tool to promote ideology. The intention was not unlike the Japanese government's during the 1930s, when filmmaking became a cultural instrument of the state. MacArthur's headquarters was intent on diffusing its political and cultural values by way of the screen.

Rebuilding the movies began with Japanese cinema. In the wake of the Pacific War, the once thriving film industry was in shambles. Although the

main studios survived the air raids, film production had dwindled as a result of material shortages and equipment deterioration. The Japanese government's regulations also constrained the industry's output. During the final year and a half of the war, the Home Ministry imposed new regulations that reduced screen time, the length of each film, and the number of theaters for commercial screenings. The pressure for cultural control, stemming from the state as well as within the industry, remained strong. Even though the number of war-mongering productions actually diminished toward the end of hostilities, a number of films continued to glorify the Japanese empire.<sup>78</sup> As a result, SCAP approached the depleted industry with skepticism and suspicion. It found a dire need to "eliminate government control" of the movies by instilling a "lawful freedom of expression."<sup>79</sup>

SCAP's first move was to influence Japanese industry personnel. On September 22, 1945, occupation authorities held a special *kondankai* meeting with the top studio representatives. The purpose of the gathering, SCAP insisted, was not to give "orders" but "suggestions."<sup>80</sup> In a tense atmosphere, occupation officials announced three basic objectives: the eradication of militarism, the promotion of "liberal freedoms" (such as freedom of expression, religion, and assembly), and the reconstruction of Japan as a peaceful nation. U.S. officials, then specifically encouraged Japanese movie companies to depict the following ten themes:

1. Show Japanese in all walks of life cooperating to build a peaceful nation.
2. Deal with the resettlement of Japanese soldiers into civilian life.
3. Show Japanese prisoners of war formerly in U.S. hands being restored to favor in the community.
4. Demonstrate individual initiative and enterprise solving the postwar problems of Japan in industry, agriculture, and all phases of the national life.
5. Encourage the peaceful and constructive organization of labor unions.
6. Develop political consciousness and responsibility among the people.
7. Approve free discussion of political issues.
8. Encourage respect for the rights of people as individuals.
9. Promote tolerance and respect among all races and classes.
10. Dramatize figures in Japanese history who have stood for freedom and representative government.<sup>81</sup>

The occupiers also sought to eliminate the presentation of undesirable themes. The "basic problem" of Japanese cinema, U.S. officials asserted, lay in the apparent pervasiveness of "feudalistic patriotism," "personal revenge," and the

"justification of treason, murder, and deceit in front of the public." Such tropes had to be replaced with "moral codes" that promoted "respect for the individual . . . and peoples of other countries."<sup>82</sup>

MacArthur's headquarters then moved to disband the structure of the war-time filmic establishment. In a directive issued on October 16, 1945, SCAP ordered the Japanese government to repeal the Film Law of 1939 to "free the Japanese motion picture industry from government domination" and "permit the industry to reflect the democratic aspirations of the Japanese people."<sup>83</sup> A month later, the occupiers banned the screening of films that were "utilized to propagate nationalistic, militaristic and feudalistic concepts." After studying the inventories of Japanese film companies, SCAP identified a total of 236 films that could harm its agenda. These films depicted such themes as "conformity to a feudal code," the "creation of the 'Warrior Spirit,'" and the "superiority of the 'Yamato'" race. MacArthur's headquarters immediately confiscated films that contained such themes. Many of these surrendered narratives were burned on the shores of the Tama River.<sup>84</sup>

In the months that followed, SCAP relied on two offices to monitor Japanese filmmaking. One was the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE), a civilian office that conducted an array of reforms in the areas of education, religion, and public information. Assigned to further the "reorientation and reeducation" of Japan, the CIE orchestrated a widespread cultural campaign to promote prodemocratic and pro-American values.<sup>85</sup> The task of reconstructing the motion picture was given to the Motion Picture and Theatrical Branch, a noticeably "progressive group" during its first year of operation.<sup>86</sup> The anchor of this branch was David W. Conde, who had worked for the OWI's Psychological Warfare Branch. Considered by many local filmmakers to be a left-wing ideologue, Conde, in his numerous meetings with directors and studio executives, passionately instructed the Japanese to replace "feudalistic" and "militaristic" themes with the ten recommended ones. One of the biggest challenges, he immediately realized, was to prevent cinema's "decline" into apolitical entertainment. "The great majority of . . . movie companies were trying to render the movies completely into amusement. . . . In order to prevent them from doing so, it was necessary to fight [against them]," he later recalled.<sup>87</sup>

The CIE oversaw the movie industry in an advisory capacity. Technically, it did not possess the authority to enforce changes in film content. But Conde's office relied on a strategy that one SCAP insider referred to as "suggestion control," that is, pressuring local filmmakers with "recommendations" and "instructions" until they made the desired modifications.<sup>88</sup> On November 19,

the CIE followed up on the “suggestions” given at the September 22 meeting with a list of thirteen themes that it deemed as problematic. These included projects that:

1. played up militarism;
2. concerned revenge;
3. involved nationalism;
4. were chauvinistic and antforeign;
5. distorted historical facts;
6. approved racial or religious discrimination;
7. portrayed feudal loyalty or contempt for life as desirable or honorable;
8. approved suicide directly or indirectly;
9. either dealt with or approved of the subordination or degeneration of women;
10. flaunted merciless violence and brutality;
11. opposed democracy;
12. approved the exploitation of children; or
13. that violated the Potsdam Declaration or SCAP directives.<sup>89</sup>

The CIE was determined to remold Japanese cinema in ways that served SCAP’s reconstruction efforts. During the initial months of the occupation, it requested Japanese companies to make a weekly report on their “progress” in filmmaking. The CIE also announced it would meet with each major studio on a weekly basis.<sup>90</sup> The CIE’s interactions with Japanese companies were frequent in the following months.

The other apparatus was the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD). A subdivision of MacArthur’s Civil Intelligence Section, the CCD was a U.S. Army-run intelligence office that furthered SCAP’s objectives through cultural regulation and control. In contrast to the CIE, the CCD, according to one insider, had a “strictly negative” role.<sup>91</sup> In an early planning document dated July 10, 1945, the U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific regarded the CCD’s mission as establishing the “security of military information, counter-espionage, collection of military information and...intelligence relating to economic, social, and political matters.” This was to be achieved through the “censorship of civilian communications in Japan.”<sup>92</sup> Once it officially began its operation on September 3, the CCD carefully monitored telephone calls, telegrams, and personal letters. It also kept an eye on the various media outlets, including newspapers, magazines, theater performances, radio shows, and “paper dramas”

(*kamishibai*)—picture cards used for storytelling. Its wide-reaching surveillance activities continued until November 1949, when the office ended.<sup>93</sup>

The section in charge of handling the movies was the Press, Pictorial, and Broadcast Division, which, according to an internal manual printed on September 30, 1945, was designed for the “censorship of all newsreels and movies made by the Japanese.”<sup>94</sup> On January 28, 1946, SCAP required all owners and producers of motion pictures to submit a complete list of their films to the CCD. Only films that received an identification number from the CCD were permitted to appear on screens.<sup>95</sup> Two months later, the CCD clarified the categories to be used for censorship: “passed,” “passed with deletion,” or “suppressed.”<sup>96</sup> The criterion for censorship was to be based on its Motion Picture Code, which was in place by May 1.<sup>97</sup> It comprised the following nine points:

1. Motion picture productions shall not contravene the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration, which listed the terms for Japanese surrender, or the announced objectives of the Allied occupation.
2. Films containing material conducive to destructive criticism of the Allied Forces of Occupation or of the Allied Powers are prohibited.
3. Films with a military background are prohibited, except when militarism is shown to be evil.
4. The photographing of Allied Forces or matériel is prohibited, except when express approval has been obtained in writing from the Press, Pictorial, and Broadcast Division, U.S. Army Civil Censorship, beforehand.
5. Films purporting to be factual representations of historical events must be truthful.
6. Portrayal of crimes of any kind is prohibited, except when presented as part of a struggle between good and evil, in which the good triumphs. The forces of evil will not be emphasized.
7. Photography purporting to be news photography shall be authentic.
8. Leads, subtitles, explanations, advertisements, and screen dialogue will conform to the spirit of the above provisions.
9. No pictorial record will be made of subjects capable of disturbing public tranquility.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to evaluating each film, the CCD occasionally opened its screenings to larger audiences—particularly its Japanese employees in other SCAP offices—to gauge popular opinion. The CCD’s power as a censorship apparatus

was considerable. It possessed final authority to allow or reject the exhibition of any film to be shown to the Japanese.<sup>99</sup>

### Privileging Hollywood

Arrangements to screen Hollywood features began to take shape at the same time. During its first six months, SCAP allowed screenings of four Hollywood films, all on an ad hoc basis. In October 1945, Japan Cinema Trade Company (Nippon eiga bōekisha) requested of the CIE to screen a handful of foreign films purchased before the war.<sup>100</sup> Two months later, *Call of the Yukon* (1938), a grim love story set in the Alaskan wilderness, hit the theaters in Tokyo.<sup>101</sup> Fans in the cold December afternoons savored the RKO film. One enthusiast, who saw it on the day of its release, marveled at the “bravery” of Richard Arlen, the gritty protagonist in the film. The moviegoer stayed in the theater for two showings, despite being “pushed and shoved by waves of standees.”<sup>102</sup> Subsequent releases of *Tarzan and the Green Goddess* (1938) and Chaplin’s *The Gold Rush* (1925) enjoyed an equally strong following. Having discovered such enthusiasm, *Variety* reported in January 1946 that “the Japanese are so anxious to see U.S. films that they are begging for them...even the oldest western would be accepted there.”<sup>103</sup>

While these American releases were captivating Japanese fans, SCAP began to institutionalize the foreign-film trade. In January, MacArthur’s headquarters started compiling a census of foreign films.<sup>104</sup> Since the right of possession of existing prints was far from clear—one official estimated that around 90 percent of foreign prints in 1946 were illegally owned—the occupiers required film distributors to submit proof of ownership.<sup>105</sup> This directive was a means of gaining control over the circulation of knowledge. It also aimed to bring legitimacy and stability to commerce in movies. MacArthur’s policy was of aid to Hollywood. Since a number of Hollywood’s prewar prints were illegally seized by Japanese bootleggers, SCAP used its authority to return them to the rightful owners.<sup>106</sup>

SCAP then assisted Hollywood in a more crucial way. It helped set up an outpost of the Motion Picture Export Association. The CIE, which eagerly took charge of this endeavor, looked at U.S. cinema with great interest. On the most basic level, U.S. companies held a large stockpile of unreleased films accumulated during the war. This, the CIE believed, would help satisfy the demands of entertainment-hungry audiences. The CIE also believed that Hollywood’s commercial screenings would expand the opportunity to show

newsreels and short subjects. Using Hollywood could increase the presentation of educational films. Finally, the CIE appreciated Hollywood’s message value. While aware that a portion of the commercial products hyped violence, gangsters, and other undesirable themes, CIE officials ultimately decided that Hollywood “had more to contribute to the furtherance of SCAP objectives than the films of any other country or all other countries combined.”<sup>107</sup>

The idea of building Hollywood’s distribution office actually predated the occupation. As the planning for the postwar period got under way, the Overseas Branch of the OWI began to discuss postwar trade with Hollywood representatives. In fall 1943, Robert Riskin of the OWI and Carl Milliken of the MPPDA exchanged ideas on the postwar film program. By the end of the year, the OWI agreed to assist Hollywood by way of a trusteeship. Under this arrangement, the Overseas Branch would arrange for the dissemination of U.S. features on a temporary basis until conditions allowed Hollywood to do so on its own.<sup>108</sup> This plan was carried out the following year. Aided by a constellation of foreign offices in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, the Overseas Branch analyzed the political and military conditions of each nation and formulated plans for film distribution. By late 1944, OWI representatives in the U.S. were visiting Europe to iron out the logistics.<sup>109</sup> By the end of 1945, American movies were penetrating Europe.

The OWI’s plans for postwar Japan emerged in fall 1944 as part of a broader attempt to map a blueprint for Asia. In October, the Overseas Branch began with the idea of building forty OWI outposts across East and Southeast Asia. Although the future power structure of the war-torn region remained uncertain, the planners chose to devote maximum attention to two nations: China, because of its territorial and population size, and Japan, because of its perceived animosity toward the Allies.<sup>110</sup> Two months later, the plan became more concrete. In an operational guide prepared for East Asia, the OWI declared its intent to establish a “central film exchange” in every liberated and occupied country. In order to ease the transfer of responsibility to Hollywood, the Overseas Branch promised to supervise the operation “as closely as possible along commercial lines” until U.S. studios were ready to do business on their own. After calculating the data on theaters and the degree of destruction wrought by the war, the planners decided to allot ten prints for Japan—the highest number for any Asian country.<sup>111</sup>

The selection of films proceeded with care and caution. Based on a list of films submitted by the U.S. film industry, the OWI handpicked a group of narrative products based on their suitability for each country. The choice of titles was based on what insiders called an “equal participation” arrangement.<sup>112</sup> The

process required a balanced selection of films from each studio.<sup>113</sup> In the early stages, the plan was called the “40 Programs,” with the eight major studios contributing five titles each.<sup>114</sup> The list for Japan eventually included forty-five feature films, five per each studio, which now included Republic. (See appendix for a list of the films and studios.)<sup>115</sup>

The selected films were diverse and eclectic. One body of films, such as *Casablanca* and *Watch on the Rhine* (1943), depicted the European theater of war, celebrating Americans and the Western Allies as liberators against the oppressive Nazi regime. Another group introduced “the lives of people who have accomplished great good for the world,” to borrow an ex-OWI official’s words, such as *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (Abraham Lincoln, 1940), *Men of Boys Town* (Father Flanagan, 1941) and *Madame Curie* (Marie Curie, 1943).<sup>116</sup> Benevolent figures appeared in fictional accounts as well: *Going My Way* (1944) and *The Keys of the Kingdom* (1944) showcased the humanitarian service of American missionaries. Other products like *The Southerner* (1945), *Our Town* (1940), *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* (1944), portrayed small-town life in the United States with humility, harmony, and joy. The list also included action-packed westerns—*Tall in the Saddle* (1944), *In Old Oklahoma* (1943), *The Spoilers* (1942)—and romantic comedies—*Kitty Foyle* (1940), *Sun Valley Serenade* (1941), *I’ll Be Seeing You* (1944)—that contained high entertainment value.

The U.S. government carried out its plans to build a “central film exchange” in fall 1945. After the OWI terminated its operation, the State Department worked with MacArthur’s headquarters to establish this office on the ground. The person in charge was Michael M. Bergher, a Far Eastern representative of Columbia Pictures who had led the American Motion Picture Association of Japan on the eve of the war. In the months after Pearl Harbor, Bergher worked for the OWI’s Overseas Branch. Fluent in Japanese, adapted to local customs (his favorite dish was cooked eel), and knowledgeable of the movie business, Bergher arrived in Japan in early November on the State Department’s payroll.<sup>117</sup> As the CIE’s film officer, Bergher approached a group of former associates to assemble the nucleus of the distribution outpost.<sup>118</sup> Soon, a handful of experienced men landed a one-room office on the eighth floor of the Osaka Building in Tokyo, where MGM had its Far Eastern office until 1941.<sup>119</sup> On February 20, 1946, Bergher received a U.S. Treasury license to start his operation. A week later, the Central Motion Picture Exchange began with the screening of *His Butler’s Sister* and *Madame Curie*.<sup>120</sup>

Bergher’s mission did not end after launching the CMPE in Japan. Less than a month after his work in Tokyo, he traveled to Seoul to set up a central picture exchange in the Korean Peninsula. Following a series of conferences

with occupation authorities—including Lt. Gen. John R. Hodge, the U.S. occupation commander—Bergher founded a CMPE office as part of the occupation government’s Bureau of Public Information. According to his report, the goal was to serve “a total of 96 theaters in Korea below 38 [degrees].”<sup>121</sup> On June 15, the CMPE head returned to the United States to join the Far Eastern Division of Universal Studios.<sup>122</sup> MacArthur’s headquarters, reported *Variety*, saluted Bergher for having done a “fine job” in East Asia.<sup>123</sup> During his brief tenure as a government official, Bergher laid the groundwork for Hollywood’s future operations. The fate of the distribution office would be left to his successor: Charles Mayer.

The founding of the CMPE completed the institutional endeavors to set up the U.S. film industry’s postwar campaign in Japan. This outcome was the result of a corporatist matrix formed in response to the war—an extraordinary moment that brought together the U.S. government, the military, and the film industry. This coalition gave birth to the Motion Picture Export Association, the united front of U.S. studios. It also created a U.S.-led occupation body that worked to remold Japan through cultural and cinematic campaigns. Finally, it enabled Hollywood to create and position the CMPE within SCAP. At its beginning phase, the CMPE functioned as an internal organ of the occupation. A year after Bergher’s departure, it turned into a full-fledged private enterprise representing the industry’s commercial interests across the main islands. Corporatist intimacies allowed Hollywood to take on a market that it previously failed to control.

## Chapter 3

# Contested Terrains

## (19) Occupation Censorship and Japanese Cinema

On July 28, 1949, a group of men quietly gathered at Shōchiku studio for a closed screening. It was the day to view the rushes of *Murderer* (*Satsujinki*), an extended court story about a man's suspected killing of his wife. Present in the dim room were three company representatives, three legal experts (one Japanese, two American), and two censors from MacArthur's Civil Information and Education Section, which routinely monitored the content of the movies. The CIE censors had taken great interest in this production, as they believed that it could introduce "democratic court procedures" and "enlighten . . . the public." And much of the film, to their delight, did not disappoint. However, occupation officials found a problem in the final sequence, in which the portrayal of the "Japanese police force . . . was entirely mishandled." Disappointed with the characterization of local law enforcement, the censors immediately "suggested" that Shōchiku reedit the prints. The following day, the studio hosted a second screening with the changes made. This time, the CIE was pleased. Harry Slott, a section officer, specifically found that its presentation had "greatly improved and would unquestionably make a strong contribution" to the occupation.<sup>1</sup>

The *Murderer* screening exemplifies the tense political climate in which Japanese filmmakers operated during the months after the Second World War. While U.S. studios were setting up their postwar trade apparatus, Japanese movie companies faced the challenge of rebuilding their ruined business in the absence of people, capital, and resources. SCAP was another obstacle to the ailing industry. Eager to utilize the screens to "educate" and "reorient"

the Japanese, the occupiers imposed their will on filmmakers, in particular by censoring their products. U.S. censors regularly met with directors and studio executives to provide "suggestions" for desirable themes. After studying the synopses, screenplays, and film prints, they requested deletions and modifications whenever the messages seemed inappropriate. Through these practices, SCAP functioned as a regulator of cultural output.

SCAP's dealing with Japanese cinema was not a story of unwavering thought control. The U.S. occupiers were actually more tolerant than fascist and totalitarian regimes that employed state censorship—such as Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, or Imperial Japan at the height of the Pacific War.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, American occupiers, as historian Jessica Gienow-Hecht has aptly noted, were "reluctant propagandists."<sup>3</sup> Yet, while constrained by the system, occupation censors went about changing the culture and content of Japanese filmmaking. Through a mixture of pressure and suasion, SCAP officials influenced the production process and interjected their own values into the movies. Filmmaking in early postwar Japan, thus, revived in a hegemonic structure of cultural and political power. It reveals America's strong influence over local activities.

For Japanese filmmakers, the occupation era involved mixed emotions. Generally pleased with the death of the wartime regime and the birth of a new "democratic" climate, Japanese filmmakers often agreed to incorporate the occupiers' ideas and "suggestions." Yet, at times, they regarded SCAP's intervention as an encroachment on their artistic and cultural sensibilities, as it appeared to reflect cultural arrogance and misunderstanding. Thus, although sometimes noted for their "receptiveness," Japanese filmmakers also displayed tenacity and resilience, even resisting SCAP's impositions on some occasions.<sup>4</sup> The gradual recovery of Japanese cinema was a largely nonviolent experience, but it embodied tense interplays of Japanese and American will. During the MacArthur era, Japanese cinema was a "contact zone" that reflected the uneven power dynamic of the occupation.<sup>5</sup>

### An Industry in Trouble

The end of World War II ushered in new developments in Japanese filmmaking. Following its arrival in Japan, SCAP disbanded the Home Ministry and allowed the so-called Big Three studios in Japan—Tōhō, Shōchiku, and Daiei—to resume their business free of bureaucratic intervention from their own state. Filmmakers halted their production of war propaganda and,

according to one film historian, began to plan the creation of “escapist entertainment movies, music, and comedy movies.”<sup>6</sup> Moviemakers outside these big companies discovered new opportunities as well. In a time when the demand for public amusement was suddenly on the rise, independent companies dived into the business. By 1950 at least twenty-three new companies were competing in the market, and thirty others specialized in shorts.<sup>7</sup> The output increased from 21 films in 1945 to 123 three years later. By 1951 the number of films produced exceeded 200.<sup>8</sup>

Filmmaking of this era, however, came with grave challenges. For one thing, resources in Japan were scarce. The war had caused a drainage of manpower from Japan proper. Directors, actors, and staff members who survived war fronts in China and Southeast Asia were slow to return to their professions.<sup>9</sup> Most production facilities had survived the Allied air raids, but Japanese companies had to cope with deteriorated equipment and chronic shortages of coal and electricity—vital energy sources.<sup>10</sup> Most devastating was the paucity of raw film.<sup>11</sup> In June 24, 1947, Tōhō announced that it would “not call for expansion.” “The reason,” the company explained, was “simply the scarcity of raw film.”<sup>12</sup>

Economic instability cast an ominous shadow over the industry. The early postwar era witnessed a broken economy struggling to rebound from the war. With the end of the Japanese government’s intense control of goods and supplies, the demand for everyday products soared, while productivity remained low. The country quickly entered an era of rampant inflation. Market volatility particularly hurt the industry by driving up the costs of film production.<sup>13</sup> This, noted the almanac *Eiga nenkan* in 1950, forced filmmakers to respond with “cheap amusement products that catered to the interests of the lowly masses.” Although film output gradually recovered during the occupation, the quality appeared to many as being low. *Eiga nenkan* admitted that the industry “has not yet recovered to the standards of the prewar [era].”<sup>14</sup>

The specter of wartime collaboration haunted studios as well. Immediately after the war, Japanese companies hastily announced replacements at the management level in hopes of relieving their businesses from war responsibility.<sup>15</sup> But the investigation for accountability commenced in the upcoming months. In April 1946, the new Japanese government, under SCAP’s auspices, began to examine public officials’ role in the war. Subsequently, a group of industry representatives and culture elites formed a special committee to assess the film industry’s war-era actions.<sup>16</sup> This led to resignations by key industry figures in anticipation of a forthcoming purge in the trade.<sup>17</sup> In October 1947, the Japanese government announced the decision to remove four industry leaders.

By the end of the calendar year, twenty-seven others were on the government’s “purge list.”<sup>18</sup>

In addition, turmoil surfaced from within. During the early months of the occupation, employees in each major studio organized their own unions to lobby for higher wages and improved working conditions. On April 28, 1946, workers across the movie industry formed the Japan Film and Theater Workers’ Union (Nihon eiga engeki rōdō kumiai, aka Nichieien) to enhance their bargaining power.<sup>19</sup> The rise of organized labor soon led to tense bargaining sessions at the Big Three studios.<sup>20</sup> Friction intensified at Tōhō, where union and management clashed in three successive sessions. Even though the workers’ disputes were eventually settled with compromises made by both sides, the company suffered from a growing deficit and an unfolding “management crisis.”<sup>21</sup> Workers and employees struggled to heal the wounds etched deeply in their exhausted minds. Some union members chose to leave the company and form their own production company, the Shin Tōhō Motion Picture company.

Furthermore, Japanese production companies struggled because of their intertwined relationship with film exhibitors. Although the occupation inspired a breakup of old institutional structures, the big film companies clung to their nationwide theater chains. According to the *Eiga nenkan* of 1950, Tōhō directly owned 68 theaters and Shōchiku, 72; both companies also maintained distribution contracts with hundreds of other theaters.<sup>22</sup> The ownership of theater circuits enabled the big studios to flourish during the prewar era, but it hurt them right after the war because of print shortages and a drastic decline in output.<sup>23</sup> The ownership of theaters also subjected studios to antimonopoly investigations. In January 1948, the Japanese government passed a law designed to eliminate the concentration of economic power. In the movie business, Tōhō, Shōchiku, Daiei, and Tōyoko were singled out as possible violators.<sup>24</sup> The scrutiny continued for many months.<sup>25</sup>

### Continuing Interventions

SCAP became involved in this volatile cinematic climate in three ways. First, it regulated the content of the movies. Determined to make use of the screen medium to further the “democratization” of Japan, the occupation government continued to tamper with film production and content beyond the initial months of its involvement. Second, it assisted institutional recovery. Aware of the chaos and volatility that marred the Japanese movie enterprise, the

occupiers prioritized the reconstruction of large studios for the sake of achieving stability. They did so, most strikingly, by opposing union and worker activities after initially supporting them. Finally, U.S. occupiers promoted cultural autonomy. While directly interfering with the production process, SCAP also took part in developing a self-censorship apparatus for Japanese companies. Through the establishment of this new instrument, U.S. officials urged the Japanese to self-contain “lowbrow” film content.

SCAP’s involvement in content regulation involved two offices. The Civil Information and Education Section continued to oversee the activities of Japanese filmmakers. The section underwent key personnel changes at the end of the first year. Brig. Gen. Kermit R. Dyke ended his service in May 1946 and returned to the United States; his replacement was Lt. Col. Donald R. Nugent, a “dyed-in-the-wool conservative” who served until the end of the occupation. David Conde, who headed the Motion Picture and Theater Branch, resigned in July 1946 and gave up the position to George Gercke, a staff member of the Information Division who had worked for the film industry before the war.<sup>26</sup> Under new leadership, the CIE continued to examine the synopses, scenarios, and film prints submitted by Japanese studios. It kept a record of its thinking on the subject and actions in its weekly reports.

The other censorship apparatus, the Civil Censorship Detachment, remained active as well. It usually became involved after the CIE viewed and evaluated films. Relying on the Motion Picture Code, the CCD closely examined prints and interjected the agendas of the military establishment. In its monthly reports, the CCD routinely announced the results of the screenings. For example, in a “special report” dated February 17, 1948, the CCD noted that a total of 102 feature films underwent review. Eighty-one of them “portrayed some elements which were beneficial” to the occupation. Thirty-three of them either “portrayed some democratic propaganda, or propaganda criticizing or exposing some undemocratic practice or custom.”<sup>27</sup>

The CCD’s intervention did not stop here: in addition to scrutinizing the films, it monitored cultural diffusion in the public arena. Censors did this by regularly visiting theaters to assure that regulations were enforced at the screenings.<sup>28</sup> In June 1947, for example, the CCD pressured a movie house in Tokyo to remove its posters that allegedly underscored “feudal ideals.” These posters, the censor charged, were a “misrepresentation of fact” of *Gingorō Fights Naked* (*Gingorō hadaka shōbu*, 1940), the feature presentation, since they “advertise the very elements that were deleted from the film in conformity with censorship regulations.”<sup>29</sup> Once CCD’s vision even extended to a small toy

store in Gunma Prefecture, which had sold short strips of old films that contained “objectionable” war scenes. The CCD forced the retailer to “withdraw and destroy” these celluloid pieces.<sup>30</sup>

While regulating the spread of cultural values in the public arena, SCAP cautiously rebuilt the Japanese movie business. It did so by prioritizing the recovery of big companies. Since its operation began in fall 1945, the CIE regularly visited the leading studios to “discuss various problems confronting motion picture production”—which usually involved matters beyond pure film content.<sup>31</sup> The occupiers also supported the newly founded Motion Picture Producers Association (*Eiga seisakusha rengōkai*, or *Eiren*; renamed the Motion Picture Association of Japan on March 1, 1947).<sup>32</sup> Originally formed on November 5, 1945, this industrywide organization led by the Japanese Big Three vowed to achieve a “healthy development” of the movie business through “mutual co-operation” and “fair competition.”<sup>33</sup> SCAP would maintain contact with the Motion Picture Producers Association to allocate material resources and help facilitate a stable recovery.<sup>34</sup>

The desire to assist industrial recovery led the occupiers to turn against organized labor. Despite its sympathetic attitude toward unions early on, SCAP soon began to oppose labor and left-wing activism, especially as they inspired turbulence through strikes and other union activities. This “reverse course” soon led to SCAP’s Red purges of 1949 and 1950.<sup>35</sup> In the film world, SCAP’s hostility to organized labor became evident during the strikes at Tōhō studio. As worker discontent with management intensified in strikes, the First Cavalry Division of the occupation’s Eighth Army dispatched tanks and troops to suppress dissent. The end of the Tōhō strikes was followed by SCAP’s purge of alleged left-wing employees from the major studios. According to one account, at least 137 individuals were removed from the movie business in 1950.<sup>36</sup> In a move that mirrored Hollywood’s response to the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings in the United States, the Big Three in Japan refrained from hiring left-wing filmmakers.<sup>37</sup>

SCAP, in addition, instilled an autonomous method of cultural regulation. While monitoring film content themselves, the occupiers took steps to transfer that authority to the Japanese. On January 13, 1946, the CIE’s George Gercke initiated talks with Japanese studios to establish a “motion picture code of ethics” modeled after Hollywood’s production code. A branch unit of the Japanese cabinet drafted the text in the summer of 1946.<sup>38</sup> For the next two and a half years, the CIE and industry representatives met repeatedly to discuss the content of the code.<sup>39</sup> On April 14, 1949, a large ceremony took place at the

Piccadilly Theater in Tokyo. The CIE attended the event together with studio and government representatives.<sup>40</sup> The Associated Press referred to this event as a “pretentious gesture at self-censorship.”<sup>41</sup>

The inauguration celebrated the founding of the Control Committee for the Motion Picture Code of Ethics, which was made up of various individuals representing film studios, producers, distributors, directors, and other production staff members. The committee’s responsibility was to read scripts and view film prints to assure that the content of the films would conform to the code, which comprised seven categories: “Nation and Society,” “Law,” “Religion,” “Education,” “Custom,” “Sex,” and “Distasteful Subjects.” The code, for instance, demanded that portrayal of violence be to be limited to “what is essential” in accord with Japan’s renouncing of war; vengeance was discouraged; religious leaders, such as ministers and priests, could not be ridiculed or villainized; nudity and gender relations had to be handled “carefully” with respect to the sanctity of marriage and family unity; and cruelty—in the form of torture, lynching, brutality against women and children, for example—could not be depicted in a “stimulating manner.”<sup>42</sup>

The Control Committee, however, did not immediately earn full-scale autonomy. During the occupation, it operated through close coordination with SCAP. The CIE directly offered “advise [sic] and guidance to the examining committee.”<sup>43</sup> It interfered with the committee’s daily protocols and occasionally mounted pressure against “undesirable” subjects. Even in the final months of the occupation, U.S. censors required “consultations” before approving films that had been banned earlier.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, SCAP kept an eye on the political orientation of committee members. In a report dated August 20, 1949—a year after the Tōhō strikes ended—the CCD specifically noted that the committee was largely devoid of “leftist leaning” individuals.<sup>45</sup> In response, the Japan Film and Theater Workers’ Union complained that “none of the opinion of the laborers are being represented.”<sup>46</sup>

### In the Contact Zone

The occupation of Japan instilled a new climate in the world of Japanese filmmaking. In contrast to the war years, when the Home Ministry held a tight grip on the industry, the early postwar era fostered a greater level of intellectual openness and artistic opportunity. The mind-set of Japanese filmmakers began to change. Veteran filmmakers who made films during the war felt guilt and shame for contributing to the propaganda. At the same time, the

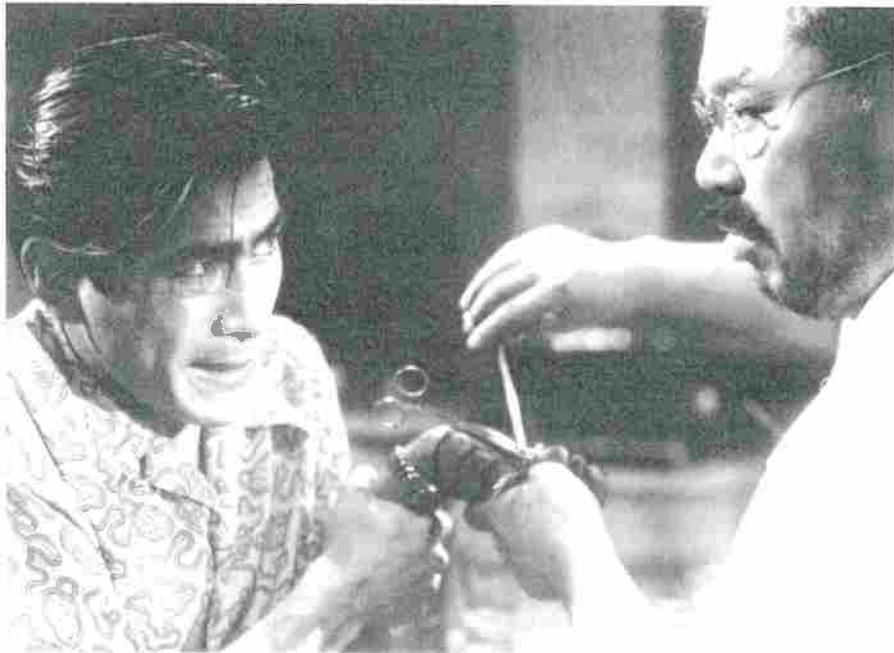
movie-making community found hope and excitement in pursuing its creative endeavors. Some displayed outright joy during the occupation, expressing appreciation to the occupiers for assisting the recovery of the movie industry.<sup>47</sup>

Yet the actual process of filmmaking involved a great deal of tension. While urging the Japanese to take charge of their own projects, SCAP censors hovered around the entire process, demanding changes and revisions of the plots, dialogues, and screen images. The occupiers’ intervention often resulted in drastic modifications of film content. The process baffled and perplexed the filmmakers. Disappointed and at times angry at the censors’ apparent lack of understanding of their own values, filmmakers often resisted compromising their original inspirations. The uneasy interplay of occupier and occupied played out in individual film projects. Three case studies explore filmmaking in this larger political and cultural climate.

### *Drunken Angel*

The occupiers believed that the movies must serve a constructive purpose. To them, political films that undermined Japan’s postwar reconstruction were simply unacceptable; pure escapism was not enough. Determined to use the movies to promote meaningful lessons, the occupiers pressured filmmakers to address social problems of everyday life. In a meeting with Daiei on October 16, 1947, the CIE’s Harry Slott called for “more pictures dealing with social and economic problems as related to the future of the Japanese people.”<sup>48</sup> In urging Japanese filmmakers to produce “pictures with a message,” occupation authorities cited Hollywood’s acclaimed social problem films, such as William Wyler’s *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946, which deals with postwar homecoming) and Jules Dassin’s *The Naked City* (1948, a neorealistic urban crime drama), as successful models for the Japanese.<sup>49</sup>

*Drunken Angel* (*Yoidore tenshi*, 1948) was a film that seemed to meet this objective. The story focused on the black market, “the most popular social problem portrayed in the pictures,” according to a CCD report in February 1948.<sup>50</sup> The genesis of this Tōhō production was an artificial set of a black market, created for *New Era of Idiots* (*Shin baka jidai*), a 1947 comedy directed by Yamamoto Kajirō. Intent on making full use of this studio creation, Tōhō summoned Kurosawa Akira and Uekusa Keinosuke to create a new film about the underworld.<sup>51</sup> The long-time friends proposed a project that would expose “the rampages and violence of the *yakuza* in a critical fashion.”<sup>52</sup> In its “Intention of Productions,” the creators vowed to demonstrate the “evil” of the “world of the so-called *yakuza*, where the foundations of all action were



**Figure 3.1.** A tense encounter between Matsunaga (Mifune Toshirō) and Sanada (Shimura Takashi). “DRUNKEN ANGEL” © 1948 Toho Co. Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

feudalistic duty and obligation, [and where] good and evil was determined by . . . physical strength.” The original title of the film, *City of Bacillus*, implied gang life was a disease.<sup>53</sup> By the time Kurosawa and Uekusa completed the script, the title was changed to *Drunken Angel*.

The story, as detailed in the first script, dated October 30, 1947, revolved around the relationship of two men. One is Sanada (Shimura Takashi), a near-alcoholic doctor who owns a run-down clinic in a raucous neighborhood. His status contrasts with that of a thriving colleague who runs his own hospital and later appears in a chauffeured automobile. The other man is Matsunaga (Mifune Toshirō), a reckless gangster.<sup>54</sup> The two first meet when Matsunaga seeks treatment at Sanada’s clinic, claiming that his right arm was hurt by a “nail . . . sticking out.”<sup>55</sup> Sanada actually discovers a bullet in the wounded arm and suspects that Matsunaga, coughing heavily, has tuberculosis. The gangster vehemently rejects the diagnosis, but soon comes to admit to his deteriorating health. The two brusque men quarrel almost every time they meet, but slowly they develop a sense of mutual trust.

The bond of these men is challenged when Okada, a “big brother” of Matsunaga who has spent a few years in jail, quietly returns to the scene. Matsunaga, almost by reflex, pledges allegiance to the elder gangster. The relationship soon turns sour, however, as Okada seizes the junior gangster’s money and girl. Okada also intimidates Sanada for having sheltered Miyo, a former patron once sick with venereal disease. Despite threats by the *yakuza*, Sanada holds his ground and calls him a “ghost of feudalism.” At one point, Sanada deplores the anachronism in Okada’s lifestyle. “Men and women have equal rights, now,” the doctor says.<sup>56</sup> Matsunaga is caught between the old and new lifestyles. While refusing to abandon the gangsters’ “code of chivalry,” he begs Okada not to harm the doctor whom he now trusts.<sup>57</sup>

Sanada tries to salvage Matsunaga from both his TB and his reckless life. Convinced that Matsunaga’s illness is rooted in the *yakuza* way of life, the doctor tells the ailing gangster that the only way to cure his lungs is to detach himself from the “rotten and worm-eater [*sic*] people who are just like germs.”<sup>58</sup> Matsunaga seems to understand, but he refuses to change his lifestyle. After losing power in his clan, Matsunaga pays a surprise visit to Okada; the scene cuts to a local police station, where the sergeant picks up the phone and learns that Okada has been killed. Matsunaga dies in the hospital due to a lung hemorrhage. Sadly, nobody is willing to claim his corpse. As the gang plans a funeral in Okada’s honor, Sanada decides to accept Matsunaga’s dead body. Riding in a funeral vehicle, Sanada asks the driver to enter the black market, where Okada’s memorial service is about to begin. Staring at the startled gangsters, an angry Sanada, in the final dialogue of the script, tells the driver to make another round “at full speed!”<sup>59</sup>

The CIE found several problems in the story. Part of the trouble had to do with the setting. Censors, for example, questioned the neighborhood’s location in a “burned out corner of the city”—which could invoke unpleasant memories of the war.<sup>60</sup> The CIE was also wary about the treatment of the black market. In the submitted script, a censor reacted to the discussions of venereal disease, bootlegging, and alcoholism—common problems known in the underworld. The biggest problem was the ending. Even though the two gangsters die in the end, the script closes ominously with the doctor hauling Matsunaga’s corpse around the run-down neighborhood. Tōhō claimed that this ending scene was a form of “protest against the evil world.”<sup>61</sup> However, the CIE found it to be “a bit gruesome.”<sup>62</sup> The occupiers demanded an upbeat closure to brighten this otherwise dark story.

Following the initial exchange with SCAP, Kurosawa’s team, a month later, returned with a revised script. The new version kept the plot largely intact. The co-screenwriters made minor changes in the dialogue involving the first

encounters of Sanada and Matsunaga. Okada's lines were also modified. The biggest change came in the ending, which highlights Sanada's conversation with Jin, a nearby bar worker who, out of her fondness for Matsunaga, decides to hold his funeral service. Sanada, then, is halted by a young schoolgirl, another tuberculosis patient who had visited his office in an earlier scene. The girl hands him an X-ray photo, which shows that she is on the course of recovery. The doctor agrees to buy her a bowl of *anmitsu* sweets to celebrate her reviving health.<sup>63</sup>

Interestingly, this new ending follows a previously absent duel between Okada and Matsunaga. In this scene, the two men, with daggers in hand, pounce on each other to kill. It is an "ugly and brutal fight of two beastly beings" according to the script.<sup>64</sup> Kurosawa and Uekusa end the scene with deep irony: Okada inflicts a fatal wound on Matsunaga and survives the duel. Thus, while Matsunaga soon dies, gangsterism remains alive and well. The revised script also included a bleak dream sequence, in which a white coffin, observed by crows in the sky, is left on the side of a pool of water. Matsunaga, hatchet in hand, breaks open the coffin and finds his own corpse in it. The gangster "screams and runs madly" until the real Matsunaga wakes up.<sup>65</sup>

The actual film adopted the modified ending with Sanada talking to the female student. But the film also kept the duel between Okada and Matsunaga intact. The nightmare scene remained in the film as well, despite the occupiers' complaint that it was "gruesome."<sup>66</sup> In addition, the final product visualized the neighborhood in remarkably dark tones. From the opening scene until the very end, the film introduced what John Dower would call "cultures of defeat"—prostitutes (not included in the original script), a dive bar, and a neon-lit dance hall in which a female singer performs an eerie number titled "Jungle Boogie Woogie."<sup>67</sup> Contrary to the occupiers' desire to show up America as a model for the Japanese, these portraits of urban nightlife, as one film scholar noted, exposed the "pernicious foreign [especially American and Western] influences and the loss of Japanese culture" under MacArthur's presence.<sup>68</sup> The bleakness is further emphasized in the filthy sump at the center of the neighborhood. Bubbling with methane gas and covered with floating garbage, this mosquito-infested pond, according to Kurosawa, was "the symbol of this production," encapsulating the dismal climate of black market society.<sup>69</sup>

As if these were not enough, *Drunken Angel* blurred the lines of good and evil. Instead of portraying this as a Manichaeian clash of two antithetical characters, Kurosawa presented both Matsunaga and Sanada as "human beings" with "reason" (*risei*).<sup>70</sup> Matsunaga, a violent and short-tempered gangster, is a "likeable" character who wins the compassion of Sanada and Jin. By contrast,

Sanada is an able doctor who cares for others but is strongly attached to alcohol—a trait associated with the black market. In an early scene, he drinks a bottle of ethanol rationed for medical use, and he does not amend his habits throughout the story. Kurosawa stresses Sanada's flawed attributes by preserving the title, *Drunken Angel*, in spite of repeated criticisms by the occupiers.<sup>71</sup> Unlike a black-and-white Hollywood gangster narrative, *Drunken Angel* is a story of complex morals and mixed messages. In the end, the film does not offer concrete remedies for the Japanese to outgrow the "cultures of defeat."

The U.S. occupiers perceived *Drunken Angel* as a successful production. It was a film in which SCAP identified "both reorientation and entertainment value," thanks to the depiction of an "inglorious end of a thug... who would not reform despite efforts of his sweetheart and doctor."<sup>72</sup> But the film was hardly a product dictated by MacArthur's will. The production process also reveals the determination, persistence, and creative aspirations of Kurosawa's team. To the director, *Drunken Angel* was a ground-breaking film. "In this picture I finally found myself," he later noted. "It was *my* picture. I was doing it and no one else."<sup>73</sup> While subjected to the intervention of occupation censors, Kurosawa, as noted in his autobiography, energetically debated with the occupiers in developing his own film products.<sup>74</sup> A film that helped establish his fame and status as a leading director in Japan, *Drunken Angel* represents Kurosawa's will as much as it reveals the occupiers' presence behind the scenes.

### *The Bells of Nagasaki*

From day one, the occupiers understood that the demilitarization of Japan would be a daunting task. At the very least, it required the disbanding of the military, the elimination of weaponry, and the purging of war-mongers from positions of influence. In addition, the instillation of peace necessitated what one historian called the "psychological disarmament" of the Japanese.<sup>75</sup> In an attempt to ensure long-term peace, the occupation had to convert the minds of the defeated population from war-seeking to peace-loving. To occupation censors, this transition required a scrupulous control over the depiction of war and militarism in Japanese cinema. Fearing that such themes could revive belligerent war-era mentalities, the occupiers employed great rigor to eliminate scenes and stories that involved military songs, symbols, and men in uniform. Censors, notes historian Hirano Kyōko, were "unreasonably meticulous" in their handling of such themes.<sup>76</sup>

The most problematic war theme involved the atomic bomb. During the months immediately following the war, SCAP, for fear of provoking outcry and

resentment from the Japanese, imposed heavy restrictions on reportage concerning the bomb, the effects of radioactivity, and the two nuclear-destroyed cities.<sup>77</sup> “Reference to bomb performance or characteristics . . . official reports of scientific investigations of results of bombing, purported details of manufacture of the bomb or its contents, etc.,” a SCAP check sheet cautioned in late 1947, were “not [to] be released.”<sup>78</sup> Films about the bomb also came under intense scrutiny. When a film crew from the production company Nippon eigasha landed in Hiroshima in October 1945 to shoot a documentary about the destructive weapon, occupation authorities temporarily halted production. Although the team was allowed to resume its filmmaking, the final product was confiscated by the occupiers. The prints of *The Effects of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1946) were not returned to the Japanese until 1967.<sup>79</sup>

*The Bells of Nagasaki* (*Nagasaki no kane*) was a biographical picture that confronted the atom. This 1950 Shōchiku production, directed by Ōba Hideo, was based on the actual life story of Dr. Nagai Takashi, a radiologist who lived in Nagasaki for much of his life. His life became tumultuous after the Manchurian Incident of 1931, when Nagai served in the military as a medic and converted to Catholicism on his return. He then worked as an assistant professor at the Nagasaki Medical College, his alma mater, but the years of radiation exposure caused leukemia. Shortly after he was told that he had only three more years to live, the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Nagai, who was at the college at the time, survived the blast, but lost his wife. He unselfishly tried to help his patients, friends, and community members, but soon found it impossible to leave his sickbed. From here on, Nagai prayed and wrote his memoirs. With his two healthy children in attendance, Nagai died on May 1, 1951, at the age of forty-three.

Nagai documented his own thoughts and feelings in a handful of books published during the occupation. One was *Leaving These Children* (*Kono ko o nokoshite*), which chronicles his emotional struggles as a dying man about to leave two young children behind. Nagai also expresses anguish over radiation sickness—a subject to which he had ironically devoted much of his professional life. Another of his books was *The Bells of Nagasaki* (*Nagasaki no kane*), which documented first-hand observations of the atomic blast. The book recounts Nagai’s efforts to help his students, colleagues, and civilians in the wake of the bomb. The book ends with a denouncement of war, especially the use of atomic weapons. In the final pages, Nagai writes as he hears the bells of a nearby Catholic church ringing over the destroyed city.<sup>80</sup>

Nagai’s literary works did not sit well with the occupiers. For example, when *The Bells of Nagasaki* (the book) was first submitted for censorship, Gen.

Charles Willoughby of the CCD suspended its publication for six months, arguing that it would “lead to possibly inflammatory reactions” by the Japanese while “suggest[ing] . . . that the American was inhuman in using this weapon to expedite the termination of the war.”<sup>81</sup> The CCD argued for the suppression of the book “on [the] ground[s] that it would invite resentment against [the] U.S.”<sup>82</sup> Shikiba Ryūzaburo, a friend of Dr. Nagai and a trustee of the American Movie Culture Association (AMCA), a Hollywood fan organization run by the culture elites (see chapter 7), attempted to reconcile the differences. In a letter addressed to SCAP, the prominent psychologist supported Nagai’s work as it treated the Nagasaki bombing as “the beginning of peace for mankind.”<sup>83</sup>

The CCD eventually allowed the publication of Nagai’s manuscript, but on the condition that he remind readers of Japanese atrocities. The final publication included SCAP’s report of Japanese military brutality in the Philippines titled “The Tragedy of Manila” (*Manila no higeki*). Hastily compiled by MacArthur’s Military Intelligence Division, this supplementary text denounced the Japanese military for its “savage acts” (*bankō*) in the Manila Massacre of February 1945. This included the razing of homes and public facilities as well as violence against women, children, and elderly civilians. The occupiers were particularly intent on exposing Japanese atrocities against Catholic institutions and worshippers: “The Japanese,” the report stressed, “strove to wipe away the scent of Christianity in the Philippines until the very last bit” was gone.<sup>84</sup> The text also offered a timeline and a set of testimonies by Catholic priests and American military officers who discussed the horrifying experience.

The film version of *The Bells of Nagasaki* originated from Shindō Kaneto, a rising filmmaker who worked for the Shinkō kinema production company before the war. During the occupation era, Shindō joined Shōchiku as a screenwriter and left to work as an independent filmmaker in spring 1950.<sup>85</sup> One of the principal themes of his career was the atomic bomb. Born and raised not far from Hiroshima, Shindō visited the destroyed city immediately after August 6. Shocked as he stood in front of a wiped-out train station, Shindō “felt that he himself was struck by the bomb.”<sup>86</sup> Later, he would go on to produce films such as *Child of the Atomic Bomb* (*Genbaku no ko*, 1952) and *The Lucky Dragon* (*Daigo fukuryūmaru*, 1959) in which he pleaded for world peace and “no more Hiroshimas.”

*The Bells of Nagasaki* was a film project that Shindō took on while still at Shōchiku. The objective was not to indict the United States but to tell a story about the “progress of science” and “the beauty of human love” through a dramatized story of a real scientist.<sup>87</sup> The first synopsis, completed April 1, 1949,

takes the story back to 1932, when Nagai was still an assistant in the physical treatment section of the Nagasaki Medical College.<sup>88</sup> There, Nagai specializes in radiology, which was a marginalized field in the profession. Nagai is portrayed as a diligent and inquisitive scientist, studying day and night until he falls asleep at his desk. Despite financial hardships, the doctor enjoys the faithful companionship of his wife Kiyono and their two children. Every Sunday, the Nagai family attends mass; they are Catholics in a city known for its long tradition of Christian worship.

As the crisis of war looms in the backdrop, Nagai abruptly feels a sharp pain in his left arm. He soon finds out that he is ill with leukemia, a life-threatening “atomic disease.” Yet the doctor refuses to give up his work at the college. Backed by his loyal wife, he continues to pursue the “inquiry of truth.” On August 8, 1945, Nagai leaves his home, seen off by Kiyono, and stays the night at the college. The next day, the atomic bomb is dropped on the city. The college catches fire, but Nagai survives the blast, and so do his children, who had been sent to the countryside. Kiyono, however, does not survive. When he returns home, Nagai discovers a pile of ashes and a rosary owned by his now deceased wife. The final lines of the screenplay present a determined Nagai continuing to explore atomic medical science in the face of ill health and family tragedy.

SCAP had no problem with the script except for one thing: the Nagasaki bombing. After reading a story that dramatized the Nagai family’s suffering, the CIE pressured Shōchiku to eliminate references to the nuclear explosion. Shōchiku responded by adding an intertitle before the scene of ground zero. The text, which was added in the revised synopsis, described the atomic bomb as a vehicle for punishing the Japanese military while “sav[ing] the innocent nation who were [sic] longing for peace in their hearts.”<sup>89</sup> Yet to SCAP, this disclaimer was not enough. While acknowledging that the story about the “life of [the] scientist is OK,” the CIE insisted that scenes involving the bomb “will serve no constructive purpose.”<sup>90</sup> This forced a crucial change in the second revision. Shōchiku’s re-revised synopsis, submitted to the CIE on June 4, 1949, dropped all references to the bomb. After Nagai leaves for his office on August 8, 1945, the script jumps to him lying on his sickbed, his wife having died mysteriously. The text ends with the two children vowing to “live courageously” in spite of their father’s fading health.<sup>91</sup>

SCAP’s intervention stymied Shindō’s project and led to an impasse. Shōchiku would not pick up the project until the following summer—after the screenwriter had already left the company to shoot films on his own. The final synopsis lists two additional cowriters, Mitsuata Sekirō and Hashida

Sugako, while Ōba remained as director.<sup>92</sup> The team did not compromise. Even though the occupiers remained wary of the project, Shōchiku submitted the final prints with the scene of the atomic bomb. The film made it to the commercial screens on September 22, 1950.<sup>93</sup> In the film, the bomb strikes in a sequence that begins when Nagai’s two children, playing in a river stream, observe a giant plume of smoke covering the skies beyond the mountains. After showing the mushroom cloud from three different angles, the narrative cuts to Nagai, standing in the rubble of his home, picking up the rosary of his dead wife. The doctor soon falls seriously ill, but decides to continue the study of radiology. He is sad that he will soon no longer be able to look after his two children. The film ends in 1949, when the Pope visits the city of Nagasaki. He praises Nagai in front of a large audience.

The final product was a result in no small measure of Shōchiku’s insistence and determination. But it also materialized because of SCAP’s policy relaxation. The film version of *The Bells of Nagasaki* was completed at a time when the occupation government was gradually—and cautiously—allowing the disclosure of information about the atomic bomb. As Japanese citizens began to learn about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it became more difficult to suppress media coverage. The Soviets’ successful test of their first bomb on August 29, 1949, rendered the censorship of nuclear news obsolete. The dissolution of the CCD in November also removed a powerful—and military—controlling agent. Once released, *The Bells of Nagasaki* collected decent earnings in the box office.<sup>94</sup> Critics’ reactions were favorable. *Kinema junpō* ranked the film sixteenth among the best films of 1949. One reviewer praised the movie for its “serious[ness].” “One can say that it was among the best of recent films by Shōchiku,” he noted.<sup>95</sup>

#### *Daibosatsu Pass*

While talk about the atomic bomb gradually entered the popular media, the period film (*jidaigeki*) began to make a quiet comeback. In the early postwar era, Japanese companies were eager to revive this once-popular genre that depicted historical pre-Meiji era stories. However, the occupiers found this problematic because of the “feudalistic” emphasis on swordfights, violence, and a “code of revenge and loyalty.” To SCAP’s chagrin, the period film too often introduced themes of personal retaliation, murder, treason, and fraud without regard for the law.<sup>96</sup> A similar anxiety surrounded the *kabuki* theater, which was nearly banned by MacArthur for its apparent display of “feudalism.”<sup>97</sup> The period-film genre, which often drew inspiration from *kabuki* stories, faced

pressure. SCAP's control was especially thorough when David Conde ran the Motion Picture and Theatrical Branch of the CIE. "American censorship was tough," recalled period-film director Itō Daisuke in reference to the Conde years. "[We] could not slash people [with swords] at all."<sup>98</sup>

*Daibosatsu Pass* (*Daibosatsu tōge*) was a project that gained life after Conde's departure. Based on Nakazato Kaizan's period novel (*jidai shōsetsu*) set in the late Tokugawa era, the story chronicles the travails of Tsukue Ryūnosuke, a blind samurai known for his soundless (*otonashi*) style of swordsmanship. Originally a newspaper serial that eventually turned into a twenty-volume epic, Kaizan's novel inspired Nikkatsu to make a film version in 1935. Sustained by a 17,000-yen budget, the Nikkatsu production, noted *Kokusai eiga shūbun*, dramatized the story on a "grand scale" and enjoyed a rare seventeen-day "long run" in major cities.<sup>99</sup> Immediately after the war, SCAP banned this film along with 235 others that appeared "harmful."<sup>100</sup> In spring 1948, Shōchiku decided to produce a remake of this story. The CIE rejected the synopsis "on the ground that this story is a revival of a banned film."<sup>101</sup>

Kaizan's story, however, was too popular for Japanese filmmakers to abandon or ignore. A year after Shōchiku's project reached a dead end, the Tōyoko Motion Picture Company decided to film the story. This young production firm struggled with financial difficulties in early 1949 and was desperate to overcome its plight.<sup>102</sup> The company soon formed a partnership with two other small producers and give birth to the so-called fourth exhibition circuit—an alternative to the Shōchiku, Tōhō, and Daiei chains.<sup>103</sup> Tōyoko believed that Nakazato's story was very exploitable: its scale was "comparable to *Les Misérables*," noted one of its liaisons.<sup>104</sup> The popular period story presented an opportunity to salvage the company from its financial woes and bring success to its business.<sup>105</sup>

Yet to persuade the occupiers required careful thinking. The banned 1935 production, which was largely based on the novel's first episode, "The Episode of the Kōgen Ittō School [of sword fighting]," was peppered with scenes that SCAP was likely to oppose.<sup>106</sup> The story, for example, opened with Tsukue's brutal murder of an innocent old man for no apparent reason. Shortly before a ceremonial sword match, Tsukue rapes Ohama, the wife of his opponent. At the match, the protagonist inflicts a fatal wound on his enemy. After her husband's death, Ohama marries Tsukue and has a child by him. Meanwhile, the dead opponent's younger brother pledges revenge and begins a search for the protagonist. The episode concludes with a bloody swordfight between a master swordsman and the Tokugawa shogunate's watchdog organization to which Tsukue now belongs.<sup>107</sup>

Tōyoko made a conscious effort to differentiate its project from the 1935 version. The first script, which the CIE received on August 20, 1949, fused plots and characters of multiple episodes. It made for a compressed narrative with abrupt plot developments.<sup>108</sup> The first half begins some five years after the episode of the Kōgen Ittō School takes place. Tsukue becomes acquainted with Otoyō, a young woman who works at an inn where he stays for several nights. A set of flashbacks reveals that her face and figure are identical to those of Ohama, to whom Tsukue was once married. In the novel, the couple have a tragic relationship beginning with her rape and his slaying of her first husband. In the script, Tsukue and Ohama constantly quarrel until he kills her. The Tōyoko script avoids the subplot of rape and offers no concrete explanation for her death. Tsukue once remarks that Ohama died "because of my selfishness," but he leaves the actual cause a mystery.<sup>109</sup>

Tsukue and Otoyō are drawn to one another through their personal tragedies. The stoic swordsman first learns of Otoyō when he overhears her conversation with her lover. The two are runaways from their hometown, where their kin had arranged marriage partners against their will. The couple decides to commit suicide, but she survives. Tsukue is drawn to her because of her resemblance to Ohama as well as her tragic past. Their relationship is threatened by the appearance of Kinzō, the groom in Otoyō's arranged marriage. Desperate to bring her back to him, Kinzō threatens to kill Otoyō and burn down their village if she does not return to him. In a surprising twist, Otoyō chooses to marry the profligate son out of fear of his reckless behavior.

The second half of the script follows a group of soldiers who are fleeing from the Tokugawa army. Tsukue has capriciously joined the ten rebellious men, who are now surrounded in a hut and attacked with explosives. He survives but loses his eyesight. Still in love with the stoic protagonist, Otoyō escapes from Kinzō's hands and takes care of the blind swordsman. In the original story, Otoyō soon becomes ill but agrees to spend a night in bed with a feudal lord (*tonosama*) for money to heal Tsukue's vision. The Tōyoko script portrays her as simply fallen ill. Otoyō then sends a letter (and money) to Tsukue, who learns of Otoyō's loyalty to him as well as her decision to commit suicide. Perhaps in order to conceal his pain, Tsukue reacts to the news with his signature line: "Those who wish to die will die on their own." The script ends thus.<sup>110</sup>

Tōyoko's aim was not to subvert the occupation forces. The overall purpose of the film, the company insisted, was to apply a "new interpretation" to an old story and "affirm life through [the story of a] samurai living in a romance."<sup>111</sup> But to the occupiers, the script appeared far from cheerful or uplifting.

The CIE, for instance, disliked the film's presentation of suicide—which happens twice, both involving Otoyō. Equally problematic was the portrayal of the stoic protagonist. Even though Tōyoko toned down the violence and cruelty, Tsukue, according to the CIE, appeared little more than a “pessimist” and “egoist.” The overall tone of the film was “extremely dismal,” ending abruptly “with hopeless [and] unbearable emotions.” The “negative” and “unconstructive” tone of the story made it unacceptable.<sup>112</sup>

Tōyoko claimed that their first script was a “constructive” period film, but nonetheless agreed to make some revisions.<sup>113</sup> Three weeks later, the company submitted a revised script that offered changes in a handful of scenes. It replaced Tsukue's signature line that feigned indifference to suicide with a moment of silence. Admitting that the script contained some “nihilistic” elements, the company toned down Tsukue's seemingly detached attitude toward government and political leadership. The new script also softened the rebel group's anger at Tsukue for appearing to lack honor and loyalty; Tōyoko decided to modify this scene because it could show that the picture “affirmed *bushido*.” Finally, the script altered Kinzō's dialogue, for it promoted arson, murder, and disruption of public tranquility.<sup>114</sup>

The changes did not impress the CIE, which continued to question some of the script's “feudalistic” scenes. One concerned the dialogue during the ceremonial match.<sup>115</sup> Another troubling scene came with Tsukue's remark: “Sword is heart and character.”<sup>116</sup> The CIE also deplored dialogue that championed the samurai code of honor and loyalty.<sup>117</sup> Women's subservience was another problem. The CIE crossed out dialogue that portrayed Otoyō's tendency to submit to Kinzō.<sup>118</sup> In addition, the presence of suicide itself—in dialogue and practice—continued to bother the occupiers.<sup>119</sup> All in all, the CIE reached a clear verdict: the new script “did not depart to a great extent from the original story.”<sup>120</sup> Tōyoko was unable to make the film during the occupation.<sup>121</sup>

SCAP took a tough line against the period film. During the first three years of the occupation, the output of *jidaigeki* features was limited to single digits.<sup>122</sup> While Tōyoko was working on the script of *Daibosatsu Pass*, the CIE received requests for permission to film popular period stories involving Tange Sazen, Miyamoto Musashi, and Nakamura Yukinojō.<sup>123</sup> The CIE denounced the trend, arguing that filmmakers were “not showing good faith” in seeking to revive stories that showcased “blind allegiance.”<sup>124</sup> Roughly a year before the occupation ended, the Motion Picture Association of Japan requested SCAP to allow the screening of the banned period films.<sup>125</sup> In the final days of his service, the CIE's Donald Nugent finally expressed willingness to open the market for these movies.<sup>126</sup>

The departure of occupation officials led to a large-scale revival of period films. Between 1954 and 1961, Japanese studios churned out well over one hundred period films per year.<sup>127</sup> Tōyoko's *Daibosatsu Pass* finally entered the production phase and was released in 1953. It had grown into an ambitious trilogy with Kataoka Chiezō playing the leading role. Five years later, Tōei released yet another trilogy of the same historical epic. Uchida Tomu's version of *Daibosatsu Pass*, starring Kataoka once again, appeared in wide-screen color and enjoyed wide viewership. The heyday of the period film arrived after MacArthur's departure.

Filmmaking in defeated Japan was a challenging exercise. While liberated from the ideological strains of the Home Ministry, Japanese companies struggled to resurrect their businesses in the aftermath of a devastating war. These filmmakers also had to deal with the U.S. occupiers, who imposed their own political agenda on the content of the movies. Although MacArthur granted a greater level of freedom to filmmakers than they had during war, he also imposed new constraints that hampered their creative activities. Japanese cinema in occupied Japan developed in this controlled political climate. It was a process that involved compliance, ambivalence, and resistance. Autonomous productions could not occur during the occupation. The Japanese film industry did not fully recover from the war until the mid-1950s.

The struggles of Japanese film companies raised Hollywood's hopes of expanding into the transpacific market. Thanks to their large stockpile of new films, U.S. studios gained the ability to compete against the Japanese film industry with quantity. American companies also renewed their confidence in the quality of the filmic products. Like most trade observers in Japan, they believed that Japanese companies were able to manufacture “very few superior pictures” that would emulate Hollywood's finest narratives.<sup>128</sup> In addition, SCAP's presence generated assurance and motivation. In addition to granting Hollywood a place in the Japanese market, the occupiers seemed determined to expand the transpacific film trade. Things were looking good for American movies.

Hollywood executives, however, soon realized that serious challenges lay ahead. To their surprise, the difficulties did not involve Japanese film companies but rather their own allies in the U.S. military and government. The transition from war to peace altered the political attitude of American officials and administrators. Once the occupation began, the corporatist harmony of the war years was replaced by an unexpectedly tense institutional relationship—one that would strain Hollywood's ties with U.S. authorities.

153. "Japan," January 4, 1944, MPAA General Correspondence Files, Roll 9, Special Collections, MHL.

154. Manager, International Department of MPPDA, "Japan: Market for American Motion Pictures," undated memo, MPAA General Correspondence Files, Roll 11, Special Collections, MHL.

155. *Film Daily*, January 28, 1942, 1, 6.

156. In 1929, *The Film Daily Yearbook* reported that U.S. film share was 22 percent. *The Film Daily Yearbook, 1929* (New York: Film Daily, 1929), 1009. In June 1946, Eric Johnston noted that American representation on Japanese screens accounted for about 16 percent of the total film rentals. See *Motion Picture Letter*, 5:6, 3.

157. MPPDA Manager, "Japan: Market for American Motion Pictures, First Section" n.d. MPAA General Collections File Roll 10, Special Collections, MHL; MPPDA Manager, "Japan: Market for American Motion Pictures, Second Section," February 19, 1945, MPAA General Collections File Roll 10, Special Collections, MHL.

## 2. Renewed Intimacies

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4. On Hollywood's recovery from the Great Depression, see Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), esp. 13-36.

5. Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 14-21, 323-28.

6. Tino Balio, ed., *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Gary R. Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3-59, 102-7.

7. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1997), esp. 362-422; Saverio Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics in the Age of the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); K. R. M. Short, "Hollywood Fights Anti-Semitism, 1940-1945," in *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II*, ed. K. R. M. Short (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 146-72.

8. Patrick J. Hearden, *Roosevelt Confronts Hitler: America's Entry into World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), esp. 53-87.

9. *New York Times*, December 9, 1941, 44.

10. Will H. Hays, "The Motion Picture in a World at War: Twentieth Anniversary Report to the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc.," MPPDA pamphlet (March 30, 1942).

11. Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: Hollywood and the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 155, 191; Susan Ohmer, "The Science of Pleasure: George Gallup

and Audience Research in Hollywood," in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 61-80. "Problems Confronting the Motion Picture Industry," n.d., Reel 30, in *The Will Hays Papers*, ed. Douglas Gomery (Frederick, MD: University Press of America, 1986), hereafter cited as WHP.

12. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 180.

13. Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 60.

14. Hays, "The Motion Picture in a World at War," 1.

15. *The Film Daily Yearbook, 1943* (New York: Film Daily, 1943), 151.

16. Harmon to George Schaefer et al. May 1, 1942, Reel 30, WHP; *The Film Daily Yearbook, 1944* (New York: Film Daily, 1944), 146. Also see the documents in War Activities Committee Papers, Box 1, Series 3D, United Artists Collection, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research, Madison, Wisconsin (hereafter cited as UA Collection, WCFTR).

17. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 239. On the inclusiveness of the category, also see Dorothy Jones, "The Hollywood War Film: 1942-1944," *Film Quarterly* 1 (October 1945): 1-2.

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46. CCD, "Special Report: Japanese Motion Picture Code of Ethics," August 20, 1949, 49, Box 8578, Folder 24.

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52. Uekusa Keinosuke, *Waga seishun no Kurosawa Akira* (Tokyo: Bunshun bunko, 1985), 132.
53. Kurosawa, Uekusa, and Motoki, "Bachirusu no machi (kadai)," Box 5290, Folder 1, SCAP Records, NA; Uekusa, *Waga seishun no Kurosawa Akira*, 127.
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58. Tōhō Company, "Yoidore tenshi" screenplay, October 30, 1947, 90, Box 5290, Folder 1, SCAP Records, NA.
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61. Tōhō Company, "Intention of Production for 'Yoidore Tenshi,'" October 15, 1947, Box 5290, Folder 1, SCAP Records, NA.
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