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NEW ZEALAND AND JAPAN 1945–1952

The occupation and
the peace treaty

Ann Trotter



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ABBREVIATIONS

ACJ	Allied Council for Japan
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Tripartite Security Pact
BCAIR	British Commonwealth Air Group
BCOF	British Commonwealth Occupation Force
BRINDIV	British Indian Division
CFM	Council of Foreign Ministers
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CSDIC	Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre
DO	Dominions Office
FEAC	Far East Advisory Commission
FEC	Far Eastern Commission
FO	Foreign Office
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IMTFE	International Military Tribunal for the Far East
Jayforce	2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (Japan)
JCOSA	Joint Chiefs of Staff Australia
Kayforce	New Zealand Emergency Force (in Korea)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PACUSA	Pacific Air Command US Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
2nd NZEF	Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force
SCAP	Supreme Commander Allied Powers
UKLIM	United Kingdom Liaison Mission (to Japan)

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Ann Trotter
Dunedin

Introduction

In the years since the Second World War, New Zealanders have contemplated Japan at different times with varying degrees of ignorance, interest, indifference and intensity. In these years Japan has gone from menace to major trading partner in the consciousness of New Zealanders.

The years 1945 to 1952 with which this study is concerned were years when, for the first time, New Zealand governments had seriously to consider a policy towards Japan. This intensity of concern over New Zealand-Japan relations and a New Zealand policy towards Japan was not matched after 1952 for another decade, by which time the menace of possible British entry into the European Community and the consequent need for New Zealand to find new markets caused New Zealand governments to reconsider Japan.

In 1945, however, New Zealand's primary concern was to secure itself against Japanese aggression. The Japanese advance after 1941 had reminded New Zealand and Australia that the Pacific Ocean connected them irrevocably to this expansionist Asian empire in the north and made evident the fact that the Royal Navy could never again be New Zealand's defender against 'Asian hoards' and other perils. This led New Zealand to look to the United States for security guarantees and it made United States policy in Occupied Japan of considerable interest to New Zealand.

The story of New Zealand's relations with Japan since 1945 runs parallel with the story of New Zealand's psychological and economic detachment from the United Kingdom. But in the period 1945 to 1952 this detachment was at most partial, foreshadowed rather than accepted. Psychological attachments had been strengthened by victory and wartime sacrifice in spite of the fact of demonstrated

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British weakness in the Pacific. Economic ties remained strong. Throughout the period the Bulk Purchase agreements signed in 1939 under which the British took all New Zealand's surplus meat and dairy products remained in place and preferential tariffs were applied to British manufactured goods in New Zealand. These realities helped underpin New Zealand's reputation internationally as an economically dependent, generally undemanding and 'dutiful' daughter within the British Commonwealth family. Of course the dutiful daughter image was never entirely accurate as many historians have pointed out. New Zealand's loyalty to Britain was neither dumb nor blind and certainly from the mid-1930s New Zealand ministers were prepared to take an independent stance at Commonwealth meetings or in the League of Nations.¹ By 1945 there was a good deal of healthy scepticism in New Zealand official circles about 'mother's' demands and ambitions and some amusement at the reactions of some of mother's officials, but the fact remained that power which was both economic and political and ties which were sentimental resulted in the long run in a New Zealand stance which usually appeared at least to be 'dutiful'.

In Great Power manoeuvres, however, scant consideration, even in matters directly affecting them, is likely to be given to the small and the dutiful. For New Zealand this truth was illustrated in the Cairo Declaration of December 1943 in which Roosevelt, Chiang Kai-shek and Churchill set out their objectives in the war against Japan² and in the Potsdam Declaration of July 1945 setting out the terms on which Japan would be called to surrender.³ On neither of these was New Zealand or Australia consulted or forewarned. In 1945 when peace came, New Zealand and Australia wished to be heard.

If it was not easy for a dutiful daughter to be heard in the family it was even less simple to make that voice heard by the United States. Here New Zealand had few cards to play. One seemed to be the 'Pacific' card. Although New Zealand's 'Pacific consciousness' was not at that time high, a Pacific connection between New Zealand, Australia, Japan and the United States was an obvious one. It was not, however, straightforward. The United States involvement with and concern for Japan after 1945 was, of course, in part a reflection of Great Power politics and the Cold War, but it was also a reflection of American priorities in their Pacific world. The American definition of the Pacific is an essentially north

Pacific one in which both Japan and China have traditionally played an important role. This is a view of the Pacific quite foreign to New Zealanders, sited in the south Pacific and conceiving of that Ocean in terms of small and scattered Polynesian and Melanesian islands and, in 1945, perceiving it as the route by which, without the British navy, an enemy might be expected to reach New Zealand's shores. New Zealanders and Americans thus had different images of the Pacific just as they had different images of Japan. In the period 1945 to 1952 Japan was central to American thinking first as the ex-enemy and then as a bulwark against the spread of communism. New Zealanders remained hostile and suspicious of Japanese intentions; but for the Americans, Japan quickly ceased to be seen as a potential threat. Quite apart from factors determined by its responsibilities as a Great Power, the American attitude to what a policy for the Pacific might be, and what might constitute security requirements in the Pacific, therefore started from basically different premises from those of New Zealand. New Zealand policy-makers were thus challenged in two respects. They had to develop their policy, essentially a security policy, towards Japan and they had to persuade the United States, without which a New Zealand security policy in relation to Japan could hardly be credible, to agree to be a player in the policy.

In the years 1945–1952 with which this study is concerned New Zealand's external policy was developing a new depth and complexity which involved dealings with both the United States and Japan. At the same time the British connection was still felt to be paramount and New Zealand's responses often seemed predictably co-operative with United Kingdom policy. Traditionally New Zealand had seen itself as a good Commonwealth team player prepared to shoulder burdens and take responsibility. In matters relating to the Occupation, New Zealand sought to be a player of this calibre and it was on this Commonwealth level that the actual Occupation of Japan itself was seen to be of real concern to New Zealand. The organizations relating to the Occupation in which New Zealand was involved and which are discussed in this study were the Far East Commission, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. The Far East Commission, in which New Zealand as a small nation had hopes of finding a 'voice' which might influence

Occupation policy, proved to be nothing but a 'talking shop'. There was no glory to be won in membership of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force nor honour, it transpired, in membership of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. Involvement in the Occupation in these three areas was a considerable burden for a nation of less than two million people but as an independent member of the Commonwealth New Zealand saw this activity as necessary for the team effort. The historian of the British part in the Occupation suggests that British participation in the Occupation was both more substantial and more effective than has generally been recognized.⁴ The New Zealanders who were disillusioned with those aspects of the Occupation in which they were involved might be comforted by and take some credit for such an estimate since they saw themselves as contributors to the general British and Commonwealth effort.

But of course it was no disadvantage to New Zealand diplomacy to be able to demonstrate that some Occupation tasks fell on New Zealand shoulders. While playing in the Commonwealth team in Japan, New Zealand sought to make American officials, who, unlike British officials, were unaccustomed to bothering themselves with the security concerns of lesser communities in the south Pacific, aware of New Zealand's merit and of what New Zealand saw as its needs. This was a challenge to New Zealand's fledgeling diplomatic service. It was necessary for New Zealand to emphasize that she was not only a Commonwealth member with responsibilities within the strategy of Commonwealth defence, but a Pacific nation. It was argued that, as a Pacific nation New Zealand was, in a sense, Japan's neighbour and therefore intimately concerned with and affected by the Japanese peace treaty and the future development and policies of that country. This was, as has been suggested, a view of Pacific neighbourhood which Americans found it hard to accept but was a matter of high policy for New Zealand. The nature of the Japanese peace treaty and the degree to which its provisions might restrict a possible resurgence of Japanese militarism were matters of central concern to New Zealand. New Zealand's persistence in its demand for security guarantees against future Japanese aggression represented a major diplomatic effort. The fact that the United States, albeit somewhat reluctantly, accepted responsibility towards New Zealand and

Australian security in the south Pacific in 1951 was the result, in part at least, of the persistent efforts of these two countries and to that extent, was something of a victory for them. In the long run, however, American participation in New Zealand's security policy had most to do with Cold War politics and almost nothing to do with any American concept of some kind of relationship and community with the south Pacific.

In looking at the Occupation and the Japanese peace treaty, through New Zealand eyes one is looking at events through the eyes perhaps, of the least significant player. The New Zealanders were, however, very independently-minded observers. Those involved in the Occupation Forces in Japan felt themselves to be better and more experienced soldiers than most there and saw no reason to be impressed by Americans of whose superiority they were not in awe and of whose abilities they were critical. The New Zealanders involved in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East were experienced legal professionals secure in their recognized qualifications and skills, and having a high sense of integrity. They made sharp criticisms from this position of strength. In Washington and New York, Sir Carl Berendsen, a diplomat of considerable knowledge and experience who feared no man, never hesitated to express an opinion whether or not it was unpopular or unfashionable. The most the New Zealand government could hope to gain from participation in the Occupation was American and British goodwill. The New Zealanders were untrammelled by a sense of mission or status, or by any awareness of possible future commercial gain. All this being so, the Occupation period through New Zealand eyes has a perspective rather different from that of most other participants.

A focus on the Pacific and on Japan is now accepted as central to New Zealand foreign policy. The years 1945–1952 were in a sense preparatory years when along with traditional diplomatic preoccupations with Britain and the Commonwealth, with the United Nations and the principle of collective security, New Zealand's security concerns were focused on Japan and the Pacific to a degree not before experienced in peacetime. The result of these years was a treaty with the United States which did not include the United Kingdom, the first such treaty that New Zealand had signed; and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan, the first Asian country with which New Zealand had had diplomatic

relations and the first country which was neither a member of the Commonwealth nor a wartime ally, in which New Zealand had an official representative. The purpose of establishing diplomatic relations with Japan was to secure the convenience of a post in an area of acute diplomatic sensitivity at the time. New Zealand wanted to be able to 'watch' Japan. While this is a not uncommon reason for the establishment of a diplomatic post, for New Zealand it was a new departure and represented a more sophisticated attitude to the purpose of, and need for representation abroad.

At the time these things did not seem to mark the beginning of a new era, and New Zealanders were more preoccupied with domestic considerations in 1952 than with arrangements which portended change for New Zealand or the potential for changes in the international arena. It was, however, to be important to New Zealand in the next decade that these arrangements were in place. Then, as the situation in south east Asia became increasingly unstable, as Britain withdrew from east of Suez and as British negotiations to join the European Community, together, altered New Zealand's strategic concerns and undermined her markets, the changes which had been signalled in the period 1945–1952 could no longer be denied. The importance of both Japan and the United States to New Zealand and the centrality of the Pacific, rather than Britain, to New Zealand's world, all of which may, with hindsight, have been discerned by 1952, had to be accepted.

1

New Zealand and Japan: The Impact of World War II

The outbreak of war in the Pacific in 1941 drew attention in a new way to New Zealand's geographical position and to New Zealanders' perception of it as it related to them. If, as a recent writer has suggested, white New Zealanders had by then a sense of New Zealand as a nation and were already very clear that they were New Zealanders and not English, Irish or Scots,¹ it seems that white New Zealanders had very little sense of New Zealand as a specifically Pacific nation. Most, it was suggested in 1940, were in danger of forgetting that New Zealand was a Pacific country at all.²

It is true, especially in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, that successive New Zealand governments had aspired to an imperial role in the south Pacific. Even before New Zealand became a British colony, supporters of the New Zealand Company had put forward the idea of New Zealand as the 'Britain of the south'.³ For New Zealand politicians of the late nineteenth century, this role had appeal. In its imperialist phase New Zealand acquired the scattered Cook Islands and Niue, more than 1,600 miles distant from New Zealand, and the people of these islands became New Zealand citizens.⁴ This was New Zealand's empire, an element of Britain's bigger and stronger empire of which New Zealanders were proud members.

It was, however, one thing for white New Zealanders to see New Zealand as one nineteenth-century politician claimed – using the language with which white New Zealanders referred to Britain – as 'a mother among the Pacific islands',⁵ and another to recognize New Zealand as a south Pacific nation which, notwithstanding its historical connections with Britain, had priorities in the Pacific and kin relationships with other Pacific islands.

By the 1920s and 1930s imperialism was no longer fashionable. New Zealand governments had found that the responsibilities of a colonial power could be troublesome and expensive especially as New Zealand administrators were faced with the national aspirations of Samoans in the League of Nations Mandate, Western Samoa, which New Zealand had been pleased to be awarded in 1919.⁶ Such interest as there was in the Pacific and Pacific Islands from the mid 1920s, therefore, was based rather more on problems of strategy than empire. The ocean tended to be regarded by New Zealand defence planners from a global perspective, as a factor in imperial defence policy. New Zealand would stand or fall with Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth, but New Zealand's remoteness and isolation could make it vulnerable.⁷ In the late 1930s as the potential for air power grew, the islands assumed some importance as possible staging posts on reconnaissance routes. In the pre-war period, however, the main concern for New Zealand defence experts was to see the completion of the Singapore base from which a British fleet could patrol the Pacific ocean and keep New Zealand safe, thus enabling New Zealanders to do their bit for the defence of the Empire and Commonwealth. In this scenario, which was essentially a British one, the Pacific, and New Zealand's possible role in it as a Pacific nation, did not have priority. New Zealanders would serve in centres more vital for the preservation of the whole than their own land. The ocean was the route which took men to wars which might be fought on the other side of the world.

New Zealanders were, then, accustomed to thinking in terms of the 'tyranny of distance' which separated them at a sentimental level from 'kin'; which at the same time both made them vulnerable and distanced them from the significant centres of conflict; and which, on a practical level, separated them from the established markets for their exports in the United Kingdom. A 'very real feeling of remoteness' has been identified as part of the New Zealand psyche.⁸ It has been suggested that their country's bush and the mountains enhanced New Zealanders' feeling of remoteness within their own land. Certainly the surrounding ocean with its empty horizons enhanced New Zealanders' sense of being remote from the world beyond that land. Of this ocean, of the peoples who lived on its rim and inhabited its small islands to their north, the average New Zealander knew very little. In October

1941, A. J. Campbell of the Christchurch Teachers' Training College said, 'The Pacific seems to be the part of the world of which New Zealanders know least and in which they are least interested. Perhaps it is because we think of ourselves in terms of Great Britain and not of ourselves as a Pacific power. . . . It is necessary to think deeply of the Pacific'.⁹ Few New Zealanders did. The truth was, as one leader writer commented in 1942 when the Japanese were advancing on Singapore, 'The strategical importance of various points in the Pacific, save Singapore, has never until now greatly interested the majority of us. We knew more about the Strait of Dover than the Strait of Malacca'.¹⁰

The identification by most New Zealanders of their country as a Pacific nation and the growth of a 'Pacific consciousness' is an important aspect of a more confident late twentieth-century New Zealand nationalism, the roots of which, perhaps, can be seen to go back to December 1941 and events thereafter in the Pacific. New Zealanders' psychological adjustment to the reality that their country is a Pacific country, that they are Pacific people living in a diverse Pacific world has, however, been a slow one.

'PACIFIC MINDEDNESS'

The reaction of New Zealanders to the traumatic events from December 1941 to February 1942 – the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and *The Repulse* and the fall of Singapore – seems to have been one of numbed disbelief. Awareness of events in Japan was minimal. Nation-wide, press coverage of events in east Asia had been sketchy, only the *Press* in Christchurch having a regular Far East correspondent.¹¹ Of course in 1940 national attention was focused on events in Europe. The widely held belief at that time was that Japan was exhausted as a result of the war in China and, although mistrust of Japan increased as this war expanded into Indo-China in the latter half of 1940, it was generally believed that Japan would not risk antagonizing Britain or the United States. Those who warned politicians and the public in 1940 that Japan might have greater ambitions were generally ignored.¹²

Even after the fall of Singapore, which one wit in the Prime Minister's Department described as 'a new high in lows',¹³ it

seemed in spite of the exhortations of the press and the politicians, to be difficult for the New Zealand public to come to grips with the situation. While the *Press* claimed 'The fall of Singapore and the advance of Japan's military power southwards as far as New Guinea, the Solomons and the Gilberts has made New Zealanders conscious for the first time of their Pacific environment',¹⁴ and the New Zealand correspondent to the *Round Table* reported 'increasing official awareness' of New Zealand's 'status as a Pacific country',¹⁵ after the first fright, and once the assurance of American protection had been obtained, public attention switched back to the Middle East where New Zealanders were involved in battle.

In retrospect, this relative detachment from the more immediate dangers of the Pacific Front seems surprising but, quite apart from New Zealanders' ignorance of the Pacific by comparison with their knowledge of the theatres in Europe in which the war was being fought, there were reasons for this. Few New Zealanders were serving in the Pacific. Cumbersome procedures for clearance of news reports and heavy censorship resulted in poor press coverage of New Zealanders' activities there.¹⁶ Severe censorship made for 'timid dullness' in local news reporting.¹⁷ The main source of news, the BBC, inevitably focused primarily on events from the perspective of Europe. Even the Americans on the Atlantic seaboard stood 'mentally with their backs to the Pacific'.¹⁸ A number of factors therefore combined to focus attention away from the Pacific. Besides, it became clear to New Zealanders before long that the Anglo-American plan was to defeat Germany first.

For most New Zealanders then, the heroes seemed to be in the Middle East. From November 1940 to 1942 when they were relieved by Americans, a New Zealand force had been stationed in Fiji. As their official historian wrote of the return of the New Zealand forces that year, 'These men bore no battle scars; they had no heroic tales to tell except those of endurance and boredom and toil in a climate as trying as any in the Pacific.'¹⁹ Even after November 1942 when the Third New Zealand Division was sent to the Pacific and RNZAF squadrons were flying in the New Hebrides and the Solomons, the war against the Japanese in the Pacific lacked the 'glamour', and the heavy casualties, of the European theatre. Both the army and the airforce in the Pacific

were ultimately under American command. The army had for the most part rather thankless guard duties and news of its actions at Vella Lavella, Treasury Island and the Green Islands in the Solomons group reached New Zealand belatedly. In terms of the strategy of the Pacific war these were clearly minor operations.²⁰ The RNZAF flew long sorties over miles of frequently empty ocean or against distant targets escorting the striking forces of American bombers. The constant enemies of all the men were the heat, rain, mud, malaria, dengue fever, yaws and hook worm, snakes and leeches which dogged them in the 'depressingly primitive' places in which they found themselves.²¹ These did not make good news stories. It was hard for New Zealanders at home to focus on the Pacific when it seemed that neither the nation's news sources nor the Allied strategic planners were doing so. By the end of 1943 when the Japanese advance had been turned back at Guadalcanal, Japan was no longer regarded as a threat and New Zealanders felt, as Sir Harry Batterbee, the United Kingdom High Commissioner in New Zealand, reported, that 'their side was going to win'. The threat to the country had been brief; New Zealanders now had 'a feeling of security and absence from personal danger.'²²

The result was, as the *Round Table* noted in January 1944, 'New Zealand has not become as Pacific conscious as once seemed possible', although it was felt that a 'discernible new interest in the affairs of the Pacific and America' was evident in the press.²³ In August 1944 in an editorial headed, 'We belong to the Pacific', the *Listener* commented that, if New Zealanders were not beginning to realize that Providence had placed them in the Pacific, not the Atlantic Ocean, it was their own fault. The editorial went on, 'Whether we realize it or not, like it or not, we have to find our place in a world occupied for centuries by tens of millions of Orientals'.²⁴ This was not a prospect New Zealanders cared for. It was one about which, it seems, most New Zealanders preferred to think very little, if they thought about it at all. In September 1945 the *Listener* again sought to encourage its readers to think about New Zealand's Pacific status claiming that signing the surrender document in Tokyo Bay had made New Zealand 'more consciously a Pacific nation'.²⁵ If it had, most New Zealanders had yet to absorb the fact.

Given New Zealanders' relative lack of interest in the Pacific in

particular, and foreign policy in general, even at the end of the war, it was possible for the personality and predilections of a single individual to make a considerable impression on the entire policy-making process. Sir Harry Batterbee observed this when in September 1945 he reported on British prospects in the New Zealand scene and the degree to which wartime experience had affected the outlook of New Zealanders. He wrote to the Dominions Office:

Despite the fright which New Zealand received from the directness of the Japanese threat in 1941–1942, New Zealand remains fundamentally more interested in European affairs than Pacific. . . . Pacific mindedness is, however, growing and will grow further. It is stronger amongst young than old ‘progressives’ than ‘conservatives’ and in the North Island than in the South Island.²⁶

The weakness of Pacific mindedness in New Zealand resulted, Sir Harry claimed, in a policy determined more by the personal views of the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, than by public opinion which he deemed to be generally non-existent. He believed that Prime Ministerial and public opinion alike could easily be influenced by outside pressure from the United Kingdom or Australia. New Zealand’s specific interests in the Far East were, the High Commissioner reported, slight, and he believed its primary interest would be in the preservation of its own security against all comers. Given her lack of ‘Pacific mindedness’, he assured Whitehall, New Zealand would give general support to the power, influence and policies of the United Kingdom; would try to keep on good terms with the United States; and to co-operate with Australia in matters of common interest. All in all, he believed New Zealand would tend to give the United Kingdom the benefit of the doubt in disagreements over policies to be pursued. This estimate confirmed established opinion in the Dominions Office. The hard fact that the United Kingdom took 90 per cent of New Zealand’s exports pre-war, was expected to keep New Zealand in the United Kingdom orbit in the long run.²⁷

All the same, the Japanese advance after December 1941 had reminded New Zealand and Australia that the Pacific Ocean connected them irrevocably to Japan in the north. The Pacific War

had made it evident that the Royal Navy could never again be New Zealand's 'shield and buckler' against a 'yellow peril' so that an aspect of New Zealand's dawning 'Pacific consciousness' and awareness of Japan was a new awareness of the importance to New Zealand of the United States, clearly now the major power in the Pacific.

NEW ZEALAND ATTITUDES TOWARDS JAPAN

Just as New Zealanders were low in general 'Pacific consciousness' before the war so too their consciousness of Japan was, at best, limited. Indeed, there is not much evidence that New Zealanders had given Japan serious thought before 1941 and a good deal of evidence that there was general ignorance about the country and its culture. 'New Zealand opinion about Japan', wrote one historian with careful restraint in 1940, 'has been a little uncertain, largely, no doubt, because of ignorance'.²⁸

Of the Japanese most New Zealanders had no experience. There was no Japanese community in New Zealand where the 1936 census – the last census before the war – recorded 72 full-blooded Japanese and 30 Japanese of mixed race in a population of 1.5 million.²⁹ There was relatively little trade between the two countries partly because of the nature of New Zealand's exports, of which wool was the only item which Japan took in any quantity, partly because of inadequate shipping services between the two countries and partly because successive New Zealand governments concentrated on retaining New Zealand's share of the British market and did not seriously encourage initiatives elsewhere. In 1938 the Labour government, in office since 1935, announced increased duties on certain imported goods and in December 1938 introduced exchange control. Henceforth foreign exchange was available only for equipment, raw materials for industry and essential consumer goods not able to be produced in New Zealand. Moreover, where possible, imports were to be from Britain. The effect of these regulations was to bring about a decline in imports from Japan over the next two years. At the same time exports to Japan declined as a result of restrictions introduced by Japan after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in July 1937.³⁰ The result was that, by 1940, New Zealand's

exports to Japan represented only 0.11 per cent of total exports, and imports from Japan represented 1.5 per cent of total imports.³¹ In the farming and business sectors of New Zealand therefore, there was no commercial reason to think positively, or indeed at all, about Japan.

New Zealanders had nevertheless very clear ideas about 'Asians' or, as they were more frequently described, 'Asiatics', in general. The Japanese along with the Chinese, who made up the largest pre-war 'Asiatic' community in New Zealand, were at the top of the list of the most undesired immigrants. Bitter anti-Asiatic feeling had in fact been characteristic of a lengthy period of New Zealand history.³²

For most white New Zealanders race relations in their country are most probably seen as an issue of the 1980s. Hitherto white New Zealanders had generally prided themselves on New Zealand's good race relations. In the eyes of these New Zealanders, tolerance, racial harmony and freedom from racial prejudice characterized their society and their relations with Maori New Zealanders. But tolerance and harmony were not expected to extend to 'Asiatics', in which group were lumped Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and Malay peoples from the Pacific and south east Asia. New Zealanders' assumptions about these people were racist to a high degree and their attitudes little different from those of Australians with whom they tended to compare themselves favourably. Fear of the 'yellow peril' combined with feelings of racial superiority joined to put all Asians at the bottom of a hierarchy, at the peak of which were those New Zealanders of British origin. Successive immigration acts from the 1880s had reflected these attitudes and, as a Labour Department spokesman asserted frankly as late as 1954, immigration policy was based on the wishes of the New Zealand people as a whole, and it was their desire that 'people whose stock originated in Britain shall always have the overwhelming predominance in the total people of New Zealand'.³³

It might have been expected that when the Labour government came into office the worst features of New Zealand's racially discriminating immigration policies would be alleviated. The Labour Party, after all, espoused internationalist causes in other areas. There was, however, as much racism in the Party and the trade unions as there was in other sectors of New Zealand society

at the time. As it was explained to a Party conference back in 1920. 'Internationalism did not mean a reckless intermingling of white and coloured races'³⁴ and Michael Savage, who was Prime Minister when war broke out, was on record as saying he did not think New Zealanders wanted a 'piebald New Zealand'.³⁵ Clearly he was not alone in this belief.

From the point of view of the Labour Party there were also high moral grounds with which to reinforce any negative views of Japan. Since 1935 Labour had been strong in its support for the League of Nations and the principle of collective security. After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war the New Zealand delegation to the League and at the Brussels conference condemned Japan as a violator of this principle.³⁶ Although the government ultimately fell into line with a British policy towards Japan which they saw as 'appeasement', the events in China tended to reinforce the negative stereotype many New Zealanders held of the Japanese.

New Zealanders in 1941 then remained largely unaware of all but Anglo-Saxon culture and in the case of Japan their ignorance was combined with feelings of hostility towards Asian people in general. Japan furthermore was a country whose actions had violated the principle of collective security and undermined the credibility of the League of Nations, both of which the government and many New Zealanders held dear. The outbreak of war in the Pacific inevitably caused Japan's supposedly undesirable racial and national characteristics to be highlighted, and confirmed New Zealanders' prejudices against the Japanese.³⁷

As an historian of the war years in the Far East has pointed out, individuals are quite capable of holding at one time, both anti-racist and racist views. Furthermore, these views may not operate to the same degree at all times and in all places.³⁸ If the outbreak of war in the Pacific confirmed New Zealanders' prejudices against the Japanese, it also required them to develop more positive images of the Chinese – in China at least, if not in New Zealand – since China had now become one of the Allies. In April 1942 when invasion was still seen as a possibility, the *New Zealand Listener*, a journal with some standing among intellectuals, published under the heading 'How to Tell Friends from Enemies', some 'rules of thumb' to enable readers to distinguish Japanese from Chinese. As might be expected the Japanese; short, stocky, lean, stiffly erect