

## Chapter 4:

### Citizens' activism and the Intrepid Four

In the following three chapters I will explore the ideals and symbolic practices, the national identity that emerged within protest. Through specific sites of resistance – assisting American deserters, the 1968 Sasebo demonstration, and the University struggle – competing and sometimes anomalous conceptions of the democracy and autonomy, were brought to the fore, contested and negotiated. These sites not only highlight the centrality of protest to postwar political culture and national identity, they also provide insights into the character of the nation, the boundaries of its imagination, and the shifting terrain of its articulation.

On the issue of identity and its formation and dissemination Stuart Hall writes:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.<sup>1</sup>

Through the use of the term 'production' Hall highlights the contingency of identity, the fluidity of its boundaries and the imagination that underpins it. Identity does not simply exist, it is always becoming - it is 'produced' - through a complex process of articulation, negotiation and representation. Identity sometimes idles; it dwells for a moment upon a set of symbolic

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' in Rutherford, J. (ed), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1990, 222.

practices and ideals but then shudders on. The production of nationality is never complete.

As I have indicated in previous chapters national identity is at once unstable -prone to the whims of disparate groups and ideas (accidental); while at the same time unambiguously political - mobilized in a multiple of often contradictory and anomalous ways (strategic). During the 1960s in Japan nationality as a discursive set of references was being produced through resistance; the ways in which nationality was imagined was based not simply on the tyranny of the state or even the states' control over the nations discursive formation, but on the ability of antiwar activists, students and citizens to dislodge and re-inscribe its imaginings. Protest gave 'the people' an avenue through which to articulate a sense of nationality, and to determine its discursive boundaries, outside the auspices of the state.

A number of different types of protest were adopted in 1960's Japan. The first that I will discuss revolved around locating the nation within an international setting, as the United States emerged as both a positive and negative reference for Japanese activists. By defining themselves in relation to their US counterparts, activists defined and nurtured new conceptions of an autonomous Japanese subject.

The conceptions of protest revealed in this chapter are based on the story of the 'Intrepid Four,' United States servicemen who deserted the military while on rest and recreation from the war in Vietnam in late 1967. When these servicemen disembarked from their aircraft carrier the 'Intrepid' and contacted antiwar group Beheiren, they were stepping into what was

described as a ‘sea of active citizens’ and protest.<sup>2</sup> Being one of the first major cases of desertion from the Vietnam War and falling into the hands of a prominent group of antiwar activists, the episode exploded onto the front page of newspapers internationally. For Beheiren it represented an opportunity to further the antiwar cause and highlight the complicity of the Japanese government within the US war effort.

The assistance of the four men represented a new form of citizens’ activism (*shimin undō*), a style of protest that saw dissident America used as a catalyst for fundamental social change and the fashioning of a national, democratic citizenry in Japan. It was not simply cultural borrowing or ‘learning from the west’ but an episode in which radical images of America were used as a catalyst for domestic political change. Beheiren was concerned with challenging the way in which people thought about democratic practice and participation and encouraging them to embody the ideals of democracy and citizenship.

The episode graphically illustrates the role of America in the production of the nation and the way in which representations of America shifted over the course of the Vietnam War. The American deserters and the civil rights movement, emerged as important signifiers for participatory democracy while also exposing the ambivalence of the American-instituted reforms of the Occupation period as well as the limitations of Japan’s parliamentary political system. Through an examination of the Intrepid Four episode, and the concurrent portrayal of America, I will highlight the centrality of individual responsibility and participation to the postwar national imaginary.

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<sup>2</sup> These expressions emerged in many accounts of Beheiren activism. See for example, Sakamoto Yoshie, “‘Ningen no umi’ no naka ni dassōhei tachi wa ita,’ *Jūgoshi Nōto Sengo Hen*, 8, Inpakuto Shuppankai, Tokyo, pp. 172-175.

Even within this one style of activism the conceptions of autonomy and nationality constantly shifted, making it difficult to read for significance. Over the course of the late 1960s the signified (deserters) constantly threatened the representation in which they were understood; American radicalism proved an ambiguous model for Japanese democratic renewal; and activists became increasingly introspective in order to articulate a sense of postwar nationality. The representation of desertion by Beheiren highlights the way in which identity is contested and nurtured, and the role that legends, heroes, ideals, visions and memories play in the production of nationality. National identity was not simply determined or extolled, it was produced, performed and constantly reevaluated.

### **The press and controversy**

On 23 October 1967, while sitting in a cafe in the shopping district of Ginza in Tokyo, four US Marines decided not to return to their aircraft carrier the *Intrepid* moored at Yokosuka near Yokohama. The men had been due back at the base a couple of hours before and it would have taken at least two hours travel to return to their ship from Ginza. They had, almost inadvertently, gone AWOL and together decided to take their chances and seek a permanent escape route from the war in Vietnam. The *Intrepid*, having arrived at the port on October 17 from the waters of Tonkin Bay, was due to head out to sea again on October 25, giving the men a week of rest and recreation in Japan. But even before the ship had departed the four men seemed determined not to return.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This account is taken from a number of sources, including: Sekiya Shigeru & Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga Ita Jidai: JATEC aru Shimin Undō no Kiroku*, Shisō no Kagakusha, 1998; Tsurumi Shunsuke et.al (eds.) *Kaetekitta Dassōhei: Betonamu Senjō kara 25 nen Terry Whitmore*, Daisan Shokan, Tokyo, 1994; Kurihara Yoshio (et.al.), 'JATEC: mienai kyowa kuni,' *Playboy*, 2 parts, Nihon pun, January & February, 1981, pp. 93-107, pp. 92-98.

The four left the café and wandered the streets of Ginza considering their next move. There were approximately 40 000 US soldiers stationed at the bases throughout Japan in 1967 and usually another 40 000 in Japan on rest and recreation furloughs. Many came when they were granted a short reprieve from the fighting in nearby Vietnam.<sup>4</sup> The expensive shopping district of Ginza was perhaps not the most popular of destinations for the men but it was close to the so called ‘pleasure quarters’ of Yūrakuchō, fashionable among GI’s. Thus their presence would have gone unnoticed by most. What is perhaps surprising is that they encountered a ‘hippie’ among the well-dressed shoppers, who despite very limited English, was willing to assist them in their plight. Yamada Kenshi, a twenty-year-old student from the Liberal Arts Department at Tokyo University took them to a small café called *Fūgetsudō* in the less salubrious Shinjuku, and introduced them to some of his friends. Over the next few days the men stayed in various apartments around Tokyo considering their options and hoping desperately that their Japanese hosts could think of a way to help them out.

Yamada recalls sitting in his tiny four and half tatami mat apartment in Sasazuka, just a few stops west of Shinjuku on the Keio Line, considering the options that the men faced and how best to help them. At this stage they were completely unaware of their legal status in Japan and the best course of action. ‘I suggested a number of options,’ [notes Yamada]

including reporting back to the Base and surrendering to the Japanese police but the response was a very definite ‘No!’ The men had a strong will and they were keen to stay in Japan.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, Vol. 8, Kodansha Ltd. Tokyo, 1983, 160.

<sup>5</sup> Yamada Kenshi, ‘Shinjuku no roji de umareta JATEC no me,’ in Sekiya Shigeru & Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga ita Jidai: JATEC aru Shimin Undō no Kiroku*, Shisō no Kagakusha, 1998, 12.

Yamada also indicated that, while they did not want to get involved with a political organization they did want to make a statement against the war and outline the reasons for their desertion. Yamada's first efforts to assist the students saw him seek the advice of one of his professors in the Liberal Arts Department but he met with a stern rebuttal and was told to turn the men over to the police. In a report that surfaced after the story of the deserters had hit the press titled 'Hippie Tōdai Student Hides US Deserters' the Professor is quoted as saying:

All of a sudden K sought my assistance over the telephone, saying that men from Vietnam were in trouble because they entered Japan without passports. Since K was not a particularly friendly student, and also because I feared that a student of a national university had violated the law, I turned down the request and strongly reproved him.<sup>6</sup>

Finally Yamada, with the guidance and assistance of a few others, contacted the antiwar activists in Beheiren and told them about the situation. On October 28 he met with Tsurumi Yoshiyuki and Yoshikawa Yūichi at the Komaba Campus of Tokyo University. Members of Beheiren were more supportive and were keen to help the four men escape and make their plight known to the world. On November 13, 1967, Oda Makoto, Tsurumi Shunsuke, Hidaka Rokurō and Yoshikawa Yūichi held a press conference in Kanda, Tokyo, announcing that they had assisted the four United States Marines stationed at the US Base Yokosuka to desert their battalion and flee Japan. The press conference began with a documentary of the four soldiers made a couple of weeks before, and was accompanied by statements outlining the reason for their decision. The film was followed by Oda Makoto's statement declaring his support for the actions

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<sup>6</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, November 16, 1967.

of the soldiers and outlining the position of anti-Vietnam War activists. He began:

We, the concerned citizens of Beheiren, as representatives of the Japanese peoples anti-Vietnam War ideals, wish to declare our strong support for the courageous actions of the four soldiers.<sup>7</sup>

The press conference continued for hours as journalists endeavoured to establish the details of the deserters' movements and the nature of Beheiren's involvement. The media had reported upon earlier cases of soldiers deserting or going AWOL (absent without leave) but only within the framework of crime and the associated threat to local communities. Instances of theft and rape by soldiers at the US Bases was an obvious cause for concern and AWOL soldiers were seen as the source of many of the problems. Thus, earlier cases had little significance as 'anti-war activism' or a political gesture, they simply fuelled resentment towards the American presence and underscored the antagonism of the local residents. The media's approach to the issue of AWOL soldiers can be partly explained by the fact that information with regard to activities at the bases was only available to the press when the local police were contacted for assistance.<sup>8</sup> Thus, far from being antiwar activists and exponents of peace, the AWOL soldier was invariably seen as a criminal who had escaped the grasp of the US Military and was roaming the streets of Japan. In fact, in light of the bars, drugs and crime that emerged around bases in Japan, it was an image with a very real referent.

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<sup>7</sup> Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, 'Yon nin no Amerika heishi nitsuite no seimei,' in *Beheiren Nāsu*, December 1967, Hon Kominiketosha, Tokyo, 1974, 96.

<sup>8</sup> The local police near the US Yokosuka Naval Base, where the aircraft carrier *Intrepid* had been docked, had assisted in the search for 16 AWOL soldiers in 1966 and over 20 in 1967. They had a special Liaison Section which was contacted in cases when the soldiers were (1) armed (2) had committed crimes such as burglary or rape in the past (3) had not returned to the base after more than two weeks.

On 13 November this focus was challenged. Unlike the earlier cases the Intrepid Four were not depicted as a threat to the community or the perpetrators of crime. The media savvy Beheiren activists presented an enthralling and mysterious saga and the idea of desertion, a term previously used in reference to all cases of AWOL soldiers, was presented in a radically different light. The media were impatient to know the detail but, despite a barrage of questions, Beheiren representatives divulged very little information focusing instead on the significance of the men's actions and the importance of antiwar activism. In the issue of *Beheiren Nyūsu* published immediately after the episode Oda writes:

We had intended to finish the press conference at around 3pm but it was not until about 4pm that the one hundred or so journalists and reporters finally let up. 'What are the names of the four men? What is their rank? What ship and squadron are they from? Have they left the country yet?' We were swamped by questions concerning the details of the case.<sup>9</sup>

Headlines in the following days newspapers reflected the mystery that surrounded the case and the secrecy that Beheiren was able to maintain. Under the front-page headline '*Four Marines Desert a US Aircraft Carrier: From Yokosuke comes an anti war appeal*', the *Mainichi Shimbun* reported on the uncertainty of events as well as outlining the reaction of the Japanese government and the rights of the soldiers with regard to the law.<sup>10</sup> The *Yomiuri Shimbun* focused on the international dimension of the episode reporting on the number of deserters that had appeared in Europe. Quoting the London Times the *Yomiuri* stated that up to 1000 soldiers were deserting each year, three quarters of who were

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<sup>9</sup> Oda Makoto, 'Hokubaku ni Sanka Shitakunai: Dassōsuihei Beheiren ga shien,' *Beheiren Nyūsu*, Hon Kominiketosha, Tokyo, 1974, 93.

<sup>10</sup> *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 14, 1967.

trying to evade the war in Vietnam. It also drew attention to organizations that had been formed to assist the soldiers in both France and Sweden.<sup>11</sup>

The *Asahi Shimbun* ran a number of headlines, on separate pages and in alternate scripts, all of them playing on the intrigue involved in the case: 'A whirlpool of hot air and doubt,' 'Are they real? Where are they now?' And, in reference to the press conference, 'Sharp questions, cautious answers.'<sup>12</sup> The *Asahi* suggested that the four men may have already left the country, indicating that asylum in Japan was impossible under existing law. This suggestion was strongly refuted by the Foreign Ministry, which issued a statement the following day.

When a US soldier in Japan leaves for a third country, he must present a travel permit issued by the US Forces in addition to an identification card. It is not conceivable that the deserters in the case this time have already left for a third country.<sup>13</sup>

This conjecture proved to be wishful thinking on behalf of the Minister who, like the Japanese press, knew very little about the actual details of the men's whereabouts. The press and the government were clearly taken by surprise by the Beheiren announcement and, without any substantial detail concerning the events, could do little more than analyze the legal and political implications of the developments.

As noted in a previous chapter, Prime Minister Satō had, amid massive and sometimes violent protest, departed for the United States on November 12, 1967 for talks with President Johnson concerning the Vietnam War and the return of Okinawa. With the Prime Minister in

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<sup>11</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, November 14, 1967.

<sup>12</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, November 14, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> A statement made by the Foreign Ministry Public Information and Cultural Affairs Bureau Director. *Tokyo Shimbun* evening edition, Nov. 14, 1967.

Washington, the ‘Intrepid Four’ press conference proved timely and Beheiren went to some trouble to ensure that it did not escape the attention of the media in the United States. Before making the documentary they had contacted Howard Zinn, an American antiwar activist who had participated in conferences and symposiums with Beheiren members previously, and arranged for someone to visit Japan and ‘verify the existence of the four soldiers.’<sup>14</sup> Earnest Young, a Professor at Dartmouth College in the United States and formerly in the Embassy under Reischauer, arrived in Japan on November 9, spoke with the four men and organized for the documentary to be shown to the media in New York on November 14. The documentary of the four men’s antiwar statements was accompanied by expressions of support from then Tokyo University Professor Hidaka Rokurō, writer Kaikō Takeshi as well as Oda Makoto and Tsurumi Shunsuke, all of whom were identified by the New York Times as the ‘leaders of anti-American causes.’<sup>15</sup>

The staging of the press conference and the contacts that were established with anti-war groups in the United States were indicative of Beheiren’s style of protest and activism. As discussed in Chapter 3 Beheiren prided itself on its decentralized and largely unstructured character and drew upon the widespread discontent with the ‘over managed’ and ‘over bureaucratized’ style of the partisan Left. In addition, Beheiren worked hard to establish strong relations between the US and Japan outside the institutional channels of the state. The assistance given to the deserters and

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<sup>14</sup> Sekiya Shigeru and Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga ita Jidai*, 27. Howard Zinn published widely on the issue of civil rights, democracy and activism. See, for example, Howard Zinn, *Disobedience and Democracy: Nine Fallacies on Law and Order Published*, Random House, New York, 1968; Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964; Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of our Times*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Times*, November 14, 1967; *New York Times*, November 15, 1967.

the subsequent press conferences provided a means of establishing dialogue between the two countries.

There had been a precedent to the case of the Intrepid Four with Kim Tonhi, who deserted the South Korean Army in 1965 and secretly made his way into Japan seeking political asylum. Kim was arrested and detained in the Ōmura detention camp in Kyūshū before being extradited. Fearing that he would face the death penalty in South Korea, Beheiren unsuccessfully fought for his right to stay in Japan, though they were able to secure a concession for Kim and he was deported to North Korea rather than the South. Documenting their activities in 1969 Beheiren wrote: ‘On January 26 1968 Kim Tonhi was suddenly forced to return to North Korea ... Although he avoided the death penalty of the South his hope of staying in Japan was denied.’<sup>16</sup> Beheiren lamented that Japan, a country with a constitution espousing peace, could not meet the pleas of a man trying to escape war. A second desertion case emerging before the Intrepid Four was Kenneth Griggs (or Kim Jin Su), a Korean American who sought refuge in the Cuban Embassy while on leave in April 1967. He had sought unsuccessfully to garner the support of the JCP and labour unions before seeking protection in the Cuban Embassy. Kenneth Griggs made contact with Beheiren in 1968 after reading about the Intrepid Four case in the English language press. Griggs, with the assistance of Beheiren, eventually made his way out of Japan with five other Americans later that year.

These two cases did not carry the significance or the media appeal of the Intrepid Four case. Not only were the men Korean but they did not seek the assistance of Beheiren to catapult them into the fray of protest and antiwar activism. In the arena of protest and citizens rights Beheiren was unique in its use of the media. With the Intrepid Four case they were able to appeal

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<sup>16</sup> Oda Makoto (ed.), *Beheiren*, San’ichi Shinsho, Tokyo, 1969, 112-113.

to the media's fascination with drama and mystery but subsequently publish their own stories about the turn of events and its significance. Unlike other protesters and citizens' rights groups in Japan, Beheiren relied on the domestic and international press for exposure but not for the scrutiny or appraisal of their movement and activism.<sup>17</sup> To this end they published *Beheiren Nyūsu* and contributed articles to a few sympathetic journals.<sup>18</sup> The notoriety and academic credentials of many activists put them in good stead to publish in popular and academic journals and rally the support of the media.<sup>19</sup>

The effect of taking a joint US/Japan anti-Vietnam struggle to the mass media was instant and dramatic for Beheiren. In countless articles and statements Beheiren members emphasized that they had no ulterior motives and that the soldiers were acting independently.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless the 'Intrepid Four case' was clearly a Beheiren production and represented an important signifier for their anti-war struggle. Yoshikawa Yūichi, the secretary of Beheiren, noted that the announcement, coupled as it was with the demonstrations at Haneda, represented a turning point for the antiwar movement.<sup>21</sup> From October 1967, before the events were made public, to

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<sup>17</sup> David Earl Groth, in his appraisal of the anti-Shinkansen movement and its use of the media, notes that activists were fairly passive with regard to the media, seeing it as a valuable resource through which to garner public opinion but one that had to be used with caution. The anti-Shinkansen movement was sometimes the victim of the media. See, David Earl Groth, 'Media and political protest: the bullet train movements,' in Susan Pharr & Ellis Krauss, *Media and Politics in Japan*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1996, pp. 213-241.

<sup>18</sup> For example, *Shisō no Kagaku, Asahi Jānaru, Sekai, Gendai no Me*, and *Beheiren Nyūsu*.

<sup>19</sup> John Creighton Campbell notes the power of the media in Japan with regard to 'public opinion' and government policy during this period. See, Campbell, John, 'Media and policy change in Japan,' in Pharr, Susan & Krauss, Ellis (ed.), *Media and Politics in Japan*, pp. 187-212.

<sup>20</sup> See for example *Beheiren Nūsu*, December 1, 1967, 94-95; Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, 'Statement concerning the four soldiers,' Vol. 2, Tokyo, 1974, 267-268.

<sup>21</sup> Yoshikawa Yūichi interview, February 1999.

the end of January 1968, the level of income generated through donations and the sale of *Beheiren Nyūsu* increased more than five-fold. Letters of support swamped the office and new groups were established under the name of Beheiren throughout the country. The issue of *Beheiren Nyūsu* published directly after the press conference reported on the massive support stating: ‘We have received over 2000 letters of support and telephone calls from Hokkaido in the North to Okinawa in the south.’ By the end of 1968 there were almost 200 groups carrying on the antiwar struggle under the name of Beheiren. Before the end of the war in Vietnam almost 250 separate Beheiren groups had been established.<sup>22</sup>

The unprecedented support was offset by attacks on the Beheiren office in Kanda. Towards the end of November the office was vandalized by a couple claiming to be the *Osaka no Nihon Juku* (The Japan Private School of Osaka), and just days later a group of about 10 men arrived at the office staging a protest and indicating their opposition to the activities of both Beheiren and the deserters. This group, claiming to be the *Hankyō Teishintai* (Anti-Communist Volunteer Corps), asserted that the deserters were traitors who had sold out their country and that they objected to the actions of Oda Makoto. In yet another incident ‘hippies’ who had assisted the four men before contacting Beheiren, claimed that the statements made by the soldiers were simply Beheiren propaganda and that the men had never expressed any antiwar sentiments. In conversations recounted in a book published recently by Beheiren members one man is quoted as saying: ‘The actions of four men, with a low level of education, was

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<sup>22</sup> Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, *Kyū Beheiren undō no jōhō peji*, document created by Beheiren, Tokyo, 2000, at <<http://jca.ax.apc.org/beheiren/index.html>>. Viewed December 2000.

tailored to fit with the antiwar agenda of Beheiren. It was used as propaganda.<sup>23</sup>

This unidentified ‘hippie’ was perhaps a member of the group called the *Shinjuku K Group* that released a book in December 1967 claiming that Beheiren had an underhand relationship with a distant relative of Prime Minister Satō.<sup>24</sup> They also challenged the way in which Beheiren had dealt with the matter and the frenzy that had been whipped up in the media. Other people affiliated with Beheiren maintained more plausible criticisms lamenting the direction that an apparently ‘mass movement’ was embarking upon. A weekly column in the *Asahi Jānaru* argued that far from accessing a romantic tradition of underground antiwar activism, Beheiren was not unlike the ‘illusory ideologues’ of the national student body *Zengakuren*. By engaging a ‘citizens rights’ group in underground activities Beheiren was said to be losing touch with ordinary citizens, and have an inflated image of its own self worth.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the criticism the Intrepid Four were the first of many deserters in Japan. The Japanese government did not recognize their right to political asylum and the police could be, and often were, asked for assistance in tracking down deserting and AWOL soldiers in Japan. Nevertheless, the assistance of deserters by Japanese citizens was not in contravention of Japanese law or the US-Japan Security Treaty. Beheiren was able to assist many other soldiers over the course of the next 3 years without facing

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<sup>23</sup> Shigeru Sekiya, ‘Intrepid no yonin to JATEC no tanjo,’ in Sekiya Shigeru & Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga ita Jidai: JATEC aru Shimin Undō no Kiroku*, 22-23.

<sup>24</sup> The book was apparently called ‘Dassōhei.’ See, Sekiya Shigeru and Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassouhei ga itta Jidai*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> The writer also suggested that the academics of Beheiren would ultimately fail in what they were trying to do and that because Japan is an island country it would prove impossible to hide the men. *Asahi Jānaru*, ‘Beheiren wa "ko hakobe" ka,’ *Asahi Jānaru*, December 17, 1967, pp. 97-98.

arrest or imprisonment. They did however face spies trying to undermine the operation and were subject to police surveillance. Terry Whitmore, a deserter who wrote a book about his experiences in 1972, recounts in almost comical fashion the experience of jumping in and out of taxis around Yokohama station in order to ensure that they were not being followed.<sup>26</sup>

In comparison to the deserters whom Beheiren assisted over the next couple of years, the Intrepid Four made an extremely brisk exit from the country. They boarded the Russian passenger ship Baycal on November 10 and on November 17 appeared on Moscow television having received the Lenin Peace Prize. By January 1968 the four men had reached Sweden and, according to Beheiren, one of the men was keen to return to Japan and recommence the antiwar struggle. The process was never to be that simple again. Many deserters faced extended periods travelling from place to place while Beheiren established an escape route and kept them hidden from the Japanese police and the United States military.

Soon after the November 13 press conference the Intrepid Four Committee was established followed by the formation of JATEC (Japan Technical Committee to Aid Anti-war US Deserters; *Hansen Dassō Beihei Enjō Nihon Gijutsu Inkai*) in February 1968. Established as a separate group to deal exclusively with deserting soldiers, JATEC essentially acted as the underground wing of Beheiren. In early 1969 they also began a publication titled 'Deserter Correspondence' that outlined the plight of the deserters, sought the support of the wider community and discussed the political and social implications of assisting the GI's.<sup>27</sup> As the extended name of

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<sup>26</sup> Terry Whitmore as told to Richard Weber, *Memphis, Nam, Sweden: A Black Marine Tells Why He Deserts*, Garden City, New York, 1971.

<sup>27</sup> JATEC (Japan Technical Committee for Assistance to Anti-war US Deserters; Hansen Dassō Beihei Enjō Nihon Jijitsu Kai) *Dassōhei Tsūshin*, No.1, August 1969 - No. 16,

JATEC denoted being antiwar was a prerequisite for assistance and to this end Terry Whitmore related the extensive interviews that were conducted in order to verify his antiwar credentials. Between 1967 and 1971 Beheiren was contacted by about 50 soldiers wanting to desert but lent assistance to less than half of them - holding convictions in line with the agenda of Beheiren was essential.

One time member of Beheiren, Douglas Lummis, notes that despite protesting and publishing prolifically before the Intrepid Four incident, Beheiren had been languishing a little through 1967.<sup>28</sup> On December 13 they discovered a voice, whipped the media, the government and the US Military into a frenzy and brought a new dimension to modes of protest. In the metaphorical words often used to galvanise activism, the episode represented yet another dimension to the 'human whirlpool' of the late 1960s - the activities of 'fish in the sea of citizens.'

### **The significance of desertion**

The significance attached to the act of desertion - the conceptual structure in which it has been read – reveals an array of competing ideals and ideological agendas. The representations have shifted over time, space and in accordance with the voices that bring it meaning. Desertion has been variously characterised as cowardly, irresponsible, an expression of discontent, pragmatic, and on the other hand courageous, adventurous and the ultimate symbol of political integrity. The significance of desertion is contingent upon the voices that inscribe it with meaning.

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December 1970, Intorepido Yon Nin no Kai, Tokyo, 1969. Later became *JATEC Tsushin*, No. 1, March 10, 1971 - No.12, March 26, 1973, JATEC Sentā, Tokyo, 1971.

<sup>28</sup> Stated in interviews with Thomas Havens. See, Thomas Havens, *Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan 1965 - 1975*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987, 141.

When the Intrepid Four came into contact with Beheiren they were launched into a culture of fervent political activism in which the very act of protest was deemed a foundation for democracy. The assistance given to deserters was part of the unremitting displays of anti-government opposition of the late 1960s and stirred the already turbulent waters of protest in the lead up to 1970. As a form of concrete, anti-establishment protest that did not contravene the law, the assistance of deserting soldiers represented a dynamic new sphere in the radical activism of the period. It was starkly different to the street demonstrations of previous years, the snake dancing students, and the violent protesters at Haneda airport. It was also antithetical to the approach of the partisan left which was unable to win elections even in the most favourable political circumstances. But, more than simply invigorate the cultures of protest it was activism through which to define the political and social terrain of Japan, and to bring meaning to citizens' activism (*shimin undō*) as a basis for democratic practices.

Beheiren produced the discursive frame through which desertion could be understood and the significance of the episode for a democratic citizenry. In doing so, they exposed both the ambiguities and hopes that underpinned the formation of a democratic Japan. The ambivalence of American instituted democratic reforms was juxtaposed against the 'participatory democracy' of antiwar activists and the civil rights movement. The assistance of deserters was a means through which to parade the ideals of agency and activism as a basis for a democratic national identity in the wake of an unrepresentative parliamentary system.

In its initial configuration the deserters were read as signifiers for an essential democracy – responsibility, individuality and resistance. By the end of the episode the significance attached to desertion and the lessons for Japan were being read differently, and the representations of their actions

were more ambiguous. In the analysis below I will trace the metamorphosis in the conceptions of citizens' activism and democracy that were projected through the deserters and their actions. Not only did the visions change and the nature of the ideals shift, but perhaps more importantly, the foundation upon which these symbolic practices were posited – the deserters and the civil rights movement – also bucked up, dislodging itself from its symbolic representation. The assistance of the Intrepid Four, and the soldiers that followed in their footsteps, provides an episode through which to explore the contingency and fluidity of both protest and the shape of Japan's postwar identity.

*i. America and democracy*

The meaning that was engendered through Beheiren, the significance attached to both desertion and its facilitation, gave new focus to visions of politics, citizenship and national identity. In this section I will illustrate the terms upon which nationality played itself out. It reveals one of the discursive frames that emerged within protest – the renewal of democracy and individual responsibility. The deserters were inscribed as the signifiers of social change and democratic political renewal.

In terms of protest, dissent within the ranks of the military was an indication of the underlying crisis in government policy and American politics generally. For Japanese and American antiwar activists alike, the high rates of desertion and AWOL soldiers pointed to an unpopular war. The nation's front line, the bastion of strength and discipline, was turning against the policies of the government - American youth, the future leaders of the nation, could not abide by the policies of their representatives. Many in the US and Japan saw the emergence of deserters as an indication of military decay and a basis for hope that this type of resistance could bring

an end to the war in Vietnam and that government policy could be altered. Activist David Cortright asserts:

At many bases combat veterans sparked the development of overt resistance and political organizing. The Vietnam War and the veterans that fought it were like a cancer gnawing at the US military apparatus.<sup>29</sup>

Even within the military hierarchy there was a sense of crisis. In the June 1971 issue of the *Armed Forces Journal* Colonel Robert Hienl, Jr., a combat veteran with twenty seven years experience in the Marines, writes:

The morale, discipline and battle worthiness of the US Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in the century and possibly in the history of the United States.<sup>30</sup>

For the military these statements were seen as a warning, a plea from a long serving Colonel to confront the lack of discipline and commitment within the military. For antiwar activists it came as a sign of hope, a basis for optimism and a platform for further activism. Aiding and encouraging this kind of resistance emerged as a key goal in Beheiren's antiwar strategy. Nevertheless there was little chance that deserting soldiers would bring the Vietnam War to an end.

Assessing the nature and the scope of GI resistance during the Vietnam War and its impact upon the Armed Forces is widely contested. It was often difficult to distinguish between AWOL soldiers, draft resisters and deserters, and depending upon how the statistics are considered the

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<sup>29</sup> David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today*, Anchor Press, New York, 1975, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Heinl, Jr., 'The Collapse of the Armed Forces,' *Armed Forces Journal*, June 7, 1971, 30.

problems faced by the military and the rising levels of dissent were not drastically different from those of WWII. It is estimated that 93 250 soldiers deserted the US Forces during the Vietnam War with most of them deserting from the Army.<sup>31</sup> Most of the cases of desertion occurred on US soil with approximately 20 000 men deserting the Forces after they had returned from their tour of duty in Vietnam. With a plethora of bars, nightclubs and GI establishments swamping the area around bases in the Pacific soldiers going AWOL was a fairly regular occurrence, but only about 3% of desertions occurred among soldiers stationed at bases in the region. It is estimated that about 50 desertions occurred in Japan during this period with JATEC assisting just 16 men to the safety of Sweden between 1967-71.

The number of desertions in Japan was clearly minimal and the number assisted by Beheiren almost negligible in terms of undermining the war effort. Although some saw desertion as a means of crippling the military machine it was clearly not going to bring the war to an end and for Japanese activists its significance lay elsewhere. In many ways the emphasis placed on dissension within the ranks emerged as part of the antiwar rhetoric rather than a motivating factor in providing assistance.

Beheiren members had been distributing pamphlets to GI's at bases in Japan outlining their antiwar position and encouraging soldiers to desert well before the issue of 'GI activism' became a major problem facing the US military. In a 'Message from Japan to American Soldiers,' a pamphlet distributed at bases in 1966, Beheiren wrote: 'We are heartened by the news of three American soldiers in Fort Hood who refused to take part in

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<sup>31</sup> Over the course of the war the rate of desertion in the entire military increased from 12.2 per 1000 in 1967 to a peak of 33.9 per 1000 in 1971. Taken alone the rate of desertion in the Army reached 73.5 per 1000 in 1971, three times higher than the Korean war and surpassing the maximum rate of 63 per 1000 recorded towards the end of WWII.

the war and preferred imprisonment to fighting.’ In a second message distributed after the Intrepid Four episode they urged – ‘Will You Consider?’<sup>32</sup> The pamphlets also pointed to their fear that WWII may have been initiated in Vietnam and drew parallels between American forces in Vietnam and Japan's invasion of Manchuria in the 1930s. In a recent book Oda Makoto recounts the sense of hopelessness that he had felt milling around the base in 1966 trying to get soldiers to respond to pleas and read the antiwar pamphlets, and he was surprised when they actually surfaced.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, appealing to soldiers and calling on America to respect democracy became a central feature of protest in the late 1960s.

In January 1968 when the nuclear powered aircraft carrier Enterprise came into port at Sasebo in Kyūshū, Oda once again appealed to soldiers to lay down their arms and dissent. Oda and Yoshikawa Yūichi sailed out to the Enterprise on a small boat hired by a contingent of opposition groups and drew the soldiers’ attention to the Intrepid Four, encouraging them to respect the constitution. They carried a large banner reading: ‘Don’t kill. Respect your constitution. Follow the Intrepid Four. We will help you. Beheiren.’<sup>34</sup> In an article titled ‘Objects and humanity – Sasebo January 1968’<sup>35</sup> Oda relates the enormous size of the aircraft carrier and contrasts his own position on a small fishing boat. Oda indicated that while the

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Sherry Gottlieb, *"Hell no, we won't go!" Resisting the Draft During the Vietnam War*, Viking Press, New York, 1991, 336-337.

<sup>32</sup> Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, ‘Message from Japan to American Soldiers,’ *Shiryō: ‘Beheiren’ Undō*, Kawade Shobō Shinsha, Vol.1, Tokyo, 1974, *Shiryō*, 1966, 181.

<sup>33</sup> Oda Makoto, *Beheiren Kaikoroku dewa nai Kaiko*, Daisan Shokan, Tokyo 1997, 159-160.

<sup>34</sup> Yoshikawa Yūichi, ‘Sasebo 1968 nen ichi gatsu,’ in Oda Makoto (ed.), *Shimin Undō to wa Nani ka*, Tokuma Shoten, Tokyo, 1968, pp. 249-266.

<sup>35</sup> Oda Makoto, ‘Mono to ningen – Sasebo 1968 nen ichi gatsu,’ (*Sekai*, April 1968) in *Nanshi no Shisō*, Bungei Shunjū, Tokyo, 1969, 99-119.

massive size of the Enterprise was intimidating, human beings could still be identified on its deck, manning its guns and ensuring its role in the war. Through this metaphor he emphasized the importance of the antiwar struggle and the need for individuals to take responsibility in the face of overwhelming power and injustice. From his small boat Oda called upon US soldiers to be ‘truly American’ and desert the military.

Through the pleas to American soldiers on the Enterprise and the 1967 press conference announcing the Intrepid Four, Beheiren represented desertion as the fulfillment of democratic activism and an expression of individual free will. In the joint statement made by the four men, and titled ‘The Four Patriotic Deserters of the USS Intrepid,’ the men state:

Throughout history, the name deserter has applied to cowards, traitors and misfits. We are not concerned with categories or labels. We have reached the point where we must stand up for what we believe to be the truth.<sup>36</sup>

Their motivations and antiwar rhetoric corresponded closely with the ideals expressed by Beheiren representatives and the statements of the men were later attached to pamphlets distributed at bases to encourage other GI's to follow the lead of the Intrepid Four.

In the statements published by Oda concerning the Intrepid Four, the men's actions are depicted as symbols of United States democratic ideals. It was the foundations of democracy that were being brought into question and thus the actions of the four deserting Americans bore significance for Japanese people striving to define and embody the ideals of their own

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<sup>36</sup> Joint statement, ‘Wareware wa naze kozotte ni deta no ka,’ *Beheiren Nyūsu*, December 1967, pp. 94-95. In English the statement was titled ‘Do not Kill in Vietnam! Joint Statement by the Four Patriotic Deserters of the USS Intrepid’ and printed on a Beheiren pamphlet. See, Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, ‘A Message to American Soldiers No.2,’ *Shiryō: ‘Beheiren’ Undō*, Vol. 1, 181.

constitution. In an article written towards the end of November 1967 Oda lamented the apathy of young Japanese people and the apparently trendy expression that Japan is ‘suffocating on peace.’<sup>37</sup> He expressed the hope that young people learn from the actions of the deserters and realize their responsibility to participate and be active in a democratic society. In his statement concerning the men Oda also alluded to the meaning of ‘citizen’ pointing to the significance of the Intrepid Four with regard to the political institutions of Japan and Japan's relationship to America and the world. He states:

The foundations of the United States, the true meaning of democracy, as well as the spirit of the Japanese Constitution are bound within and reinforced by the activism (of the four deserters) ... The events have helped established a link between the citizens of Japan and the United States that circumvents the military ties that currently frame the relationship ... It is not just about the future of Vietnam. It is an historical moment, an act that bears significance for the future of the world.<sup>38</sup>

For Oda the episode offered a chance to reassess the relationship with the United States and articulate an active and participatory form of democracy. In this regard the international dimension of protest represented a proxy attack on the postwar Japanese state. The international dimensions of both military relations, as well as political activism, signified the ‘wider web’ of political responsibility, the complicity, in which the government of Japan was entangled. The similarities between the US and Japanese constitutions, both of which were, according to Beheiren, being

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<sup>37</sup> Oda Makoto, ‘Yon nin to watashi to “yūshi”’, *Asahi Jānaru*, November 26, 1967, pp. 20-24.

<sup>38</sup> Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, ‘Yon nin no Amerika heishi ni tsuite no seimei,’ *Beheiren Nūsu*, December 1967, 96.

contravened by the war in Vietnam and the military alliance between the two countries, was being exposed in the appeal to US soldiers.

The participation of Japanese citizens and interaction with soldiers was seen as an important dimension of protest and activism. Going to the bases, handing out pamphlets and encouraging anti-war soldiers was itself depicted as a form of concrete activism, an immediately recognizable form of participation in political affairs. If the occasional abuse from soldiers could be endured this kind of activity represented a basis from which citizens could exercise their democratic responsibilities. In her article 'My history in Beheiren,' Mizuda Fū writes:

The meaning of Beheiren was based upon the way in which I wanted to define it. I operated according to my own beliefs and bore witness to my own morality and political ideals.<sup>39</sup>

In this sense the activities of JATEC and the deserters were like an educational campaign in democracy, encouraging activism and highlighting the responsibility of each individual. Beheiren sought to draw attention to what they saw as an unresponsive state/military complex, a government that disregarded the anti-war ideals of the population, and a military alliance maintained at the expense of Japan's Asian neighbours.

Images and articles featured in *Beheiren Nyūsu*, the monthly magazine published by Tokyo Beheiren, reinforced this commitment to activism and highlighted the importance of challenging the dictates of the state in order to protect democracy. One article that succinctly captured the notion of individual democratic responsibility was the story of the Intrepid Four's short stay in Japan written by a woman who hosted them in Kyoto. In this

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<sup>39</sup> Mizuda Fū, 'Watashi no naka no "Beheiren",' *Jūgoshi Nōto Sengo Hen*, 8, Inpakuto Shuppankai, Tokyo, pp. 176-181.

account the events are depicted as the ideal home-stay experience as the men enjoy the temples of Kyoto on a national holiday and delight in some of the unique foods and customs of Japan.<sup>40</sup> The idea of America that was being presented through these images and accounts was one that could be accommodated within, or even transposed into the daily lives of Japanese citizens. The depiction of deserters within an average Japanese home was an explicit reflection of Beheiren's ideal self-image – an unstructured movement full of ordinary citizens actively participating in the protection of the constitution. In a similar vein Yoshikawa Yūichi, chairman of Beheiren from 1965-74, contributed a piece titled 'Deserters and ordinary citizens' in which he emphasized the ignorance of the four with regard to the antiwar movement in the United States and anti-government activism. '[The Intrepid Four are simply] ordinary Americans, ordinary human beings,' he writes, 'who have taken courageous steps for what they believe.'<sup>41</sup> Some members of Beheiren also espoused the idea of having three deserters in every prefecture of Japan in order to bring as many people as possible into contact with the War in Vietnam and the antiwar campaign. In this case the deserter was, of course, not a soldier going AWOL, a criminal, or even a hippie, but an ordinary American, a custodian of democratic ideals, and a signifier for democratic renewal.<sup>42</sup>

By employing the notion of a 'signifier' I do not mean to suggest that the deserters were simply instruments in a wider political plan, or that the

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<sup>40</sup> Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, 'Dassō Beihei Nihon no yūjitsu' (December 1967), *Beheiren Nyūsu*, 97.

<sup>41</sup> Yoshikawa Yūichi, 'Dassōhei to futsu no shimintachi,' Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, (December 1967), *Beheiren Nyūsu*, 97.

<sup>42</sup> The idea of having deserters in each prefecture is expressed in Motono Giyū, 'Hōshin tenkai to beigun kaitai undō,' in Sekiya Shigeru & Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga itta Jidai: JATEC aru Shimin Undō no Kiroku*, 149. This notion is reminiscent of the campaign that occurred in the aftermath of the 1960 demonstrations when students took democracy to the countryside in the 'back to the village movement.'

Beheiren activists misrepresented them. The significance attributed to the act of desertion in Japan, certainly operated as an autonomous conceptual structure, a way of reading that was specific to the 1960s, but certainly not a representation that disguised a separate reality or an authentic reading of desertion. While the particular reading of events and ideas betrayed the politics of the activists – the significance attached to desertion was politically charged - it did not simply displace a more legitimate understanding of the issues.<sup>43</sup> By examining the conceptual structure in which desertion was understood we can decipher the meaning of desertion in 1960s Japan. Within a milieu of hope, activism and political renewal the appearance of deserters and the formation of a covert antiwar operation, signified yet another form of protest to reshape and enliven the foundations of an autonomous Japanese society. Representations of deserters and their assistance provided a vehicle through which to determine the agenda and scope of protest and citizenship.

Beheiren activists represented the Intrepid Four and the assistance of deserters within an international movement for social change. It was a rendering of democratic activism that saw it as an internationally relevant set of political practices that needed to be performed and brought to life within a particular national framework.<sup>44</sup> Desertion, demonstrations and

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<sup>43</sup> On the issue of signifiers, Sunder Rajan skillfully highlights the competing representations of *sati* in India, and the significance that has been attributed to the act of a ‘widow’ burning herself on her husband’s funeral pyre, through an examination of literature. Rather than simply highlighting the contradictions in the way that *sati* has been represented, Sunder Rajan illustrates the way in which its meaning – the significance attributed to its enactment – has been variously determined and promulgated over time and space. In literature *sati* is at once barbaric, a symbol of oppression, devotional, and traditional. See, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture, and Postcolonialism*, Routledge, London, 1993.

<sup>44</sup> Despite the overlapping meanings between the two terms, the notion of ‘universal’ cannot be used in place of an ‘internationally relevant set of political practices.’ The relativity of ideas about democracy in Japan problematised the notion of universal democracy. In this regard Harry Harootunian’s definition of ‘coeval modernity’ is instructive for our understanding of how these ideas operate. In conceptions of democracy

protest were equated with democracy, activism and fundamental social change. The act of desertion was depicted as a lesson in democratic participation and the episode helped to set out an agenda for realizing the essence of the postwar constitution and forging a space for the active citizen in Japan. Thus, the assistance of American soldiers and the idea of ‘America’ itself played an integral role in defining the nature of protest, the significance of citizens’ activism, and the precepts of political and social visions of the nation in the late 1960s.

*ii. America and the ambivalence of democracy*

Paradoxically America emerged as both the signifier for a democratic Japan and the object of opposition. In turning to deserters as the bedrock of American democracy Beheiren exposed the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in Japan’s postwar experience. The United States’ ‘reverse course’ on democratic reforms during the Occupation period and the subsequent failing of Japan’s parliamentary democracy left a vacuum in the political culture of postwar Japan. In this context the democracy envisaged in 1968 was no longer moored in the democratic reforms ushered in by SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Occupation Forces). Activists turned to the deserters and the civil rights movement more generally as the embodiment of the democratic ideals that the US Occupation Forces had failed to uphold. Embracing the activist politics of America saw the nature of postwar political identity – democracy and peace – dislodged and radically reconfigured. The deserters exposed the ambivalence of American democracy and the new ground upon which postwar Japan was being established.

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we find ‘contemporaneity with the possibility of difference.’ See Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000.

Over the course of the war issues surfacing in US society and politics, particularly the issue of race, became inextricably linked to the war and to the antiwar movement. Hansen Baldwin, military correspondent writing for the *New York Times* towards the end of 1967 wrote: ‘nearly all of the US officials from Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and General Westmoreland down, believe that the main battle ground in 1968 will be in the US.’<sup>45</sup> The military was not simply facing scared kids who did not want to fight, or an unpopular war, it was facing a challenge to its foundations and structure. The military was no longer immune to the debates manifest within the social and political landscape of 1960s America. For the first time the military hierarchy was being held accountable to something that it had heretofore paid very little attention - racism and civil rights. The war in Vietnam was an important catalyst for New Left activism in the United States and was inextricably linked with developments in domestic politics.

The most salient example of this link came when Martin Luther King spoke out, in a famous speech, against the war in April 1967.<sup>46</sup> On this occasion he set down strong links between the civil rights movement in the US and the antiwar movement. These links between the war in Vietnam and social and political change were also espoused by deserter organizations established in Canada. In December 1968 a group of deserters in Canada calling themselves the American Deserters Committee issued a manifesto outlining their political agenda. It read:

We deserters and associates view ourselves as an integral part of the worldwide movement for fundamental social change. We express support and solidarity with the National Liberation front

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<sup>45</sup> Hansen Baldwin, *New York Times*, 1967.

of South Vietnam and the black liberation struggle at home. We are prepared to fight side by side with anyone who wants to bring fundamental social change to the US.<sup>47</sup>

This proclamation explicates the link between helping the deserters and tapping into the civil rights movement in the United States, of alternative conceptions of politics and society. In a recent publication, Kurihara Kōhei emphasized the social and political implications of the deserter episode by positing it within the wider counter cultural movement of the period. He recalls the place of assisting the deserters within the context of 1960s anti-establishment radicalism and youth, thereby drawing attention to its role in social change, alternative society and even revolution. Kurihara recounted the activities of JATEC alongside the hippie movement and communes, non-sect student radicals of *Zenkyōtō*, the Beatles and the work of underground artists such as Terayama Shūji who founded the Tenjō Sajiki Theatre with Yokoo Tadanori in 1967.<sup>48</sup> According to Kurihara the fun aspect of all of this was the anti-establishment aspect of it - the process of challenging the structures of the state, and envisioning a new social and political terrain.<sup>49</sup> In some respects Kurihara's account depicts the episode as a nostalgic appeal to youth that essentially undermines its political

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<sup>46</sup> James Melvin Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1991.

<sup>47</sup> American Deserters Committee, 'Deserters Manifesto,' reprinted in M. Gettleman, *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, Penguin Books, USA, 1967, 316.

<sup>48</sup> Terayama agitated for subversion through theatrical imagination by staging spectacles peopled with dwarfs, giants, naked women, deformed men, and live grotesqueries of all descriptions. His plays also drew freely upon native Japanese legends, folklore and popular Buddhism as well as heroes in Japanese juvenile literature, television and movies. See, Alexandria Munroe, *Scream Against the Sky*, Harry N Abrams Inc., New York, 1994.

<sup>49</sup> Kurihara Kōhei, '90 nendai no chigatta jōkyō no naka de ikasu keiken,' in Tsurumi Shunsuke et.al (eds.) *Kaetekitta Dassōhei: Betonamu Senjō kara 25 nen Terry Whitmore*, Daisan Shokan, Tokyo, 1994, pp. 82-83.

significance. Nevertheless, it also highlights the ties that developed with the ideas emanating from the United States.

The conceptual and practical relationship established between deserters, the civil rights movement, and the ideals of participatory democracy, elicited renewed reflection upon the Occupation Period and the limitations of Japan's democratization. The Occupation period is widely regarded as the birthplace of a democratic Japan. It was a period in which a new democratic constitution was promulgated, political parties were initiated and political prisoners released from gaol. Nevertheless, in his essays on the lessons of the Pacific War and the implications of the experience for the postwar nation, Oda Makoto indicates that for his generation recollections of the postwar period do not conjure up memories of the new constitution's promulgation and Japan's democratization. As I indicated in a previous chapter, for Oda the strongest memories were of the 'reverse course' in the United States policy towards Japan with the onset of the Cold War, and the crack down on the Japan Communist Party.<sup>50</sup> Oda's depiction of Japan's introduction to a democratic constitution remind us again of the 1960 Ampo demonstrations and the conceptual and political oscillation between democracy determined by the old power brokers in the Diet and a democracy embodied in citizens' movements. Oda reflected back on the Occupation period in Japan and recalled most vividly the US betrayal of democracy. His mission in the 1960s was to produce a form of democracy unmediated by the state, to enunciate a democracy unhindered by the pragmatism of the Japanese government or the deception of the United States' Cold War agenda.

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<sup>50</sup> Oda Makoto, "'Nanshi' no shisō", (*Tembō*, January 1965), *Sengo o Hiraku Shisō*, Kōdansha, Tokyo, 1965, 21. Abridged English version, 'The Meaning of Meaningless Death', *Journal of Social and Political Ideas in Japan*, Vol. IV, No. 2, August 1966.

In his consideration of colonial authority and the institution of political ideals in colonial India, Homi Bhabha provides a useful way of understanding the ambivalence engendered by the American instituted reforms in Japan. Bhabha notes that there is an underlying ‘ambivalence’ in a political system transposed and implemented by a colonial regime. In the case of Japan it was ambivalence manifested in the fact that a military force was instituting democratic reforms. During the Occupation period democratic political ideas were displaced from their structural origins and instituted as an ideal system rather than embedded in the very regime that commanded their articulation. ‘What threatens the authority of colonial command,’ writes Bhabha, ‘is the ambivalence of its address – father and oppressor or, alternatively, the ruled and the reviled – which will not be resolved in a dialectical play of power.’<sup>51</sup> Oda’s portrayal of the US agenda highlights the ambivalence of American democratic reform and the dashed hopes contained within the US ‘reverse course.’ In many ways the ‘reverse course’ represented a return to authenticity – a military regime rediscovering its undemocratic self. In the light of this portrayal the future of Japanese democracy had to reside elsewhere.

The assistance of deserters and the rhetorical alliance struck with the civil rights movement brought the ambivalence of democratic reform into sharp relief and provided a foundation for democratic values that at once disavowed the United States political system while simultaneously searching the margins of that system for democratic ideals. The assistance of deserters ridiculed America by highlighting the ‘ambivalence of its colonial address.’

The new focus was evident during the press conference when Oda stated that the men were complying with the spirit of the United States

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<sup>51</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994, 97.

Constitution and that it was the government that was disregarding the democratic foundations of American society. This portrayal of the events is reinforced by an image appearing initially in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and later in *Beheiren Nyūsu* in which the famous presidents who graced the facade of Mount Rushmore were substituted for the four deserting soldiers, with President Lincoln standing behind them presenting a stark image of deserters as the upholders of the Constitution.<sup>52</sup> In yet another image the Statue of Liberty is being dropped in a row of bombs over Vietnam - the foundations of the US political system hurled from the bottom of a military aircraft.<sup>53</sup>

Corresponding with the shifting representations of American democracy was an emphasis upon articulating an indigenous basis for democratic renewal. In his 1966 essay 'Re-empowering democracy as a principle,' Oda Makoto writes of Japan's struggle for democracy and the relationship between the nation-state and universal political values. As the following passage indicates, America is decentred as the custodian of democratic ideals and each nation is attributed leeway to interpret and invigorate their own national political values.

The peoples of the world, especially the so-called advanced peoples who have had a long experience with a 'system' of democracy, have reached a new stage when they must now take a new look at democracy. They must reexamine the true meaning of democracy and remake democracy so that it is their own. I believe the Japanese people are no exception.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening edition, November 23 1967.

<sup>53</sup> Oda Makoto (ed.), *Shūkan Ampo*, No.15 (June 1970), Amposha, Tokyo, 1968-1970.

<sup>54</sup> Oda Makoto, 'Genri to shite no minshushugi no fukken,' *Tembō*, No.4, August 1967, pp. 16-45. Abridged English version, 'Making Democracy Our Own,' *The Japan Interpreter*, Vol. VI, No. 3, Tokyo, Autumn 1970, p. 253.

The United States engagement in Vietnam stimulated the questioning of America's position as the purveyors of democratic practises and ideals and made it possible for Oda to make these assertions about democracy. The US bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 undermined the position of the United States as the protectors of justice. Oda was thereby able to problematize the ideal of democracy itself and its place within the confines of Western political thought. For Beheiren activists it provided an opportunity to enter into dialogue with the United States that circumvented the unequal alliance established by SCAP following the Pacific War when the Japanese Constitution was introduced. In a similar vein to Takeuchi Yoshimi, Oda's conception of democracy revealed a political philosophy that was no longer alien to Japan and synonymous with the United States, but one that was manifested within the protest and activism that he rigorously pursued.<sup>55</sup>

The questioning of United States' commitment to its political foundations allowed Beheiren to engage the Japanese constitution not as something instituted by a benevolent outsider but as a political value that Japan was suitably placed to nurture and protect. As noted by Oda, Japan's unique experience of war put her in a prime position to contribute to the international dialogue on democracy. In a 1968 article titled 'The ethics and logic of peace,' he writes:

I dislike shop-worn words like 'Solidarity,' but if international solidarity is to mean anything at all besides hand-shaking, speech-making, and message exchange - if, for example, we are to go so far as to join hands with people in other lands to challenge the principle of ultimate state authority - it can only be when each of us succeeds in developing the principle of

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<sup>55</sup> See for example, Takeuchi Yoshimi, 'Kindai no chōkoku' (1958), in Yoshimoto Takaaki, *Nashonarizumu*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1964, pp. 377-428.

individual autonomy within themselves ... This is an enterprise for all countries, but our experiences as Japanese have equipped us for a unique contribution.<sup>56</sup>

Examining the nature of the ‘unique contribution’ – the ideas that Japan had to offer protest movements internationally - highlights the values that were being promulgated within the cultures of protest and thus provides an insight into Beheiren’s vision of Japan’s postwar political renewal. Once again we find that the conceptualization of citizenship was intimately entwined with national histories and ideals. The relationship with the United States, that Oda sought to solidify in the lead up to 1970, and the perspective that Japan could bring to the partnership was based on the experience of war, the experience of life under an authoritarian state, the perspective of a newly democratic Asian country and an underlying desire for peace. As I noted in previous chapters the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 put Japan in a unique position from which to demand peace and made the Vietnam War seem all the more threatening.

The reading of desertion was intrinsically linked to the ideals and political agenda that centred notions of responsibility, participation and activism. It was a reading of America focusing not on its technological success, its economic prowess or the glory of its political institutions. On the contrary, it focused on the margins in the United States. It focused on the ability of protestors to realise and embody democratic practice and thereby exposed the ambivalence of America’s democratic reforms. In the ruins of Japan’s constitutional reforms and parliamentary political system we can decipher the significance of citizens activism and the assistance of deserters as a building block for a postwar democracy and national identity. Only in the

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<sup>56</sup> Oda Makoto, ‘Heiwa no rinri to ronri,’ (*Tembō*, August 1966) *Nanshi no Shisō*, Bungei Shunjū, Tokyo, 1969, 63.

actions of the deserters and in the relentless activism of groups such as Beheiren did democracy manifest itself - it had to be nurtured within citizens' activism.

### *iii. The second 'reverse course'*

In March 1970 with many questioning the meaning of their activism and debating whether they would be able to continue assisting soldiers JATEC members came together and decided upon a change of course. By this stage JATEC was faced with a number of practical problems inhibiting their ability to continue in the same vein. The USSR was no longer willing to assist the deserting soldiers and thus the ports of exit and means of escape were increasingly difficult to access. In addition, despite the number of volunteers that had come forward and the money donated, resources were drying up and JATEC was finding it difficult to finance the assistance of deserters. With some of the men staying in Japan for over 12 months before they could find a way out, money was a perpetual concern. Finally, the questioning of the deserters' commitment to peace and antiwar ideals magnified these practical problems.

In the context of these concerns two fundamental problems emerged that made the representation of desertion outlined above problematic. First, for many assisting deserters was an arduous and often confronting experience, consuming a great deal of time and money.<sup>57</sup> The deserters had their own stories to tell and secrets to hide and they were not always the upright symbols of American democracy that was projected by Beheiren. Thus, the catalyst for reform was inherently unstable. Unlike the women who committed *sati* discussed earlier, the deserters (the signified) were still

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<sup>57</sup> Kurihara Kohei, while expressing some nostalgic memories of the activities of JATEC in the 1960s, also recalls the trials and tribulations faced by the Japanese people assisting soldiers. Kurihara Kohei, '90 nendai no chigatta jōkyō no naka de ikasu keiken.'

alive; their very presence rendered unstable the representation that they were contained within. The deserters quickly defied the borders of their typology. Second, there was a concurrent shift in the civil rights movement in the United States and a reappraisal of what it had come to symbolize for Japan. Images of America changed considerably during this period and the focus on American dissent could be seen as a corrupting influence as much as it was an empowering symbol for Japan. Dissident America emerged as an ambiguous foundation for thinking about Japanese democracy.

In September 1968, JATEC helped three men traverse the Ohotsk Sea on the East Coast of Hokkaido and make their way to the Russian territory of the Kuril Islands. Their journey, which lasted about two months from July 1968, exemplifies some of the difficulties that Beheiren, and the soldiers, faced and the secrecy that was required.<sup>58</sup> In order to avoid infiltration by spies JATEC went to some trouble to avoid detection - housed in a Buddhist monastery near Kyoto the three men had to take on the identity of students from New York University on other occasions they went by assumed names.<sup>59</sup> It was a difficult charade and more than once local residents tipped off police that there were some 'strange foreigners' roaming around the streets. The case of these three men was further complicated by the activities of the soldiers themselves. Just weeks into the escapade Charles Smith revealed that he had been in a fight in Yokohama and believed that he may have killed a man and Joseph Parra realised that he had departed Osaka with a sexually transmitted disease.

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<sup>58</sup> This story was told in a Playboy exclusive published in 1984. Kurihara Yoshio (et.al.), 'JATEC: mienai kyowa kuni,' *Playboy*, 2 parts, Nihon pun, January & February, 1981, pp. 93-107, pp. 92-98.

<sup>59</sup> JATEC did face the threat of spies infiltrating the organization and more than one deserter was arrested before being able to escape Japan. See for example Sekiya Shigeru, 'Intorepido no yon nin to JATEC no tanjō,' in Sekiya Shigeru & Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga Ita Jidai: JATEC aru Shimin Undō no Kiroku*, particularly pp. 94-103.

The Beheiren members were shocked by the revelations but continued to assist the men. The deserters were put into contact with a friend of Tsurumi Shunsuke, Gary Snider in Kyoto, and then proceeded down to a small hippie commune on the island of Suwanose south of Kyūshū. The men stayed with members of the Suwanose *buzoku* (tribe) for two weeks, from August 5, but Yamada Kaiya indicates that it was only due to Gary Snider and the members of Beheiren, ‘who had opened their hearts to the men,’ that they were allowed to stay. In his book *I am a Hippie: the Japanese Hippie Movement, 1960 - 1990*, he writes:

This particular group [of Deserters] were awful. Their understanding of Hippie and communal cultures was completely nonexistent. They would have been better off in a detention centre.<sup>60</sup>

In an article appearing in *Asahi Jānaru* in May 1970 Fukumi Shinsuke relates some of his experiences of having a deserter staying in his house and the questions that it raised about the assistance of deserters.<sup>61</sup> He saw the assistance given to the Intrepid Four as an ‘epoch-making’ event in Beheiren's development, but as the number of deserters increased the antiwar credentials of the soldiers was brought into question. Fukumi Shinsuke was perhaps more tolerant of the GI's and the cultural differences than Yamada Kaiya. But his experience and contact with deserting soldiers was more confronting. Amongst other stories, Fukumi relates the story of hiding Arnett, an enlisted man from Pennsylvania who joined the Army in 1966. ‘Arnett had seen hell,’ [writes Fukumi]

He had colleagues who had murdered civilians in order to extract

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<sup>60</sup> Yamada Kaiya, *Ai amu hippii: Nihon no hippii mubumento 1960 - 1990*, Daisan Shokan, Tokyo, 1998, 68-69.

their silver teeth, who tortured people by removing their ears and, a Sergeant who collected the eyes of his victims. I asked Arnett how he felt about it and whether he was involved. 'I don't want to tell a lie,' he replied. 'I had no choice.'<sup>62</sup>

Fukumi, while being aware that he had no direct experience of the war, was overcome by the sense that he was harbouring a murderer and a war criminal. And it was a suspicion that incited major reservations about the assistance of the soldiers. The deserters themselves had a history that was not necessarily akin to the role that Beheiren had constructed for them - they were usually under-educated soldiers fresh from the battlefields of Vietnam who did not necessarily subscribe to the ideals of the Japanese peace movement.<sup>63</sup> There was an irredeemable slippage between their signification and the reality of their experiences. In March 1970 Beheiren thereby decided to shift their focus and work in concert with antiwar GI's at the bases in Japan rather than help them to desert.

There was a concurrent shift in the way that desertion was read in the United States. By 1970 it was apparent that desertion as a form of protest in the US did not carry the same potency as it did in Japan. The political significance attributed to desertion in the United States took a radically different tone and the voices of soldiers in exile - soldiers in Sweden and Canada - were not seen as powerful subjects for political and social reform. In this context, Americans who had been living in Japan and

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<sup>61</sup> Fukumi Shinsuke, 'Dassō enjō kara beihei to no Kyoto e,' *Asahi Jānaru*, May 10, 1970, pp. 38-43.

<sup>62</sup> Fukumi Shinsuke, 'Dassō enjō kara,' 39.

<sup>63</sup> It was generally poorly educated, enlisted men from lower-income, rural families who deserted midway through their service. These men voluntarily enlisted and later sought to escape. GI magazines also indicate that they were often Black Americans who felt that they had been deceived by the recruiting campaigns of the Military. See for example, Sherry Gottlieb, *"Hell No, We Won't Go!" Resisting the Draft During the Vietnam War*, Viking Press, New York, 1991.

assisting Beheiren and antiwar GI's at the bases advised Beheiren that public opinion in the US was firmly against soldiers who had deserted the military.<sup>64</sup>

As the war dragged on deserters and their civilian counterparts - resisters who fled to Canada or Sweden - emerged as the villains of the Vietnam era. The Nixon government called them 'malingerers, criminals and cowards' and the 'victims of their own character deficiencies.'<sup>65</sup> Even among antiwar GI's they were often seen as turncoats who let their comrades down. Thus deserters were far more reviled than the largely well educated draft dodgers who avoided the war all together. In the years after the Vietnam War, when the ethics of the war and the basis of the US effort in Vietnam was being revised, the attitude towards deserting soldiers had turned sour. This was still the case in January 1977 when US President Carter issued an unconditional pardon for draft evaders but did not extend that pardon to men who had deserted. Thus few deserters obtained an honorable discharge and many even served time in gaol for their actions.<sup>66</sup>

It became evident that the agenda of the movements and the way in which desertion and GI activism was represented in Japan and the US, were substantially different. By 1970 JATEC members decided that GI resistance within the bases and the establishment of GI coffee houses was seen as a much more effective way of fighting the war and of incorporating

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<sup>64</sup> The change of course in JATEC policy and the influence of American's living in Japan is discussed in Section III, 'hōshin tenkan to kichi kōsaku,' Sekiya Shigeru & Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga Ita Jidai*, pp. 141-202.

<sup>65</sup> Richard Nixon quoted in Sherry Gottlieb, '*Hell No, We Won't Go!*,' 335.

<sup>66</sup> It is estimated that about 40 000 American's lived in exile during the Vietnam War. Approximately 30 000 of these people stayed in Canada, 1000 each in Mexico and Sweden and the rest scattered through out the world. By 1978 almost 75% of American's who had escaped the US during the war years, many of whom were deserters, had left their adopted country and returned to the United States. See, Baskir, Lawrence & Strauss,

soldiers into the fray of the so-called ‘fundamental social and political change’ of the era. In the US, rather than promoting desertion, civilian and military based organizations such as the Black Liberation Army, Resisters Inside the Army, GI’s United Against the War in Vietnam and Black Unity, espoused the political concerns of antiwar GI’s still on active duty in the US and Vietnam.<sup>67</sup> In Japan Jan Hicks, using the pseudonym Hobbit and working with the assistance of Beheiren, established the Pacific Asia Counseling Service which worked in similar ways to the groups that emerged in the US, assisting with GI publications and supporting antiwar activities at the bases. Drawing on a tradition of GI coffee houses beginning with UFO, which was established near Fort Jackson in the US in late 1967, Hicks helped open a GI Coffee shop called the Hobbit at the base at Iwakuni. In addition, a number of publications emerged at the bases including an Asian edition of *We’ve Got the Brass*, a publication initiated in Germany, *Right On* published briefly in 1970, and *Fall in at Ease* and *Semper Fi* which were both produced with the assistance of the Pacific Asia Counseling Service and Beheiren.<sup>68</sup>

The magazines and the activism initiated in concert with soldiers within the US military represented a new approach centring upon disrupting the US bases in Japan and ‘taking them to pieces.’ Beheiren continued to be active, working together GI’s, but the act of desertion no longer played the role of signifier for participatory democracy and individual responsibility.

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William, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1978.

<sup>67</sup> One of the most prominent organizations, the American Servicemen’s Union, tried to establish links with existing trade unions while at the same time highlighting problems of inequality and racism in the armed forces and encouraging unity among GI’s.

<sup>68</sup> Tsurumi Yoshiyuki, ‘Toku koto to aku koto,’ *Asahi Jānaru*, November 29, 1970, pp. 4-10.

In late November 1970, JATEC member Tsurumi Yoshiyuki outlined the limits of JATEC's past antiwar activities and emphasized the need for a joint struggle with GI's. He advocated a more open and vocal antiwar struggle encompassing the assistance of soldiers involved in court cases at bases, the promotion of their cause and close involvement in GI's antiwar events. In doing so Tsurumi signaled the end of the 'underground struggle.'<sup>69</sup> Discussing a debate that members of JATEC had over the future course of action, Honno Yoshio writes:

There were a number of issues that we considered: Are the activities of JATEC anti-war activism or is it simply philanthropy? If we hide deserters is it really a form of activism? If this activism bears no relationship to Japan's social and political reform then who is active? But it was not just this. We weren't there simply to support the sexual and dietary habits of deserting American soldiers.<sup>70</sup>

This statement highlights the antipathy towards not just the deserters but the very idea of America, and the corresponding notion of US activism, as a signifier for Japan's democratic renewal. America as the custodian of universal political values had been substantially undermined.

Towards the end of the 1960s America was looking more like a battleground than a bastion of democracy. The assassination of Martin Luther King in April 1968 and Robert Kennedy in June of that year are indicative of the sense of decay emanating from the United States. In addition, the racial riots that broke out and the political, social and economic division that pervaded American society signified crisis rather than the strength of democracy. America and the deserters as the

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<sup>69</sup> Tsurumi Yoshiyuki, 'Toku koto to aku koto.'

<sup>70</sup> Sekiya Shigeru & Sakamoto Yoshie (eds.) *Tonari ni Dassōhei ga Ita Jidai*, 149.

custodians of democracy - dissident symbols of political participation and responsibility - looked as threatening as it did empowering to many Japanese by 1970. The international focus, the formation of national identity as a largely reactive process, was susceptible to the unpredictability of active engagement.

Through the protest surrounding the Intrepid Four and their cohorts national identity was being produced, challenged and reinvigorated – the deserters signified political renewal. But, deserters and the American civil rights movement provided an unpredictable foundation for Japanese nationality. The deserter's constantly defied signification and the civil rights movement in the US elicited ambiguous symbols for the activists across the Pacific. In interviews with Thomas Havens, Yoshikawa Yūichi draws attention to the confidence of Japanese activists and an increasing ambivalence towards the US as the bastion of democracy by 1970. Responding to criticisms from Jane Fonda in 1971 that the movement in Japan was 'male chauvinist,' Yoshikawa accused Fonda of 'American antiwar imperialism.' He emphasized the autonomy that had been established over the course of the 1960s and Beheiren's unwillingness to prioritize the US agenda or blindly follow their lead.<sup>71</sup> In this sense the 'reverse course' in the assistance given to the deserters was symbolic of a renewed emphasis upon the indigenous nature of Japan's democratic ideals.

### **Conclusion**

The engagement of America within protest saw Beheiren give concrete form to the idea of an autonomous citizen in postwar Japan. Through the dynamics of citizens' activism (*shimin undō*) Beheiren circumvented the

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas Havens, *Fire Across the Sea*, 225.

institutions of the state, exhibited a new means through which to engage Japan in the world, and provided a cutting critique of the government's commitment to the postwar constitution. To this end the deserters were employed as signifiers of political change and social and political rejuvenation around the precepts of participatory democracy and individual responsibility. They were employed as a model from which to nurture citizens' activism (*shimin undō*). Assisting deserters brought Japanese activists into the vision of the international media, providing a symbolic basis from which to parade the new, autonomous, Japan.

The significance attached to the assistance of soldiers and desertion shifted over the late 1960s. The concrete nature of the activism was central to the Beheiren strategy but as a symbol for the postwar nation it was incredibly amorphous. The signified was prone to dislodge itself from its symbolic enunciation. At the same time the relationship with America, the representation of New Left political activism, and the nature of participatory democracy as a basis for postwar nationality, underwent continual change and re-evaluation. The assistance of the deserting American soldiers precipitated changes in the nature of protest as 'citizens' activism,' and the re-appraisal of the models for Japan's democratic development.