The Scientific Community Post-Defeat

BEFORE GHQ’S ARRIVAL

Immediately after they heard the Imperial Edict of surrender many scientists set about burning secret military documents. On the previous day, 14 August 1945, the Deputy Minister of Army issued a directive to eliminate official documents. Military related documents in particular were to be burned before the incoming Occupation Forces could confiscate them and use them as evidence of Japanese war crimes. On 15 August, the smoke of burning documents issued forth from every research institute and many universities.

Ordinance resources were released even before the surrender. The Osaka Military Arsenal started to transfer their essential resources to private sector factories on 9 August when they realized that the day of surrender was approaching. The Kantarō Suzuki Cabinet believed that when the Occupation Forces came, they would confiscate everything; hence before then all resources had to be covered up and dispersed. Covered up resources amounted to one third of the Army’s total resources and 100 billion yen worth (in current prices) of Navy resources. These resources have been estimated to be the equivalent of four years supply of the peacetime economy or one year of wartime military production. GHQ (General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP)) tried to prevent this hoarding and ordered the Japanese government to stop it. The Naruhiko Higashikuni Cabinet deliberately delayed taking action for eight days, but on 28 August, the Cabinet called back dispersed military resources.1

Until the end of the war, the science sections of universities were engaged in mobilization research, and laboratories had been evacuated to the countryside in spite of their staff’s continuing teaching commitments. The period between the surrender and the Occupation Forces’ arrival was very confusing; rumours were rife that the Occupation troops would rob, rape and kill Japanese people. So a lot of people, including teachers and students, stayed home to wait and see what would happen. The secretariat of the university requested home-staying teachers and students to come back to school.2 Professors could not foresee what sort of life awaited them and many passed the time in a state of apathy. Many professional military engineers who taught war-related disciplines in universities resigned before the Occupation Forces arrived in anticipation of a purge of positions.
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When the Occupation Forces arrived in September the Japanese realized that this peacetime invasion was not so disorderly. Thus, in the autumn, students who had been evacuated to the countryside returned to school and course work resumed.

PROBLEMS WITH DEMOBILIZATION

The arrival of the Occupation Forces, though, did not alleviate the confusion. The first priority of GHQ – as discussed in Part 1 of this book – was the demilitarization of Japan. Whilst disbanding military units and closing down the weapons and ordinance industries was confusing enough, demilitarizing military-related S&T research facilities created special problems. Most of these facilities were to be reassigned to non-military institutions rather than disbanded. But the command channels were confused and where a particular laboratory was to be transferred to was not clear.

The Japanese Government tried to preserve ex-military facilities and personnel by transferring entire institutions to peacetime bureaus; for example, the facilities and personnel of the Navy were to be transferred to the Ministry of Transportation.

To further complicate matters, inventories and records of facilities and equipment had been burned at the time of surrender and it was thus impossible to check them. All ex-military facilities and equipment were supposed to be confiscated by the Occupation Forces and put on reparations lists. If all of their mobile resources were to be confiscated by GHQ, though, they figured that they might as well take them home for their private use. With no adequate records, those who lived nearby and could carry munitions or equipment items could get almost anything released from their workplaces. These items were often sold and circulated on the black market. During the period of confusion a lot of police activity focused on the black market operations and criminal cases were often reported in the newspapers. Police frequently uncovered stolen goods.

The literature of science and technology suffered a similar fate. The documents and books related to wartime military action were all to be inspected by GHQ. Fearing censorship by the Occupation Forces, secret documents were either concealed or transferred to the non-military sector for preservation – e.g. the Imperial University of Tokyo or Hibiya Public Library – in order to avoid GHQ searches. Navy documents had been evacuated during the war to protect them from US air raids. After the San Francisco Peace Treaty these resources were partly returned to the Navy College (Etajima) or the University of the Coast Guard (Kaijō Hoan Daigaku) located at Kure.

REPARATIONS AND RESTITUTIONS OF MILITARY-AFFILIATED S&T FACILITIES

Edwin Pauley, the head of the Reparations Mission to Japan, arrived on 13 November 1945 as a Special Ambassador. He listed machine tools, etc. as reparations items. On 6 December he decided to dismantle half of Japan’s production capability. In November 1946, the final inventory of the Pauley