

エレノア・M・ハドレイ

『日本における独占禁止政策』

Eleanor M. Hadley, *Antitrust in Japan*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970. 528p.

In 1970, with Japan's postwar economy steadily posting new highs, memories of occupation days and the struggle over "zaibatsu dissolution" should have faded. They have not. Today the old issues reappear in new form:—did the deconcentration program help Japan's postwar economic performance? is reconcentration taking place? and, if so, is it threatening to undo the postwar benefits of a competitive economy? For breadth of coverage, vast masses of tabulated data, and skilled technical analysis, Eleanor Hadley's new volume offers the most thoroughly researched answers to these fundamental questions.

Far from being outdated, the "antitrust" theme supplies one of the best approaches to an understanding of the contemporary Japanese economy. SCAP's deconcentration measures established the new framework for Japan's business enterprise that conditioned its postwar operation in the most basic ways. Part I of this book, covering the whole range of the deconcentration effort, with shortcomings included, takes rank at once as the definitive study of the program. Stress must be laid on the first-hand knowledge of Miss Hadley, the most expert member of SCAP's 1945-47 staff and the most influential official at work over the entire scope of the program. Given substance by rich statistical material on the operation's most tortuous phases, it is a study that will not have to be done again.

Before moving on to present-day issues, comment might be offered on two matters of historical background to which reference is made. This reviewer takes special satisfaction in one of these—the strong evidence presented for close *zaibatsu*-military ties, even to undercover work by combine officials in foreign

countries. Overall, on the business side, the Big Four, with Mitsui and Mitsubishi in the lead, are shown to have controlled 24.5 per cent of "the corporate and partnership capital of the nation" by 1945, whereas the comparable ratio in 1937 had been only 10.0 per cent. If there was no partnership here, there can at least be no doubt of the profitability of the war years to the *zaibatsu* combines before catastrophe struck. The issue has been a controversial one in American academic circles; Miss Hadley's position is one that I held during the thirties and expressed most fully in 1945 when *Japan's War Economy* was published.

As an old China hand I may perhaps be permitted a *caveat* on another item of historical interpretation. Confucian ideology does not hold that "power is moral;" if such is the Japanese concept, it represents a distortion of Japan's "Confucian heritage." In Confucian terms power was moral only if morally used; if abused, that is, if the ruler acted unethically, he lost the mandate of heaven and could be rightfully overthrown. In one of the most ancient Confucian antitheses, drawn from the Chou dynasty's internecine struggles, Pa Tao (霸道), the way of force, the immoral way, was set against Wang Tao (王道), the kingly way, the moral way. The orthodox interpretation, by Confucius and even more by Mencius, one might add, however much practice may have strayed from the ideal, prescribed not a mere personal morality of the ruler but a social morality to be expressed in sincere attention to the welfare of his subjects.

When we reach the first five chapters of Part II, the heart of the book, the issues become current and debatable, and controversy takes center stage. How does one assess the business "groupings" (*keiretsu*) that have emerged as the new trusts of postwar Japan? Generally, in her analysis, the author takes a relaxed view of the structure and operations of the groupings, though on entering the sixties a warning note sounds more insistently.

Differentiated by the nature of the ties that join them, the business groupings take on several distinct forms. Of these, the Mitsubishi, Mitsui, and Sumitomo *keiretsu*, linked by multiple ties instead of by credit or other single-type ties, may be chosen as the best

example to illustrate the author's findings.

The new Big Three form a different breed from their forerunners—a conclusion supported by a mass of expertly tabulated data, in itself a notable feat of collation and organization. Neither their banks, nor their trading firms, nor the weekly “club” meetings of presidents of their majors, nor all together, are sufficient to knit them together in prewar combine style. The constituent firms are corporations in their own right, free to discuss any and all questions, to determine officer appointments and personnel policy, and to decide such key matters as financial policies, marketing approaches, or choice of new product lines. They act much less in concert than formerly, crossing *keiretsu* boundaries in buying and selling, as in borrowing. Thus, the broad conclusion: “Internally, the three groupings are very different structures, externally they are different, too. Preferences for the grouping is still there, but the old exclusiveness is gone.”

No one, of course, would argue that the new groupings are as tight-knit or restrictive as the old combines, but the point being made is different—that the postwar years opened a new era in which a large measure of competition existed not only in medium and small-scale industry, where it was and still is customary, but in the capital-intensive sector as well, where it had not existed. The *keiretsu* were too loosely structured to be able to reestablish the full-scale “cordial oligopoly” that had characterized the combines. Or, in other words, “competition kept breaking out,” chief reason for the mid-sixties’ merger of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries’ three deconcentrated units; their *keiretsu* ties were simply not strong enough “to inhibit competition.”

The great benefits of the competitive years are detailed—among others, wider opportunity for more independent managerial talent; extremely high investment ratios; rapid retooling with the newest technology, more widely shared, and resulting high productivity; despite a government-business stress that was producer-oriented, the social by-product of a flourishing domestic market of altogether new dimensions.

Were these gains to be lost as the economy moved toward renewed conditions of excessive concentration?

Mergers were at “the beginning of a sharp upturn” in 1961, and “cartelization mounts in Japan’s postwar economy.” By 1962 cartels already controlled 42.4 per cent of Japan’s export trade, stimulated ironically by American efforts to restrict Japanese imports yet desired and often compelled by the Japanese authorities and, normally, despite occasional maverick hold-outs, strongly supported by “many leading Japanese businessmen.”

A careful technical analysis demonstrates that inherent peculiarities of the Japanese economy often lead to underestimates of its actual degree of concentration; above all, such gauges have to be applied to the capital-intensive sector as a separate entity. Even here market positions and capital investment ratios may be inadequate measures, especially if *keiretsu* subsidiaries are left out of the equations. The most recent estimate cited shows reconcentration beginning in the 1959–62 period. The author’s statement follows that the post-1962 years would see “a gain in the momentum of this movement.” Primary agents of acceleration would be “mergers, expanding subsidiary networks, and cartelization.”

All of these, indeed, have pressed forward during the sixties, climaxed by the spectacular Yawata-Fuji steel merger, concentrating 35 per cent of fiscal 1968 crude steel output in one concern, and that one with strong influence over a smaller firm accounting for another 10 per cent of crude steel output. Many pages of this book show the occupation’s antitrust law, its teeth drawn as early as 1949 and even further in 1953, steadily losing its effectiveness. And today some observers view consummation of the steel merger as the final blow. “The Fair Trade Commission,” observes the London *Financial Times*, “is a bent, if not a broken, reed. In the end, the FTC capitulated, making only minor conditions, and in future mergers will certainly become easier to achieve.”

Supporting Miss Hadley’s concern over the lead taken by the government in concentration moves, one notes that the Ministry of International Trade and Industry had originally conceived the steel merger, with the companies giving cordial endorsement. It went through, despite the strongest and best informed

public opposition of the postwar years, featured by a carefully reasoned economic manifesto issued by nearly 100 of Japan's leading economists and social scientists. The type of questions they were asking, mentioned in the *New York Times* of March 2, 1969, might have been taken from the book under review:—now that competition has been limited, will the steel companies spend as much as before on new technologies? will they improve their plant and offer better prices? or will they foist higher prices on the domestic market to achieve a better position on the international market? The answers to such questions will go far to sustain or negate the reservations expressed in the final chapters of *Antitrust In Japan*; in any case, this study will long remain the standard treatment of its subject.

As the author rightly states, economic deconcentration was tied into, and closely affected by, a nexus that included wide socio-political reforms. Here strong political views are expressed, with some of which I would disagree. Among others: "Democracy and competitive capitalism are of one fabric." But are they, necessarily and exclusively, say in the decaying society of the United States with its multitude of ills, seemingly more and more incurable, for which an entrenched military-industrial oligarchy bears prime responsibility? And where does this leave Sweden, one of the more democratic socialist countries? Many liberals, indeed, would maintain that Sweden, with predominant stress on the social well-being of its people, was the sounder model for Japan. The latter's prestige will indeed be high, as its accelerating development carries it into rivalry with the superpowers, but other more modest goals might be more justifiable. Is this rift between social and nationalistic ends, not unnoticed by the author, wholly unrelated to drives in capitalist countries rooted in basic economic motivations? The United States is the prime example.

Never was Japan so fluid as in September 1945, or the alternatives so open. True enough, from the United States what other policy besides antitrust could one expect? But does this mean there was no other choice? In the Far Eastern Commission pleas for a contrary policy came from Britain, then under a Labor government; they came, of course, too late because

the United States was already far along in applying its original unilateral directive.

The only business operation as efficient as a private steel mill, in the Japan of today, is a nationalized railway. Should this be surprising? Japan had a long tradition of nationalized enterprise but none of breaking up trusts à la American. In 1945 the option of nationalizing the economy's commanding heights might have been picked up, giving the Social Democrats a break as against an antitrust policy that robbed them of their *raison d'être*. There was something ludicrous in brow-beating a Yoshida into embracing antitrust measures; even deceptive, when he and his kind were being groomed as the instruments to run the newly democratized order.

Has the American choice made in 1945 been vindicated? A strong chorus of ayes would be the response today, but final balance on the occupation's account is still to be struck. It has been long delayed; even after two decades the ultimate verdict still lies in the future. The realistic picture of today's Japan is one in which a firmly seated government-business coalition has successfully, well-nigh triumphantly, operated a capitalist system. For this it deserves an accolade; in this, Washington's choice of antitrust would seem validated. There is a debit side, easily overlooked. Public funds are too little directed to urgent social needs, as in the housing crisis stressed by Miss Hadley. There is also the danger posed by a return to oligopoly practices. If this threat is somehow countered and if, too, a sorely needed redirection of the national product is effected, with social priorities taking their due place beside development priorities, the seventies may indeed justify the trusteeship of Japan's conservative wardens and thereby also of the thrust of the occupation reforms.

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