From Wartime Friend to Cold War Fiend

The Abduction of Kaji Wataru and U.S.-Japan Relations at Occupation’s End

Erik Esselstrom

Once described by the eminent American Sinologist John King Fairbank as an “elfin little Japanese who worked for the Nationalist military” in wartime China, Kaji Wataru is not a well-known name in the United States, or even in contemporary Japan.1 A left-wing writer and political activist, Kaji fled to China in the late 1930s, like many radical Japanese intellectuals of that day, to escape police surveillance and persecution on the home islands. By 1938, he was participating in the frontline propaganda campaigns carried out by Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government against imperial Japanese soldiers in the field, and for several more years Kaji directed efforts near Chongqing to reeducate Japanese prisoners-of-war (POWs). He spent the remainder of the war in the Chongqing area and was even briefly courted by members of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the spring and early summer of 1945, their hope being that Kaji might prove useful to the U.S. military in gathering intelligence information from captured Japanese soldiers. Kaji’s wartime activities have recently become more widely recognized in Japanese scholarship on the wartime era in China, but they have been discussed in only a few English-language works.2

Kaji returned to Japan in the spring of 1946 and quickly immersed himself in the vibrant political climate of the day, publishing widely in left-wing periodicals and literary journals. After a failed bid to win a parliamentary seat in the Japanese Diet in the fall of 1946, Kaji continued to write about his experiences in China during the war as well as his views on contemporary issues in Chinese society. Not until late 1952, however, did Kaji become a household name in Japan. After dropping out of public sight in late 1951, he suddenly reappeared at a press conference on 7 December 1952 at the home of lawyer Inomata Kōzō and made a startling claim. He said that when he was walking near his vacation home in Kanagawa Prefecture on 25 November 1951, he had been kidnapped by a band of thuggish U.S. military intelligence officers and confined at a secret facility near Yokohama, where he was harshly interrogated, accused of being a spy for the Soviet Union, and pressured to become a double agent for the United States. Kaji said he had denied the charge and had refused to cooperate, and he was subsequently held against his will for more than a year. The night before the press conference, his captors had unceremoniously dropped him off near a railway station not far from his home.

The allegations were stunning. The Japanese press jumped on the story, a government inquiry was convened, and Kaji testified before a special committee of the Japanese Diet on 10 December. The furor revolved around two main issues. First, Kaji’s claims seemed to confirm in vivid detail the popular suspicion that U.S. military intelligence authorities had for years been engaged in a wide variety of clandestine political security operations throughout occupied Japan. Second, if Kaji had indeed been held against his will until early December 1952, this would have been a violation of Japan’s national sovereignty, which had been restored with the formal end of the occupation in late April. This second point is what Kaji’s supporters rallied around with greatest enthusiasm. The Kaji affair thus soon became inseparable from larger questions concerning the U.S.-Japan security agreement and the ever-deepening ties between Japan’s conservative political elites and the U.S. government in the early 1950s.

The investigation, discussion, and debate that ensued over the next several months became known as the “Kaji Wataru Incident” (Kaji Wataru jiken),

and within Japanese historiography on U.S.-Japan relations in the 1950s the Kaji affair figures prominently. Several of the participants in the Kaji case, as well as activist observers, published books in the 1950s and 1960s laying out voluminous amounts of evidence to counter the official U.S. account of Kaji’s disappearance. Although some recent work by Western scholars has begun to unearth the many secret agreements forged between the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) during the early postwar era in the name of anti-Communism, the still-shadowy world of occupation-era political intelligence operations is less understood.

The case of Kaji’s abduction, in particular, is almost completely unknown in English-language scholarship. The most detailed description of the Kaji case can be found in Chalmers Johnson’s classic study of the Matsukawa railway accident, but Johnson’s account is based on a narrow array of available secondary materials, and his interest in Kaji was limited to the degree to which that case had relevance for the Matsukawa affair. The rich archival record related both to Kaji’s activities in wartime China and the political surveillance of him carried out by U.S. authorities in occupied Japan can tell us much more.

What really happened to Kaji from late November 1951 to early December 1952, and why does it matter? To suggest an answer, this article first reviews the narrative details relevant to the case as presented by Kaji and his supporters, as well as the official explanation laid out by the U.S. embassy in Tokyo. The analysis then turns to Kaji’s wartime relationship with the OSS in China in order to shed new interpretive light on the background forces


that shaped the kidnapping incident of 1951–1952. Next, the article draws on multiple archival sources, including previously classified documents I recently obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) petition, to offer a more definitive conclusion concerning the “truth” of the Kaji case. Finally, I discuss the larger interpretive lessons of the Kaji affair, emphasizing the broader relevance of this case for our understanding of U.S.-Japan relations during the early Cold War era. Two of these lessons stand out. First, the experience in wartime China of Japanese leftists such as Kaji, as well as their fate in occupied Japan after repatriation, suggests that the so-called ‘reverse course’ in U.S. occupation policy after 1947 was perhaps not such a dramatic shift after all. If we want to understand why U.S. officials were so suspicious of Japanese leftists during the later stages of the occupation era, we need to consider the wartime roots of those anxieties. Second, the public outrage provoked by Kaji’s abduction and illegal detention stands out as a significantly early example of popular angst toward the U.S.-Japan security agreement, sentiment most often associated with dramatic episodes of urban student activism in 1960 and after. In becoming a potent symbol of Japanese resistance to U.S. Cold War geopolitical strategy in East Asia just six months after the end of the occupation, the Kaji case also illustrates the need to identify and explain the 1950s origins of the more recognizable 1960s cultures of protest in Japanese society.

The Mysterious Disappearance of Kaji Wataru

The Japanese version of what happened to Kaji is laid out in a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, but the rendition offered here is drawn primarily from the accounts published by Kaji himself and by the young man who initially leaked word of Kaji’s incarceration to the Japanese press, Yamada Zenjirō. The basic outline of their story is as follows. As Kaji strolled through the posh Kanagawa neighborhood of Kuganuma after dinner on the evening of 25 November 1951, a dark sedan pulled up alongside him. Several foreigners, some in civilian attire and others in uniform, jumped out, seized Kaji, threw him into the car, and sped off into the darkness. Their destination was a nondescript house in the Hongo ward of Tokyo occupied by Lieutenant-Colonel Jack Canon’s so-called Z-Unit, a shadowy group of espionage operatives working under the authority of the U.S. Army’s military intelligence service and...
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its chief, Major-General Charles Willoughby. They subjected Kaji to intense interrogation involving the use of physical torture and accused him of being a spy for the Soviet Union, an accusation he adamantly denied. As the questioning continued over the next few days, the U.S. operatives insisted that Kaji admit his guilt and become a double agent for U.S. military intelligence. Seeing no other way out of his desperate predicament, Kaji attempted suicide by drinking a bottle of household cleaner on 29 November after penning a last will and testament to his close friend Uchiyama Kanzō, a Japanese bookstore owner from Shanghai who at that time was also the head of the Japan-China Friendship Association in Tokyo. Flustered by Kaji’s will to resist, his captors, among whom were several Japanese-American officers, offered him medical aid to assist his recovery from both the suicide attempt and his persistent tuberculosis, and Kaji remained at the house in Hongo ward until early February 1952.

With the end of the occupation slated for the early spring of 1952, Canon’s Z-Unit was operating on borrowed time, so in February 1952 Kaji was hastily moved to a house in the Shibuya ward of Tokyo. This transfer was witnessed by Yamada, who worked as a cook in the Z-Unit house preparing meals for Kaji and the other “guests” who found themselves confined there. Yamada had developed a deep sympathy for Kaji during the first two months of his captivity and had even sent a letter to Kaji’s friend Uchiyama to let him know that Kaji was safe. At the new house in Shibuya, Kaji was placed under the custody of local CIA officers in March, but he was soon moved again to a different location in the Chigasaki area of Kanagawa Prefecture, where he stayed for the next several months. During Kaji’s time at the Chigasaki house, CIA operatives continued to pressure him to become an agent of U.S. intelligence, again to no avail. Then, in September 1952 an anonymous English-language letter arrived at several Tokyo-area newspapers with a cryptic suggestion that the long-missing writer Kaji Wataru was being held against his will by U.S. intelligence agencies. Japanese media outlets began running stories in October and November concerning the unknown whereabouts of Kaji, and by November Yamada and Uchiyama believed the time had come to try their best to secure Kaji’s release.

On 24 November they paid a visit to the office of leftist Diet member and lawyer Inomata Közō, telling him all they knew about Kaji’s disappearance. Inomata took the matter to the Japanese police, and Yamada also made a formal public statement to the mass media about what he had seen of Kaji’s confinement. During the preceding months, however, Kaji had been moved from Chigasaki back to Shibuya, so neither Inomata nor Yamada could say precisely where Kaji was. By early December, with the Tokyo media scene
abuzz with rumors concerning the mystery, Kaji was flown to a U.S. military facility in Okinawa in an attempt to steer clear of the brewing storm. On 6 December, however, a press conference including Yamada, Uchiyama, and Inomata, as well as Kaji’s wife, father, and sister, brought the matter to a head. The next morning, apparently convinced that Kaji could be hidden away no longer, his captors flew him back to Tokyo on a B-17 bomber, landing at a U.S. airfield in Tachikawa. They then drove him to Tokyo, ultimately dropping him off near a railway station just a short walk from his home. That evening, 7 December 1952, Kaji appeared alongside Inomata, Uchiyama, and Yamada to celebrate his newly secured freedom in front of the assembled Japanese press.

As told by Kaji and his supporters, this story—in which Kaji’s legal and human rights, as well as Japan’s national sovereignty, were so flagrantly violated—was irrefutable proof of U.S. disdain for the genuine democracy that liberal Japanese were struggling to nurture in an environment in the early 1950s dominated by conservative Japanese political elites beholden to the United States. In response to such highly provocative allegations, U.S. military authorities initially denied any knowledge of Kaji and categorically rejected his claims. But, in the face of popular outrage and political pressure, U.S. officials could not remain silent for long.

The official statement the U.S. embassy issued in response to Kaji’s charges laid out a counter-narrative that differed dramatically from the tale spun by Kaji and his backers. “For some time prior to 1951,” the statement explained, U.S. authorities had been aware of a Soviet spy ring operating in Japan in which Japanese intermediaries played a key role facilitating communication between local Soviet agents and Moscow. As part of a plan to “apprehend one or more of these intermediaries,” Kaji had been arrested in November 1951 and held for questioning. During his period of captivity, the statement continued, “Kaji admitted that he was an active Communist intelligence agent.” Then, fearing that his personal safety had been jeopardized by that admission, and also suffering from ill health related to advanced tuberculosis, Kaji “pleaded for refuge over a safe period in consideration of his hitherto cooperative attitude.” In response to that plea, U.S. authorities offered Kaji “shelter, lodging and medical aid in the post-Occupation period until such time as his health permitted him to make his own arrangements.” Once Kaji felt well enough to resume his private life, he returned home with U.S. assistance on 7 December 1952. Contemplating a return to political activism, however, and also still fearing retribution from fellow Japanese Communists, Kaji realized that “the threat to his life would still remain.” So he “concocted a story of illegal detention by U.S. officers in an obvious attempt to convince
Communist espionage headquarters that he was subjected to force and duress.” The embassy statement then concluded that, as

an avowed Communist agent, [Kaji’s] espionage activities in the past and his unfounded charges at present raise a conclusive presumption that he is either still serving Communist interests in an endeavor to poison relations between Japan and the United States, or that he is attempting to re-establish himself in the eyes of his Communist associates so that he may once again be of some service to them.7

The U.S. embassy’s official position was that Kaji’s initial arrest was completely justifiable because he was a Soviet spy and that his extended period under U.S. supervision beyond April 1952 came at his own request. The embassy alleged that Kaji’s story of mistreatment, imprisonment, and harsh interrogation was a flimsy attempt to damage the image of the United States in Japanese public opinion and protect his own reputation among his leftist peers. However, a confidential memorandum containing the U.S. embassy’s responses to a series of questions posed by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs sheds more nuanced light on the hotly contested matter of Kaji’s detention beyond April 1952. “If Kaji was under protection at his own request,” the Japanese office asked, “when, where and with what persons were the arrangements for protection made?” The embassy replied, “Since, as previously indicated Kaji admitted he was an active communist intelligence agent, the Embassy cannot for obvious reasons furnish the details concerning the granting of shelter and assistance to Kaji without prejudicing the security interests of those concerned.” Pressing further on the details of Kaji’s detention beyond April, the Japanese side queried, “Why were not the Japanese authorities informed, after the coming into force of the Peace Treaty, that a Japanese was being given protection?” The U.S. side responded as follows:

The Embassy is advised that the Japanese authorities were not informed of the arrangements because the assistance extended to Kaji as a private individual was humanitarian in nature without any government concern apparent at the time. Consequently, there was no reason at the time to suppose that the Japanese government would be particularly interested in the matter. However, if it were known at the time the arrangements were made to extend aid and assistance to Kaji that any unfounded concern over Japanese jurisdiction or authority, as aforesaid,

might have arisen, it is believed that appropriate steps might have been taken at that time to inform the competent authorities of the situation. The implication was that if anyone on the U.S. side had realized that Kaji’s detention beyond April 1952 would cause such a fuss, Japanese officials would likely have been notified. Thus, Kaji’s captivity, even if it did come at his request, was deliberately kept secret in the hope that no one on the Japanese side would learn about it.

The initial U.S. version of events, though not entirely implausible, did not point to any firm evidence of Kaji’s crimes as a spy other than his alleged confession. That deficiency, however, was soon remedied. Around the time the U.S. embassy released its statement in mid-December 1952, Japanese police officials released a statement claiming that a man named Mitsuhashi Masao had been arrested on 10 December for sending radio signals to the Soviet Union. Interrogation of the suspect revealed that Mitsuhashi had served in the Imperial Army and spent roughly two years as a POW in the Soviet Union before his repatriation to Japan in December 1947. Mitsuhashi claimed to have been trained in espionage by Soviet agents during his captivity in the USSR before being sent back to Japan with instructions to meet with a local Soviet contact to receive orders. In reality, Mitsuhashi was a double agent during the occupation era. The U.S. Army’s Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) had interrogated him upon his return to Japan in December 1947 and ordered him to continue following his orders from Soviet agents and to reveal all of his radio transmissions to the CIC before sending them to the USSR. But the end of the occupation in April 1952 meant that Mitsuhashi was no longer in the employ of U.S. intelligence officers when he was arrested by Japanese police in December 1952. The charge against him, therefore, was that he had sent illegal messages to the Soviet Union by radio because he was still in contact with Soviet espionage agents in Japan. According to Japanese police, Mitsuhashi claimed he and Kaji were members of the same Soviet spy ring, and U.S. officials quickly cited this as further proof of their charges against Kaji. When informed of Mitsuhashi’s claims, however, Kaji categorically denied any knowledge of the man and suggested instead that Mitsuhashi was most likely a police informant who had been enlisted to implicate him in an espionage network with which he had no connection whatsoever.

The Japanese police ultimately charged both Mitsuhashi and Kaji with the crime of sending politically sensitive information to Moscow in violation of the prewar-era Radio Waves Control Law. Mitsuhashi was put on trial and convicted in March 1953, but Kaji’s case was delayed because of his poor health. Not until 1961 did a Tokyo court find him guilty and hand down a mild suspended sentence. But Kaji’s legal supporters appealed the verdict, and the case dragged on for several more years until he was finally acquitted in 1969, seventeen years after the initial charges were made. That acquittal, however, came primarily because the Tokyo court determined that the evidence linking Kaji to Mitsuhashi’s activity was insufficient. The ruling was not a formal determination that Kaji had never been a Soviet agent.10

The Wartime Encounter

From a reading of only the U.S. side of the story in the Kaji case, one might assume Kaji had not come to the attention of U.S. military intelligence officials until the late 1940s. To believe that, however, is to know only the last act of a much longer drama. Perhaps the most striking difference between Kaji’s story and the official U.S. version is that Kaji explicitly connected the events of 1951–1952 to his wartime experiences, whereas the U.S. embassy barely mentioned the war. In Kaji’s numerous published accounts of what transpired between him and his U.S. captors, he consistently said that his past links to the OSS were brought up by U.S. personnel during his interrogation. Both Canon and Kaji’s CIA interrogators told him he had been targeted by the Z-Unit in late 1951 because he had worked closely with U.S. intelligence officers during the war, and now they wanted him to do so again. In contrast, the U.S. embassy statement of 10 December 1952 mentions Kaji’s “espionage activities in the past” only as part of its effort to discredit his present-day claims. A close examination of the OSS file on Kaji held at the U.S. National Archives can thus bring into sharper focus the relevance of those events to the dynamics of the Kaji case in 1951.

Kaji’s prewar experiences at home were not unlike those of most leftist intellectuals. He faced harassment by political police throughout the late 1920s and spent several stints in prison for allegedly violating prewar Japan’s infamous Peace Preservation Law. After being released from jail in 1935, Kaji fled to Shanghai in early 1936. There he found refuge within the leftist Japanese

10. Ibid., p. 373.
community until the Japanese military occupation of the city in the fall of 1937. By March 1938, after escaping to Hong Kong, Kaji had reached Hankou, where he began to work for the Nationalist Chinese (Kuomintang, or KMT) military in propaganda campaigns against Japanese soldiers in the field. In December 1939, Kaji formally established the so-called Japanese People’s Antiwar League (Nihonjinmin hansen domei) in Chongqing, and through it he continued his work of frontline propaganda activities and reeducation programs for Japanese prisoners-of-war (POWs).

By 1940, however, worsening relations between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) spelled bad news for Kaji and his POW projects. Suspicious of his leftist political orientation and his friendly relations with many CCP members, KMT military officials soon disbanded the antiwar league, although they allowed Kaji to maintain an “institute” in Chongqing, where he and other group members carried on with their production of antiwar propaganda leaflets and other material. It was through his work in Chongqing that Kaji came to the attention of U.S. military authorities, and by 1942 he was often working in association with the U.S. Office of War Information (OWI). Through those connections, Kaji came to know several influential U.S. diplomats, such as John K. Emmerson, and the view of Kaji held by many Japan-hands in the United States at that time was exceptionally positive. Andrew Roth, for example, in his early post-surrender analysis of Japan’s political future, said of Kaji, “there are few Japanese who can speak with more authority on the possibility of reclaiming the Japanese mind from the corruption of military fascism.”

But the relationship between Kaji and his U.S. contacts in wartime China was not all pleasantries and platitudes. The story of an attempted (but failed) agreement between Kaji and a handful of OSS officers in China during the final months of the war sheds important new light on the validity of Kaji’s story in 1952. As early as January 1945, OSS operatives in China had expressed a keen interest in setting up in southern China something similar to the POW reeducation efforts then underway in Yan’an through cooperation between the CCP and a senior official in the Japanese Communist Party, Nozaka Sanzo. By February, Kaji had been identified as the most likely candidate to head up a similar program in Kunming. An OSS memorandum insisted that “the outstanding man for this job is Kaji Wataru, an exile from Japan, who is generally regarded, both here and in America, as one of the three outstanding Japanese not under the control of Japan. . . . Though leftist in his views, he is not a communist but

an anti-fascist, who has fought against the gunbatsu, [the] Japanese military clique.”

Not overly concerned about Kaji’s socialist proclivities, U.S. military officials by early April 1945 had put in a formal request with the KMT that Kaji be released from his work in Chongqing so that he might be directly employed by the OSS. That approval was secured by mid-month. Plans were in motion soon thereafter to have Kaji arrive in Kunming by May to begin his work, but a potential crack in the relationship had already appeared by the end of April. In a letter to his OSS contact Harley Stevens, Kaji wrote: “I am grateful for your efforts . . . (but) I am worried that there may have been some misunderstanding.” Kaji was quick to point out that “On basic principles, we have no objection to complete cooperation, both political and military, with the government and armed forces of your country.” But, he was also equally eager to secure “the guarantee of our views on our political independence. In other words, we ask a guarantee by your country of our right to organize a Japanese political group and to cooperate with the governments of China and of other United Nations.”

In a later memorandum, Kaji made his conditions for a working agreement with the OSS more explicit. He proposed three general points:

1. It must be regarded that the basis of cooperation of our organization with the American Army is the mutual victory over the Japanese militarists; 2. The American government must guarantee that those members that are dispatched as organizers by our League . . . can be exchanged by others according to the decision of our organization; 3. Japanese POWs who become affiliated with our League must be guaranteed by the American government of their political right(s), and they must be considered as members dispatched by our organization to cooperate with the American Army.

These conditions show that Kaji had no intention of subverting his larger political goals for the sake of U.S. military strategy. He was willing to accept

12. Memorandum from OSS China headquarters to Major General Wedermeyer, Commander of US Forces in the China Theater, 23 January 1945, in “Kaji and POW Projects” File, Entry 211, Box 1, 250/64/32/5, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, RG 226, NARA (hereinafter referred to as “KPP File,” with appropriate document description and date); and Memorandum from OSS China headquarters to Major General Wedermeyer, Commander of US Forces in the China Theater, 28 February 1945, in KPP File.
OSS support for his activities, but not if that support came at the cost of his operational independence. Stevens’s response was to say that “the OSS could make no guarantees but would not hinder his larger work of organizing a Japanese group on which he has been working for years.”

The “group” mentioned here was Kaji’s League for the Establishment of a Democratic Japan (Minshū Nihon kensetsu dōmei), an offshoot group that had emerged from the 1939 Antiwar League with the more explicit purpose of planning for political action in post-surrender Japan. Kaji described its four organizational pillars as follows:

1) We oppose the war of aggression started by the Japanese Army. We seek to deliver our fatherland and the Japanese people from the ruinous sacrifices of war by its immediate cessation; 2) We are resolved to release the wills and energies of the people by destroying the bases of dictatorial power, which makes them mute slaves and cannon fodder against their wills, and thereby to bring about the happiness and prosperity of the fatherland; 3) Japan has been reduced to the uttermost impoverishment by the suicidal war policy of the military. We intend to build a strong and prosperous new Japan dedicated to the happiness of the people; 4) The people have been sacrificed to aggressive war. We will redeem them and will rebuild and improve their smashed, bankrupt livelihood.

Such proclamations make the primary motivation behind Kaji’s wartime activism obvious. He sought the ultimate liberation of Japanese society from authoritarian political oppression and what he saw as industrial capitalist exploitation, and the destruction of the imperial Japanese military machine in China was the first step in achieving that goal. In response, senior OSS officials in Washington communicated to Roland Dulin, chief of the OSS Morale Operations branch in China, that “in principle, the OSS supports the idea of such a League, but cannot officially guarantee it.” Moreover, they insisted that Kaji’s work for the league must “not in any way be traceable to OSS sponsorship.”

Despite these obvious signs of divergent goals and perhaps even competing loyalties, the OSS by July 1945 had drawn up an official contract for Kaji that indicated a salary of $200 per month and an indemnity payment of $1,200 should Kaji be killed while performing his OSS duties. The contract, however, also included an oath of loyalty to be signed by Kaji and his wife, Ikeda Yuki.

15. Memorandum from Harley C. Stevens to Kaji, 27 April 1945, in KPP File.
16. A draft platform of the League is enclosure no. 2 in a memorandum from Roland E. Dulin to OSS headquarters in Washington, DC, 30 April 1945, in KPP File.
17. Memorandum from Herbert S. Little to Roland E. Dulin, 14 June 1945, in KPP File.
and the contract stipulated that the OSS reserved the right to terminate the agreement with Kaji at any time. At this point the dialogue between Kaji and his OSS contacts essentially collapsed. As Harley Stevens reported to Roland Dulin on 25 July 1945:

Today when [Walter] Pauly went to pick up, Kaji refused to sign objecting to everything in it from the term of contract, oath of office, unilateral right of termination, secrecy provision, etc. Also mentioned the guarantees which we thought you had explained we cannot give. Apparently he wants to be paid collaborator not employee. We are thoroughly disgusted but realize our needs and conceivably he is being put up to this by someone else. We are attempting to get him to come down with group pending revision of contract when I think he ought to be talked to sternly under some duress if necessary which we cannot supply here.

Even with such setbacks, the OSS continued to pursue Kaji’s cooperation through the end of July, but by early August Pauly was even more convinced that an agreement with Kaji was unlikely. As he stated in a report to Dulin: “Have seen Kaji most every day for the past few weeks and am sorry to report the more I seem him the less I think of his sincerity and willingness to cooperate with us. . . . Kaji is in my estimation placing much more emphasis on his own ‘works’ than he should be, rather than concentrating his efforts on his future with our organization.” Perhaps further negotiation between Pauly, Dulin, and Kaji would have proved fruitful, but Japan’s surrender roughly two weeks later rendered the issue moot.

In a February 1953 essay titled “The Eight Years I Was Targeted by America,” Kaji not only recounted what transpired during his detention in 1951–1952 but also explicitly connected those events to his treatment at the hands of OSS operatives during the summer of 1945. Specifically, he described the response he claims to have sent to Dulin on 31 July concerning the terms of his OSS contract. Among the questions he raised with Dulin were, “Does this contract represent only a temporary local relationship between our groups, or does it represent a long-term commitment to a shared goal of democratizing Japan?”—clearly reflecting his suspicion that the answer was most likely the former. Kaji also offered a fuller explanation of his preference to be a paid

18. Memorandum from Roland E. Dulin to Walter E. Pauly, 12 July 1945, in KPP File.
20. Memorandum from Walter E. Pauly to Roland E. Dulin, 2 August 1945, in KPP File.
collaborator, not an employee of the OSS, something his OSS contacts at the time had found disagreeable. As Kaji explained to Dulin: “If something should occur and we are to lose our lives in this endeavor, it must be for the sake of carrying out our mission, not in our capacity as employees of the United States.” In short, Kaji would not sacrifice his long-term goal of dramatic political transformation in post-surrender Japan in order to obtain only short-term assistance from the OSS in hastening the war’s end.

Although this attempt to collaborate against the shared enemy of Japanese imperialism failed to materialize in 1945, the CIA’s encounter with Kaji six years later shows that U.S. intelligence officials had not forgotten that he was a potentially valuable recruit. The documentary trail of Kaji’s interactions with the OSS in the spring of 1945 provides an important backlight to the drama that unfolded between Kaji and U.S. military intelligence in 1951–1952. The archival evidence is far more supportive of Kaji’s version of events than of the story told by U.S. officials. Kaji refused to compromise his political convictions for the sake of cooperating with U.S. intelligence officers in both 1945 and 1951. U.S. officials in 1952, however, distorted the presentation of Kaji’s wartime past in order to tarnish his character, either from ignorance of that past or for the deliberate manipulation of it. Kaji was as committed to his vision of regional peace and Japanese democracy in 1952 as he had been in 1945. What had dramatically changed was the U.S. position. In a 1944 commentary on the nature of Japanese political institutions and the postwar future, a scholar of East Asia who later served as an adviser to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) Government Section, T. A. Bisson, named Kaji as one among a “long and honorable” list of liberals “who can be useful in establishing a new political order in Japan, based on the will of the people and dedicated to democracy and peace.” Having touted Kaji near war’s end as a valuable asset to help secure a future for Japanese society free from militarism and autocracy, U.S. authorities in 1952 decried Kaji as a fiendish traitor to both his homeland and freedom-loving people everywhere. On one matter, however, the U.S. side remained consistent. As Harley Stevens wrote when describing his frustration with Kaji’s stubborn attitude in July 1945, “I think he ought to be talked to sternly under some duress if necessary.” Canon evidently reached the same conclusion in December 1951.

Unraveling the Mystery

The background story of Kaji’s interactions with the OSS in wartime China makes clearer the motivation behind his selection as an interrogation target in 1951, but a more complete understanding of the Kaji kidnapping case still requires answers to two central questions: Was Kaji a spy for the Soviet Union during the later years of the occupation era? Was Kaji held against his will beyond April 1952 when the occupation formally came to an end? Based on the evidence now available, the most reasonable answers seem to be “no” to the first question and “yes” to the second.

Just when Chalmers Johnson was finishing his 1972 book on the Matsukawa railway accident, a former Korean military intelligence agent who had worked closely with Canon, Yŏn Chŏng (known in Japanese as En Tei), offered startling recollections of that period. In a series of articles first published in the Japanese weekly magazine Shūkan bunshū in 1971 and later put out in book form in 1973 as Kyanon kikan kara no shōgen (Evidence from Canon’s Unit), Yŏn admitted that the Z-Unit had kidnapped Kaji but that the intelligence he provided was nearly useless. Canon had drastically miscalculated Kaji’s value as a potential informant.23 Yŏn claimed, however, that he was publishing his memoirs not to substantiate Kaji’s story but to challenge several elements of the account that he found dishonest and even absurd. Allegations of physical mistreatment and torture, for example, made no sense to him. Why would Canon and his crew have beaten someone with whom they hoped to forge a fruitful collaborative relationship? In Yŏn’s view, Kaji had employed his talents as a dramatic writer to make his detention sound far more harrowing than it actually was.24 Even so, Yŏn expressed sincere remorse for what had happened to Kaji, claiming that both Canon’s Z-unit and the CIA had caused great trouble for a man who was guilty of nothing and could never have been of any practical use to U.S. intelligence authorities.

An examination of available archival sources also renders highly problematic the purported link between Kaji and Mitsuhashi. The U.S. embassy’s position in December 1952 was that U.S. agents had started investigating Kaji after learning through Mitsuhashi about Kaji’s involvement in a Soviet spy ring. This is simply untrue. Mitsuhashi was not repatriated to Japan until

December 1947, whereas the CIC of the U.S. General Headquarters had already targeted Kaji for surveillance for roughly seven weeks from late May to early July 1947. The reasons given for that surveillance were threefold: (1) to ascertain whether Kaji was “organizing repatriates and demobilized soldiers in a separate organization apart from the Communist Party” and “if such organization will be under the jurisdiction of the Russian Communist Party through the Soviet embassy”; (2) to determine the identities of Chinese and Korean intermediaries who might be facilitating that contact with the Soviet embassy; (3) the nature of Kaji’s “present contact with the Soviet Embassy, including Soviet personnel with whom he deals.”

Records of the Civil Censorship Detachment also make clear that mail addressed to Kaji, and even letters mentioning him, were being read and recorded by SCAP authorities as early as the fall of 1946. Given that the CIC was suspicious of Kaji as far back as the summer of 1947—half a year before Mitsuhashi returned to Japan and subsequently became a CIC double agent—the suggestion that intelligence from Mitsuhashi is what led to the arrest of Kaji does not hold up.

The 1947 CIC interrogation report on Mitsuhashi also suggests that the link between him and Kaji might have been spurious, a smokescreen cast by the CIA to implicate Kaji and defame his character. After a lengthy review of Mitsuhashi’s experiences in the Soviet Union after Japan’s surrender, including the training he received there, the report concluded: “He has not experienced any happiness during his youth and one unfortunate incident after another has molded his mind into a believer in predestination, and now feels that all events which one confronts are predetermined, and accordingly one must make adjustments as he meets the new situation.” The report went on to assess his potential as a double agent:

Subject now rationalizes that there is no sense in fretting about one’s fate and feeling despondent over it. . . . His past experience has taught him to make the best out of the present situation for the future will take care of itself. . . . With subject’s courage and ability, the possibility of obtaining the counter-intelligence information on the Soviets by utilizing subject intelligently is very promising.


26. “Kaji Wataru, 1945–1949,” ARC Identifier: 492255, Records of the Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, SCAP, Civil Intelligence Section, Civil Censorship Division, RG 331, NARA.

This suggests the CIC had pegged Mitsuhashi early on as the sort of malleable character whose fatalistic outlook on life meant that he could be put to use in a wide variety of scenarios, including the framing of Kaji. That possibility seems more likely when matched with the fact that Kaji was already under surveillance for several months before Mitsuhashi returned from the USSR.

What evidence did U.S. authorities possess, beyond Mitsuhashi’s testimony, that Kaji had connections to Soviet espionage agents? Very little. The only potential connection I have found is in an intelligence file on a man named Inoue Mitsuru. The file indicates that Inoue had studied Russian as a youth, spent time in the USSR during the war, and then worked as the personal interpreter for Lieutenant-General Kuzma Derevyanko of the Soviet embassy in Tokyo in 1948–1949. Inoue and Kaji then both appear in a Civil Censorship Detachment summary regarding a list of the executive committee of a nebulous study group known as the Japan Democratic Culture League (Nihon minshushugi bunka renmei). The file also frequently links Inoue to the sort of Japanese POW repatriation and aid projects with which Kaji was also closely associated in the late 1940s. Inoue’s connections with Soviet intelligence networks are also indicated in a report from the CIC in February 1950 that identifies him as a local Japanese contact point between repatriated Japanese soldiers and Soviet agents in Tokyo. In addition, Inoue was a friend of the noted leftist Aoyama Kazuo (an alias for Kuroda Zenji), who had worked with Kaji in Chongqing during the war. Concerning Aoyama, a U.S. intelligence report from July 1950 claims, “at present he spies for the Soviet and Chinese Communist authorities.” In other archival sources Aoyama and Kaji are mentioned together as prominent Japanese leftists with close connections to known and suspected Chinese espionage agents in Japan.

Such circumstantial evidence linking Kaji to Inoue and Aoyama, however, is hardly persuasive. Equally suspicious organizational links could have been

29. “Soviet Intelligence Activities in Japan,” 23 February 1950, in File No. ZF01613, Box 114, Russian Intelligence (Espionage) [Far East], 1947–1951, Impersonal Files, 1940–1976, Investigative Records Repository, Counter Intelligence Corps Collection, Records of the Army Staff, RG 319, NARA.
31. “Chinese Communist Espionage Agents,” 4 April 1953, in File No. ZF010020, Box 133, Chinese Communists Activities in Japan, Impersonal Files, 1940–1976, Investigative Records Repository, Counter Intelligence Corps Collection, Records of the Army Staff, RG 319, NARA. Curiously, even though this report was created after the details of the Kaji case became public in late 1952, it includes no mention of the case.
drawn for dozens of Japanese leftwing activists at the time. In addition, Koji Ariyoshi, a Japanese-American member of the U.S. military mission to Yan’an in wartime China, claims in his memoirs that Kaji and Aoyama hated each other and were barely on speaking terms during the Chongqing years. “I tried to bring the two together,” Ariyoshi writes, “for both were political exiles fighting the Japanese military rulers. Finally I gave up my efforts when I saw that Aoyama was not interested in cooperating with Kaji. I also discovered that Aoyama worked closely with Tai Li agents, popularly referred to as the Chinese Gestapo.”

Moreover, Kaji’s own writings from 1946–1948 reveal very little, if any, interest in the Soviet Union. Kaji was a scholar of Chinese culture and literature, his continental connections were almost exclusively with Chinese intellectuals and political figures, and his early postwar publications dealt overwhelmingly with affairs in China. Finally, based on his study of the CIA and Japan, Haruna Mikio suggests that CIA officer Carlton Swift explicitly stated that Kaji was flown to Okinawa in late 1952 in order to undergo a lie detector examination for the sake of determining once and for all whether he was a Soviet agent. When the examination turned up nothing, Kaji was flown back to the Tokyo area and released.

The most compelling evidence against the notion that Kaji was a spy comes from documents recently declassified by the CIA. In the file at the U.S. National Archives containing the U.S. embassy statement of 10 December, two documents had been removed as security classified information. After waiting more than four years for a response to a FOIA request, I finally received the documents in April 2013, and they shed significant light on the embassy’s memorandum. The first document, titled “Script for Handling the Kaji Case,” is a CIA directive that suggests the embassy convey the findings of the U.S. government as: “1) Americans involved were military personnel acting without instructions, authority or knowledge of any responsible U.S. official; 2) persons involved acted in good faith and from generous humanitarian motives; 3) Americans involved were nevertheless misguided, negligent, lacking in discretion.” Moreover, the hand-written notes that accompany the printed script state, “if case threatens fall of Yoshida, U.S. must take quick and vigorous steps to assume responsibility for discipline and corrective measures.” The script also suggests the need for “blackening of Kaji character and recital

of his past activities during the war.” Perhaps most curious, however, is the instruction at the beginning of the document that, as a first step, the “Japanese government dispatch strong note to U.S. Embassy (this could be pre-dated back to initial reports on case). Note would contain: 1) reference to press statements on case; 2) Demand for immediate investigation by U.S. government and full report on the facts.” This indicates that U.S. and Japanese authorities colluded to manufacture a precisely crafted response to the popular outrage that at least some feared had the potential to destabilize the cabinet of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru.34

The second declassified CIA document provides even greater detail on the carefully polished official response to Kaji’s claims. “The following three courses of action are listed,” it begins, “in the order of least harmful effect on our intelligence operations in Japan and without regard to the necessity for adopting that course of action which will best protect our overall political interests in Japan, particularly to prevent if possible the fall of the Yoshida government and a serious deterioration in the U.S. position in Japan.” The first of those three options, “Vigorous Defense and No Concession of any Wrongdoing,” seems closest to the actual statement released by the embassy, including the recommendation of a “reminder that during the World War II, Kaji worked against his country in Chungking to prove that he has always been unpatriotic and even treasonable.” The second option, “Partial Concession of Wrong Doing by the U.S.,” includes everything from the first option but adds an admission that those who “cared for” Kaji after 28 April 1952 “never informed higher authority which would have otherwise taken appropriate measures to release Kaji in view of the likelihood of Communist exploitation and distortion of a basically generous act” as well as a pledge to “carry out immediate disciplinary action against individuals involved without naming them.” The third course, “Full Admission of Acts and Assumption of Full Responsibility for Vigorous Corrective Measures,” repeats everything included in option two but also recommends that the United States “admit serious culpability, negligence and lack of discretion by individuals taking care of Kaji,” as well as “concede these individuals were formerly connected with the CIC.” The CIC operations would then be explained as a “carry-over made necessary by the legal ambiguity of post-treaty Japan regarding Soviet espionage.” The report concludes that option one was the most preferred course but allows for

the possibility of option two “if the Kaji case threatens the fall of the Yoshida cabinet and a serious impairment of Japanese-American relations.”35

These newly released archival sources bring to light two critical factors in the Kaji case. First, the men who seized Kaji while on his early evening walk in Kuganuma in late November 1951 did so without formal authorization from senior officials in the CIC. Second, the consequences of that action were understood on the U.S. side in December 1952 as possibly severe enough to bring down the Yoshida government unless they were countered with a viable explanation. Faced with such potentially dire consequences, the case against Kaji needed to be ironclad. An alleged confession of Soviet espionage backed by a purported link to former CIC informant Mitsuhashi Masao was the strongest possible case to make.

When Johnson reviewed the Kaji case in his 1972 book, he revealed his lingering uncertainty by concluding that “whatever the ultimate truth” Kaji had been cleared of all charges by the summer of 1969.36 In light of the evidence presented here, that “truth” is closer than ever before. What really happened between Kaji and his U.S. captors in late 1951? Most likely, Canon’s Z-Unit abducted Kaji thinking that he would prove useful given some vague suspicion of his Soviet ties. Once they had him, however, they quickly realized that he knew very little and would likely be of no use. In January and February of 1952, however, Z-Unit was preparing to shut down its operations, and Canon could not decide how best to handle Kaji under those circumstances. The CIA, which gained custody of Kaji in March 1952, also thought his knowledge and continental experience could be useful, but again nothing came of it. The CIA, too, then fumbled around with a plan for how best to make Kaji go away as quietly as possible. Ultimately, when the story broke in the Japanese press, U.S. agents had no choice but to let Kaji go. Faced with political pressure (but also with the cooperation of Japanese police), U.S. authorities then fabricated the link to Mitsuhashi in order to justify Kaji’s arrest and cover their tracks.

Might Kaji nonetheless have exaggerated his side of the story for political purposes? Perhaps. He loathed the conservative political establishment in Japan and the U.S. occupation regime, and it is therefore not unthinkable that he sought to embarrass both of them by exaggerating the affair in an inflammatory

35. “Possible Courses of Action in the Kaji Case as [redacted], 10 December 1952, in Box 2, 250/49/09/04, Records Relating to the Treaty of Peace with Japan—Subject File, 1945–51, RG 59, NARA. This document was released to the author on 14 April 2013 with “sensitive information deleted.”

36. Johnson, Conspiracy at Matsukawa, p. 373.
manner. A CIC report quotes a speech Kaji delivered in November 1946 in which he said, “On returning to Japan, I am surprised to see no signs of democracy in the country... The downfall of the Yoshida cabinet is the first great step toward a democratic Japan.”37 It is certainly possible, then, that Kaji embellished his experiences for maximum political impact. Even so, the U.S. claim that he asked to be held for an extended period beyond the end of the occupation is doubtful. There is no evidence beyond the U.S. embassy’s statement to substantiate this assertion. In addition, revelations in the popular Japanese press during the last few years of Kaji’s life bolster his claims of mistreatment in U.S. captivity. In the summer of 1981, for example, the magazine Sunday Mainichi ran a piece based on the testimony of three Japanese men who had worked for Canon as the crew of a boat used for espionage surveillance in the waters near North Korea in the early 1950s. According to their story, Kaji was indeed tortured by Canon’s men during the first few weeks of his captivity, and after he still refused to cooperate Canon ordered his local Japanese henchmen to kill Kaji and burn his body. Taking the murder of a fellow Japanese citizen as a deeply serious matter, they demanded that Canon pay them each $1,000. Faced with that prospect, Canon is said to have withdrawn the order.38

As for the suggestion from U.S. authorities that Kaji needed to discredit the United States in order to protect his public reputation, this may not be entirely unfounded either. Yomiuri shimbun reported on 14 December 1952 that some believed Kaji gave U.S. military authorities information on possible bombing targets in Tokyo during the wartime period when he cooperated with the OWI. If true, Kaji had done so because he and U.S. military planners at that time had the same goal: the destruction of Japan’s imperial military machine. In the context of post-occupation domestic politics, the Korean War, and left-wing criticism of the Yoshida government, the idea that Kaji had helped the U.S. unleash ferocious fire-bombing raids on urban Japan during the spring of 1945 might well have cost him sympathy in the eyes of the general public.39

Even with such questions still unresolved, however, the recently declassified CIA documents indicate that the U.S. side needed a strategy to cover up the unauthorized actions of Canon’s Z-Unit. The men who took Kaji and held him had no official authorization from the U.S. government to do so.

Moreover, U.S. officials recognized the severity of the public relations mess unleashed by the case and were willing, if pressed, to admit that these agents had acted on their own and even to punish them for doing so. U.S. military intelligence agents, as Kaji himself stated upon his formal acquittal of all charges in 1969, “fell into their own trap.”

**The Kaji Case and U.S.-Japan Relations in the Early 1950s**

Canon took his own life, shooting himself in the head at his home in Texas, on 8 March 1981. Kaji died the following year, on 27 July 1982. With their deaths, the truth of what happened from November 1951 through December 1952 became something we can know only through the documentary record left behind. The CIA is still determined to keep some details of the case hidden—the documents released to me in 2013 were sanitized, with all the the names of those involved in holding Kaji after April 1952 whited out. The only documentary evidence that might tell us definitively whether Kaji was a spy for the USSR likely rests in the former Soviet foreign intelligence archive, which has never been accessible to researchers unaffiliated with the intelligence service. Nonetheless, the argument made here, despite still relying at times on logical inferences when conclusive documentation is not available, posits with confidence that Kaji was not a Soviet spy. Beyond the question of Kaji’s individual guilt or innocence, however, the story of his relationship with U.S. military intelligence agents from the spring of 1945 to the winter of 1952, a tale of his transformation in the eyes of U.S. officials from a potentially valuable ally in the struggle against Imperial Japan to a despised patsy of Moscow and traitor to democratic Japan, is one that offers significant insight concerning at least two broader themes in U.S.-Japan relations during the early Cold War era.

One issue better understood through an examination of Kaji’s experiences is that of U.S. relations with Japanese leftists before 1945. In the context of the Second World War, leftwing Japanese activists in occupied China were often viewed quite positively by U.S. authorities. On meeting Kaji and his wife in Chongqing, for example, a member of the U.S. “Dixie Mission,” Koji Ariyoshi, remembered: “I felt deeply that the future of Japan belongs to peaceloving people like them.”

41. Ariyoshi, *From Kona to Yenan*, p. 106.
became far less common. As John Fairbank, who served in China right after the Japanese surrender, noted in his memoirs:

One day Kaji Wataru, the poetic-looking Japanese intellectual who had translated OWI leaflets into Japanese for Jim Stewart, came to see me in Shanghai hoping to get passage back to Japan. The U.S. Navy was shipping his countrymen, our late enemies, by the hundreds of thousands, but Kaji was held up evidently by security. I wrote a letter to the American military suggesting that someone who had helped us in the war deserved as good treatment as those who had fought against us. This intervention got Kaji back home but gave me a black mark. We were already afraid of the Communists, who were already afraid of us. Security was at work.42

Many narratives of the occupation era emphasize a “reverse course” in U.S. policy beginning in early 1947, when initial U.S. support for the Japanese left during the occupation period began to be abandoned in the face of geopolitical anxieties stoked by tensions with the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, the rising strength of the CCP in the Chinese Civil War, Mao’s victory in 1949, and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Chinese Communism and Japanese socialism become intertwined in this narrative only insofar as the U.S. perception of and reaction to them after 1947 was connected. Tracing the story back to the presurrender period, however, reveals that many Japanese leftists had long defined their activism as inseparable from the victory of the CCP, and U.S. military intelligence officers knew this perfectly well. Indeed, Kaji’s interactions with the OSS in 1945 had made this abundantly clear. Although the stories of Japanese leftists who were imprisoned at home during the war tend to be studied more frequently because they were the ones “liberated” by early SCAP policy to counter the influence of conservative Japanese politicians and bureaucrats, the experience of leftwing Japanese activists in wartime China is equally important. People such as Kaji and the members of his Japanese antiwar league in Chongqing had maintained relationships with U.S. military authorities since long before the surrender. If we look closely at that history to excavate the earliest roots of later-day SCAP policies, the “reverse course” of 1947 seems far less abrupt and more like the full fruition of earlier trends than a dramatic shift in mid-occupation policy.43

A second lesson learned from the mystery behind Kaji’s arrest and detention concerns the power it held as a rhetorical weapon for those in Japan in

42. Fairbank, Chinabound, p. 310.
43. Oinas-Kukkonen’s Tolerance, Suspicion, and Hostility is one of the few recent works in English that attempts this sort of excavation.
the early 1950s who sought to discredit the U.S.-Japan security agreement and by extension the entire framework of early Cold War geopolitics in East Asia. Without much regard for the facts of the incident, pundits and commentators trumpeted the case as evidence of sinister U.S. actions. The truth behind the affair seemed of less importance than the power Kaji’s story possessed as a referential symbol for left-leaning Japanese critics of the United States in the early 1950s, becoming a highly potent political myth almost immediately. One author, for example, used the Kaji case to draw a parallel between the CIC and Imperial Japan’s own dreaded “thought police” (tokkō keisatsu).44

Another lamented the trickery the United States had employed to hide the facts of the kidnapping, and a third claimed that the Kaji affair was evidence of “American-style” freedom and democracy, a sarcastic dig at the supposed benefits brought by the U.S. occupation.45

More than a year after the case had gone public, the political magazine Shinsō (Truth) drew an even bolder critical link between the Kaji case and U.S. policy in Japan. The real reason behind Kaji’s kidnapping, the magazine alleged in the May 1954 article, was not fear of Soviet espionage but a secret plan for the containment of Chinese Communism. In support of this claim, the article cited comments supposedly made by Charles Willoughby in 1952 to a group of former Japanese imperial army officers then in the employ of the U.S. Army’s G-2 intelligence agency: “You guys constructed Manchukuo, called it an independent country, and then used it to carry out your policies against the Soviet Union and China. You said Manchuria was Japan’s lifeline, right?” He then purportedly exclaimed: “Well, Japan is America’s Manchukuo!”46

Kaji’s arrest and illegal detention, which had been carried out largely under Willoughby’s watch, were thus embedded within a much larger critique of U.S. aims in East Asia that seemed to rest on the presumption that the U.S. government could use Japan as a colonial puppet in its broader campaigns against the menace of the PRC. Such arguments resonated loudly within the community of leftwing Japanese intellectuals and politicians who, in the early 1950s, were frustrated by what they perceived as the sycophantic complicity of Japan’s dominant conservative political elites in U.S. geopolitical maneuverings against Soviet and Chinese Communism. The Kaji case thus provided early


fuel to the fires of popular protest against the U.S.-Japan Security Agreement—flames that would rage nearly out of control some eight years later during the massive student-led demonstrations of May and June 1960.

Epilogue

In 2011, Yamada Zenjirō, the man who had first leaked word of Kaji’s incarceration, was, at age 83, still fighting his battle against what he saw as illegal U.S. intelligence networks and their shady operations. In a book titled American Spies—Crimes of the CIA, he reprinted the account of Kaji’s detention first told in his 2000 memoir Ketsudan, but he appended to it a discussion of U.S. imprisonment of enemy combatants at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and other secret facilities around the world.47 Drawing a direct line between Kaji’s case and post-9/11 interrogation techniques might seem a stretch, but the general point Yamada raises cannot be completely dismissed. The Kaji case certainly does have relevance to matters of law, national security, international diplomacy, and human rights—issues as fiercely debated in the early 1950s as they are today.