

# On the Road to Fukushima

## The Unreported Story behind Japan's Nuclear-Media-Industrial Complex

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by Brian Covert

### PROLOGUE

The most powerful earthquake to ever hit the islands of Japan struck on the afternoon of March 11, 2011. The magnitude 9 quake, centered about 70 kilometers (43 miles) off the Pacific coast, sent oceanic shock waves racing toward Japan's northeastern Tohoku region. Located squarely on the tsunami's course were coastal areas that are also home to several nuclear power plants, such as in Fukushima Prefecture, which is situated about 240 kilometers (150 miles) from Tokyo, the most populated metropolis on the planet. As it became clear that something had gone seriously wrong and, due to the tsunami, Japan now had a nuclear catastrophe on its hands at Fukushima, all eyes turned to the Japanese press.

But the Japanese press was nowhere to be found. In the immediate aftermath of reactor meltdowns and the release of radioactivity at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, when evacuations and press restrictions had not yet been set by Japan's government, the major Japanese news companies did not have a single reporter on the ground in the area.<sup>1</sup> Such media companies in Japan usually spare no expense in having their reporters or photographers camp for days at a time outside the homes of suspects in sensationalized crime cases or when stalking scandal-tainted celebrities. But when it comes to pursuing real news stories of public concern, investigating the nation's political

or corporate centers of power, and exercising the freedom of press as enshrined in the Japanese constitution, the news media of Japan can be strangely submissive or even silent. Nowhere has that been more on display than in the reporting of the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

How is it that one of the most technologically advanced, democratic societies in the world finds itself with a press that serves more as a lapdog to the powerful than as a watchdog for the public? How does Japan's nuclear power industry in particular fare in the news media? And more importantly, how is censorship fostered in such an environment and how did it get this way?

The answers to such questions can be found by taking a look back on the road to Fukushima that Japan has traveled since the Second World War. It is the story that most of the mainstream media in Japan are failing to report or to piece together in the wake of Fukushima, perhaps because, in many ways, the media itself *is* the story.

It is the story of how the Japanese press has risen to become a global media power unto itself,<sup>2</sup> and how Japan's corporate-dominated news industry grew hand-in-glove with the nation's development of atomic energy and other major industries following the war. It is the story of a Japanese war crimes suspect imprisoned by US occupation forces, of Japan's preeminent media tycoon, of the godfather of Japanese nuclear power development, and of the father of Japanese professional baseball—all of whom happen to be the same man, the powerful Japanese predecessor of today's Rupert Murdoch.

It is the story of the power wielded by right-wing forces in Japan and, at the fringes, of the Japanese mafia. It is a story that also closely involves the United States of America as benefactor: the Central Intelligence Agency, the US Congress, and the US media establishment. It is the story of America's Cold War geopolitical priorities over the long-term security and environmental safety of the planet.

It is the story, in the end, of Japan's rise as a modern nuclear-media-industrial power from the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 up to Fukushima more than sixty-five years later. This report attempts to connect the dots of Japan's atomic past and present, providing the much bigger picture behind the individual acts of censorship surrounding Fukushima and, in doing so, will hopefully offer lessons for the future of a democratic, responsible press in Japan.

## THE SHORIKI FACTOR

If there is one person who has stood at the nexus of nuclear power, media conglomeration, politics, and industrial development in post-war Japan, it would be Matsutaro Shoriki.

Shoriki, in the early 1920s, was a high-ranking official of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, and in previous years had reportedly been involved in every major incident of police repression of social unrest.<sup>3</sup> That included the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1923, Japan's deadliest natural disaster up to then, in which more than 100,000 people died and tens of thousands of others went missing.<sup>4</sup>

After the earthquake's ensuing panic and confusion and the Japanese government's declaration of martial law, the police took the opportunity to round up ethnic Koreans living in Japan, along with leading Japanese socialists, anarchists, labor activists, and other leftist dissidents of the day—some of whom were later reported killed.<sup>5</sup> This all happened on Shoriki's watch, and a month after the quake he was promoted to a department head position within the Tokyo police hierarchy.<sup>6</sup> Shoriki's law enforcement career came to a halt a couple months later, however, when a young Communist Party supporter attempted to shoot Hirohito, the emperor-to-be, in public. Shoriki was among those dismissed from their police posts for the lapse in security surrounding the assassination attempt.

It was the end of Shoriki's days as a hard-line police official, but just the beginning of his career as a central figure in the Japanese media world.

One month after his firing from the Tokyo metropolitan police, Shoriki—with no past media experience whatsoever—found himself serving as president of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper, then a fledgling 50,000-circulation Japanese metropolitan daily paper in Tokyo.<sup>7</sup> He had bought out a controlling stake in the newspaper through a huge personal loan from a cabinet minister then serving in the Japanese government. A rebellion immediately arose among the editorial staff of the paper, but the new owner had no regrets. "Instead of committing *hara-kiri*" (ritual disembowelment) over the police firing, "I bought a newspaper," Shoriki would boast.<sup>8</sup>

The openly pro-capitalistic, anticommunistic Shoriki quickly showed himself as having a finger on the public pulse, understanding well the links between three key areas: mass entertainment, mass mobilization, and massive profits.<sup>9</sup>

His *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper company sponsored tours in Japan of major league baseball players from the US—first in 1931, then again in 1934, when the *Yomiuri* paid for US baseball legends Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and others to come and play in Japan. The next year, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper created its own baseball team, the Yomiuri Giants, in the exact image of the famed Giants baseball team of New York (later of San Francisco). In 1936, Japan's first professional baseball league was started, with Shoriki going on to serve as owner of the Yomiuri Giants pro team and as the first commissioner of the Nippon Professional Baseball league years later.

By the late 1930s and early 1940s, the winds of war were blowing in Japan. All of the Japanese press was expected by the military-dominated government to support Japan's war of aggression throughout East Asia and the Pacific, and the major news publications—from liberal to conservative—toed the line, either under government pressure or out of a sense of patriotism. Two days after the Japanese military attack on the US-occupied Pacific island of Hawaii in December 1941, the major newspapers in Japan sponsored a public rally in Tokyo denouncing the US and Britain. Shoriki, representing the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper, was reportedly one of the main speakers.<sup>10</sup>

In the fifteen years since Shoriki had taken over the paper, the *Yomiuri* had gone from being a fairly liberal Tokyo metro daily paper to being an unashamedly conservative national daily newspaper—the third-largest daily paper in Japan, in fact—with a circulation of 1.2 million.<sup>11</sup> *The Yomiuri* became the most nationalistic of Japan's mainstream news media during World War II. For his efforts, Shoriki, like other press executives in Japan, was appointed to several key government propaganda organizations during the war, including as cabinet-level advisor in the government.<sup>12</sup>

## BEHIND PRISON WALLS

Following the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed more than 200,000 people in August 1945, and Japan's formal surrender a month later, the occupation forces under General Douglas MacArthur wasted no time in sniffing out suspected war criminals as part of victor's justice, Yankee-style.

The top ranking of war criminals, "Class A," applied to persons in the highest decision-making bodies in Japan who were believed to have taken part in the starting and/or waging of war against the Allied powers. Among those who were openly demanding that the Americans include Shoriki, the *Yomiuri* newspaper president, in that Class-A category were Shoriki's longtime enemies on the Japanese political left and, incredibly, some of the newspaper magnate's own editorial staff at the *Yomiuri Shimbun*.<sup>13</sup> Long considered to be something of a "dictator" within his paper,<sup>14</sup> Shoriki was now facing a serious mutiny by his crew at a very sensitive time in Japanese history. In December 1945, he was ordered by the US occupation forces to report to Japan's notorious Sugamo Prison in central Tokyo as an inmate.

The dozens of initial suspects of Class-A war crimes at the prison made up a virtual "who's who" of the most elite of Japanese political, military, and business circles. Shoriki was placed in cellblock 2-B of the prison, directly across from a prominent industrialist who had once been head of the mighty Nissan group of corporations.<sup>15</sup> As a media baron, Shoriki commanded respect even behind bars. The Buddhist priest in charge of counseling the accused war criminals at the prison recalled: "Mr. Shoriki, former president of the 'Yomiuri Newspaper,' I had met two or three times at banquets given by the Chief Priest, whose advisors in various matters we both had been. He [Shoriki] was still as vigorous as ever. . . ."<sup>16</sup>

George Herman Ruth, one of the US baseball idols invited by Shoriki to play for Japanese audiences back in the 1930s, had little sympathy for his former patron. "That bum [Shoriki] seemed like a pretty nice fellow," Babe Ruth, now retired from baseball, said on hearing the news of Shoriki's imprisonment in Tokyo. "I guess he was too nice, come to think of it. All any of them guys did was bow to us, and even then they must have had a knife in their kimona [sic]."<sup>17</sup>

Ruth even complained that the American ballplayers had been cheated during their tour of Japan a decade before: “Shoriki didn’t pay us what he promised to pay. Most of us spent more money in Japan than we made.”<sup>18</sup>

As Shoriki and the others languished in prison not knowing their fate, the US, at least in the early stages, proceeded with its plan of “re-forming” Japan, putting a high priority on strengthening democratic institutions and the rights of the individual.

But a funny thing happened on the way to democracy: on a parallel track, the government of the United States, under the umbrella of the Truman Doctrine of President Harry Truman, was also proceeding on a “reverse course” in Japan. From 1947–48 onward, the US priority began shifting away from promoting democracy to fighting communism. General MacArthur’s occupation forces in Tokyo now sought to “strengthen, not punish” right-wing Japanese leaders so as to secure Japan as a key ally especially against the regional influence of Communist China.<sup>19</sup>

The Cold War was starting and, almost overnight, the US had gone from purging its sworn wartime enemies on the political right in Japan to purging those on the left. Japanese ultra-rightist organizations and even the *yakuza*, Japan’s mafia syndicates, were becoming useful tools for the US occupation authorities in suppressing the growing social movement of organized labor and liberal political dissent, including in the Japanese news media.<sup>20</sup>

And so it was that right-wing media mogul Matsutaro Shoriki walked out of the Tokyo prison gates on September 1, 1947—twenty-one months of prison time served and no war-crime charges filed against him.<sup>21</sup> Shoriki and many of his fellow Japanese war-criminal suspects were looking much more useful to the United States beyond—rather than behind—prison walls.

## TELEVISION AND “ATOMS FOR PEACE”

In summer 1951, with the official end of the American occupation of Japan just around the corner, Shoriki and other released Japanese war criminal suspects were finally removed from General MacArthur’s war-criminal “purge list” and were now free to resume their former

public lives. Shoriki received his pardon on August 6, the sixth anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. The very next day, he went to work on his next big project: establishing Japan's first commercial television network.<sup>22</sup>

In this venture, Shoriki had warm support from conservative members of the US Congress, who, like their right-wing counterparts in Japan, apparently saw the mass media not as a way to inform or educate the poverty-stricken Japanese masses but rather as a means to essentially feed the Japanese public a steady stream of pro-American messages of progress and development in the postwar period.

Shoriki's key ally in the US Congress for this was Karl Mundt, a Republican senator from South Dakota. Through the mid-1940s, Mundt had served as an active member of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) that was investigating suspected Communist infiltration throughout US society. During that same period, Mundt pushed a bill through Congress in 1948 that became law, creating the *Voice of America* short-wave radio propaganda program.<sup>23</sup> But Mundt had an even bigger dream: using the rising medium of television to carry VOA broadcasts throughout the world, including in Japan, as a way to counter the growing global "red" menace. Mundt called his grand plan "Vision of America."<sup>24</sup>

It was Hidetoshi Shibata, then a popular conservative, America-friendly radio commentator on Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK, Japan's public broadcaster) and a former *Yomiuri* newspaper reporter under Shoriki, who eventually hooked up Mundt and Shoriki.<sup>25</sup> On August 14, only a week after Shoriki's pardon as a US-branded war crimes suspect, Mundt, at a press conference in Washington DC accompanied by a member of Japan's parliament, announced plans for a team of three American "experts" to fly to Japan the following week to firm up the plans for this new Japanese TV broadcasting network.<sup>26</sup> Another week later, the Japanese and American sides met in Tokyo and worked out the details: it was agreed that instead of making this new TV station a part of Mundt's worldwide "Vision of America" scheme, it would be a wholly Japanese-owned and Japanese-run network financed in part by airing *Voice of America* radio broadcasts within Japan.<sup>27</sup>

Shoriki had meanwhile regained his old position as the largest shareholder of the *Yomiuri* paper, and now persuaded the heads of his

archival daily newspapers, the liberal *Asahi* and *Mainichi*, to join the conservative *Yomiuri* in putting up joint capital of about ¥2 billion (\$25 million) for the TV station. Shoriki also used his highly placed connections in Japanese government and financial institutions to further strengthen support for the new station, promoting the TV network as potentially attracting three million Japanese viewers within five years.<sup>28</sup>

In July 1952, just three months after the US occupation bureaucracy had packed its bags and gone home, the new Nippon Television Network (NTV) was granted its broadcasting license by Japanese media regulators. Shoriki became the first president of NTV in October 1952, and in August 1953, the station went on the air with black-and-white television programs. Now it was just a matter of getting the message out to the masses.

### **“Kilowatts, not killing”**

At the United Nations in December 1953, US President Dwight Eisenhower announced the start of his “Atoms for Peace” program. Several months later in September 1954, US atomic energy commissioner Thomas Murray stood before a convention of American steelworkers at Atlantic City, New Jersey, and called for a nuclear power plant to be built in Japan with US know-how and manpower as “a dramatic and Christian gesture which would lift all of us far above the recollection of the carnage” of Hiroshima and Nagasaki nine years before.<sup>29</sup> An editorial in the *Washington Post* immediately and enthusiastically supported this “brilliant idea,” stating: “How better, indeed, to dispel the impression in Asia that the United States regards Orientals merely as nuclear cannon fodder!”<sup>30</sup>

A few months after that in early 1955, Representative Sidney Yates, a Democrat from Illinois, took it even further when he stood on the floor of the US Congress and called for that proposed first nuclear power plant in Japan to be constructed, of all places, in the atomic-bombed city of Hiroshima. He was then sponsoring a bill in Congress for a 60,000-kilowatt nuclear power generating plant to be built in Hiroshima as part of Eisenhower’s “Atoms for Peace”—a power plant, Yates said, that would “make the atom an instrument for kilowatts rather than killing.”<sup>31</sup> (Plans for the Hiroshima nuclear plant eventually fizzled out.)



Back in Japan around that same time, Matsutaro Shoriki, while still president of NTV, campaigned in February 1955 for a seat in his own country's House of Representatives and won. He was appointed to the cabinet-level position of minister of state. Everything now seemed to be in place. For the better part of 1955, Eisenhower's newly established United States Information Service (USIS), with its mission of overseas "public diplomacy" (read: propaganda) and Shoriki's *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper, which now had a colossal circulation of more than two million readers,<sup>32</sup> worked closely together on plans to bring America's atomic-age vision to the Japanese people.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Atom Returns to Japan**

On November 1, 1955, the USIS and Shoriki's *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper kicked off the opening of a futuristic, traveling "Atoms for Peace" exhibition at an event hall in downtown Tokyo, not far from the Imperial Palace.

The fifteen sections of the exhibition, touted as the first of its kind in Far East Asia, explained "how the boundless wealth of the atom has been unlocked, and now it is already being used in many ways for man's benefit in medicine and industry." The exhibition was to be shown in Tokyo for a month and a half, then rotated on to seven other major Japanese cities.<sup>34</sup> The exhibition included profiles of ten pioneering nuclear scientists; a small demonstration nuclear reactor; a movie about the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; panel displays; and an introduction to the medical, agricultural, and industrial uses of atomic isotopes.<sup>35</sup> On New Year's Day of 1956, while the exhibition was still touring Japan, state minister Shoriki was appointed the first chairman of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, a move praised by US atomic energy commissioner Lewis Strauss as "an important contribution to international peace."<sup>36</sup>

The "Atoms for Peace" exhibition finally arrived in Hiroshima in May 1956 and was shown for three weeks at the recently opened Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, located within the city's Peace Memorial Park commemorating the victims of the 1945 US atomic bombing. An estimated 110,000 Japanese visitors came to see the "Atoms for Peace" exhibition in Hiroshima, and a reported 2.5 million people had seen the exhibition nationwide.<sup>37</sup> At the end of it all,

notwithstanding some public and press criticism that arose, the “Atoms for Peace” exhibition in Japan was considered a resounding success, primarily due to the positive spin given to it by the Japanese media, especially the *Yomiuri* newspaper and NTV network headed by Shoriki.<sup>38</sup>

### CODE NAME: PODAM

Tetsuo Arima, a professor of media studies at the elite Waseda University in Tokyo, goes where the Japanese mainstream press fears to tread in researching and making public the CIA’s past connections to the media and nuclear power in Japan, having published several books on the subject in recent years. He has visited the US National Security Archive in Washington DC and obtained almost 500 pages of once-secret documents detailing the introduction of atomic energy technology to Japan.<sup>39</sup>

“Relations with PODAM have now progressed to the stage where outright cooperation can be initiated,” Arima quotes one of those CIA documents as reading, concerning political maneuvering against the Japan Communist Party back in the 1950s.<sup>40</sup> Another document approves “PODAM” as being used to gain information about political developments and trends in Japan, along with information on persons working in Japanese newspapers and media. PODAM, the code name of a CIA asset, was none other than Japanese media tycoon Matsutarō Shoriki.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, a cursory check of the National Security Archive website ([gwu.edu/~nsarchiv](http://gwu.edu/~nsarchiv)) reveals Matsutarō Shoriki as being listed under the cryptonym PODAM as well as “POJACKPOT-1.”<sup>42</sup> Equally revealing is Shoriki’s TV station, Nippon Television, being listed in the archive’s CIA file index as part of a project called “KMCASHIER.”<sup>43</sup> Project KMCASHIER, as Arima notes, was a failed 1953 US plan to construct a massive microwave communications network covering four Asian countries (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines) as part of a larger international microwave communications network. Japan’s role in KMCASHIER was listed under the CIA code name of “POHIKE.”<sup>44</sup> “POBULK” is listed in the archive index as the CIA code name for the *Yomiuri*, Shoriki’s newspaper.

Arima found also that Shibata, the popular NHK radio newscaster who initially put Shoriki in touch with US senator Mundt of VOA fame, had contacted and met in Tokyo with persons connected with the CIA (presumably on Shoriki's behalf), both before and after Shoriki obtained the broadcast license for NTV.<sup>45</sup> The professor also came across a document dated May 5, 1955—placing it around the time of joint preparations by the USIS and Shoriki's *Yomiuri* newspaper for the "Atoms for Peace" exhibition—in which a "provisional" security clearance was sought for Shoriki as an "unwitting cutout."<sup>46</sup> This indicates that Shoriki would have been considered a trusted intermediary for passing along highly sensitive information, yet not necessarily aware of the details of that information or exactly how he was being used for such intelligence purposes.

According to one CIA document that Arima uncovered, Shoriki as atomic energy commissioner was so impatient to get nuclear power online in Japan following the 1955–56 "Atoms For Peace" exhibition that he seriously considered buying a small reactor to power his own home as a public show of atomic energy's benefits.<sup>47</sup> And what was PODAM's urgent motivation? To help reach his political aspiration of becoming the prime minister of Japan.

### THE DEEP TIES THAT BIND

Japanese nuclear power, industrial production (especially in electronics), and the news media grew side by side in the critical Cold War years that would see Japan elevated to the status of "economic miracle." Without doubt, from the end of the Second World War onward, the media industry has been a crucial part of that whole corporate synergy in Japan—not an objective, neutral force standing outside it.<sup>48</sup>

That is still the situation today for the most part. The electric power companies in Japan advertise widely in the major print and broadcast media companies. Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)—operator of the Fukushima nuclear plant and two others—alone spent about ¥27 billion (\$330 million) on public relations and other events promoting nuclear energy in 2010, ranking tenth highest among all Japanese corporations in the amount of money spent on such expens-

es that year.<sup>49</sup> Of that amount, TEPCO spent ¥9 billion (\$110 million) directly on advertisements placed in the media.<sup>50</sup>

So what effect does this kind of relationship between nuclear energy and media in Japan have on news coverage? According to author and independent journalist Osamu Aoki, a former reporter for Japan's Kyodo News wire service, "Newspapers, TV, magazines—it makes no difference: because they receive these huge advertising monies, it's hard for them to criticize the power companies, especially with nuclear power. It's a taboo that's been going on for some time."<sup>51</sup>

Where Japan differs from the US and other developed countries is in the sheer breadth and depth of external press controls and media self-censorship in the form of the "*kisha club*" (reporters' club) system.<sup>52</sup>

The *kisha clubs* are press clubs attached to various Japanese government agencies (from the highest levels of government down to local government agencies), political parties, major corporations, consumer organizations . . . and electric power companies. At last count there were an estimated 800 to 1,000 *kisha clubs* nationwide. Membership in such clubs is mostly restricted to the big Japanese newspaper and broadcasting companies, with smaller Japanese media and the foreign press normally not allowed in. One important rule: *kisha club* reporters are not usually allowed to "scoop" fellow club members on any given story, even if they are reporters for rival Japanese news companies. In most cases a *kisha club* is based on the premises of the institution that the reporters are covering, with the operating expenses of the club paid by that institution. The *kisha club* rooms generally are off-limits to the average Japanese citizen, even when located inside of public buildings.

TEPCO, like other power companies around Japan, has its own in-house *kisha club*. And what was the chairman of TEPCO doing at the time of the March 11 quake/tsunami and subsequent Fukushima nuclear plant disaster? He was hosting Japanese journalists on a press junket in China, courtesy of the power company.<sup>53</sup>

According to an independent journalist attending a press conference hosted by TEPCO soon after the accident on March 11, 2011, not one of the power company's *kisha club* reporters got around to ask-

ing the TEPCO chairman at press conferences about the possibility of plutonium leaks from the Fukushima plant until the independent journalist himself raised the critical question two weeks after the accident. Another independent Japanese reporter working for Internet media was shouted down by the TEPCO kisha club reporters when he tried to ask the TEPCO chairman a question at the same press conference. These are not uncommon occurrences at kisha clubs in Japan.<sup>54</sup>

How did all of this translate in terms of Japanese versus overseas reporting on Fukushima soon after the accident? There were often major gaps between the two. On the morning of March 12, the day after the accident, for example, Japan's public broadcaster, NHK television, was telling evacuees from Fukushima to calmly "walk instead of drive to an evacuation area" while also repeating Japanese government assurances that there was "no immediate danger."<sup>55</sup> That same morning, the tone of reports carried on BBC News, as just one foreign news media source, was one of skepticism of such Japanese government assurances rather than blind acceptance.<sup>56</sup> That kind of gap between Japanese and overseas coverage would widen considerably as the Fukushima crisis went on, with the Japanese public increasingly voicing distrust of their government and suspicious that Japan's media were not reporting the whole story.

That is certainly true for one related issue that has been underreported in Japan for years: the so-called "nuclear gypsies"—the thousands of day laborers, many unskilled and homeless, that make up a large part of the workforce at Japan's fifty-four nuclear power plants nationwide—and the *yakuza* (organized crime) syndicates as suppliers of such temporary workers to the industry.<sup>57</sup> The underside of Japan's economic miracle in the postwar era was the existence of pools of cheap, "disposable" labor from the slums of the big cities, such as the Sanya district in Tokyo and Kamagasaki district in Osaka, working in the vast construction industry with which the *yakuza* have long been aligned. But the electric power companies today also use such day laborers, doing highly dangerous work with little or no job security, and many of these nuclear workers are financially exploited by the *yakuza* and other labor agents as well.

It has been left mainly to independent journalists in Japan to uncover and expose these facts. One of them, photographer Kenji Hi-

guchi, had worked for decades before Fukushima, trying to tell an indifferent Japanese media and public the stories of these exploited, intimidated nuclear power plant workers and the illnesses that afflicted them after they had worked at the plants. Higuchi's efforts to get at the truth are the focus of a short documentary film, *Nuclear Ginza*, broadcasted in 1995 on Britain's Channel 4 television.<sup>58</sup> More recently, another Japanese independent journalist, Tomohiko Suzuki, went undercover as a day laborer at the Fukushima nuclear power plant after the March 2011 accident and found that the *yakuza* were still recruiting day laborers to work there, with top management at the Fukushima plant—like most construction companies in Japan—not necessarily knowing (or caring) how these workers got hired there in the first place.<sup>59</sup>

### THE SELLING OF A “MIRACLE MAN”

To be fair, the Japanese people are not the only ones who have been sold a bill of goods about nuclear power and been shielded from seeing its dark side by the media. Americans have too, and the US media role over the years is one that has to be acknowledged in this post-Fukushima age. This is most clearly seen in the US media treatment of Matsutaro Shoriki and the vital role he played in bringing US-sponsored atomic energy to Japan during the Cold War years.

In 1946, six months after the American occupation of Japan had begun, the US progressive magazine the *Nation* correctly noted how “Shoriki's yellow journalism, combined with the scandalously low wages he paid his newsmen and printers, brought him rich profits, and his fervent support of aggression [in the Pacific War] won him a seat in the House of Peers and a position as Cabinet adviser.”<sup>60</sup>

Compare that with the glowing coverage a few years later by US mainstream media: Shoriki as “bitterly anti-Communist” ally to the US and Japan's “most successful publisher,” known “among Western newsmen as the [William Randolph] ‘Hearst of Japan’” (*Time* magazine, 1954);<sup>61</sup> Shoriki as “father of professional baseball in Japan” who nobly sent then-US president Eisenhower an ancient suit of Japanese armor as a show of goodwill (*Washington Post*, 1954);<sup>62</sup> Shoriki as “Japan's Mr. Atom,” a man who “has made a brilliant success of

nearly everything he has tried” and who, “if he lives long enough . . . will make Japan one of the leading atomic powers of the world” (*New York Times Magazine*, 1957);<sup>63</sup> and Shoriki as pioneering TV network president aiming to make Japan the first country in the world to have color television (*Time*, 1959).<sup>64</sup>

Then there was the 1963 *Time* tribute to Shoriki as art connoisseur, head of his *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper’s own symphony orchestra, architect of the “Yomiuri Land” amusement park in Tokyo named for his newspaper, and all-around Man for the Millennium. The article quoted Bob Considine, a well-known columnist for the Hearst media empire in the US, who sounded almost shocked with awe: “[W]henever editors speak of the great press lords of our age, they often mention Hearst and sometimes [Canadian-British tycoon Lord] Beaverbrook. But they *always* mention Shoriki.”<sup>65</sup>

Just a few years earlier, this same Hearst underling and ghostwriter, Considine, had written the foreword to the American publishing industry’s own nod to Japan’s premier media baron in a 200-page book titled *Shoriki: Miracle Man of Japan—A Biography*. The book was published in 1957 by Exposition Press, back then a leading publisher of so-called “vanity books” that are essentially paid for by the person who is the subject of the biography—which, in this case, would have been Shoriki himself. The book was coauthored by the publishing company’s president, Edward Uhlan. A *New York Times* obituary would later list *Shoriki: Miracle Man of Japan* as one of the late Uhlan’s most noteworthy accomplishments.<sup>66</sup>

All in all, *Shoriki: Miracle Man of Japan* stands out as a cleverly crafted work of disinformation. It covers up Shoriki’s infamous reputation as a police bureaucrat before the Second World War, plays down his wartime role in anti-US propaganda and war-criminal imprisonment by the US after the war, and plays up his subsequent achievements in baseball, news media, and atomic energy in Japan—with a strong line of anticommunist sentiment running throughout. Newspaper, magazine, and book publishing media in the US had now weighed in with Shoriki and his crusade for a pro-America, pro-nuclear Japan, and on the whole found him to be on the right side of the cause.

## EPILOGUE: THE ROAD FROM FUKUSHIMA

When Matsutaro Shoriki died in 1969 at age eighty-four while in office as a representative of Japan's parliament (and while still NTV network president), his obituary in the *Washington Post* was surprisingly sparse. Nowhere did the *Post* mention that Shoriki, as Japan's first atomic energy commissioner, had been Washington's point man on nuclear energy development after the war—indeed, he had led Japan to embrace atomic power as a prime energy resource ten years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Also missing was Shoriki's tainted past as a former police official and as a prisoner during the US occupation of Japan. And of course, there was no mention at all of the CIA's interest in Shoriki as an asset of the agency.<sup>67</sup>

Just a few years later in 1976, however, the late Shoriki's name surfaced in connection with the "Lockheed scandal," a major political scandal in Japan involving bribe money paid by the US aerospace corporation Lockheed to a former Japanese prime minister. The conservative *Yomiuri* newspaper denied allegations of Shoriki, its ex-president, having been a past "recipient of CIA favors" and spoke of suing for libel the American publications that carried the stories.<sup>68</sup>

If most Japanese people know or remember anything at all about the late press lord today, it is probably the "Matsutaro Shoriki Award" bestowed in Shoriki's name every year with great fanfare to some outstanding Japanese baseball figure by NTV network and *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper—whose circulation of thirteen million readers today makes it reputedly the largest daily newspaper in the world.<sup>69</sup> The majority of Americans know even less about Shoriki, including the fact that the prestigious Museum of Fine Arts in Boston today has a respectable chair position named after him.<sup>70</sup> And for their part, few if any Japanese mainstream media companies in their news reporting are linking Shoriki to nuclear energy and the Fukushima accident of March 11, 2011—even though it was his influence and vision of a fully atomic-powered Japan, with firm support by the US, that had led Japan as a nation to that place.

Demands have arisen in the wake of Fukushima for Japanese government nuclear regulators and politicians to be more independent of the nuclear power industry that they are supposed to be keeping



an eye on.<sup>71</sup> But looking to the future, there is one more party that equally needs to be separated from Japan's nuclear power establishment (or "nuclear power village," as it's called), and that is the Japanese press. The media in Japan, like the government regulators, have been intimate with the nation's atomic energy club from the very start. Until the day when the Japanese news media are finally weaned off the nation's nuclear power village, the whole truth about nuclear energy—and the corruption and great public dangers surrounding it—will continue to be mostly unseen and unknown in this country. Disengaging the Japanese press from the nuclear powers-that-be will not be easy, but it must be done.

One place to start would be to begin dismantling the Japanese *ki-sha* club system. This too will be no easy task, given the deep historical and institutional roots of the system. But if the toothless Japanese lapdog press of today is to regain the public credibility at home and abroad that it lost in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster—and if it is to earn the respect that it would deserve as a true watchdog of the people over Japan's centers of power in the future—then it is the Japanese news media that must now take the first steps in that direction on this long and uncertain road away from Fukushima.

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BRIAN COVERT is an independent journalist and author based in Kawanishi, western Japan. He has worked for United Press International news service in Japan, as staff reporter for three of Japan's English-language daily newspapers, and as contributor to Japanese and overseas newspapers and magazines. He is currently a lecturer in the Department of Media, Journalism, and Communications at Doshisha University in Kyoto.

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