

VOICES OF THE VANQUISHED

Censored Print Publications from
Postwar Japan, 1945-1949

On display
through
December
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“Beginning with Pearl Harbor and ending with the emperor’s capitulation after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the war between Japan and the Allied powers lasted three years and eight months; the occupation of the defeated nation began in August 1945 and ended in April 1952, six years and eight months later, almost twice as long as the war itself. In those years, Japan had no sovereignty and accordingly no diplomatic relations. No Japanese were allowed to travel abroad until the occupation was almost over; no major political, administrative, or economic decisions were possible without the conquerors’ approval; no public criticism of the American regime was permissible, although in the end dissident voices were irrepressible.

“Initially, the Americans imposed a root-and-branch agenda of ‘demilitarization and democratization’ that was in every sense a remarkable display of arrogant idealism—both self-righteous and genuinely visionary. Then, well before their departure, they reversed course and began rearming their erstwhile enemy as a subordinate Cold War partner in cooperation with the less liberal elements of the society. Yet despite the ultimate emergence of a conservative postwar state, the ideals of peace and democracy took root in Japan—not as a borrowed ideology or imposed vision, but as a lived experience and a seized opportunity. They found expression through a great and often discordant diversity of voices.”

—John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*

The immediate postwar years were a turning point in Japanese history and laid the foundation for Japan as we know it today. This exhibit of materials from the Gordon W. Prange Collection explores the postwar period from various vantage points—from politics to culture to everyday life. Diverse Japanese voices are expressed in the books, magazines, and documents displayed here.

This exhibit was inspired by *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* by John Dower, Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Published in 1999, it remains the seminal work on the Occupation of Japan. The book garnered numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize in Letters for General Nonfiction, National Book Award in Nonfiction, Bancroft Prize in American History, John K. Fairbank Prize in Asian History, Los Angeles Times Book Prize in History, Mark Lynton History Prize, and L. L. Winship/PEN New England Prize. Professor Dower utilized the Prange Collection in writing *Embracing Defeat*. Now, *Embracing Defeat* lends structure to this exhibit. The book and the collection are mutually enriching.

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