

VOL I

A Critical History Of Socialist
Thought In Japan To 1918

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This study is dedicated to the
working class in Japan, in the
hope that a day will come when
(along with the workers throughout
the rest of the world) they will
decide to get up off their knees.

PREFACE

The idea of writing this study came to me a full 10 years ago, when I spoke not a word of Japanese, had never been to Japan, and knew next to nothing about the country. Over the last 10 years I have walked a long and often hard road, but I have been assisted by many people who have given me a helping hand along the way.

I should like to thank the staff of the Centre of Japanese Studies at the University of Sheffield for giving me a grounding in Japanese and for putting up with a sometimes difficult undergraduate student. In particular, I should like to thank Graham Healey, who gave up several hours of his own time to guide me through my first stuttering lessons in Japanese (and who later supervised me when I became a postgraduate student).

After graduating from Sheffield, I spent the next 2 years at the Institute of Social Science, University of Tōkyō and then returned to the Centre of Japanese Studies, University of Sheffield for a further 3 years. During these periods I lived on scholarships provided by the Japanese Ministry of Education and the British Social Science Research Council. I should like to record my gratitude to the working class, which involuntarily provides the surplus value from which the various states finance such scholarships.

While in Japan, many people were kind enough to give up hours of their time to talk to me about socialism (or 'socialism'). They included Andō Jimbei, Arahata Kansō, Fujita Shōzō, Fukumoto Kazuo, Hagiwara Shintarō, Haniya Yutaka, Hara Momoyo, Higuchi Tokuzō, Matsumoto Reiji, Nabeyama Sadachika, Nakajima Masamichi, Nakamura Akira, Nosaka Sanzō, Ozeki Hiroshi, Sakisaka Itsurō, Shimodaira Hiromi, Shirai Shimpei, Taguchi Fukuji, Takahashi Kōkichi, Takahashi Masao, Tsushima Tadayuki, Tsuzuki Chūshichi, Wada Eikichi, Yamakawa Kikue and others who wish me not to mention their names.

Outside Japan, my greatest debts are to those from whom I have gained insights into what socialism genuinely means. It may seem strange to acknowledge my indebtedness to men whom I have never met and who, indeed, were often dead long before I was born. Yet the fact remains that my intellectual debts to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Peter Kropotkin and William Morris (to name but four) are enormous. I have also learned lessons and received inspiration from later generations of revolutionary socialists - in other words, from those who have battled to maintain the vision of a genuinely socialist society throughout the bitter years of social-democratic and Bolshevik ascendancy. The men and women I refer to here are those who have stood in the anarcho-communist, council-communist, Bordigist, situationist and Socialist Party of Great Britain traditions. In particular, I gained a great deal from the SPGB (and also gave back a little in return) during the 9 years I spent within its ranks. The fact that certain political differences now separate me from the men and women who have formed the SPGB over 75 years does not deter me from acknowledging what I owe to them.

Various people kindly read part or all of my manuscript and commented on it. They are: Anthony Arblaster, Gordon Daniels, Graham Healey, Matsuzawa Hiroaki, Jitendra Mohan, Stephen Stefan and Totsuka Hideo. I am grateful to all of them for their many helpful comments, including those comments which I was too obstinate to act upon! I particularly wish to record my thanks to Matsuzawa Hiroaki, whose detailed knowledge of socialist thought in Japan saved me from making a number of errors, and to Totsuka Hideo, who read the first half of my manuscript while sick in hospital.

My friend Adam Buick read the entire manuscript and commented on it with his usual combination of intelligence and commitment to socialism. My own grasp of socialist theory has benefited greatly from years of

friendship with Adam, and I pay tribute to him for being that rarest of animals - a good friend and a dependable comrade.

Last, and most of all, my thanks are due to Midorikawa Taeko. It was she who sustained me in the mind-numbing toil of learning Japanese. Untold hours of her time went into discussing almost every aspect of this study and correcting my translations from the convoluted Japanese of the Meiji era. Above all, it was thanks to her that the writing of this work became a labour of happiness.

John Crump. York, 27 September 1979.

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INTRODUCTION

Few of those who might read this work will easily recognise the theoretical position from which it is written. Fewer still are likely to share that position. It is nonetheless hoped that many readers will still be able to get something out of this study. A lot of the information collected here is not otherwise readily available in Western languages and even those who find socialist theory indigestible may still be able to glean many facts and figures which are new to them. All the same, it has to be said that my intention in writing this study was not simply to mechanically assemble data on the socialist movement in Japan. There is an argument which runs through this account of the development of socialist thought in Japan and I shall try to state this briefly here.

Paradoxically, the basic thesis of this history of socialist thought in Japan is that socialism - either as a body of thought or as an active political movement - has barely existed in that country at any period. In my opinion, the vast majority of ideas in Japan which at different times over the years have been labelled 'socialist' have been nothing of the sort. The same goes for the groups and the parties (and, indeed, the individuals) which have embodied those ideas. What these various ideas have been concerned with, if not with socialism, I have tried to explain with some precision in the text. Here it is sufficient to generalise and say that, despite fervent protestations of 'socialism', those who have held these ideas have nearly all envisaged the continuation of capitalism (even if they have often recognised the need to make some modifications). The last thing to have crossed most of their minds is the perspective of constructing a genuinely new society which would be worthy of the title socialism.

Already I have revealed an important difference between myself and most of those who write on the subject of 'socialism'. It is remarkable that many supposedly authoritative tomes on 'socialism' dispense with definitions of such key concepts as 'socialism' itself and 'capitalism'. All too often, the assumption is made that everyone knows what 'socialism' means. Yet a moment's thought will show that not only is there no unanimity in the world today about what constitutes 'socialism' but that many popularly held notions about 'socialism' must be entirely mistaken. One only has to think of the variety of responses which a question such as "Is the British Labour Party socialist?" would evoke in different parts of the world and from different generations to realise that unanimity as to 'socialism's meaning clearly does not exist. Similarly, it is evident that many widely accepted ideas about 'socialism' must be wrong as soon as one realises that the claims of (shall we say) western European social-democrats, Russian Leninists and Chinese Maoists to be 'socialist' all run counter to one another. Quite clearly they cannot all be right - although there is no reason either why all of them should not be equally wrong!

I will define my use of terms without attempting an elaborate justification of this terminology. To take up the task of explaining thoroughly why I attribute to words such as capitalism and socialism the particular meanings which I do would involve me in writing an entirely different sort of book from the present one (and, indeed, would leave no room for an account of the development of 'socialist' thought in Japan - which is, after all, my main purpose here). Suffice it to say that by capitalism I mean a system of society where production is carried on for the purpose of sale on the market, where the majority of people own no significant means of production and are therefore forced to sell their ability to work for wages or salaries in order to

survive, and where there are social classes, the state and money.

If anyone finds such a definition unsatisfactory because, judged by such criteria, even Russia and China would be capitalist, I can only reply that they are perfectly right. Russia and China are capitalist! - as are the other supposedly 'socialist countries' too.

Conversely, throughout this study socialism is taken to mean a social system which negates the principal features of capitalist society. In other words, socialism is given the meaning of a society where production is for the direct satisfaction of human needs without the mediation of a process of buying and selling or exchange, where the means of production are commonly owned and democratically controlled, where there are neither social classes, the state, nor money.* Whenever the word socialism is used in any other sense than this it always appears in inverted commas as 'socialism', so as to distinguish it from what I regard as genuine socialism.

When it came to writing about those individuals and groupings who claimed to want 'socialism', I was faced with a difficulty. My inclination was to refer to them as 'socialists' and restrict the use of the term socialist to those few whom I consider to have been motivated by the desire to achieve socialism (an example, more or less well known in Britain, would be William Morris). However, this would have so over-loaded the text with inverted commas that I decided against it for the sake of readability. No particular significance

* The foregoing definition of socialism could serve equally well as a definition of communism. Socialism (the social ownership of the means of production) and communism (the common ownership of the means of production) are one and the same thing, although in order to avoid unnecessary confusion I have chosen generally not to use the term communism in this work.

To those who will rush to tell me that Karl Marx distinguished two different stages of social development in his Critique Of The Gotha Programme, one of which he called socialism, the other communism, I would recommend that they read again what Marx actually wrote (Selected Works, Karl Marx, London, 1942, Vol. II, pp 563 ff.) - only this time without the Leninist footnotes! (Besides, it should also be added that the fact that Marx held a certain view on this or any other subject has no particular significance.)

should therefore be attached to the word socialist in the following account. The fact that I refer to individuals, organisations, etc. as socialist signifies nothing more than that they are 'socialist' in common parlance.

It may well be wondered why I should have chosen to write about the history of socialist thought in Japan if I deny that much of it has anything to do with socialism. The answer is that Japan is by no means unique in this respect. True, the situation has generally been even bleaker in Japan than it has in other comparable parts of the world (those which - like Japan today - are highly industrialised and have a truly mass working class). Yet even in western Europe, let alone North America, the history of genuine socialism has been the story of a mere thin red line which has never involved more than relative handfuls of participants and has nothing to do with what are conventionally supposed to be the great victories of 'socialism' (ie of social-democracy and bolshevism). Even if one were to mention some of the theoreticians (such as Anton Pannekoek or Otto Rühle) or some of the currents (such as the Socialist Party of Great Britain or the Council Communists in Germany, Holland, etc.) who - despite many mistakes of their own - have maintained socialism as an intellectual tradition in Europe during this century, they would be unknown by most people even in those countries where they have been active.

Socialism's tragedy up till now has been that - while it is a doctrine of social change, to be brought about by the working class so as to introduce a society which combines individual freedom with communal solidarity - it has existed as a philosophical proposition in a period when only revolutions of an entirely different sort have been on the order of the day. There never yet has been a socialist revolution in any part of the world, nor a socialist society either. Revolutions which have been hailed as socialist, such as the one which occurred in Russia in 1917, have all without exception been capitalist.

The proof of this lies in the capitalist (as defined above) nature of the societies they have given rise to.

Now, it is the fact that we do live in an age which has seen a succession of capitalist revolutions in Russia, China and elsewhere which explains why 'socialism' should have come to be widely thought of as a policy of rapid capital accumulation carried out under the supervision of a strong, centralised state. It is the acutely felt need for capital accumulation which creates the social tensions which give rise to capitalist revolutions and the state has had to shoulder this responsibility in those countries which have embarked on this accumulation process in the relatively unfavourable conditions of the twentieth century, rather than leave it in the private hands of individual bourgeois. What was more natural than that, in a world which has seen the drift towards state capitalism on all sides, 'socialism' should have become a convenient ideological device for masking the ugliness of what has in reality been taking place?

But, if socialism remains throughout the world a future possibility rather than a description of existing reality, the areas of the world where that possibility has the greatest chance of first registering on the popular consciousness are those which are economically the most highly developed and where the blue- and white-collar working class comprises the vast majority of the population. At present this principally means western Europe, North America and Japan. We can perhaps think of these three areas as forming a triangle, yet it is a triangle of which only one of the sides has been closed. What I mean by this is that, although there is a ready, two-way flow of information and ideas between western Europe and North America, the same cannot be said of either Japan and North America, on the one hand, or Japan and western Europe, on the other. Integrated into the world economy though Japan might be, at the level of social thought there are still formidable barriers erected by language and cultural

differences which prevent the two-way flow of information between Japan and the rest of the world. This particularly applies to the rest of the world's obtaining a correct understanding of what people think in Japan. It was the idea of helping to correct this deficiency in what for me is the vitally important field of socialist thought that prompted me to take up this study.

This thesis is a critical history of socialist thought in Japan up to the great rice riots of 1918. Although it can stand by itself as an independent piece of research, it should be borne in mind that it is intended as the first part of a longer work. 1918 has been chosen as the point at which to end this thesis because, in the first place, it was from this year onwards that the influence of bolshevism increasingly made itself felt in Japan. Under the impact of the Russian revolution, many of the socialists in Japan were henceforth gradually to come round to different positions from those which they had been occupying for the previous decade or so. Besides this, when the rice riots rocked Japan in the summer of 1918 they represented an explosion of working class and peasant resentment against the oppression these classes were experiencing - and hence a somewhat changed political climate for the socialists to work in. 1918 or thereabouts can thus be regarded as a definite turning point in the development of socialist thought in Japan, and it therefore seems an appropriate spot at which to break the narrative.

The end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 can also be taken as an earlier 'turning point' in the development of socialist thought in Japan and this is why the pre-1906 period and that from 1906 onwards are treated separately in Parts I and II of this study. Up till the end of the Russo-Japanese War it was social-democracy which was the dominant form of 'socialism' in Japan, whereas soon after that war was over anarchism seized the initiative. Similarly, up till 1905 the Japanese socialists were a more or less united movement, whereas the

war's drawing to a close was the signal for a swift disintegration into rival factions. Of course, there were elements of continuity too which bridged these so-called 'turning points' in 1905 and 1918. Some socialists' ideas altered remarkably little over the years and in other cases, even when change did come, it was hesitant and incomplete. Despite these qualifications, however, 1905 and 1918 were dates of some significance in the development of socialist thought in Japan. They marked the approximate beginnings of periods of considerable theoretical activity (and of organisational renewal) and - for the purposes of analysis - can, I believe, legitimately be regarded as turning points in the history of 'socialism' in Japan.

There is, of course, very little published material on socialist thought in Japan available in Western languages. In fact, there is relatively little material available on any aspect whatsoever of 'socialism' in Japan, but most of what has been published has tended to concentrate on the socialist movement - on organisations and personalities, rather than on ideas and theories. In Japan itself the situation is quite different, with a vast literature on 'socialism', dealing with both Japan and overseas. Most of this is of post-Second World War vintage and some of it is well researched and highly informative too. Where the majority of the Japanese-language material falls down, however, is in its uncritical adherence to Leninist (and I would emphasise Leninist, as opposed to Marxist) assumptions. Leninism continues to enjoy a tremendous vogue among academics in Japan, resulting in often highly distorted accounts of 'socialism' in that country. For example, in assessing the worth of any particular socialist thinker, attention to details (such as whether he/she had a 'correct' (by Leninist standards) grasp of the role of the 'vanguard party') has tended to totally eclipse more basic considerations such as whether she/he had a vision of socialism which successfully challenged the social relationships of capitalism. To take an obvious case, how

often does one find Kōtoku Shūsui contrasted unfavourably with his contemporary, Katayama Sen? This is usually explained as being due to Kōtoku's 'petit-bourgeois' inclinations and to his lack of contact with the working class of his day, while the fact that Kōtoku's understanding of socialism (despite its many defects) was head and shoulders above Katayama's (if, indeed, Katayama's can be said to have existed) is simply ignored.

Wherever possible I have gone back to primary sources but there are limits to what a Western-based scholar can do in this respect. Some of the material presented in this study is new, but much of it is already to be found in Japanese-language books on 'socialism'. As a general approach, I felt it more worthwhile to concentrate my efforts on a re-evaluation of what is (within Japan, at any rate) already broadly known about the development of socialist thought in that country than to attempt to unearth entirely new material on the subject. It seems to me that Japanese scholars are much better equipped than I am to carry out the latter task and I see no point in attempting to duplicate their work in this field. On the other hand, someone standing outside Japanese society, as I do, has a definite advantage in being able to look at facts which are relatively well known within Japan with a fresh eye. I do not claim that my approach to the study of socialist thought in Japan provides all the answers, but I am confident that it does give one greater insights than the Leninist yardstick applied by most Japanese scholars (and, needless to say, than the unsympathetic line - hostile to anything which calls itself 'socialism' - adopted by many Western scholars).

Those who will try to classify me either as a 'Marxist' or as an 'anarchist' and then read my account of the development of socialist thought in Japan according to some such pre-conceived categorisation will, I fear, get less than they might from this study. My debts both to Marx and to anarchists such as Kropotkin are obvious enough, but

they should not be allowed to obscure my criticisms of the deficiencies of both Marxism and anarchism. I stand with those who argue that the longstanding juxtaposition of Marxism to anarchism is both confusing and something which needs to be transcended by developing socialist theory further so that it combines the positive elements found in both these schools of thought. Those who disagree and regard Marxism and anarchism as fundamentally incompatible should pause and reflect that, on many questions which are vital to socialism, advocates and opponents have been distributed haphazardly within the so-called 'Marxist' and 'anarchist' camps. For example, those, on the one hand, who have envisaged that commodity production would persist within their supposedly 'new' societies and those committed, on the other hand, to the free distribution of products and the abolition of the wages system have been ranged indiscriminately on both sides of the 'Marxist'- 'anarchist' divide. This ought at least to raise some doubts as to whether the polarisation which occurred between Marxism and anarchism was over those issues which are of central importance to socialists wishing to abolish capitalism. A process of separation certainly was needed to divide genuine socialists from those who continued to think along predominantly capitalist lines, but I would contend that, tragically, when the line came to be drawn, it was in entirely the wrong place.

Both 'Marxists' and 'anarchists' were, I believe, responsible for this confusion and it was a mistake that was compounded by the contradictory elements incorporated into the doctrines of even the foremost theoreticians among them. Even thinkers of the stature of Marx and Kropotkin could not escape such contradictions. There was a rich socialist vein running through the works of both of them, but there were other elements too which ought to have been consigned long ago to the slag heap of capitalism. Instead, the mutual hostility which exists between Marxism and anarchism has ensured that those

identifying with both camps have defended traditional positions, contradictions and all.

I have called this study "a critical history of socialist thought in Japan" and the formulation "socialist thought" perhaps needs a word of explanation. The socialists in Japan have, at various junctures, thought a great deal about the problems of the society they live in and their thinking has ranged widely over many varied questions. Different socialists at different times have had things to say about issues ranging from the position of women and of minorities such as the Ainu* and Burakumin* within society to the problems raised by religion, language, the family and so on. Clearly, it has not been possible for me to follow all the socialists as their thoughts have ranged over all these varied questions. What I have tended to concentrate on in this study has been the socialists' understanding (or lack of understanding) of how a capitalist economy functions and the extent to which they were able to challenge capitalism (if at all) by posing a genuinely socialist model in its place. Other questions - such as their attitude towards the state - have also received considerable attention as well.

It is true that I regard the questions to which I have paid most attention in this study as acid tests for any who claim to be socialists, but I do not wish to give the impression that I consider issues other than those I have been able to take up here as unimportant. On the contrary, socialists' attitudes towards discriminated groups within society can be every bit as revealing as their ideas on economic organisation. To mention only one case, Kawakami Kiyoshi's scurrilous comments on the Ainu¹, published in 1903, damned him as a socialist just

* See glossary.

1 Among other comments, Kawakami wrote that the Ainu "are fast degenerating. They keep themselves away from all reforming influence; they cannot adjust themselves to, and are, therefore, being killed by the new civilization." (The Political Ideas Of Modern Japan, Karl Kiyoshi Kawakami, Tōkyō, 1903, p 15.)

as surely as did his confusionist ideas on the relationship between wage labour and capital. The point is, however, that limitations of time and space have prevented me from taking up each and every issue on which the socialists in Japan pronounced their views. It is a question of priorities and, while the issues I have concentrated on here are not by any means the sole ones of concern to socialists, they certainly are central to any serious examination of capitalism and socialism.

I take the view that, in writing a history of socialist thought, different considerations apply than if one were writing a history of the socialist movement. It is not necessary to give a blow by blow or year by year account of developments. Rather one needs to concentrate on periods of theoretical innovation and pay relatively less attention to the years and even decades when political ideas all but marked time. I am aware that the method I have chosen of presenting the data collected in this book has its drawbacks. My approach has been analytical and to those readers who would have preferred a strictly chronological presentation I can only say that this too would have brought fresh problems of its own. Readers who are bewildered by references to events and organisations, which are often mentioned in the text with only a minimum of explanation, are urged to make use of the chronologically arranged charts which are included in the final chapter of each section. Appendix 5 also gives biographical sketches of the most prominent individuals involved in the socialist movement.

In writing this study I have constantly reminded myself that relatively few people in the West have any knowledge of Japanese. I have therefore tried to incorporate a considerable amount of original material into this history, some of it in the form of often lengthy quotations. It is hoped that this will add to, rather than detract from, the interest of this work. As will be seen, I have used mainly Japanese-language sources - and the difficulties which this incurs are

considerable. Quite apart from the sheer toil involved for someone like myself, brought up in Britain, of working in an oriental language, one is also obviously not ideally placed when one writes about politics in Japan from a vantage point on the other side of the earth. There have often been problems, both in grasping the subtleties of passages of heavily nuanced Japanese and in obtaining materials. However, I do not wish to make excuses for those errors and deficiencies which, despite all my efforts, will no doubt have crept into the text. I will be grateful to anyone who can draw my attention to mistakes of either fact or interpretation. Apart from that, all I can say is that I have done my best and that I take comfort in the fact that in scholarship there is never such a thing as a last word or a finished work.

PART I

To The End Of The Russo-Japanese War (1905)

CHAPTER 1.

The Development Of Capitalism In Japan
And The Forming Of A Working Class

The Revolution Of 1868

Behind the reactionary facade of a restoration of Imperial power, it was a capitalist revolution which occurred in Japan in 1868. The term 'capitalist revolution' is deliberately employed here rather than the more conventional 'bourgeois revolution', for in Japan the revolution was capitalist without being bourgeois. What is meant by this is that the revolution was capitalist in its effects, in terms of the capitalist society it gave rise to, but that the class which brought it about was not a bourgeoisie - was not the flourishing merchant class, which had raised itself to a position of great economic influence throughout Japan during the preceding centuries, even though state power had remained out of its flabby reach.¹

Who was it who made the capitalist revolution in Japan, then, if it was not the merchants? The answer to this question is that it was none other than the dissatisfied lower strata of the ruling samurai class itself, especially those from some of the fiefs farthest removed

1 The notion that capitalism might be capable of being introduced by other social classes besides the bourgeoisie has remained difficult to grasp for many academics but has been well understood by at least some revolutionaries. Michael Velli, for one, has drawn an interesting and valid parallel between post-1868 Japan and post-1917 Russia:

".... the launching of the primitive accumulation of Capital in Japan after 1868 demonstrated that the process could dispense with the West European bourgeoisie and with its liberal-democratic ideology. Japanese industrialization demonstrated that the social relations required for the primitive accumulation of Capital are a strong State, universal commodity production, and the division of labor...."

"The Bolshevik seizure of State power in 1917 confirmed the lessons learned from the Japanese restoration of the centralized State in 1868. The accumulation of Capital can dispense with the institutions and ideas of the West European bourgeoisie; what is required is the State, commodity production and the division of labor." (Manual For Revolutionary Leaders, Michael Velli, Detroit, 1972, p 215.)

from Edo*, who rose up and overthrew the central bakufu* government in 1868 in what has gone down in history as the 'Meiji* Restoration'. For a decade prior to the revolution disgruntled young samurai from fiefs such as Satsuma, Chōshū, Tosa and Hizen in the south and west of Japan had been engaged in plots and armed skirmishes and by 1868-69 the revolutionary army they had formed was strong enough to defeat the bakufu's forces in a civil war. Given the fact that the leaders of the revolution were samurai, it is hardly surprising that the slogans and imagery they employed during their struggle for power were reactionary in the extreme. Their best-known rallying cry in the fight against the bakufu was "Sonnō Jōi" ("Revere the Emperor and Expel the Barbarians!"), the figure-head of the Emperor in Kyōto serving as a prestigious symbolic focus for opposition to the government in Edo and the 'barbarians' in question being the imperialist powers who had been applying an increasing pressure on Japan throughout the nineteenth century. Once the bakufu had been brought down, however, Sonnō Jōi no longer expressed the priorities which the new government judged that the situation demanded. Monarchical trappings did, indeed, continue to be important to the new regime as a means of attracting support to itself but Sonnō Jōi was dropped just as surely as fifty years later another group of successful revolutionaries, this time in Russia, were to drop a slogan which had outlived its usefulness for them - "All Power To The Soviets!" In the Japanese case the new, post-revolutionary priorities were formulated as "Fukoku Kyōhei" ("National Wealth and Military Strength!").

Not only were the leaders of the new government** of samurai rather

* See glossary.

** Or, rather, new governments - since throughout the Meiji era governments were replaced with great rapidity. There were few, if any, significant differences of major policy between them, however, and many of the same individuals appeared repeatedly in the various ministerial posts.

than of bourgeois origin themselves, but they had no coherent policy to establish a capitalist society in Japan either. As they saw it, their first responsibility was to protect Japan's independent existence in the face of the threat posed by the imperialist powers. Hence the relevance of the "Military Strength" half of the "Fukoku Kyōhei" formula. But in the late nineteenth century effective military strength was everywhere becoming more and more dependent on a powerful industrial base. In other words, what the "National Wealth" half of "Fukoku Kyōhei" signified for Japan's political leaders in the Meiji era was the country embarking on the process of industrialisation.

'Industrialisation', however, entailed much more than mere technical operations (daunting though even these were) such as building factories, installing machinery, modernising shipyards and extending mines. It also involved creating the social relations which accompany industrialisation - of supervising a process of polarisation in society whereby a minority would come to control the means of capitalist production, while increasing numbers of people would find themselves reduced to a situation where they had no alternative but to go and work for whatever wages they could find in the newly established industrial and commercial enterprises.

It was in this way - at best only half conscious of what they were doing - that the Meiji leaders fostered the development of capitalism in Japan and the formation of a wage-earning working class. One of the great ironies of this process was that, in carrying out their role, the samurai leaders of the new regime were actually responsible for the suppression of the class from which they themselves had originated. The stipends which the samurai were accustomed to receive from the heads of their fiefs continued to be paid at first, but were soon reduced in value and were finally abolished in favour of interest-bearing bonds which most samurai, unused to business transactions, rapidly squandered.

Destitute samurai were one of the elements from which a working class was to be forged in Japan and a lingering nostalgia for the vanished life style of the samurai figured prominently in the ideas of many of the early Japanese socialists, some of whom were of samurai origin themselves.

For the present we can leave the story of the revolution of 1868 - the 'Meiji Restoration' - here. We will come back to it again repeatedly at various stages in the history of socialist thought in Japan for, as with most other revolutions, its influence was to be felt for decades to come. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I wish to deal only with the early development of capitalism in Japan and the forming of a working class, and then only to the extent that these questions are relevant to the history of socialist thought in Japan up to the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1905). Obviously enough, the relatively undeveloped state of capitalist society in Japan in the Meiji era was bound to hinder the efforts of those there who thought of themselves as socialists either to produce an adequate critique of capitalism or to pose a genuinely socialist alternative to it. Thus a sketch of the level of capitalist development (or underdevelopment) achieved at the time helps to convey the background against which the Meiji socialists were operating. But socialism is supposed to be much more than a disembodied intellectual reaction against capitalism. Until Mao Tse-tung set a new fashion by claiming to have carried out, by means of the peasant forces under his command, a revolution which had as its "ultimate perspective.... not capitalism but socialism",² it was generally accepted that it is the modern working class - wage labourers forced to sell their labour power for wages,

2 The Chinese Revolution And The Chinese Communist Party, Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works Of Mao Tse-tung, Peking, 1967, Vol. II, p 329.

since they own no means of production of their own, forming the majority of the population within advanced capitalist societies - which alone can be the agent for the social change needed to bring about socialism.³ The size and nature of the working class in Japan is therefore equally as interesting to us as is the level of development reached by capitalism. Indeed, the two go together.

Industrialisation

Japan's industrialisation started with the government establishing the nuclei for several basic modern heavy industries which were vital for the country's military capability. These were first set up by the state, employing technical experts from abroad, but the tendency was, once they were working smoothly and the initial problems had been overcome, to transfer them at low prices into private hands. Yet, even in the hands of private companies, these industries were of such

3 It would take us too far afield to adequately discuss whether, in view of what has been said about classes other than the bourgeoisie bringing about capitalism, it might not also be possible for non-proletarian classes to substitute themselves for the working class in a socialist revolution. My own opinion is that the very nature of socialism itself precludes this possibility. However, I will resist the temptation to attempt to demonstrate this theoretically at this point and simply confine myself to what has occurred in historical practice. Revolutions led by non-bourgeois social groups have resulted in societies which exhibit the essential features of capitalism - commodity production, the polarisation of wage labour and capital, the existence of the state and of social classes. Japan is one example of this. Allegedly socialist revolutions (included within this category are revolutions like the Chinese which, while it is admitted by their admirers that they are not purely socialist, are also claimed to have socialism as their "ultimate perspective") led by non-proletarian social groups have also, without exception, resulted in societies which exhibit these selfsame features of capitalism - commodity production, the polarisation of wage labour and capital, the existence of the state and of social classes. They are thus only 'socialist' to the extent that 'socialism' has been redefined by their leaders, as has happened in China for example, to take in the essential features of capitalism.

importance to the state that they were assured of subsidies and careful nursing by the government. Important though these basic heavy industries were, however, they did not account for the bulk of Japan's industrial enterprises. In terms of sheer numbers of factories and numbers of workers, it was textiles which dominated the industrial sector of the economy. In textiles too the government played a role early on, by establishing a number of model factories where technical difficulties were ironed out, but direct state involvement in light industries was never on anything like the scale which applied in heavy industry.

Accurate statistics showing the development of Japanese capitalism right the way through from 1868 to 1905 do not exist but the figures given in Table 1, although often suspect and leaving many gaps, do bring out the essential features of that development. Many of the discrepancies in the figures concerned with numbers of 'factories' and numbers of 'factory' workers arise from the fact that at different times different criteria were applied in deciding which workshops should be counted as 'factories'. On some occasions a workforce of 5 or more was required for a workshop to qualify as a 'factory', on others a workforce of 10 or more, and on yet other occasions a workshop did not become a 'factory' until the total capital invested in it reached ¥1000. A further complication arises from the fact that there was no uniformity when it came to including government-owned 'factories' in the statistics on 'factories' in general. Sometimes they were included and sometimes they were not.

Despite the inaccuracy of our statistics, however, certain facts stand out clearly enough. Industrial operations were generally on a very small scale. Although there was a steady increase in the total number of 'factories', the number using any type of mechanical power remained less than half of the total, this still being the case even at the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1905). In other words, more than

TABLE 1.

Year	No. of 'Factories'	No. of Power- Equipped 'Factories'	No. of 'Factory' Workers	No. of Joint- Stock Companies	No. of Banks (with paid- up capital)	Capital Invested in Private Railways
1880					39 (¥ 6,280,000) ⁴	
1881					90 (¥10,447,000) ⁴	
1882	2033 ¹⁴		61,025 ¹⁴		176 (¥17,152,000) ⁴	
1883					207 (¥20,488,000) ⁴	
1884					214 (¥19,422,000) ⁴	
1885		487 ⁶			218 (¥18,759,000) ⁴	¥11,829,500 ⁵
1886	1097 ⁷		112,779 ⁷ 193,940 ¹⁴		220 (¥17,959,000) ⁴	

TABLE 1.

Year	No. of 'Factories'	No. of Power- Equipped 'Factories'	No. of 'Factory' Workers	No. of Joint- Stock Companies	No. of Banks (with paid- up capital)	Capital Invested in Private Railways
1887						¥12,129,500 ⁵
1888	1694 ⁷		123,327 ⁷ 212,604 ¹⁴			
1889	2259 ⁷		220,138 ⁷			
1890	2284 ⁷		346,979 ⁷			¥47,390,000 ⁵
1891	2480 ⁷		321,624 ⁷			
1892	2767 ⁷	987 ¹³	294,425 ⁷			
1893	3019 ⁷	1163 ⁹	285,478 ¹⁵ 381,390 ⁷		545 (¥30,584,000) ¹⁰	¥73,123,000 ¹³

TABLE 1.

Year	No. of 'Factories'	No. of Power- Equipped 'Factories'	No. of 'Factory' Workers	No. of Joint- Stock Companies	No. of Banks (with paid- up capital)	Capital Invested in Private Railways
1894	5985 ⁷	2409 ⁹	381,390 ¹³ 381,393 ¹¹ 418,140 ⁷		700 (¥37,381,000) ¹⁰	
1895	7154 ¹¹	2758 ¹¹	418,140 ¹¹		792 (¥49,807,000) ¹⁰	
1896	7640 ¹⁶ 7672 ⁹	3069 ⁹	434,832 ¹⁶ 436,616 ¹¹ 441,616 ¹³	2577 ¹²	1005 (¥87,899,000) ¹⁰	¥121,138,000 ¹³
1897	7287 ¹⁶ 7327 ¹¹	2950 ¹¹	437,254 ¹⁶ 439,549 ¹¹	3169 ¹²	1223 (¥147,812,000) ¹⁰	
1898	7085 ⁹	2964 ⁹	412,205 ¹¹	3474 ¹²	1444 (¥189,440,000) ¹⁰	
1899	6699 ¹¹	2305 ¹¹	408,029 ¹¹ 423,171 ¹⁶	3685 ¹²	1561 (¥209,973,000) ¹⁰	

Sino-
Japanese
War

TABLE 1.

Year	No. of 'Factories'	No. of Power- Equipped 'Factories'	No. of 'Factory' Workers	No. of Joint- Stock Companies	No. of Banks (with paid- up capital)	Capital Invested in Private Railways
1900	7284 ⁹	2388 ⁹	403,474 ¹¹ 422,019 ¹⁶	4254 ¹²	1802 (¥239,364,000) ¹⁰	
1901	7349 ¹¹	2764 ¹¹	433,813 ¹¹	4336 ¹²	1867 (¥251,700,000) ¹⁰	
1902	7749 ⁸ 7821 ⁹	2991 ⁹	488,277 ⁸ 498,891 ¹¹	4306 ¹²	1841 (¥258,112,000) ¹⁰	
1903	8274 ¹¹	3741 ¹¹	483,839 ¹¹	4382 ¹²	1754 (¥253,004,000) ¹⁰	
1904	9234 ¹¹	4000 ¹¹	526,215 ¹¹	4240 ¹²	1708 (¥248,776,000) ¹⁰	
1905	9776 ¹¹	4335 ¹¹	587,851 ¹¹	4214 ¹²	1697 (¥252,698,000) ¹⁰	

Russo-
Japanese
War

one half of so-called 'factories' relied entirely on human (or animal) labour power. The number of workers per 'factory' remained small, averaging 30 for the first year for which we have figures (1882) and being no more than 60 in 1905, and as a percentage of the total population workers in factories were, of course, no more than a drop in an ocean of peasants. In the year before the Russo-Japanese War (1903) there were 483,839 'factory' workers in a population of 46.1 millions¹⁷ (just over 1 per cent.).

Despite the overall low level of capitalist development, another point brought out by the figures presented in Table 1 is the accelerating influence of war on that development. The government favoured industrialisation as a means of increasing Japan's military capability, yet conversely it was military operations themselves which helped to spur on industrial development. The Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) came right at the end of the period we are considering and its effects do not therefore show up clearly in our table but the effects of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 (Japan's booty included

4 Meiji Taishō Sangyō Hattatsu Shi (History of Industrial Development In The Meiji And Taisho Eras), Takahashi Kamekichi, Tōkyō, 1966, p 163.

5 Ibid., p 79.

6 Ibid., p 175.

7 Ibid., p 238.

8 Ibid., p 303.

9 Ibid., p 547.

10 Nihon Keizai Tōkei Shū (Collected Statistics Of The Japanese Economy), Japan Statistical Research Institute, Tōkyō, 1968, p 204.

11 Ibid., p 55.

12 Ibid., p 128.

13 Nihon Shakai Undō Shi (History Of The Social Movement In Japan), Akamatsu Katsumaro, Tōkyō, 1974, pp 31-32.

14 Social Impact Of Industrialization in Japan, M. Sumiya, Tōkyō, 1963, pp 33-34.

15 Labor In Modern Japan, Kazuo Okochi, Tōkyō, 1958, p 5.

16 Asian Revolutionary, Hyman Kublin, Princeton, 1964, p 108.

17 A Short Economic History Of Modern Japan, G. C. Allen, London, 1972, p 208.

an 'indemnity' of ¥366 millions from China¹⁸) are unmistakable. If we compare the figures for the year prior to the War (1893) with those for the year following it (1896), we can see that the number of 'factories' increased by more than 150 per cent. (although the increase in the workforce in the 'factories' was less dramatic), the number of banks almost doubled (the increase in their total paid-up capital being almost three-fold), while capital invested in private railways rose by more than 65 per cent. According to Ōkōchi Kazuo, the "Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 gave a powerful impetus to the industrial revolution in Japan and laid the foundations for a modern capitalist economy, a modern factory system, and an independent class of modern wage workers."¹⁹

To avoid misunderstanding, it should perhaps be explained that the categories listed in Table 1 are, in a sense, quite arbitrary. Statistics relating to joint-stock companies, private banks and capital invested in private railways happen to be useful indicators of capitalist development in Japan in the Meiji era, but this is not to imply that capitalism as a social system can be identified only with such representative institutions of private capital as the joint-stock company. State capital and its institutions are just as much a part of capitalism as is private capital. Similarly, the fact that numbers of 'factory' workers are collated in Table 1 does not mean that it is only those working in factories who constitute the working class. The working class includes all of those who, because they own no means of production, are forced to sell their labour power for wages. 'Factory' workers are included in Table 1 simply because, in the first place, they are one section of the working class, as representative as any other, and

18 Ibid., p 48.

19 Labor In Modern Japan, Kazuo Okochi, Tōkyō, 1958, p 22.

secondly because statistics relating to them are relatively easily available. In the discussion of the nature of the working class in Japan in the Meiji era which follows 'factory' workers will figure prominently again, so it would be as well to bear in mind what has been written here.

The Forming Of A Working Class - The Samurai

As was mentioned previously, one of the elements from which the working class was forged in Japan was destitute members of the samurai class. Under the old regime Japan had been carved up into semi-autonomous fiefs. Following the revolution of 1868, these were dismantled in a two-part operation in which they were first formally "restored to the Emperor" ("hanseki hōkan") in 1869 and then replaced by modern prefectures ("haihan chiken") in 1871. Restoration of the fiefs "to the Emperor" (ie to the centralized state) was accompanied by a cut of one half in the income of the feudal lords who had ruled them. A further cut in samurai incomes came in 1875 when hand-outs from the government to the warrior class were converted at a time of rising prices from payments in kind (rice) to payments in money. This move was followed in 1876 by the substitution of government bonds for the allowances to the samurai. These bonds carried interest rates of up to 7 per cent. and the maximum period of maturity allowed on them was 14 years.²⁰

Samurai resistance to the government's policy will be touched on in a later chapter. Here it is sufficient to explain the economic effects of that policy for the samurai as a class. Samurai numbered

20 E. H. Norman gives a detailed breakdown of the rates of interest and periods of maturity of these bonds in Japan's Emergence As A Modern State, E. H. Norman, New York, 1940 (Reprinted 1973), p 95.

about 400,000 (with their families, about 2 millions)²¹ and of these more than 80 per cent. received bonds with a face value of less than ¥1,100²² (in contrast to the treatment of a select few, such as the former feudal lords, who received as much as ¥70,000²³). Since the maximum rate of interest paid on the bonds was 7 per cent., this meant an annual income for an entire family of less than ¥77 - a "level of income (which) was lower than that for the lowest social class even in those days."²⁴ Finding themselves in such dire circumstances, most samurai soon pawned or sold their bonds. A government report reads: "Most shizoku (samurai) families have lost their property, and only one or two of every 10 families can sustain their lives. The Government bonds issued for the benefit of shizoku families have mostly gone out of their possession or have been put up as security for loans."²⁵ The same report went on to say that, taking the samurai as a whole, only 7 per cent. were able to live on the interest derived from their bonds. A further 8 per cent. were said to be supporting themselves by their own "vocational skills" (which would seem to mean that they had become police men or teachers and bureaucrats of various sorts), while 30 per cent. were day labourers and the remaining 55 per cent. were completely destitute. The day labourers sought work as coolies, rice polishers and rickshaw men but it was the young, unmarried daughters of samurai families more than the samurai themselves who went to work in the newly opening factories, above all the spinning mills. Initially, the mills often

21 Reimeiki No Nihon Rōdō Undō (The Labour Movement In Japan In The Dawn Period), Okochi Kazuo, Tokyo, 1973, p 19.

22 Sumiya, op. cit., p 11.

23 Norman, op. cit., p 95.

24 Sumiya, op. cit., p 11.

25 Ibid., p 18.

employed skilled technicians from abroad to supervise the unfamiliar routines and the prospect of working alongside 'barbarians' who were rumoured to be partial to human blood and flesh (an impression gained from the technicians' wine drinking and meat eating habits) terrified many young girls. Unmarried daughters from samurai families were dispatched to the mills as if to the battle front, fortified by assurances that they were sacrificing themselves "for the sake of the country", and when eventually they returned to their homes they were welcomed as heroines. Ōkōchi Kazuo refers to the Tomioka silk reeling mill where, when it was opened in 1872, out of 18 skilled female hands 8 were daughters of samurai. Later 200 girls from samurai families in Yamaguchi prefecture are said to have come as one contingent to work in the same factory.²⁶

Perhaps the most important aspect of this submergence of the samurai is the attitudes which those of them who became wage earners took with them into the working class. On the one hand they often exhibited an unruly arrogance towards other workers, conscious of the fact that only yesterday they had been members of a privileged ruling class. This was possibly one of the reasons why many samurai preferred to take day labour as coolies or rickshaw men rather than being thrown closely together with workers from other social backgrounds in the confined space of a factory. In sharp contrast to this attitude towards other workers, however, was their frequent subservience towards those in authority, a hang-over from the unquestioning obedience, even to the point of death, which a samurai had traditionally owed to his lord. Such subservience was particularly striking among the female factory hands, many of them of samurai origin, who all too often endured the most appalling conditions with depressing obedience.

26 Reimeiki No Nihon Rōdō Undō (The Labour Movement In Japan In The Dawn Period), Ōkōchi Kazuo, Tōkyō, 1973, p 19.

The Artisans

Apart from impoverished samurai, many members of the traditional artisan class (the Kō of the official class hierarchy of the old regime - Shi Nō Kō Shō = samurai, peasants, artisans, merchants) found themselves after 1868 pitchforked into the working class. Before the revolution the artisans had been a class of independent skilled craftsmen (though by no means all achieved the status of independent masters, some being de facto wage labourers). After 1868 many of the even independent masters among them discovered that their skills, painfully acquired through long years of apprenticeship, had suddenly become redundant. Those who had catered for the samurai found themselves without a market while others found their laborious techniques displaced by new methods of production introduced from the West. An example of the former case were the swordsmiths, for under the old regime no samurai ever appeared in public without the regulation two swords stuck in his obi (belt). The swords were none the less important for being symbols of samurai status rather than weapons to be used in earnest, but by 1871 the wearing of swords by samurai had become optional and by 1876 the custom was banned altogether. Artisans with skills for which there was little demand any longer, like the swordsmiths, were placed in the same poverty-stricken predicament as samurai without their stipends. Yet most artisans remained deeply aware of the skills which until only yesterday had given them a definite status in society and hung on to them wherever they could by a certain amount of adaptation (traditional blacksmiths becoming metal workers, for example). They were bound to be contemptuous of common wage labourers, even though many of them became just that themselves. Once again it can be said that, as with the impoverished samurai, some of the attitudes which the artisans took with them into the working class were unlikely to make a positive contribution to the development of working class consciousness.

The Peasants

Having mentioned the samurai and artisans, however, our attention has to be mainly focused on the peasantry, for it was from the masses and masses of poor peasants that the bulk of the new working class emerged. Indeed, this process had already been under way in the days of the old regime. Agricultural industries such as silk weaving and sake brewing were already flourishing in the Tokugawa* period and wage labour had accompanied them, as well as intruding (sometimes in very primitive forms) into feudal agricultural relations too.²⁷ T. C. Smith has written:

For upward of two hundred years the agricultural labor force had been unwittingly preparing for the transition to factory employment. Commercial farming and the experience of working for wages had taught peasants to respond with alacrity to monetary incentives, and had given them a certain tolerance of impersonal relationships in pursuing monetary goals; but at the same time agriculture had not changed so much as to destroy the habit of loyalty and obedience.

28

Be that as it may, the process rapidly gathered momentum after 1868 since not only were there economic pressures at work driving peasants from the land but the old, feudal restrictions, which impeded the flow of labour between the countryside and the towns, were removed. What tended to happen, however, was that rather than a stable, totally urbanised working class differentiating itself from the peasantry, considerable numbers of peasants became half-proletarianised, flowing and ebbing back and forth between the country and the towns in response to the fluctuating ups and downs of the capitalist economy. Surplus labour in the countryside (such as younger sons in peasant families where inheritance was restricted to their eldest brother) would drift

* See glossary.

27 The Agrarian Origins Of Modern Japan, Thomas C. Smith, Stanford, 1959, pp 114-5.

28 Ibid., p 212.

into the towns when opportunities for work existed in times of economic upsurge. But the reverse side of this coin was that, whenever a recession occurred, unemployed workers would trickle back to their villages to be reabsorbed after a fashion by the agricultural sector of the economy. The rural villages thus acted as refuges for many workers in times of unemployment and were reservoirs of labour for capital to draw on at will.

The phenomenon which has been described here exhibits itself in many industrialising societies and in Japan's case it gave the working class of this period its han nō han kō (half-peasant/half-worker) and dekasegi (migrant labour) character which has often been remarked on. This half-peasant/half-worker and migrant character of the Japanese working class persisted for decades after the period we are concerned with here and gave rise to many further repercussions. The virtually unlimited supply of labour available in the countryside was bound to depress wages and dampen working class militancy, as was the fact that so many Japanese workers did not in the end regard themselves as being solely dependent on their wages for survival in the way in which workers in advanced capitalist societies are. In fact, the abysmally low levels of wages experienced by workers in Japan in the Meiji era can be accounted for in Marxist terms by the fact that wages in Japan were not strictly comparable to wages as they exist in fully developed capitalism. According to Marx's analysis, in a developed capitalist economy wages (the price of labour power) represent under normal conditions the value of that labour power - ie they are equivalent to the socially necessary labour required to produce (and reproduce) that labour power. To put this in simple language, since workers in advanced capitalist societies are normally entirely dependent on their wages, the capitalist class has to pay its wage labourers sufficient to keep them in active mental and physical working order and sufficient too to also guarantee a future supply of further generations of proletarians. In

Japan this did not apply. Peasants came to the factories either to supplement the farm's income or because their individual labour was surplus to the farm's requirements. The low wages they received could thus be interpreted as reflecting this situation. Wages were low because they were only a supplement to another source of income (so that the capitalists were under no economic compulsion to pay the full value of labour power) or because they were designed to support only an individual (a younger son or daughter) and not an entire working class family.

This half-peasant/half-worker and migrant character of wage labour also had other effects besides low wage levels. Since there was a high turnover among workers, it served to keep the workforce atomised and created the conditions in which an oyakata* pattern of labour recruitment would thrive. The peasant girls who went to work in textile mills were commonly signed on by travelling company representatives and oyakata consciousness was strong among male workers (building workers being a conspicuous example of this). This system of recruitment meant that many workers' strongest allegiances were to their oyakata first, rather than to other rank and file workers like themselves. It also meant that workers in different factories were isolated from one another and often uninformed about wage levels elsewhere, so that a lack of uniformity of wages and working conditions generally prevailed. This is not to imply that wages and working conditions were bad in some places and good in others. On the contrary, they were bad everywhere - but this still did not prevent them from being worse in some cases than in others.

* A foreman or a small capitalist who is leader of a work gang and who acts as intermediary between the workers and the bigger capitalists. See glossary for further details.

Women

Evident though all these problems were among male workers, they tended to be experienced even more severely by women - who at this stage (and for many years afterwards) outnumbered men in the workforce in the factories. Table 2 breaks down the figures on factory workers given in Table 1 into numbers of women and numbers of men.

It has already been mentioned that not a few of these women were the daughters of samurai, but the majority still came from peasant backgrounds. Most were relatively short-term contract labourers, the contracts²⁹ being signed by their parents. They entered the factories for a pre-determined period of a few years and then (if the awful working conditions did not kill them first - tuberculosis was rife) returned home to arranged marriages in the countryside, where they would settle down as peasant wives. Their period in the factories simply tided them over until they were of a marriageable age, their families being too poor to support them at

29 "The slave-like nature of early primitive labor relations in Japan is revealed in the following typical employment contract of the period:

"1. The period of employment shall be from three to five years.

"2. Employees shall prove that they have no contract with any other factory.

"3. Employees shall not reveal manufacturing techniques peculiar to their factories.

"4. Employees shall strictly observe the orders of the factory owner or supervisor and shall obey all rules in force now or in the future.

"5. Employees shall not request retirement except in an unavoidable case.

"6. The management shall be free to dismiss workers at any time at its own convenience.

"7. Wages shall be paid in a proper way at the convenience of the management.

"8. Should an employee violate the rules of the factory or his contract of employment, the management may reduce his pay or confiscate his unpaid wages."

(Labor In Modern Japan, Kazuo Okochi, Tōkyō, 1958, p 16.)

TABLE 2.

Year	No. of 'Factory' Workers	No. of Women	No. of Men
1880			
1881			
1882	61,025	35,535 ³⁰	16,654 ³⁰
1883			
1884			
1885			
1886	193,940		
1887			
1888	123,327		
	212,604		
1889	220,138		
1890	346,979		
1891	321,624		
1892	294,425		
1893	285,478		
	381,390		
1894	381,390	239,476 ³¹	141,917 ³¹
	381,393		
	418,140		
1895	418,140	248,625 ³¹	169,515 ³¹
1896	434,832	261,218 ³²	173,614 ³²
	436,616	261,960 ³¹	174,656 ³¹
	441,616		
1897	437,254	234,462 ³²	182,792 ³²
	439,549	255,305 ³¹	184,244 ³¹
1898	412,205	234,573 ³¹	177,632 ³¹
1899	408,029	256,763 ³¹	151,266 ³¹
	423,171	264,378 ³²	158,793 ³²
1900	403,474	248,617 ³¹	154,857 ³¹
	422,019	257,307 ³²	164,712 ³²
1901	433,813	265,909 ³¹	167,904 ³¹
1902	488,277	305,842 ³³	182,435 ³³
	498,891	313,269 ³¹	185,622 ³¹
1903	483,839	301,435 ³¹	182,404 ³¹
1904	526,215	318,264 ³¹	207,951 ³¹
1905	587,851	347,563 ³¹	240,288 ³¹

home. Byron K. Marshall has aptly commented:

Many workers, notably the young females in the textile mills, cannot be considered ever really to have left the village environment, since they were recruited through family heads and came to the cities with the intention of staying only a few years before returning home.

34

Ōkōchi Kazuo describes these young girls as "ignorant and apathetic"³⁵ and one wonders how they could have been anything else when it is remembered that, apart from their daily stints of frequently 15 or 16 hours in the factory,³⁶ the rest of their time was spent under lock and

30 Sumiya, op. cit., p 33. The figures for women (35,535) and men (16,654) do not add up to the total number of 'factory' workers (61,025). This is because, in addition to men and women, there were 9,863 children under 15 years old (whose sex we are not told) working in the 'factories'. Even when these children are taken into account, however, there is still a discrepancy in our figures - since $35,535 + 16,654 + 9,863 = 62,052$ and not the figure given (61,025). This is an illustration of the inaccuracy of these early statistics.

31 Nihon Keizai Tōkei Shū (Collected Statistics Of The Japanese Economy), Japan Statistical Research Institute, Tōkyō, 1968, p 55.

32 Asian Revolutionary, Hyman Kublin, Princeton, 1964, p 108.

33 Meiji Taishō Sangyō Hattatsu Shi (History Of Industrial Development In The Meiji And Taisho Eras), Takahashi Kamekichi, Tōkyō, 1966, p 303.

34 Capitalism And Nationalism In Prewar Japan, Byron K. Marshall, Stanford, 1967, p 64.

35 Reimeiki No Nihon Rōdō Undō (The Labour Movement In Japan In The Dawn Period), Ōkōchi Kazuo, Tōkyō, 1973, p 24.

36 "The Shokkō Jijō (Information on Workers) described the real conditions of labor in this country around 1890, as follows:

"Although labor hours in weaving factories differ according to each factory, there is generally a great difference in working hours between the plants using power-driven looms and small plants using hand-driven looms. In the former, it is generally around twelve hours, but in the case of the latter, a working day of twelve to thirteen hours from sunrise to sunset is the shortest, and it is frequently as long as fifteen to sixteen hours a day from sunrise to 9:00 p.m. or 10 p.m. The majority of weaving factories are adopting the latter system, with even some plants requesting workers to work from seventeen to eighteen hours a day."

"In the part concerning cotton spinning workers in this book, it states:

"They frequently instruct working girls, who were to leave the plant after finishing a day's work, to remain in the plant and to continue work standing until the following morning as long as twenty four hours, or in the case of the worst example, though scarce, they let these girls continue to work on a daytime shift in the following day up to thirty six hours."

(Outline of Japanese History In The Meiji Era, Fujii Jintaro (ed.), Tōkyō, 1958, p 448.)

key in dormitories on the factory premises. It sometimes happened that dormitories were accidentally burned down with the workforce still locked inside them but the vicious practice of confining the girls was justified all the same by the supposed obligation to protect their female virtue, the factory standing in loco parentis while the girls were away from home.

Unbelievably miserable though their lives certainly were, the female factory workers, constituting a majority of the workforce in the factories, were extremely unlikely to show many signs of militancy. The vast majority of them were seeking a personal rather than a class solution to their problems, seeing marriage as their best chance to escape from the drudgery of the factories (not that life as a peasant housewife was very much better!). Add this basic orientation to their youth and inexperience and one soon starts to understand why they were rarely able to mount effective struggles against employers who, after all, held all the trump cards.³⁷

Oppression By The State

To say that the working class as it took form in Japan was oppressed, then, is an understatement. Workers were subjected to the barbarities which always do accompany capitalism in its formative periods anywhere. The horrors which occurred during the industrial revolution in Europe were not missing in Japan. As one European eyewitness put it:

37 There were exceptions, all the same. The Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper No. 4, 6 December 1903, p 1) reported an apparently successful strike for a wage increase by 121 female workers in a tea factory in Saitama prefecture.

In Osatra (?Ōsaka) I was able to look over the cotton mills and the match factories.... without coming across more than a hundred men, nearly all of the work being done by girls and children. The girls earn from 37 to 50 centimes; the children from 25 to 35 centimes. I even saw, in one match works in Osatra (sic), children of six to eight years, almost babies, working eight hours per day for a wage of 7½ centimes.

38

Even a representative of capital as partisan as the President of the Industrial Bank of Japan had to admit that the "condition of labourers is to be pitied by an impartial observer".³⁹ There was little pity on the part of the state, though. When, in an attempt to improve their miserable conditions, certain groups of workers (generally male, skilled workers such as railway engineers, mechanics and printers) took the first faltering steps towards creating a trade union movement in the closing years of the nineteenth century, the state moved swiftly to crush the emerging workers' organisations with the infamous 'chian keisatsu hō' ('police peace preservation law'), introduced in 1900. As Hagiwara Shintarō has pointed out, this law purported "formally to control both labour and capital. But over the following 30 years there was not one single case of its being applied to the employers." On paper it might have forbidden equally any agitation which sought to encourage either "employers to dismiss workers or refuse workers' requests for work for the purpose of bringing about a lock-out" or "workers to stop work or refuse offers of employment for the purpose of bringing about a strike" (Clause XVII). This was simply mystification, however. In practice the 'police peace preservation law' was a straightforward piece of anti-working class legislation designed to "completely uproot the labour movement".⁴⁰

38 La Revue Socialiste, September 1901, p 356.

39 Japan By The Japanese, A. Stead (ed.), London, 1904, p 466.

40 Nihon Anakizumu Rōdō Undō Shi (History Of The Anarchist Labour Movement In Japan), Hagiwara Shintarō, Tōkyō, 1969, p 12.

The serious effect it had on workers' struggles to improve their wages and working conditions is shown in Table 3, giving annual figures for the number of labour disputes which occurred between 1897 - 1905 and for the number of workers involved in those disputes.

As with the previous tables, one cannot claim a high degree of accuracy for the figures given here, but they do at least illustrate the general trend. In view of the still embryonic nature of the working class in the Japan of this period, it comes as no surprise to find that the number of labour disputes was consistently low, with no more than a relative handful of workers involved. On average there were throughout the whole country approximately 18 notified labour disputes per year during this period 1897 - 1905, though on occasions the number fell as low as 8 or even a mere 6 disputes. As a percentage of the total number of factory workers (not the whole of the working class), the number of workers involved in disputes was sometimes as low as 0.17 per cent. (1904) and was never higher than 1.5 per cent. (1898). On the other hand, the number of workers involved in the average dispute was approximately 171 for the period 1897 - 1905 - a figure almost three times the size of the workforce employed in the average 'factory' in 1905. This means that the majority of struggles must have occurred in the larger capitalist enterprises, as one would have expected.

The slump in the number of disputes from 1899 onwards speaks for itself but it might seem odd that this drastic decline should have preceded the actual introduction of the 'police peace preservation law' in 1900. This is less strange than it appears at first, however. The Meiji governments never allowed themselves to be hamstrung by anything so trivial as the law, least of all where the working class was concerned. The stepping up of police repression directed at workers in struggle was in advance of the formal passing of the legislation authorising this, as the figures themselves show. Perhaps a word of

TABLE 3.⁴¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Labour Disputes</u>	<u>No. of Workers Involved</u>
1897*	32	3517
1898	43	6293
1899	15	4284
'police peace preservation law' <u>1900</u>	11	2316
1901	18	1948
1902	8	1849
1903	9	1359
1904	6	879
1905	19	5013

* Figures for 1897 are for the latter half of this year only.

41 Nihon Keizai Tōkei Shū (Collected Statistics Of The Japanese Economy), Japan Statistical Research Institute, Tōkyō, 1968, p 296.

explanation also needs to be said about the relatively high figures for 1905. Despite the restrictions imposed by the law, there was an upsurge of working class resistance between 1905 - 1907 in response to the additional burdens which the (Russo-Japanese) war effort imposed on workers. Following this, the labour movement was again becalmed and it is worth mentioning that the number of labour disputes slumped to very low figures again in 1909/1910 (11 and 10 respectively) even though those years lie outside the period under examination here.

As was stated earlier, the undeveloped state of the capitalist economy in Japan in the Meiji era was bound to seriously hamper the efforts of those there who thought of themselves as socialists to formulate an alternative to capitalism. Aspiring socialists levelled their criticisms at a social system which they did not properly understand and which, especially from what they could see of it in Japan, was not even remotely approaching the stage where "all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed" - which Marx had once suggested represented an essential pre-condition, before which "no social order ever disappears".⁴² Capitalism in Meiji Japan was obviously still immature and on the ascendant and the socialists were faced with the difficulty of trying to challenge a system whose contours were as yet still in the process of being defined. Nor was this the socialists' only problem. Along with an undeveloped capitalist economy went an equally undeveloped working class. The backwardness of the workers not only added to the socialists' isolation but even made it difficult for many of the Meiji socialists to recognise in the working class the force which could achieve socialism. In 1956 a veteran of the socialist movement in Japan, Yamakawa Hitoshi, recalled what it was like to be a socialist in Japan in the Meiji era and explained

42 A Contribution To The Critique Of Political Economy, Karl Marx, Chicago, 1911, p 12.

the socialists' estrangement from the working class. Strictly speaking, he was writing about the period 1906-07 but the situation was little different - and certainly no worse - than that which had existed prior to 1905.

.... the party members enrolled in the Nippon Shakaitō (Socialist Party of Japan) were a mere 200 or so. The class differentiation of the provincial party members is not clear but the majority were youths from the lower strata of the middle class. Modern workers were rare. Even if we look at the composition of the party leadership, we find that half were either pre-capitalist types of handicraftsmen who were in the process of being ruined or independent owners of petty workshops. There was not a single factory worker among them. This was partly because socialist thought had still not permeated into the working class but it was also due to the fact that in those days to be marked by the police as a socialist meant to immediately lose one's job. If one did not more or less have some independent means of livelihood, it was difficult to draw close to the movement.

43

Yamakawa's reminiscences capture the flavour of the period but one should beware of exaggerating the effect of police harassment on the development of socialist understanding. As Yamakawa says, socialist thought had not permeated into the working class, so that even on the odd occasion when workers were able to summon up sufficient forces to overcome the repressive tactics of the police and collectively voice their aspirations, there was nothing even remotely socialist about the views they supported. This was shown perhaps most strikingly of all by the massive demonstration (in the language of the time, a konshinkai - social gathering) held in the Mukōjima district of Tōkyō on 3 April 1901 in defiance of a police ban. 20,000 people turned out, ignoring a police order that no more than 5,000 would be allowed to assemble, and the 1,000 police on duty had little alternative but to allow the meeting to go ahead. During the course of the meeting a

43 Shakaishugi Kōza Vol. VII - Nihon No Shakaishugi
 (Lectures On Socialism Vol. VII - Japanese Socialism),
 Ōkōchi Kazuo (ed.), Tōkyō, 1956, p 219.

series of reformist resolutions calling for labour legislation and extension of the suffrage were passed unanimously, under a preamble which read:

We workers, subjects of the Empire, receiving great blessings from His Majesty the Emperor, open the grand social gathering.... and pass the following resolutions with sincere hearts and minds.

44

The proceedings also came to an end with three cheers for the Emperor, "which were most heartily given, because before everything the Japanese working man is patriotic and loyal."⁴⁵

Sentiments such as these were reactionary by any standards but the most startling thing about the preamble to the resolutions is the fact that it originated from the supposed socialist Katayama Sen (in later years one of Stalin's yes-men in the Comintern), who moved its adoption at the meeting. Among the Meiji socialists Katayama was the one who forged the strongest links with the workers of this period and he has often attracted favourable comment because of this. Yet Katayama's case is a perfect example of the dangers involved in socialists seeking to express the views of a non-socialist working class. Only to the extent that Katayama was prepared to relinquish whatever grasp of socialist principles he might have had,* was he able to faithfully represent the ideas of the workers he came in contact with.

* In fact, as we shall see below, Katayama understood precious little about socialism.

44 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 76, 15 April 1901, p 3. (There is a rather freely translated version of this in the paper's English language columns, p 8.)

45 Great Japan, Alfred Stead, London, 1906, p 233.

CHAPTER 2.

Populism (Narodnism) And Other Russian Influences

Despite some bizarre claims which were made by the early socialists in Japan about the long (and even royal!) pedigree which socialism could allegedly boast of in that country,¹ socialist thought as it emerged in Japan in the Meiji era was essentially a collection of imported doctrines taken from the West. Although the Meiji socialists could legitimately point to a number of earlier Japanese thinkers who had anticipated certain elements found in Western socialism² (or what was commonly taken to be 'socialism', in the West as well as in Japan³), there was no native socialist tradition for them to build on. Even if there were no traditions that were specifically socialist, however, there was a long history in Japan of struggle against the authorities and of rebellion, the most spectacular examples being the frequent peasant uprisings (ikki) which had been a continuing feature of Tokugawa rule (and which still occurred under the new regime after 1868). Peasant uprisings were normally short-lived, spontaneous outbursts of violence - gestures of mass despair expressed in a few simple

- 1 "To give an accurate account of the development of Socialism in Japan entails going back to the early days of our history and examining the principles which influenced our sovereigns in governing their people in those far-off times." (Abe Isō on 'Socialism In Japan' in Fifty Years Of New Japan, Shigenobu Ōkuma, London, 1909, Vol. II, p 494.)
- 2 See, for example, the article 'Hyaku Gojū Nen Mae No Museifushugisha Andō Shōeki' ('Ando Shoeki: An Anarchist Of 150 Years Ago') in the Nihon Heimin Shimbun (Japan Common People's Newspaper) No. 16, 20 January 1908, p 15.
- 3 See 'Bakumatsu No Shakaishugisha Satō Nobuhiro' ('Sato Nobuhiro: A Socialist Of The Late Tokugawa Period') which first appeared in the Kyōto Hōgakukai Zasshi (Kyoto Law Society Journal) in October 1909 and is collected in Kawakami Hajime Chosaku Shu (Collected Works Of Kawakami Hajime), Ōuchi Hyōei et al. (eds.), Tokyo, 1964, Vol. I, pp 373-387.

demands to right immediate grievances, with no theoretical insight behind them. Distinct from the peasant uprisings, there had also been intellectual opposition to the old regime during the Tokugawa period, often by dissident members of the ruling samurai class. Yet the samurai status of these dissidents, no less than the draconian repression practised by the bakufu, had tended to limit the scope of their criticism. Often their opposition amounted to little more than variant interpretations of the ideological supports used by the regime to shore up its power - such as Confucianism. Nonetheless, this intellectual opposition together with the peasant uprisings constituted a tradition which, while it fell infinitely far short of socialism, was radical by the standards of the time.

Naturally enough, the early socialists in Japan were influenced by this tradition, as they also were by the capitalist revolution of 1868, which was still very much a living memory at the time when socialist ideas first began to appear in Japan. But it was not only this radical tradition which exerted its influence on the first socialists in Japan. George Lichtheim once described the emergence of a socialist movement in Europe as a process whereby "socialist progressives parted company with liberal progressives, sometimes to the accompaniment of battle-cries which sounded not altogether unlike the despairing complaints of agrarian conservatives and religious traditionalists."⁴ Similarly in Japan there was a heavy slice of conservatism and of nostalgia for the (often imaginary) values of the past incorporated into the ideas of the early socialists. Because of this, while the following chapters will first deal with the Western origins of socialist thought in Japan, they will then go on to examine what further elements in the thought of the pioneer socialists there were inherited from the Japanese past. Having looked at these diverse elements - some of them Western in origin, some

4 Marxism, George Lichtheim, London, 1964, p 24.

of them traditional Japanese; some of them radical in their implications, some of them unambiguously reactionary - I will then attempt to show the synthesis which the Meiji socialists made of them.

Western Sources

There were three major Western sources for the socialist thought which was introduced into Japan prior to 1905. The first, although the least important in the long run, was Russian populism (narodnism), which will be dealt with in this chapter. Following the decline of populism in Russia itself in the 1880s, its influence faded in Japan as well and was replaced by social-democracy. This development was all but inevitable, in that the socialist movement was still struggling to find its feet in Japan at a time when abroad powerful social-democratic parties were coming to be a force to be reckoned with in many European countries and had, from 1889 onwards, allied themselves in an international organisation which was to count its formal adherents by the million. Dazzled by the European parties' numbers and prestige, to socialists as inexperienced as those in Japan the Second International came to have virtually the stature of a god and its jargon-ridden pronouncements took on the authority of holy writ. Not only that, but at the head of the International stood its largest and seemingly most powerful party, the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD). In its heyday the SPD exerted a fascination that was akin to charisma for many who thought of themselves as socialists - and the socialists in Japan were no exception to this. Yet, however powerful the influence which the SPD exercised on the Japanese socialists, this influence was largely indirect. When socialists in Japan knew a language other than Japanese it was generally English and, if an opportunity to travel abroad presented itself, it was usually to the USA. This meant that European (primarily German) social-democratic ideas had to find their way to Japan through what can best be described as an English-language filter.

This reliance on English as the language for most of their international contacts exposed the Japanese socialists also to a variety of supposedly socialist doctrines popular in one or other of the world's English-speaking countries. To a greater or lesser extent, socialists in Japan in the years before 1905 absorbed the ideas of American social-gospellers, of British Fabians and even of New Zealand's Lib-Labs. These influences exerted first by the SPD and secondly by the various socialist currents found in the English-speaking countries mentioned above will be the subject of our next two chapters. As in the case of Russian populism in this chapter, the intention is not to describe these different socialist movements in detail, nor to analyse their rise and fall in the countries of their origin. My purpose is simply to examine them in terms of the significance which they had for the development of socialist thought in Japan. We will be looking at them through Japanese eyes, as it were, trying to assess how they appeared to the small groups of socialists active in Japan prior to 1905 and trying to highlight the lessons (often dangerously false, especially in the Japanese context) which the Meiji socialists learned from those abroad whom they took as their mentors.

First News Of 'Socialism'

During the 250 years before the revolution of 1868 the official policy of the old regime had been to rule Japan as a closed country. It is true that loopholes existed, because the policy was never rigorously applied to China and the Dutch East India Company was allowed to maintain a single trading post (to which its officials were normally confined) on a tiny, artificially constructed island in Nagasaki harbour. Due to this, some news of the development of scientific and military techniques by what were generally regarded as the 'butter-stinking barbarians' in the West did trickle into Japan (some of it directly via the Dutch, the rest indirectly by way of

China), but obviously the information which could be gleaned in this way was pretty meagre. After the revolution of 1868 there was a complete about-turn in official policy. As was explained in the previous chapter, the new regime saw the chances of Japan's survival as an independent country as depending on its ability to beat (or, at least, to equal) the Western powers at their own game of industrialisation and military aggression. In order to achieve this, the gates were flung wide open to allow in Western technology - and, along with the new techniques of production and warfare which were adopted, new ideas from the West also came pouring into Japan.

Japan had been closed for so long that, once the gates were opened, the rush of new ideas was like air surging into a vacuum. The only factor to limit the flood was the time it took to translate often garbled versions of a thousand and one unfamiliar ways of looking at a world about which, until only the day before, most people in Japan thought the last word had been said. New theories were introduced in rapid succession, each with its group of recent converts to argue extravagantly (and, as often as not, uninformedly) on its behalf. Bourgeois-democratic ideas from the era of the French revolution and various interpretations of Christianity, British utilitarianism and German statism, theories of natural rights and Social-Darwinism were all locked in an untidy and belligerent tangle and, edging in among these conflicting schools of thought, came the first information on 'socialism'.

Not too much needs to be said about these first accounts of 'socialism' to be heard in Japan. Those responsible for them did not claim to be socialists themselves but were academics hostile to the little they knew about the doctrine they sought to explain. The only reason for briefly mentioning a couple of the very first among them here is to show the misrepresentation which socialism suffered right from its initial appearance in Japan. In 1870 a writer called

Katō Hiroyuki published a book Shin Sei Tai I (Outline Of True Government).⁵ This was an exposition of the "principles of practical politics under constitutional rule"⁶ but Katō also had something to say about what he transcribed in Japanese syllabary as "komuniyunistume" (communism) and "soshiarisume" (socialism). He wrote:

Two schools of economics known as 'komuniyunistume' (communism) and 'soshiarisume' (socialism), as well as by other names, have arisen. Already in Europe a system akin to these existed at the time when Ancient Greece was flourishing and at later times too. There are slight points of difference between these two schools but on the whole they are more in agreement than disagreement. The theory behind them is that everything in the life of the masses today should be made egalitarian, starting with food, clothing and shelter. The essential reason why these schools arose is that, if the people were left to their various fates, a big gap between rich and poor would be produced, owing to differences in people's ability and to whether they are lazy or hard-working. The rich would become progressively richer and the poor progressively poorer. All the suffering in the world (is said to) stem from this cause. Therefore - starting with food, clothing and shelter and going on to include all of today's privately owned land, implements, industry etc - everything would be taken out of people's hands and everyone's private property placed collectively under the government's care. It is said that in this way a situation where there were neither rich nor poor could be attained. What it amounts to is a means of achieving so-called 'salvation'. Without a doubt what lies behind it is earnest idealism but the severity of such a system would, in fact, be unbearable. Nothing could go farther than this in restricting (people's) customary feelings of freedom and their rights and, because of this, it has to be said that it is a system which would be most injurious to law and order.

7

As can be seen, the image of 'socialism' or 'communism' which Katō Hiroyuki projected here was that of a (literally!) Spartan, barracks-room

5 Nobutaka Ike translates this "Principles of True Government". (The Beginnings Of Political Democracy In Japan, Nobutaka Ike, New York, 1969, p 118.) Ike also gives here an alternative translation of sections of the passage from Katō's book quoted at length below.

6 Nihon Shakai Undō Shi (History Of The Social Movement In Japan), Akamatsu Katsumaro, Tōkyō, 1974, p 6.

7 Translated here from Akamatsu, op. cit., pp 6-7.

system of forcibly imposed, monotonous egalitarianism and even more sinister than this was the role he ascribed to the state in his version of a communist/socialist society. Far from the state disappearing, together with the class divisions in society which are the reason for its existence (this was a pivotal demand of many of those in nineteenth century Europe who called themselves communists or socialists⁸), its power was obviously to increase in proportion to its monopoly of property (".... everyone's private property placed collectively under the government's care.") This statist view of 'communism'/'socialism' was made even more explicit in an article Katō wrote four years later in which he crossed swords with the famous 'liberal'* Fukuzawa Yukichi. Quoting Gustav Frantz, he declared that the "Communist Party extends state power as far as it can and reduces the people's power as far as it can. It favours its own state rule over all sections of the masses - peasants, workers and merchants."⁹ Many of those reading today what Katō

* 'Liberal' in the terms of Meiji Japan.

8 "The positive abolition of private property and the appropriation of human life is therefore the positive abolition of all alienation, thus the return of man out of religion, family, state, etc. into his human, i.e. social being." (Economic And Philosophical Manuscripts (1844), Karl Marx. Collected in Early Texts, Karl Marx, Oxford, 1972, p 149.)

Or, again: "The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society." (The Poverty Of Philosophy (1847), Karl Marx, Moscow, no date, p 197.)

Marx is referred to here not with the deference due to an infallible oracle but simply because on occasions he usefully illustrates the point that the prospect of sweeping away social classes and the state, along with all the other relics of the old society, was a prominent feature of the socialist/communist theory of the day.

9 'Fukuzawa Sensei No Ron Ni Kotau' ('In Reply To Fukuzawa's Article'), Meiroku Zasshi (The Meiroku Magazine), ?February 1874. The extract quoted here is translated from Nihon Shakaishugi Shi (A History Of Japanese Socialism), Kimura Tsuyoshi, Tōkyō, no date given but probably 1926 or 1927, p 10. See also Meiroku Zasshi, W. R. Braisted (ed.), Harvard, 1976, pp 22, 29.

wrote about "the Communist Party" a hundred years ago will have derived their own ideas on socialism/communism from the policies implemented by political parties in Russia and elsewhere which make use of a 'communist' or 'socialist' label. They will therefore be struck by the degree to which Katō/Frantz's description fits the state capitalist practices of such parties and it would be idle to deny that plans to introduce a state-controlled version of capitalism formed one of the many strands one finds running through the wide range of doctrines in nineteenth century Europe which declared themselves to be 'socialist' or 'communist'. Indeed, the 10-point programme which appeared at the end of Section II of Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto¹⁰ was itself a detailed set of proposals for introducing a state capitalist economy - and there were others calling themselves 'communists' who wanted to bring about the sort of crudely imposed egalitarianism (an equality of poverty) which Katō also severely criticised. At the very least, however, it has to be conceded that Katō Hiroyuki's condemnation of communism/socialism was one-sided. Besides the state capitalist and other extraneous elements included within the umbrella terms 'socialism' and 'communism', there was a core of socialist/communist doctrine in Europe which Katō completely shut his mind to. In fact, only three years before Katō's assertion (borrowed from Frantz) that "the Communist Party extends state power as far as it can and reduces the people's power as far as it can. It favours its own state rule over all sections of the masses....", some of those in France who were regarded as 'communists' or 'socialists' had given a practical demonstration to the contrary at the time of the Paris Commune. There was never any question of the Commune achieving communism and, anyway, it survived only a few weeks during 1871, but even the hasty,

10 Manifesto Of The Communist Party, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Collected in Selected Works, Karl Marx (sic), London, 1947, Vol. I, p 130.

stop-gap measures it was able to introduce left many observers in wondering admiration. All its officials were elected on the basis of universal suffrage and could be instantly dismissed whenever those who had elected them chose to do so. In addition, officials of all types were paid far less than their Bonapartist fore-runners had been. There was little in the Paris Commune that smacked of the glorification of state power at the expense of ordinary people, but Katō chose to ignore the side of the "Communist Party" which incidents such as the Paris Commune revealed.

In much the same mould as Katō was the Reverend Dwight W. Learned, who appears to have been the first person from abroad to have felt himself qualified to instruct the Japanese on the subject of socialism. True to his 'Reverend' title, Learned is normally described as clutching a bible in one hand and an economics text book in the other¹¹ and this perhaps gives us an idea of the quality of his lectures at the Dōshisha University in Kyōto from 1875 onwards. Although dismissing socialism as a delusion¹², Learned still managed to convey the impression of a system of widespread government control in his references to it. "It plans to reform things by means of the government taking charge of all property, land and the control of production"¹³, he told his young students (and a wider audience too when his lectures were collected in two volumes which appeared in 1886 and 1891).

The 'People's Rights Movement'

Measured against the political storms which were raging in post-revolutionary Japan, however, these tendentious judgements pronounced on socialism by academics like Katō and Learned were without a great deal of significance. As is usual following capitalist revolutions, the

11 Tazoe Tetsuji, Okamoto Hiroshi, Tōkyō, 1971, p 39. Akamatsu, op. cit., p 8.

12 Akamatsu, op. cit., p 8.

13 Okamoto, op. cit., p 39.

coterie of leaders who had grasped the reins of government in Japan following the upheavals of 1868-69 had its work cut out to hold on to power in the unsettled years following the revolution. Having so recently come to power, the political leaders of Meiji Japan had at first no aura of tradition with which to legitimise their privileges, in the manner which is customary with ruling classes everywhere. Many of their rivals saw them as political upstarts and nothing more. In addition to this, the revolutionary process itself had aroused hopes among a variety of social classes which the capitalist nature of the revolution made it impossible to satisfy. The new regime thus found itself confronted by a whole range of opponents, all dissatisfied with the government of the day, but still divided by important differences. It was this array (or, as often as not, disarray) of social groups opposed to the policies of the Meiji governments which, from the early 1870s and for the next 20 years, took on the collective proportions of what is normally referred to as the 'jiyū minken undō' (literally the 'liberty and popular rights movement' but often rendered more simply as the 'people's rights movement').

As indicated in Chapter 1, it was groups of samurai in fiefs such as Satsuma, Chōshū, Tosa and Hizen in the south and west of Japan who had spearheaded the struggle against the bakufu. After the revolution, however, it was mostly those from Satsuma and Chōshū who were able to secure state power in their own hands. Their erstwhile allies, particularly those from Tosa, found themselves outmanoeuvred in the scramble for power and, as frustrated aspirants for governmental office, formed for a time one incongruous element in the 'people's rights movement'. Indeed, it was these Tosa politicians' leader, Itagaki Taisuke, who actually launched the Jiyūtō (Liberal Party) which stood at the centre of the movement until Itagaki himself was bought off by the government. A second element in the 'people's rights movement' was a wider section of the samurai class as a whole, whose economic and

social position was worsening with each year that passed under the new regime. Destitution made desperate men out of many samurai and many of the most militant and vocal activists within the 'people's rights movement' were members of the old warrior class.¹⁴ Samurai also formed the shock troops in many of the insurrections which the 'people's rights movement' witnessed in different parts of the country. Yet all too often elitist sentiments lay behind the democratic phrases used by samurai activists, for the hopeless struggle which many of them were engaged in was more about regaining their own former privileged status than it was about achieving liberty for all and sundry.¹⁵

The 'people's rights movement' also attracted support from sections of the landlord class and bourgeoisie - who were strongly in favour of 'people's rights', understanding 'people' to mean precisely themselves. They were opposed to the system of taxation used by the government and sought to change this by means of representative government (representing

- 14 Sakai Toshihiko, an early Japanese socialist and himself of samurai origin, described the impasse in which the samurai involved in the 'people's rights movement' found themselves. "... the samurai were the debris of the warrior class, which had already been destroyed. As individuals, they were superior in intellect and in ability but, as a class, there was no reason why their status and power should permanently continue in the new society." (Nihon Shakaishugi Undo Shōshi - A Short History Of The Socialist Movement In Japan, Sakai Toshihiko. Serialised in Shakaishugi (Socialism) No. 1, September 1920, p 34.)
- 15 An illustration of this elitism is provided by the 'Kakumei Kyohei No Geki' ('Appeal For The Raising Of A Revolutionary Army') issued by the insurgents in the Kaba-san insurrection in Ibaraki prefecture in 1884. (Kaba-san is a mountain used by the rebels as their base.) Although addressed ostensibly to "our 37 million brothers of the same blood", its call for action was principally directed towards "shishi and men of virtue" ("shishi jinjin taru mono") which, in the circumstances of the time, meant mainly samurai. (Jiyūtō Shi - History Of The Liberal Party, Itagaki Taisuke, Tōkyō, 1910, Vol. II, p 248. The "shishi" mentioned here was the revolutionary type specific to the Japanese revolution of 1868, as typical as the Jacobin or enragé to the French revolution. For further details see glossary.)

themselves). Worthy of attention in this respect were the sake merchants, who smarted under the taxes levied on their industry. When their attempts to protest were banned by the government, there was for a time the strange spectacle of well-to-do brewers engaged in clandestine activity, until they eventually got cold feet and withdrew from the 'people's rights movement'.¹⁶ Important for the financial backing they gave the movement, the support of these landlord and bourgeois elements was put under strain by the radical policies favoured by the left wing of the 'people's rights movement', which had entirely different ideas to themselves about what constituted 'the people'.¹⁷ Apart from impoverished samurai, this left wing was composed of poor - and often landless - peasants (who would obviously find themselves at odds with supporters of the movement who were landlords) and the urban poor. The poor peasants wanted tax reductions, the landless yearned for land and the urban poor were simply seeking relief of any kind from the grinding poverty which afflicted them. All wished to free themselves too from the hateful military service imposed by the government on young men. Clutching at straws, the solution to all these problems facing different sections of the poor seemed for a time somehow to lie in the establishment of a constitutional government.

16 Kajinishi Mitsuhaya deals briefly with this in his 'Reimeiki No Tatakai - Jiyū Minken To Shakaishugi' ('Battles In The Dawn Period - People's Rights And Socialism') in Shakaishugi Kōza Vol. VII - Nihon No Shakaishugi (Lectures On Socialism Vol. VII - Japanese Socialism), Ōkōchi Kazuo (ed.), Tokyo, 1956, p 65.

17 "... so-called people's rights were people's rights for the propertied class which had suddenly risen to power. But at the time people still could not clearly see what was going on. They believed that 'people's rights' meant genuine people's rights for the ordinary people." (Sakai, op. cit., p 34.)

Russian Populism

It was within this milieu of the left wing of the 'people's rights movement' that the term 'socialism' first came to enjoy a degree of popularity in Japan. The main intellectual influence acting on the left wing was French revolutionary thought from the era of the French revolution. Apart from the lessons of history, however, the activists agitating for 'people's rights' were eager to learn from contemporary events in other parts of the world and, not unnaturally, the movement with which they could most readily identify was that of the Russian populists. Although events such as the Paris Commune were reported in the press¹⁸, it was assassination attempts on tsarist officials and similar incidents which more readily caught people's imagination in Japan. The similarities between Russian and Japanese societies struck even the casually informed. Both were autocracies wielding a vicious repression which fell mainly across the shoulders of the millions of poor peasants who formed the bulk of the population. If the causes of the Russian and Japanese peoples' hardships were apparently the same, then presumably the solution would be the same - so that, when the Russian populists talked about 'socialism', the left wing of the 'people's rights movement' in Japan was eager to follow suit.

In 1881 the Russian populist movement captured the attention of the world by its successful bid on the life of the tsar Alexander II and the same year marked the beginning of a wave of interest in Russian populism in Japan. According to Yanagida Izumi, in 1881 there were 31 works of one form or another dealing with the Russian "nihilists" (kyomutō) published in Japan and the following three years

18 News of the Paris Commune appeared, although without very much in the way of analysis, in the Shimbun Zasshi (News Magazine) in May 1871, for example. (Kimura, op. cit., pp 8-9.)

saw another 34 such works appear.¹⁹ At a time when the reading public was so restricted, figures like these indicate a keenly felt interest in the activity of the Russian populists. We get a good idea of the nature of this interest and the superficiality of the lessons which were learned from Russian populism, however, when it is realised that a good many of these works were semi-fictional novels! These included Tajima Shōji's Fujo Risshi Ōshū Bidan (Stories From Europe About Women With A Purpose In Life) published in 1881, Somata Sakutarō's Rokoku Kibun Retsujo No Gigoku (Strange News From Russia About The Criminal Case Of A Heroine) which appeared in 1882 and Miyazaki Muryū's Kishūshū (The Devil's Weeping) of 1883.²⁰ Their lurid titles alone suggest that it was the sensational side of the Russian populists' exploits which made the strongest appeal to their admirers in Japan and, in fact, both Tajima's and Somata's books spun romantic melodramas around Vera Zasulich's attempt on the life of the St. Petersburg Chief of Police which had taken place on 24 January 1878. Trepov, the Chief of Police, was a brute even by tsarist standards who had made himself notorious by ordering that one political prisoner be flogged simply for not having removed his cap in Trepov's presence. Vera Zasulich was later to become one of the founders of the Russian social-democratic movement but at this stage was still a populist. It was the spectacle of a frail young girl attempting to avenge the Chief of Police's brutality

19 'Roshia Dai Ichiji Kakumei To Kōtoku Shūsui' ('The First Russian Revolution And Kotoku Shusui'), Asukai Masamichi, Shisō (Thought) No. 520, October 1967, p 1328.

20 Akamatsu, op. cit., p 6. Books such as these were often based on Western works but the fact that Japanese was so little known in the West allowed their 'translators' to take great liberties with the original texts. In many cases the original authors would have been hard-pressed to have recognised their own work in the 'translations' which appeared and, besides, it was common practice in Japan for books to appear under their 'translators' names alone without any acknowledgments.

rather than any knowledge of Zasluch's political position²¹ which in Japan seems to have evoked the sympathy of the left wing of the 'people's rights movement'. Japan in the Meiji era was well supplied with Trepovs of its own and there were numerous young activists in this period inspired by Zasluch's example. As Uchida Roan says about one of the other books published around this time (Kawashima Tadanosuke's Kyomutō Taiji Kidan - The Strange Story Of The Suppression Of The Nihilists - 1882), "the fact that it should have been welcomed with such curiosity is clear testimony to the state of mind of the youth of the time."²²

Another indication of the influence of Russian populism in Japan at this time was a talk on Tōyō No Kyomutō (Oriental Nihilists) given by Tarui Tōkichi in Nagasaki in January 1882. Tarui's speech was printed in the issue of the Kinkō Shin Shi which appeared on 2 March 1882 and provides clear evidence that Tarui knew a certain amount about "Western nihilists" and about the attempts which had been made on the lives of Russian tsars.²³ Tarui compared this 'nihilism' to Taoist and Buddhist doctrines of 'nothingness' ('kyomu')²⁴ and later the same year took part in the organisation of the first political group in Japan

21 At the time of her attempt on Trepov's life Zasluch was moving towards the position of the 'Total Reapportionment' group which was to stand - as its name suggests - for total reapportionment of the land. 'Total Reapportionment' emerged as a breakaway section of 'Land and Freedom' in 1879. It used the motto "let the worker seize the factory, the peasant the land". (The Origins Of Bolshevism, Theodore Dan, London, 1964, p 118.)

22 Kimura, op. cit., p 17.

23 Tōyō No Kyomutō (Oriental Nihilists), Tarui Tōkichi. Collected in Nihon Shakai Undō Shisō Shi (History Of The Thought Of The Japanese Social Movement), Itoya Hisao and Kishimoto Eitarō (eds.), Tōkyō, 1971, Vol. II, pp 125-126.

24 Ibid., pp 125-126.

which called itself socialist. This was the Tōyō Shakaitō (Oriental Socialist Party), formed in the Saga/Nagasaki region of south-west Japan on 25 May 1882. The Tōyō Shakaitō never came to anything, being ordered by the government on 7 July 1882 to disband only a few weeks after its formation, but the very fact that it should have chosen to call itself a 'socialist party' is not without interest. As Ōsawa Masamichi has said, there are "various points, such as its being considerably stimulated by the assassination of the Russian tsar in 1881, its raising of party funds by intimidating the rich, its organising the peasants' struggles and its secret meetings, which make one think of it as a Japanese version of the Narodniks."²⁵

An important source of information on the Russian populists was Stepniak's* Underground Russia, which was available in Japan in English translation. Asukai Masamichi calls Miyazaki Muryū's The Devil's Weeping, for example, a "free re-working" of the material found in Underground Russia and a later book of Stepniak's (The Career Of A Nihilist) suffered a similar fate as well.²⁶ In this latter case it was serialised in the Kokumin Shimbun (The Nation's Newspaper) in 1896 - taking the form of a novel about a shishi** revolutionary living in Japan in the period immediately prior to the revolution of 1868! Underground Russia was written very much in the romantic vein, being primarily "a series of animated pictures (of) the men (sic) and the incidents of the Russian Revolutionary movement...."²⁷ Its "revolutionary profiles" included accounts of Peter Kropotkin as well as of Vera

* Alias of S. M. Kravchinsky.

** See glossary.

25 Anakizumu Shisō Shi (A History Of Anarchist Thought), Ōsawa Masamichi, Tōkyō, 1971, p 200.

26 Asukai, op. cit., p 1329.

27 Underground Russia, Stepniak, London, 1883, pp x-xi.

Zasulich and the terrorist methods employed by the Russian populists were prominently dealt with too. A serious reader of Underground Russia in Japan might have been able to learn various organisational lessons from the experiences of the Russian populists and he or she might also have been impressed by their use of terror. Such a reader would almost certainly have agreed with the demands for political liberties which were included in the book in the form of a "Note" from the populist "Executive Committee" to the assassinated Alexander II's successor, Alexander III. These called for universal suffrage, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of public meeting and freedom of electoral address and were thus identical to those advanced by the left wing of the 'people's rights movement' in Japan. A sympathetic reader might also have absorbed a heavy dose of elitism from Stepniak and have been inspired by the general activist elan of the Russian populists. When it comes to socialism, however, there were few solid lessons to be learned from Stepniak - or from the other populists either. The word 'socialism' itself appeared repeatedly in Underground Russia but Stepniak's approach was extremely vague ("A new world, based upon the fraternity of all men, in which there will no longer be either misery or tears, All hail to the Revolution, the sole means of realising this golden ideal."²⁸) The only passages in which 'socialism' was given any more concrete meaning than this were those where its affinity with the Russian village commune - "a form of primitive collective communal property which has.... already been to a large extent destroyed", as others wrote about it²⁹ - was claimed. It was said before that Underground Russia was a romantic book and the romance spilled over into its treatment of 'socialism' too. The following

28 Ibid., p 23.

29 Marx and Engels in the preface to the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto, January 1882. Taken here from Correspondence Of Marx And Engels, Dona Torr (ed.), London, 1941, p 355.

passage captures the general tone of the book and also illustrates just how devoid of theoretical content it was:

He (the revolutionary) will stretch forth his hand. He will tell the peasant how to free himself and become happy. His heart throbs for this poor sufferer, who can only weep....

.... he will do the hard work of the peasant, enduring every privation in order to carry to him the words of redemption, the Gospel of our age, - Socialism. What matters to him if the cut-throats of the Government lay hands upon him? What to him are exile, Siberia, death? Full of his sublime idea, clear, splendid, virifying as the mid-day sun, he defies suffering, and would meet death with a glance of enthusiasm and a smile of happiness.

30

Heady stuff though this was, as a basic text on socialism it was full of pitfalls. Not only was it likely to reinforce the elitism of the left wing of the 'people's rights movement', which already showed this tendency due to the many samurai in its ranks, but socialism was also sure to be equated with terrorist action carried out by this elite. Among the ill-informed, socialism became synonymous with terrorism, since "the impression conveyed to the general public was that a socialist party is a group of conspirators perpetually plotting to even assassinate the Emperor."³¹ On the other hand, although the activists on the left wing of the 'people's rights movement' were not repelled by this terrorist image and were sympathetic to the aura surrounding the word 'socialism', the basis of their thought remained the ideas of Rousseau and other thinkers from the period of the French revolution. Given its nature, Russian populism was well suited to serve as a source of encouragement and inspiration for those struggling after elusive 'people's rights' in Meiji Japan, but it was quite inadequate when it came to the problem of theoretical clarification of what socialism was. This was highlighted practically by the Kaba-san insurrection of 1884, which we referred to earlier (see this chapter,

30 Stepniak, op. cit., pp 12-13.

31 Yamakawa Hitoshi writing in *Ōkōchi*, op. cit., p 219.

note 14). The fact that in this struggle the insurgents should have made such extensive use of bombs - not traditional Japanese weapons - is generally accounted for by the influence of the Russian populists, among whom explosives were a favourite device. Yet, when we look at the programme which these same insurgents were fighting for, we find no trace of socialism whatsoever. There were vague references to "equality", "liberty" and "happiness" and to the unequal treaties which the Japanese government had signed under pressure from the imperialist powers. In addition, they indicated that they were in favour of the opening of a diet and the setting up of a constitutional system of government.³² Whatever their heroism, in other words, the Kaba-san rebels were fighting for other aims than socialism.

1884 marked the high point of the influence of Russian populism in Japan. This was hardly surprising because even in Russia itself "Narodnik Socialism (sic) had spent its force by the 'eighties and the revolutionary movement could develop no further under its banner."³³ After 1884 populism's influence went into a slow decline in Japan, but it still lingered on in radical circles. The adaptation of Stepniak's The Career Of A Nihilist, published as late as 1896, has already been mentioned and it is interesting to note that the famous socialist Kōtoku Shūsui's Collected Works contain an unfinished short story entitled Kyomutō Shosei (Nihilist Students), written in November 1895 when Kōtoku was 24.³⁴ Although politically insignificant, it does show the continuing fascination which the Russian populist movement had for radicals in Japan in the late nineteenth century.

32 Itagaki, op. cit., p 248.

33 The Origin Of Russian Communism, N. Berdyaev, London, 1937, p 110.

34 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. I, pp 154-167.

Tolstoy

To complete the picture of Russian influence acting on the socialist movement in Japan up to the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, it is necessary to say something about the respect with which Tolstoy was regarded. I will also indicate the tenuous contacts which were made with the Russian social-democrats at the time of the war between the two countries. In addition, it should be added that Peter Kropotkin's ideas were beginning to attract attention in Japan towards the end of the period extending up to 1905 which we are concerned with here. Since Part II of this study is mainly concerned with the rise of anarchism in Japan, however, I will defer consideration of Kropotkin until then.

The English-language column of the issue of the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) which appeared on 14 August 1904 was given over to an article on 'The Influence Of Tolstoi In Japan'.³⁵ According to this, it was "about fifteen or twenty years ago that his name began to be talked about among us", which would have meant the 1885-90 period. As the article explained, Tolstoy was first introduced to Japan as a great Russian writer, then his religious views became known, and finally - with the approach of the Russo-Japanese War - he became famous for his opposition to militarism. 1885-1890 might be a slight exaggeration but certainly by the early 1890s Tolstoy was becoming well-known to many educated Japanese. Abe Isō recalls how, as a young student in the USA between 1891-95, he read Tolstoy's religious and pacifist works and claims that they were important in leading him to 'socialism'.³⁶ Also the influential magazine Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend) carried

35 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 40, 14 August 1904, p 1.

36 'Watakushi O Shakaishugi Ni Michibiita Bungaku' ('The Literature Which Led Me To Socialism') by Abe Isō in Nihon Shakaishugi No Chichi Abe Isō (Abe Iso - The Father Of Japanese Socialism), Takano Zenichi, Tōkyō, 1970, p 227. This essay of Abe's first appeared in Hankyō (Echo) Vol. I, No. 3, June 1926.

serialisations of some of Tolstoy's novels in the 1890s, a long article on Tolstoy in January 1896³⁷ and a letter from Tolstoy to the magazine which was translated and published in December 1896.³⁸ The letter was Christian-pacifist in its arguments and took basically the same stance which Tolstoy was to remain true to at the time of the Russo-Japanese War.

It was above all else this anti-militarism of Tolstoy's which won him the respect of the socialists in Japan, although his religious ideas too appealed to the Christians among the socialists (about whom there will be much more to be said later). As the shadow of war between Russia and Japan drew near, so articles on him began to appear in the socialist press in Japan and, once the war had actually broken out, references to his anti-war stance were repeated in issue after issue of the socialist newspapers. Tolstoy was important to the socialists in Japan for reason of his heroic scale and for the inspiration which could be drawn from his opposition not only to the war but to a despotic government. When a copy of Tolstoy's long article on the war contributed to the Times on 27 June 1904 fell into their hands, two of the early Japanese socialists Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko laboured night and day to have a translation ready for the impending issue of the Heimin Shimbun and, when it appeared, it occupied 5½ pages of their 8-page weekly newspaper.³⁹ Although the following issue of the Heimin Shimbun carried a lead article⁴⁰ (apparently written by Kōtoku⁴¹) which

37 'Torusutoi Haku' ('Count Tolstoy'), author's name not given, Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend) No. 280, 25 January 1896, pp 9-12.

38 'Shūkyoku Wa Chikakeri' ('The End Is Nigh'), Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend) No. 325, 5 December 1896, pp 16-24.

39 'Torusutoi Ō No Nichi Ro Sensō Ron' ('Tolstoy On The Russo-Japanese War'), Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 39, 7 August 1904, pp 1-6.

40 'Torusutoi Ō No Hi Sen Ron O Hyōsu' ('A Comment On Tolstoy's Anti-War Article'), Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 40, 14 August 1904, p 1.

41 See Heimin Shimbun Ronsetsu Shū (Collected Editorials Of The Common People's Newspaper), Hayashi Shigeru and Nishida Taketoshi (eds.), Tōkyō, 1974, p 32.

criticised Tolstoy's religious attitude as not giving a sufficient explanation for - nor a sufficient alternative to - war, it is clear that many of those in Japan who called themselves socialists were in agreement with Tolstoy's analysis of the causes of war.⁴² Indeed, it tells us a great deal about the imprecision of socialist ideas in Japan at this period that Tolstoy's opposition to the war was sufficient to qualify him as a 'socialist' in the eyes of most Japanese. Even Kōtoku and Sakai's Heimin Shimbun shared this view, so that, when it was decided to publish a series of 6 postcards carrying the pictures of "celebrities who have strong connections with socialism"⁴³ in order to commemorate the first anniversary of that newspaper in November 1904, Tolstoy was one of those chosen (along with August Bebel, Frederick Engels, Peter Kropotkin, Ferdinand Lassalle and Karl Marx - a motley crew if ever there was one!).

Abe Isō, who as I said before had been influenced by Tolstoy in his youth, made sure to send a copy of the issue of the Heimin Shimbun which carried the Japanese translation of his article in the Times to the master in Russia. Tolstoy replied but, due to the war, the exchange of letters took a whole year. When at long last it came, Tolstoy's letter contained a shock for the Japanese socialists, for what he wrote there was:

Wishing to be quite sincere with you,.... I must tell you that I do not approve of socialism and am sorry to know that the most spiritually advanced part of your - so clever and energetic - people has taken from Europe the very feeble, illusory and fallacious theory of socialism, which in Europe is beginning to be abandoned.

44

42 See, for example, 'Torusutoi No Sensō Ron O Yomu' ('Reading Tolstoy's Views On War'), Shirokuma ?, Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 11, 3 May 1903, p 835.

43 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 50, 23 October 1904, p 7.

44 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 30, 27 August 1905, p 1.

All that the socialists in Japan could say in answer to this was: ".... we are very sorry to know that such a great man as Tolstoy is yet in error as to socialism...."⁴⁵ It sounded rather lame, especially in the light of the fact that for some time Tolstoy had been figuring as one of their 'socialist' heroes (as the episode of the postcards showed), and it certainly did not convince some of the Christian youth in Japan who had been identifying with the socialist movement up till then. It seems that Tolstoy's reply was one of the factors which eventually prompted a number of these young Christians to abandon even the nominal allegiance which socialism had claimed from them up till that time.⁴⁶

The Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 was important for the socialist movement in Japan in many ways. At this point, however, I do not propose to deal with all of the many effects of that war on the Japanese socialists but simply to concern myself with the influences from Russia which the socialists in Japan, who by this time were modelling themselves primarily on the SPD, felt as a result of the war. Even during the early course of the war the Japanese socialists were interested in the struggle of their counterparts in Russia against tsarism, but it was the 1905 revolution - sparked off by the defeat of the Russian army in the war - which focused their full attention on what was happening in Russia. For a period of five months during 1904⁴⁷, while the war was in progress, a serialised and abridged version of Sixteen Years In Siberia, the autobiography of Lev Deich (Leo Deutsch), appeared in the Heimin Shimbun. This was translated by Kōtoku Shūsui from the English

45 Ibid., p 1.

46 Kimura, op. cit., p 83.

47 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 23, 17 April 1904 to No. 43, 4 September 1904.

version of Deich's book and the sensational title it was given in the Heimin Shimbun ("Gods Lament And Spirits Weep: The Adventurous Story Of The Russian Revolution") was reminiscent of the populist works of a generation earlier. Along with Plekhanov, Zasulich and Akselrod, Deich had been a founder member of the 'Emancipation of Labour' group in 1883 and later he went on to become a Menshevik, but the socialists in Japan had only a hazy grasp of the different factions into which the revolutionary movement in Russia had split. Deich was described vaguely as a "leader of the Russian Socialist Party"⁴⁸ and, as Kōtoku explained in a postscript to the final instalment of his translation, his intention in presenting Deich's autobiography had been no more than to convey to Heimin Shimbun's readers "the hardships of our comrades in Russia".⁴⁹ Evidently Kōtoku and other Japanese socialists' idea in publishing the autobiography of a Russian revolutionary in a Japanese newspaper during the course of a war between the two powers was to underline the fact that in both of the belligerent countries there were men and women struggling against the war-making governments.

With the outbreak of the 1905 revolution, the socialists in Japan declared themselves to be night and day following the events in Russia.⁵⁰ Issue after issue of the Heimin Shimbun's successor Chokugen (Straight Talking) carried articles on the "Lessons Of The Russian Revolution" and so on and these 'lessons' were often very similar to those learned earlier from the populist movement. The same elitism still figured prominently. Russia was portrayed as a country where a few great scholars stood like rocks among a sea of ignorant people and, among the same sea of patriotic and monarchically inclined peasants, stood heroic "revolutionaries burning with enthusiasm".⁵¹ It was correctly

48 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 23, 17 April 1904, p 6.

49 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 43, 4 September 1904, p 6.

50 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 15, 14 May 1905, p 3.

51 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 6, 12 March 1905, p 1.

pointed out that the experiences of the Russian revolution showed that revolution does not come in a day, that a long struggle is required, but with much less realism the socialists in Japan also assured themselves of things which there was little factual evidence to support but which they desperately wanted to believe. When they asked themselves "What lessons can the history of the (Russian) revolutionary movement teach us?", one of their wishful answers was: "What should really surprise us is the ineffectiveness of police power".⁵² There were going to be many surprises in store for the socialist movement in Japan - but the "ineffectiveness of police power" was not going to be one of them.

In the West probably the best known incident in the whole history of the Japanese socialist movement is still the meeting of Katayama Sen and George Plekhanov on the platform of the Amsterdam Congress of the Second International in August 1904. Their symbolic shaking of hands at a time when the Russian and Japanese armies were locked in battle in Manchuria makes Katayama probably even today the best known of all those in Japan considered at one time or another to have been socialists. Whatever the boost in morale Katayama and Plekhanov's handshake might have given the Japanese socialists, though, it had little influence on the development of socialist thought in Japan. Less dramatic but more important in terms of an exchange of ideas was the statement 'To The Socialists In Russia' published by the Heimin Shimbun in March 1904 and the reply to this in the Russian social-democratic paper Iskra later the same year. Contact between the two camps was by an extremely tortuous route. 'To The Socialists In Russia' ('Rokoku Shakaitō Ni Atauru Sho') first appeared in Japanese as the lead article in issue No. 18 of the Heimin Shimbun published on 13 March 1904. A fairly freely translated English version of this statement was subsequently carried in the next issue of the Heimin Shimbun which came out on 20 March 1904. This English

52 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 3, 19 February 1905, p 1.

translation was reprinted in many left wing newspapers in Europe and America and thus eventually came to the attention of the Russian social-democrats living in exile in Switzerland. Iskra replied and an English translation of its reply was noticed by the Japanese socialists in their turn in the American publication Worker. This 'Russian Reply' appeared in Japanese in issue No. 37 of the Heimin Shimbun, published on 24 July 1904, and a week later in English in No. 38. The time taken for the entire operation of exchanging ideas on the war was thus just over 4 months.

The text of 'To The Socialists In Russia' as it appeared in English in the Heimin Shimbun was as follows:

Dear Comrades:

For many years we have been hearing of you and thinking about you, though we have not yet had an opportunity to shake hands and talk cheerfully with you, being separated from you by many thousand miles. Twenty years have already passed since you began to preach the great principle of humanity in 1884 under the banner of Social Democracy. During that time, the persecutions of a despotic government and the cruel action of detectives have been such as has never before been seen. Your predecessors passed through the bitterest trials, having forsaken fame and fortune; and those who were shut up in prisons, exiled in desolate Siberia or who perished on scaffolds were numberless. In spite (sic) of this your agitation was not checked even in the slightest degree but your courage always increased a hundred-fold after each persecution. It was last year that the several bodies of socialists throughout Russia were united in strong organization and since then socialism has become an immense (sic) power. We express our hearty sympathy for you in your hard situation and at the same time admire your abiding faith in principle.

Dear Comrades! Your Government and our government have plunged into fighting at last in order to satisfy their imperialistic desires, but to socialists there is no barrier of race, territory or nationality. We are comrades, brothers and sisters and have no reason to fight each other. Your enemy is not the Japanese people, but our militarism and so-called patriotism. Nor is our enemy the Russian people but your militarism and so-called patriotism. Yes, patriotism and militarism are our common enemies; nay, all the socialists in the world also look upon them as common enemies. We socialists must fight a brave battle against them. Here is the best and the

most important opportunity for us now. We believe you will not let this opportunity pass. We too will try our best.

But permit us to say a few words more. We are neither Nihilists nor Terrorists, but Social Democrats, and are always fighting for peace. We object absolutely to using military force in our fighting. We have to fight by peaceful means; by reason and speech. It may be very difficult for you to fight with speech and produce a revolution by peaceful means in Russia where there is no constitution, and consequently you may be tempted to overthrow the government by force. But those who are fighting for humanity must remember that the end does not justify the means.

We can not foresee which of the two governments shall win in fighting, but whichever gets the victory, the results of the war will be all the same - general misery, the burden of heavy taxes, the degradation of morality and the supremacy of militarism. Therefore the most important question before us is not which government shall win, but how soon can we bring the war to an end. The determination of the International Workmen's League in its agitations in the time of the Franco-Prussian War give us a good lesson. We are comrades, brothers and sisters; and have no reason why we should fight. The fiend, our common enemy, is now breathing poisonous fire in order to torment millions of people. As Karl Marx said: "Workmen of all nations! Unite!", so we socialists must join our hands in order to do our best.

Dear Comrades! When you suffer under the oppression of your government and the pursuit of cruel detectives, please remember that there are thousands of comrades in a distant land, who are praying for your health and success with the deepest sympathy.

53

As can be seen, the weakest section of the statement was its third paragraph, with its insistence on SPD-style quiescence and respectability. There was something pathetic about the importance which the socialists in Japan obviously attached to the Japanese constitution and the contrast they made with the situation "in Russia where there is no constitution". Even on paper, let alone in its actual application, the Japanese constitution of the time (the so-called 'Meiji' constitution which was to remain in force up till the end of the Second World War) was a licence to enforce a despotism every bit as severe as that practised by the tsar.

The Iskra reply put its finger squarely on the weakness in the Japanese socialists' declaration, even if it did so with marked generosity. What the Russian social-democrats wrote was:

This manifesto is a document of historic significance.

If we Russian Social Democrats know only too well with what difficulties we are confronted in time of war when the whole machinery of government is working to the utmost to excite 'patriotism' - difficulties which we meet at every step, notwithstanding the utter unpopularity of the present hazardous career of the despairing absolutism - we must bear in mind that far more difficult and embarrassing is the position of our Japanese comrades who, at the moment when national feeling was at its highest pitch, openly extended their hand to us.

In the time of the Franco-Prussian war, Liebknecht and Bebel, by protesting against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, rendered an immortal service to the cause of international Socialism - a service for which they paid the penalty of imprisonment. Not less valuable and significant is the service rendered to the same cause by these advanced representatives of the Japanese working class.

Amid the jingoistic chorus of both countries their voice sounds as a herald from that better world which, though it exists to-day only in the minds of the class-conscious proletariat, will become a reality to-morrow. We do not know when that 'to-morrow' will come. But we, the Social Democrats the world over, are all working to bring it nearer and nearer. We are digging a grave for the miserable 'to-day' - the present social order. We are organizing the forces which will finally bury it.

Force against force, violence against violence! And in saying this we speak neither as Nihilists nor as Terrorists. The 'Nihilist' is merely a product of the vivid imagination of the novelist Turgenieff and the fears of the European bourgeoisie. Against Terrorism, as an improper method of action, we have never, since the establishment of the Russian Social Democratic Party, ceased to fight. But, regrettable as it may be, the ruling classes have never submitted to forces of reason and we have not the slightest ground for believing that they ever will.

But in the present instance this question is of secondary importance. What is important for us is the feeling of solidarity which the Japanese comrades have expressed in their message to us. We send them a hearty greeting. Down with militarism!
Hail to the International Social Democracy.

54

54 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 38, 31 July 1904, p 1. The question of who it was who wrote the 'Russian Reply' has much exercised the pens of commentators in Japan. Given the

It is interesting to note that the only comment which the Japanese socialists made on the English version of the 'Russian Reply' which appeared in the English-language column of their paper was that they felt it demonstrated "how the feeling of fraternity is prevailing among socialists throughout the world."⁵⁵ The Japanese translation of the 'Russian Reply' had an extra paragraph of comment appended to it, however, a paragraph which the Japanese socialists knew few, if any, outside Japan could read. This said: "... when we see how they say that there are cases where in the end violence cannot be avoided, we feel deep bitterness about the situation within Russia and cannot help feeling sorry about the adversity of their circumstances."⁵⁶ There was a warm-hearted sympathy here being expressed for the plight of others but, reading it today, one is left above all else amazed at the naivety of the socialists in Japan in this period and at their blindness regarding the difficulties confronting not others but themselves.

Right up to the end of the period we are considering here, when the SPD influence acting on them was at its strongest, the Japanese socialists were to remain formally committed to pacifist tactics, no matter what

reverence with which Lenin is widely regarded in Japan, some have been eager to attribute its authorship to Lenin. Yet, as Arahata Kanson has pointed out, the Russian social-democratic paper Iskra had already by the time of this exchange passed out of Bolshevik control into the hands of the Menshevik opponents of Lenin. (See Heiminsha Jidai - The Heimin Society Period, Arahata Kanson, Tokyo, 1973, p 116.) This does not entirely rule out the possibility that Lenin might have been its author, since the Menshevik-Bolshevik split was less rigid at first in 1903-04 than it was to become at a later stage, but there is nothing in the content of the 'Russian Reply' which indicates Lenin as its writer. It would have been just as much in character for a Menshevik such as Julius Martov to have written along the lines of the 'Russian Reply' as it would a Bolshevik such as Vladimir Lenin and the fact is that we do not know who its author was.

55 Ibid., p 1.

56 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 37, 24 July 1904, p 5.

the cost. But the example provided by the 1905 Russian revolution does seem to have planted a few seeds of doubt in their minds. One sign of this was an article 'Rokoku Kakumei No Sobo' ('The Grandmother Of The Russian Revolution') which Kōtoku Shūsui wrote in February 1905 in celebration of an elderly Russian revolutionary.⁵⁷ In contrast to its criticism of the Russian social-democrats for focusing their attention on the workers and neglecting the peasants, the article spoke in glowing terms about the "Revolutionary Social Party" (ie the Social-Revolutionary Party or SRs). It argued that the revolutionaries in Russia had become dissatisfied with the social-democrats' "moderation" and had therefore organised an alternative Social-Revolutionary Party, which also boasted a "sentōdan" ("fighting group"). This "fighting group" was the SRs' assassination organisation, which had assassinated both the Minister of Education, N. P. Bogolepov, in 1901 and the Minister of the Interior, D. S. Sipyagin in 1902. Kōtoku's article gave an early indication of the direction in which the ideas of some of the socialists in Japan were to move in the period after the end of the Russo-Japanese War.

If it was Russian influence which planted seeds of doubt in some of the Japanese socialists' minds, however, it was the repressive actions of the Japanese government itself which helped those seeds cautiously to sprout a little. An article in the English-language column of Chokugen in April 1905 informed the world that "the government (has) now began to persecute us more severely" and finished with the headline: "JAPANESE GOVERNMENT IS AS BARBAROUS AS RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT".⁵⁸ All the same, the socialist movement in Japan was in 1905 still young and full of illusions. It was going to take more than comparisons with the situation in Russia to bring home to the socialists in Japan the full extent of governmental barbarism.

57 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 2, 12 February 1905, p 3.

58 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 13, 30 April 1905, p 1.

CHAPTER 3.

Studying At The Feet Of European Social-Democracy

Sakai Yūzaburō

In 1889, the year that the social-democratic Second International was founded in Europe, a young man called Sakai Yūzaburō* was despatched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce in Japan to be present at the great Exposition being held in Paris. Sakai was appointed because of his knowledge of French but it so happened that the person who had taught him this language was Nakae Chōmin, one of the principal theoreticians of the left wing of the 'people's rights movement' and the first person to translate Rousseau into Japanese. Sakai had been influenced by Nakae and was interested in radical political and social thought himself. Realising he had a golden opportunity to investigate this during his time abroad, he paid little attention to his official duties (later he was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce to the Foreign Office) and concentrated instead on informing himself of the developments which were taking place in trade union and left wing political activity in Europe. Among other things, he attended the second congress of the Second International held in Brussels in 1891 (being, of course, the only Japanese present - although he did not rank as the delegate of any social-democratic organisation, since none existed in Japan at that time).

Sakai was to die in a fall from a hotel window in Paris but before this happened he wrote a number of reports on social-democracy in Europe which were published in the magazine Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend). These articles became important sources of basic information on European social-democracy for many radicals in Japan because - although

* Sakai Yūzaburō was not related to Sakai Toshihiko, who has already been mentioned as one of Japan's early socialists. Although their surnames appear the same when transcribed in the Roman alphabet, the characters with which they are written in Japanese are quite different.

lacking any great depth - they did point to the widespread existence throughout Europe of trade unions and strikes, of social-democratic parties, and of the class struggle in general. An article 'Shakaitō No Undō' ('The Socialist Party Movement') which appeared in July 1890¹, for example, gave an account of the May Day agitation and of the social-democratic parties. Although the bulk of the article dealt with France, it also gave brief sketches of the situations in Germany, Austro-Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, Britain and even the USA. The reformist demands (for an 8-hour day, a minimum wage and so on) which had prompted the May Day demonstrations were explained and the split between "Marxist" and "possibilist" factions in the French social-democratic movement was outlined. Both Karl Marx and Auguste Blanqui were referred to as "famous socialists" and the anarchist Louise Michel was mentioned in connection with the idea that a socialist revolution could be achieved by means of an international general strike.

Much of what Sakai wrote here must have passed straight over the heads of many of his readers in Japan. Men such as Blanqui and Marx would have been no more than names to them and it was difficult enough to grasp what was meant by unfamiliar words such as "union" ("kumiai" - which Sakai supplemented with the word "sanjika", a Japanese rendering of the French 'syndicat') and "strike" ("dōmei hiko" - literally 'an allied work-stoppage'), let alone to appreciate the differences between "Marxists" and "possibilists". Nonetheless, Sakai's reports did serve a useful purpose, simply by bringing home to some radicals in Japan the fact that the term 'socialism' was open to other interpretations than that given it by the Russian populists. An article of Sakai's which served as a follow-up to 'The Socialist Party Movement' dealt

1 Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend) No. 88, 13 July 1890, pp 20-28.

at length with the demand for an 8-hour day² and it cannot have escaped the attention of thoughtful readers that the wage-earning working class stood at the centre of the concerns of those in western Europe who called themselves socialists, in a way that was very different to the preoccupations of the Russian populists. A year later, writing from Brussels, Sakai also claimed that the social-democratic parties favoured the general strike as a means for achieving their aims.³ Irrespective of how true this was, it must at least have suggested once more to Japanese readers how different western European social-democrats were to the peasant-oriented Russian populists.

'Authorities' On 'Socialism'

Despite the prominence which Sakai gave to strikes and demonstrations in his accounts of social-democracy, however, not a few of his readers in Japan failed to realise that socialism was an expression of the struggle between classes in society. All too often socialism was conceived as just another exotic Western philosophy and, in order to learn more about it, people in Japan turned to some extremely doubtful 'authorities'. These were men like William Graham - professor of political economy and jurisprudence at Queen's College, Belfast - whose Socialism New And Old (first published in London in 1890) appeared in Japanese translation in 1894.⁴ Among Graham's other profundities in this book was an assurance that, in the "sense of the word that it is generally used by writers of authority"⁵, "the laws of Solon, equally

2 'Gogatsu Tsuitachi No Shakaitō Undōkai Ni Tsuite' ('On The Socialist Party Meetings Held On May Day'), Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend) No. 89, 23 July 1890, pp 17-23.

3 'Gogatsu Tsuitachi Oyobi Sōkyō Dōmei Hikō' ('May Day And The General Strike'), Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend) No. 123, 3 July 1891, pp 15-23.

4 Nihon Shakaishugi Shi (A History Of Japanese Socialism), Kimura Tsuyoshi, Tōkyō, no date given but probably 1926 or 1927, p 42.

5 Socialism New And Old, William Graham, London, 1891, p 4.

with certain legislation of today, the Jewish Jubilee, and even the English Poor Law would be Socialism."⁶ When the Minyūsha company, which published Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend), brought out a volume on Genji No Shakaishugi (Socialism Today) in 1893 it acknowledged its debt to Graham's Socialism New And Old and to another English-language work, John Rae's Contemporary Socialism.⁷ If anything, Rae's Contemporary Socialism was even less reliable than Graham's Socialism New And Old - for, in a chapter in which he critically examined the theory of "Das Capital (sic)", the labour theory of value was rejected as a "vicious argument!"⁸ One gets an idea of the general tenor of Rae's book from the review it was given in the Times when it first appeared in English in 1884: "His introductory chapter is well worth studying, as also are his sketches of Lassalle, Karl Marx, and Professor Winkelblech."⁹ This was hardly the most auspicious of recommendations but Genji No Shakaishugi (Socialism Today) - which was, as I said, partially derived from Rae's Contemporary Socialism - had a considerable influence on men like Nishikawa Kōjirō who were to become prominent in the socialist movement in Japan¹⁰ and one finds Rae still being quoted as an 'authority' on 'socialism' as late as 1903.¹¹

Although Sakai Yūzaburō had written mainly about social-democracy in France, by the end of the nineteenth century it was the movement in Germany which was capturing people's attention everywhere. In Germany, though, the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) was not alone in claiming to be socialist. On the contrary, the policy of nationalisation which had

6 Ibid., p 3.

7 Kimura, op. cit., p 43.

8 Contemporary Socialism, John Rae, London, 1901, p 166.

9 Ibid., p ii.

10 Kimura, op. cit., p 43.

11 'Shakaishugi No Unmei O Kessubeki Mondai' ('Questions Which Should Decide The Fate Of Socialism'), Part VI, Abe Isō, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 6, 20 December 1903, p 3.

been initiated by none other than Bismarck himself was frequently described as a type of 'socialism' and there was a whole school of academics which explained and justified (and thus provided an ideological back-up for) the measures introduced by the Iron Chancellor and his successors. These academics were men like the one-time professor of political economy at the University of Vienna and Austrian Minister of Commerce, A. Schäffle, and the professor of political economy at the University of Berlin, Adolf Wagner. The activist connotation which 'socialism' had once enjoyed among those who formed the left wing of the 'people's rights movement' was now disappearing as memories of the Russian populists faded in Japan and 'socialism' was coming to be cloaked in an intellectual aura instead around the turn of the century. It was therefore perhaps inevitable that even the radically inclined should have relied on the writings of academics in order to gain more information on the subject of 'socialism'. There was also the point that, until contacts were established with social-democratic parties abroad, the flimsy pamphlets and periodicals in which the social-democratic movement normally argued its case were a great deal harder to come by in Japan than the substantial volumes, published by major companies, in which Schäffle and other scholars expressed their views. At any rate, whatever the reason, the English-language version of Schäffle's Quintessenz des Sozialismus became the virtual bible of those starting to call themselves socialists in Japan. Supplementing Schäffle's work, there was also Thomas Kirkup's An Inquiry Into Socialism (which was heavily German-oriented in its approach¹²), W. H. Dawson's two books German Socialism And Ferdinand Lassalle and Bismarck And State Socialism and R. T. Ely's French And German Socialism In Modern Times. Long forgotten though all these books

12 ".... I should like here to make special acknowledgment of my obligations among German economists to Roscher, Adolf Wagner, Adolf Held, and, above all, to Schäffle...." (An Inquiry Into Socialism, Thomas Kirkup, London, 1907 - first published 1887 - p vi.)

might now be, it is difficult to exaggerate the esteem in which they were held in Japan in their day.

Schäffle's Quintessence Of Socialism

When news of Schäffle's death in 1903 reached Japan, obituary notices duly appeared in both the English and Japanese columns of the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper). The English column said: "His 'Quintessenz des Socialismus (sic)' and other works were largely (ie widely - J.C.) read among our people. It is through his books that we have obtained the clearest account of Socialism."¹³ (my emphasis). Although the clarity of Schäffle's treatment of 'socialism' is, in fact, open to dispute, this comment by what was the most representative organ of the socialist movement in Japan at that time shows the influence which his writings exerted. Even the very title of Kōtoku Shūsui's Shakaishugi Shinzui (The Quintessence Of Socialism, published in 1903), which it is probably fair to describe as the most celebrated theoretical work written by any socialist in Japan in the Meiji era¹⁴, was taken from Schäffle and quotations from Schäffle's books regularly adorned the pages of the socialist publications of the period. In particular, there was a prescription for state capitalism ("The Alpha and Omega of socialism is the transformation of private and competing capitals into a united collective capital.") which was quoted again and again over the years¹⁵ - and this gives us a hint of the notions about

13 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 9, 10 January 1904, p 1.

14 One of Kōtoku's biographers calls Shakaishugi Shinzui (The Quintessence Of Socialism) "the leading exposition of socialism in Japan prior to World War I." (Kotoku Shusui: Portrait Of A Japanese Radical, F. G. Notehelfer, Cambridge, 1971, p 68.)

15 For example:
Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 40, 15 July 1899, p 10.
Shakaishugi Nyūmon (Introduction To Socialism), Heiminsha, Tōkyō, 1904, p 10.
Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) No. 2, 15 April 1906, p 39.

'socialism' which the socialists in Japan obtained from Schäffle.

Schäffle was a supporter of Bismarck and in his Quintessenz des Sozialismus he attempted to first describe the supposedly socialist policies of the SPD and then subject them to a Bismarckian criticism. Critical though he was of the SPD, however, there was a wider area of agreement between the German social-democrats and those like Schäffle who favoured Bismarck than either side cared to admit. In its calls for widespread state control, the SPD was not seeking anything essentially different from Bismarck's own nationalisation measures and it was this basic similarity of views which enabled a writer like Schäffle - formally hostile to social-democracy - to summarise the SPD's state-capitalist policies as effectively as he did. Reading the English version of his Quintessenz des Sozialismus, the Japanese socialists were told that the SPD's aim was to transform the means of production into "State-factories" and "public bodies under State regulation and inspection".¹⁶ In other words, said Schäffle:

The economic quintessence of the socialistic programme, the real aim of the international movement, is as follows.

To replace the system of private capital (i.e. the speculative method of production, regulated on behalf of society only by the free competition of private enterprises) by a system of collective capital....

17

Capital was to be collectivised, rather than abolished, and put under the control of the state, which in its turn was not to be abolished either but would sport a socialist label. A generation of socialists in Japan cut their teeth on this doctrine and enormous harm it did, for - as has since been proved in other parts of the world in actual practice - capital no more ceases to be an anarchic force outside of people's rational control on being collectivised than the state ceases

16 The Quintessence Of Socialism, A. Schäffle, London, 1890, p 48.

17 Ibid., p 3.

to be an organ of repression on being given a socialist label. Whether private or collectivised, if the means of production within society function as capital - producing commodities for sale on the market within a monetary economy - then a class is bound to form at the opposite pole of society to that capital, consisting of individuals stripped of all means of production and therefore forced to sell their labour power for wages to whoever controls the means of production. It makes no difference whether the minority controlling the means of production do so individually as private capitalists or collectively as a group in command of the state for, as Marx once put it, "capital presupposes wage labour; wage labour presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally evoke each other."¹⁸ As if in recognition of this, Schäffle made it clear that in the SPD scheme of things a class of wage labourers would persist, the only difference in their status being an upgrading of their wages by dubbing them "salaries" instead.¹⁹

All in all, then, there was a terrible irony in the tribute which the Japanese socialists paid Schäffle on his death. The Japanese-language columns of the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) repeated what the obituary in the English column had said, but also added for good measure:

.... anyone reading his book (Quintessenz des Sozialismus) will find a great many misunderstandings regarding socialism cleared up and in the end, without fail, will be drawn towards socialism out of sympathy for it.

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18 Wage Labour And Capital, Karl Marx. Collected in Selected Works, Karl Marx, London, 1947, Vol. I, p 213.

19 "The productive labour of all would be associated in establishments for the purposes of production and exchange, socially managed, equipped out of collective capital, and worked by persons in receipt of salaries, not of private profits and of wages." (Schäffle, op. cit., p 5.)

20 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 9, 10 January 1904, p 3.

Nothing could have been further from the truth, for Schäffle's Quintessenz des Sozialismus served as a recruiting manual not for socialism but for state capitalism and, as I have shown, was well supplied with misunderstandings of its own about the nature of a socialist society.

Kirkup, Dawson, Ely

It is not necessary to examine Kirkup's An Inquiry Into Socialism, Dawson's German Socialism And Ferdinand Lassalle and Bismarck And State Socialism or Ely's French And German Socialism In Modern Times in the same detail as Schäffle's book, because essentially these writers too were saying the same things as Schäffle.

Thomas Kirkup's An Inquiry Into Socialism (first published in London in 1887) went even further than Schäffle in its praise of the virtues of capital²¹ and was equally enthusiastic in its defence of the state.²² Kirkup had a considerable influence on Kōtoku Shūsui among others²³ and as late as 1906 one finds almost an entire issue of Sakai Toshihiko's theoretical journal Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) given over to translated excerpts from Kirkup's writing.²⁴

- 21 "Instead of undervaluing or denying the importance of capital, socialists wish to make it more effective for the good of man by transferring it from the private property of a few competing individuals to the systematic management of society. They believe it to be so essential to mankind that it should not be left in private hands, but should be under co-operative control for the common good." (Kirkup, op. cit., p 124.)
- 22 "The State, with its wide functions and ample resources, should be organised to promote the welfare and the freedom of the whole community." (Ibid., p 212.)
- 23 Kōtoku wrote in the preface to Shakaishugi Shinzui (The Quintessence Of Socialism) that Kirkup's An Inquiry Into Socialism was one of the sources he had used in the writing of his own book. (Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū - Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui, Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tokyo, 1968, Vol. IV, p 454.) See also Kōtoku's references to Kirkup in his essay Shakaishugi To Kokutai (Socialism And The National Polity), collected in Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū, Vol. IV, p 534. Shakaishugi To Kokutai first appeared in the Rikugō Zasshi (Universe Magazine) No. 263, 15 November 1902.
- 24 Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) No. 3, 15 May 1906.

W. H. Dawson's Bismarck And State Socialism was translated into Japanese (under the title Kokka Shakai Sei - The State Social System) shortly after it first appeared in English in 1890²⁵ but it was probably his earlier German Socialism And Ferdinand Lassalle (first published in 1888) which was the more highly regarded among the Japanese socialists, even though it does not appear to have been translated into Japanese. A provincial correspondent writing to the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) in 1904 to enquire about what to read on 'socialism' was recommended German Socialism And Ferdinand Lassalle as an "interesting book"²⁶ and Yano Fumio in his utopian novel Shin Shakai (The New Society - 1902) urged those who could not manage to "study the theories of Karl Rodbertus, Karl Marx etc." to read Dawson instead.²⁷ Bismarck And State Socialism was, as its title implies, an account of Bismarck's policy of state intervention in the economy and the image of 'socialism' projected by Dawson in his German Socialism And Ferdinand Lassalle is well summed up by the following passage taken from the 'Introduction':

.... no more singular inconsistency exists than that of subjects of a civilised State declaring against the Communistic and Socialistic principle. For this principle has been extensively adopted in all the most progressive countries, and some of our most highly esteemed institutions are based upon it. The State post, telegraph, railway, and bank, the free school, the poor law system, the factory laws, sanitary legislation - these are all institutions which must be unconditionally condemned if Communism and Socialism are evil in theory.

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- 25 Shakaishugi Undō Shi (A History Of The Socialist Movement), Kiyama Kumajirō, Tōkyō, 1908, p 274. (Kimura Tsuyoshi says that Kokka Shakai Sei appeared in 1892 - Kimura, op. cit., p 44.)
- 26 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 28, 22 May 1904, p 5.
- 27 Shin Shakai (The New Society), Yano Fumio, Tōkyō, 1902, p 62.
- 28 German Socialism And Ferdinand Lassalle, W. H. Dawson, London, 1899, pp 3-4.

With teachers like Dawson, no wonder that the Japanese socialists should have seen "the application of pure socialism in the postal services, the telegraph and telephones"²⁹ established by the Meiji state!

R. T. Ely really belongs to the next chapter because he was one of a number of American social-gospellers who exerted a major influence on the Japanese socialist movement. Although I shall come back to him again in Chapter 4, it seems appropriate to mention his French And German Socialism In Modern Times here, because it was one of the works which the Japanese socialists relied on at first as a source of information on European social-democracy. As with the other books I have been considering, the same identification of 'socialism' with state control occurred³⁰, but this did not deter the Heimin Shimbun in November 1903 from recommending French And German Socialism In Modern Times as providing "data for the study of social problems".³¹ Indeed, the important role played by this book of Ely's in the socialist movement in Japan around the turn of the century is strikingly indicated by a short piece entitled 'Yo Wa Ika Ni Shite Shakaishugi(sha) To Narishi Ka' ('How I Became A Socialist') written by Sakai Toshihiko early in 1904.³² There he explains how it was Ely's French And German Socialism In Modern Times which set him on the path to 'socialism'.

False Optimism

In December 1897 a labour paper Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) started to appear in Tōkyō on a regular fortnightly basis. Rōdō Sekai varied a good deal from issue to issue, being anything from 6 to 18 pages in

29 'Shakaishugi Oyobi Shakaitō' ('Socialism And The Socialist Party'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 85, 21 July 1901, p 2.

30 ".... the socialist ascribes to the state numerous functions...." (French And German Socialism In Modern Times, R. T. Ely, New York, 1883, p 29.)

31 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 3, 29 November 1903, p 4.

32 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 8, 3 January 1904, p 9.

length, but one of its features which never changed was that it always carried a page of news written in English. The fact that it included an English page meant that Rōdō Sekai could be exchanged with labour and social-democratic publications abroad and the benefits of this were so obvious that, even after Rōdō Sekai ceased publication, the practice of printing at least one column of news in English was continued by its successors.³³ Although the Japanese socialists' ability to read publications from abroad was generally restricted to English-language material, there was plenty of information on the European social-democratic parties (particularly the SPD) in the American and British papers with which they established exchange arrangements. Gradually these papers became more important sources of information on European social-democracy for the socialists in Japan than the books by Schäffle and others which I dealt with above.

Throughout the Meiji era the socialists in Japan operated under very difficult circumstances. Their numbers were few, their resources limited and they were continually being threatened by an always repressive and sometimes brutal state. In contrast to the situation in Japan, however, the social-democrats in Europe appeared to be going from strength to strength and the successes scored by the European parties were sources of great encouragement for the Japanese socialists. Viewed from Japan, it seemed that the battle for 'socialism' had actually been engaged in Europe and America - and, what was more, that it was being won as they stood watching.³⁴ "Socialism is gradually appearing in the

33 The most important of these (during the period we are considering here up till the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905) were Shakaishugi (Socialism) which appeared from March 1903 to December 1904, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) which ran from November 1903 to January 1905 and Chokugen (Straight Talking) which, subjected to severe harassment by the police, lasted only 7 months from February to September 1905.

34 "People advocating modern socialism are too numerous to count and, even though there are people opposed to this doctrine as well, socialism is proving victorious in Europe and America." (Rōdō Sekai - Labour World - No. 45, 1 October 1899, p 6.)

real world and is being put into practice on all sides"³⁵, wrote Rōdō Sekai, and the social-democrats' electoral gains were studied enthusiastically. The fact that there were 58 social-democratic MPs in the German Reichstag, 47 in France, 35 in Belgium and so on was cited as evidence that "in the world today socialism... is certainly no wild fancy.... (but) is being put into practice by the socialist parties...."³⁶ Nor were election results the only favourable omens for 'socialism's realisation, it was held. Plagued continually by police interference as the Japanese socialists were, the fact that there were reported to be social-democratic sympathisers within the police force in Paris and elsewhere abroad was hailed as a matter of great significance. "The emergence of believers in socialism in all fields is proof that the time for socialism's victory is definitely drawing near. We should congratulate ourselves! We should congratulate ourselves!", they rejoiced.³⁷ Strange if this seems, odder still was the attitude they took towards the appointment in 1899 of the French social-democrat Millerand to a cabinet position in the government of Waldeck-Rousseau. Unaware that the social-democratic movement in France had divided into two hostile parties over this very issue³⁸, the socialists in Japan greeted the entry of a supposed socialist (Rōdō Sekai called him a "pure socialist"³⁹!) into an avowedly capitalist government as yet

35 Ibid., p 6.

36 'Shakaishugi Oyobi Shakaitō' ('Socialism And The Socialist Party'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 85, 21 July 1901, p 1.

37 'Junsa To Shakaishugi' ('The Police And Socialism'), Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 7, 3 March 1903, p 728.

38 These were the Parti Socialiste de France (supporters of Guesde and Blanqui) and the Parti Socialiste Français (Broussists, Allemanists and Independents). The split lasted until 1905 when they united to form the Parti Socialiste Unifié.

39 'Shakaishugi' ('Socialism'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 42, 15 August 1899, p 3.

another sign of 'socialism's impending victory.⁴⁰

The SPD

The small group of enthusiasts who tried to raise the socialist flag in Japan at the turn of the century had various alternatives as to which organisation abroad they should model themselves on. Forming a Shakaishugi Kenkyū Kai (Society for the Study of Socialism) in 1898⁴¹, they often liked to draw a parallel between their own little study circle and the incomparably more influential Fabian Society in Britain⁴², but generally it was the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) in whose glow they sought to bask. The SPD was far and away the most powerful party in the Second International, with not merely a mass following but its association with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to add to its international prestige, and to the early socialists in Japan it appeared as an omniscient source of guidance. No wonder, then, that when Abe Isō wrote a series of articles on 'Shakaishugi No Unmei O Kessubeki Mondai' ('Questions Which Should Decide The Fate Of Socialism') in the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) between November 1903 and January 1904, the SPD figured prominently there. Abe's argument was that one

40 "Fifty five years ago Proudhon - that fearless man of France - was imprisoned for (sic) nearly half a dozen times for his cause of socialism, and today we see a socialist minister in the cabinet of the same country. What a difference! What a progress! Yes, time only works miracle; be patient and we will see what become of us after all." (Letter from Kaneko Kiichi to Kōtoku Shūsui in Heimin Shimbun - Common People's Newspaper - No. 63, 22 January 1905, p 1. This letter was sent from the USA, where Kaneko was a student at Harvard, and was in English.)

41 The founding members of the Shakaishugi Kenkyū Kai were Takagi Masayoshi, Kawakami Kiyoshi, Toyosaki Zennosuke, Kishimoto Nobuta, Makihara Toshihide, Katayama Sen, Saji Jitsunen, Kanda Saichirō, Murai Tomoyoshi, Kōtoku Shūsui, Kaneko Kiichi and Abe Isō. Its aim as a society was to "conduct research into the principles of socialism and investigate whether or not they could be applied in Japan" (Nihon Shakaishugi Shi - A History Of Japanese Socialism, Ishikawa Kyokuzan (Sanshirō) and Kōtoku Shūsui. Collected in Meiji Bunka Zenshū (Collected Works On The Culture Of The Meiji Era), Tōkyō, 1929, Vol. XXI, p 363). Eventually those of its members who were interested only in studying 'socialism' were to drop out and it renamed itself the Shakaishugi Kyōkai (Socialist Association) in 1900.

42 Ibid., p 363.

could not expect the socialist movement in Japan to reach the level represented by the SPD within the space of a few years. "20 to 30 years"⁴³ would be needed for that - and, long before that time had elapsed, the situation in Germany was bound to come to a head. Like it or not, the Japanese socialists were going to be mere spectators to socialism's success or failure in Germany and - in that sense - the SPD was performing a great service for the socialist movement in Japan as well. For "if our people (sic) see socialism put into practice in that country (ie Germany - J.C.) and if, moreover, it yields excellent results, then they too will want to take advantage of it just as they would want to introduce into Japan discoveries in the field of science."⁴⁴

Then again, in 1901 the socialists in Japan attempted to launch a political party and the name they chose for it (Shakai Minshutō - Social-Democratic Party) is another indication of the reverence with which the SPD was regarded.⁴⁵ A remark by Sakai Toshihiko as to why he was publishing biographical essays on Marx and Engels, written respectively by Wilhelm Liebknecht and Karl Kautsky (both leaders of the SPD), in the first issue of his magazine Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) is revealing as well: "Above all, it is because both these biographies were written by celebrities of the German Socialist Party that I believe they are of value and should be highly esteemed."⁴⁶ The Japanese socialists were isolated at the other end

43 'Shakaishugi No Unmei O Kessubeki Mondai' ('Questions Which Should Decide The Fate Of Socialism'), Part VI, Abe Iso, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 6, 20 December 1903, p 3.

44 Ibid., Part VII, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 7, 27 December 1903, p 3.

45 The Shakai Minshutō published its manifesto on 20 May 1901 and was immediately banned by the government on the same day. The six men who tested out the political climate to see whether the government would tolerate the existence of a social-democratic party were Abe Iso, Katayama Sen, Kawakami Kiyoshi, Kinoshita Naoe, Kōtoku Shūsui and Nishikawa Kōjiro. More will be said about the Shakai Minshutō and its programme below.

46 Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) No. 1, 15 March 1906, p 35.



Founders of the Shakai Minshutō
(Social-Democratic Party) in 1901.

Left to Right: Abe Isō, Kawakami
Kiyoshi, Kotoku Shūsui, Kinoshita
Naoe, Katayama Sen, Nishikawa
Kōjiro.

47 The Exceptional Law against the Socialists, introduced in January
of 1907 and revised in 1911.
48 Red Star (New World) No. 54, 1 March 1904, p. 8.

of the world from the main centres of the international movement with which they identified. In addition, their meagre numbers were pitted in an unequal struggle against an overwhelmingly powerful and unscrupulous state. Faced with the enormity of the task which this situation imposed on them, it was perhaps only natural that they should have been desperate to draw comfort from the image provided by the SPD as a wise and powerful older brother. Not only was the SPD seen as a theoretical mentor, but even the setbacks which the Japanese socialists suffered at the hands of the state were continually being interpreted in the false light shed by SPD experiences, which had occurred under greatly different circumstances from those which applied in Japan. Thus Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) declared in its English columns, on the passing of the 'chian keisatsu hō' ('police peace preservation law', which was referred to in Chapter 1) that "This peace law like the Exceptional Law of Bismark⁴⁷ will prove to be a great blessing to the cause of the labor movement in Japan as it was so in Germany!"⁴⁸

The three main planks of the doctrine which the socialist movement in Japan learned from the SPD were state capitalism, reformism and parliamentarism and these will now be examined in turn.

State Capitalism Again

It is not necessary to analyse the state capitalist component of social-democratic theory in any great detail because it has already been looked at in the section concerned with Schäffle's exposition of SPD ideas. Besides, as far as the mistaken notion that the mechanisms of a capitalist economy could be incorporated into a socialist society was concerned, it does seem that this was generally absorbed by the Japanese socialists from Schäffle, Kirkup and company, rather than

47 The Exceptional Law against the Socialists, introduced in Germany in 1878 and used against the SPD until 1890.

48 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 56, 1 March 1900, p 8.

directly from the SPD. This appears to have been more a matter of chance than anything else, for the leaders of the SPD like Karl Kautsky had, by the beginning of the twentieth century, come a long way from Karl Marx's call for "Abolition of the wage system"⁴⁹ and were already loud in their praise of the monetary economy.⁵⁰ Yet, if one takes a book such as Katayama Sen's Wa Ga Shakaishugi (What Socialism Means For Me), published in 1903, references to the German social-democrats are mainly confined to its political sections - "Katosukii" (ie Kautsky) being cited, for example, in support of Katayama's views on the nature of a socialist revolution.⁵¹ Although prices, value, money and taxation are all to be found within Katayama's version of 'socialism'⁵², he does not seem to have relied on Kautsky and the other leaders of the SPD to any great extent in order to lend weight to his spurious economics.

When we come to the statist element in state capitalism, however, the situation is different, with many direct references to the SPD in the writings of the early socialists in Japan. The leaders of the SPD paid lip service to the Marxist classics* and therefore frequently engaged in verbal somersaults in order to avoid referring to socialism and the state in the same breath. Despite this, what they were quite clearly advocating in their social-democratic policies was a scheme of widespread state control and not only did the early socialists in Japan take up such policies themselves but, lacking the verbal sophistication

* Which, as was mentioned before (Chapter 2, note 8), were sometimes unequivocal in their insistence that the state would have no role to play in a socialist society.

49 Value, Price And Profit, Karl Marx. Collected in Selected Works, Karl Marx, London, 1947, Vol. I, p 275.

50 "I speak here of the wages of labor. What, it will be said, will there be wages in the new society? Shall we not have abolished wage-labor and money? How then can one speak of the wages of labor? These objections would be sound if the social revolution proposed to immediately abolish money. I maintain that this would be impossible." (The Social Revolution, Karl Kautsky, Chicago, 1902, p 129.)

51 Wa Ga Shakaishugi (What Socialism Means For Me), Katayama Sen, Tōkyō, 1903, p 73.

52 Ibid., pp 100, 136, 137, 158, etc.

of the SPD, they were naive enough to call a spade a spade (or a state a state!). In an essay Shakaishugi To Kokka (Socialism And The State), written in 1902, Kōtoku Shūsui admits at one point that "parties like the German Social-Democratic Party have in fact declared that they hope to abolish the state".⁵³ But Kōtoku also reassures his readers (he was writing in the magazine Nihonjin - Japanese - most of whose readers would have found such a proposition alarming) that words are used in a "special, technical sense"⁵⁴ by the SPD! He further adds that whether the organ of social control which the SPD was seeking to set up could "suitably be described by the term state or not is a question we need not go into here".⁵⁵ One is left with few doubts that Kōtoku believed it could, though, and anyway only 18 months before Socialism And The State appeared, Wilhelm Liebknecht had been caught in a quotation on the front page of Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) losing his footing in one of the somersaults and actually demanding a "socialist state" ("shakaishugiteki kokka").⁵⁶ The front page treatment which this demand was given in a paper like Rōdō Sekai symbolises the statist influence exerted by German social-democracy on the socialist movement in Japan prior to 1905.

Reformism

Even though the SPD might have had as its ultimate aim a system of all-embracing nationalisation or state capitalism, more or less similar to that which exists in state capitalist countries such as Russia today, it viewed this as merely a long-term prospect. Its day to day political

53 Shakaishugi To Kokka (Socialism And The State). Collected in Kotoku Shusui Zenshu (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1968, Vol. IV, p 521. Shakaishugi To Kokka first appeared in Nihonjin (Japanese) No. 156, 5 February 1902.

54 Ibid., p 521.

55 Ibid., p 522.

56 'Riipukunefuto O Tsuitō Su' ('Mourning Liebknecht'), Katayama Sen, Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 66, 1 October 1900, p 1.

activity was directed towards securing piecemeal reforms within the framework of the Imperial German state. This concern with reforming capitalism - and not, of course, doing away with capitalism - was another leaf which the socialists in Japan took out of the SPD's book. One can obtain a very good idea of the reformist example which the SPD set by an article 'Doitsu Shakaitō No Seikō' ('The German Socialist Party's Political Programme') published in Rōdō Sekai in April 1900. This article criticised Japanese scholars for denouncing socialism as a dangerous doctrine. It itemised the SPD's proposed reforms of German capitalism (proportional representation*, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly, free education, changes in the system of taxation etc.) and assured Rōdō Sekai's readers of their respectability - assured the Japanese public, in fact, that they "are certainly not a policy for subverting Germany".⁵⁷ The same 10-point reform programme of the SPD was again quoted at length in an article by Nishikawa Kōjirō which appeared in Shakaishugi (Socialism) in September 1903. On this occasion Nishikawa described the SPD's proposals for reforming capitalism in Germany as "appropriate"⁵⁸ and the article was significantly headlined 'Doitsu Shakaitō No Shōri Ga Atauru Kyōkun' ('Lessons Which The German Socialist Party's Victory Has Taught Us').

When the still-born Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party) announced its own political programme in the Japanese press on 20 May 1901, it was its turn to supplement the eight "ideals" ("risō") it proclaimed with a list of 28 reformist measures said to be suitable for

* The actual Japanese term used was "kōhei senkyo" ("fair elections"), but the particular meaning which the Meiji socialists attached to this ambiguous expression appears to have been proportional representation. Katayama Sen, for example, translated the clause "Kōhei senkyo hō o saiyo suru koto" in the Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party)'s manifesto as "To adopt the system of the proportional representation" (Rōdō Sekai - Labour World - No. 85, 21 July 1901, p 8).

57 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 59, 15 April 1900, p 3.

58 Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 20, 18 September 1903, p 1111.

a "practical movement".⁵⁹ Predictably, these reformist measures were of the type which the parties of the Second International habitually called 'palliatives' and among them were several of the demands advanced by the SPD. The core of the programme read as follows : -

Manifesto Of The Social-Democratic Party

.... Our party, in response to the general trend at work within the world, and understanding the tendency of the economy, wishes to abolish the gap between rich and poor and secure a victory for pacifism in the world by means of genuine socialism and democracy. Our party therefore hopes to advance step by step towards the ideals listed below.

- (1) Propagation of the principle that the whole of humankind, regardless of racial and political differences, are brothers and sisters of the same blood.
- (2) Abolition of armaments as the precondition for achieving international peace.
- (3) Abolition of class systems.
- (4) Land and capital, which are essential as means of production, all to be publicly owned.
- (5) Means of transport, such as railways, ships, canals and bridges, all to be publicly owned.
- (6) Fair distribution of wealth.
- (7) Achievement of equal political rights for the people.
- (8) The state to bear the expenses of all education, so that the people can receive education on a basis of equality.

These are our party's ideals but it goes without saying that it is difficult to put them into practice at present. Because of this, our party expects to establish a programme such as the following and expects to put its efforts into a practical movement.

59 Shakai Minshutō Sengen (Manifesto Of The Social-Democratic Party). Reproduced in Nihon Shakai Undō Shisō Shi (History Of The Thought Of The Japanese Social Movement), Kishimoto Eitarō (ed.), Tōkyō, 1968, Vol. III, p 157. See also Nihon Shakaishugi No Chichi Abe Iso (Abe Iso: The Father Of Japanese Socialism), Takano Zenichi, Tōkyō, 1970, p 242. It was Abe Iso who wrote the Manifesto.

- (1) Public ownership of railways throughout the country.
- (2) Municipal ownership of trams, electricity boards, gas boards, and all other monopolies.
- (3) Prohibition of the selling of publicly-owned land held by either central, prefectural or local government.
- (4) Adoption of a policy of the municipalisation of all land in towns and cities. In cases where this policy cannot be speedily implemented, laws to be enacted which will prohibit the buying up and annexing of city land by private persons.
- (5) Patent rights to be bought up by the government. In this way inventors can be given a proper reward at the same time that their inventions are made available to the people at moderate prices.
- (6) Restriction on house rents so that they do not exceed a certain percentage of the value of the property in question.
- (7) All government works to be undertaken by the government itself. Government works never to be contracted out to private individuals or private companies.
- (8) Taxes on articles of consumption such as alcohol, soy sauce and sugar to be abolished and replaced by inheritance tax, income tax and other direct taxes.
- (9) The period of compulsory education to extend up to higher elementary school. Abolition of tuition fees and text-books to be supplied at public expense.
- (10) Setting up of a labour bureau. Investigations into all aspects of labour to be instigated.
- (11) The employment of children of school age to be forbidden.
- (12) The employment of women in work which is harmful to morals or health to be forbidden.
- (13) Abolition of night-work for minors and females.
- (14) Abolition of Sunday work. Hours of labour to be restricted to 8 hours per day.
- (15) Enactment of a law establishing employer responsibility. In cases where workers are injured in the discharge of their duties, appropriate compensation to be paid by the employers.

- (16) Enactment of a law on trade unions. The right of workers to organise freely to be officially recognised and adequate protection to be afforded to them.
- (17) Enactment of a law protecting tenants.
- (18) The insurance industry to be taken over completely by the government.
- (19) All judicial expenses to be borne by the government.
- (20) A law establishing universal suffrage to be introduced.
- (21) A law establishing proportional representation to be adopted.
- (22) All voting to be direct and the ballot to be secret.
- (23) Establishment of a method of directly polling the general public on matters of great importance.
- (24) Abolition of the death penalty.
- (25) Abolition of the House of Lords.
- (26) Armaments to be cut.
- (27) Abolition of the police peace preservation law.
- (28) Abolition of the newspaper laws. 60

Of these 28 immediate demands, Nos. 8, 9, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24 and 28 were equivalent to proposals in the SPD's programme of reforms as it appeared in the socialist press in Japan at different times, while a number of the other items (such as Nos. 1, 15, 16 and 27) had already been achieved, after one fashion or another, in Germany. The point I am making is not to deny that any of these reformist measures could have benefited the working class in Japan. Although, in fact, little more than pious hopes within the context of Japanese society in the Meiji era, it can readily be admitted that, if by some miracle they could have been achieved, they would have improved the status of working men and women both economically and in terms of their democratic rights. Advantageous though they might have been, however, such

improvements would in no way have altered the fundamental nature of Japanese society, any more than Bismarck's nationalisation of the Prussian railways or the repeal of the Exceptional Law against the Socialists had in Germany. The history of the SPD and, for that matter, of the Second International as a whole is eloquent testimony to the fact that 'palliatives' of this kind were not the 'stepping stones to socialism' which social-democratic parties imagined them to be. On the contrary, they were substitutes for socialism, since mass parties like the SPD attempted to swing the working class behind them on the strength of the tinkering with the capitalist system which they advocated. There can be no doubt that, had conditions allowed it, the Japanese Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party) would have played the same role as the SPD was doing in Germany. Ironically, it was saved from this fate not only by the backwardness of the economy but also by the action of the Japanese government - for the government suppressed it as soon as it was formed.

One of the similarities between the situations in Japan and Germany was the existence of groups and individuals to the right of the main body of social-democrats advocating out and out reformism. In Germany the mainstream of the SPD could engage in solemn debates on the subject of 'reform or revolution' not only with its academic critics like Schäffle and Adolf Wagner but even with its own right wing. Karl Kautsky's polemics with Eduard Bernstein won him an easy reputation as a 'revolutionary', despite his own commitment to a programme of reforms. Similarly in Japan a debate ensued around the turn of the century between Katayama Sen and others, who claimed to stand for 'socialism', and a group known as the Shakai Seisaku Gakkai (Society for the Study of Social Policy) which was in favour of 'social reform'. Members of the Shakai Seisaku Gakkai, such as Kanai Nobu and Kuwada Kumazō (who were both university professors), had been heavily influenced by the writings of Adolf Wagner and other German economists and they held

up the policies adopted by Bismarck as examples to be followed. Their calls on the government to introduce reforms were not seen by them as in any way threatening the existence of capitalism. Rather, they saw reform as a means to strengthen the bases of capitalist society in Japan, by preventing the worst excesses of laissez-faire.

The presence of a group such as the Shakai Seisaku Gakkai was unfortunate. When Katayama Sen and others suggested reforms which were slightly more radical or more extensive than the Shakai Seisaku Gakkai's, the impression was given that they were advocating socialist alternatives to what was seen as the Gakkai's 'reformism'. A case in point was the debate between Katayama Sen, Kanai Nobu and others, organised by the printers' union, which was reported at length in Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) in October 1899. Kanai denounced socialism as "something which will destroy the present structure of the state"⁶¹ and supported instead the measures introduced by Bismarck, while Katayama sung 'socialism's praises - offering, among other examples, "the city system of San Francisco"⁶² as an illustration of how it worked in practice! The fact that there was a degree of similarity between the situations in Germany and Japan was also underlined when Katayama represented the Japanese socialists at the Amsterdam Congress of the Second International in 1904 and voted against 'revisionism'. Just as Kautsky had been built up as a supposed champion of revolutionary principles due to his polemics with the 'revisionist' Bernstein, so Katayama was able to claim:

In Japan, socialists and social reformers always stand on opposite sides when they deal with labor problems or social problems. As Japanese socialists have been faithful to strict principle thus far in spite of many difficulties, I am glad to agree to the Dresden resolution and to vote for it.

63

61 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 46, 15 October 1899, p 5.

62 Ibid., p 4.

63 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 51, 30 October 1904, p 1 (English column).

It was true that Katayama and his co-workers had crossed swords with Kanai Nobu and the other "social reformers" of the Shakai Seisaku Gakkai but, whatever the phrase "faithful to strict principle" was supposed to convey, it certainly did not mean that the socialists in Japan had broken with reformism.

Parliamentarism

In Germany the SPD's strategy was to contest elections and to use the apparatus of parliament as the means for eventually gaining political power. Even within the SPD's terms of reference, such a strategy made sense only in a situation where the franchise was wide enough to include at least a reasonable percentage of SPD supporters and where social-democrats were able to organise themselves into a political party and to engage in activities without too much interference by the state. The socialists in Japan took over the SPD's strategy and tried to apply it in a set of circumstances which ruled out any chance of its success whatsoever. They were prevented from forming a socialist party and the police continually interrupted their meetings and put severe pressure on their newspapers. Not only were the Japanese socialists constantly harassed in these ways, but their repeated affirmations of the policy of working through the Japanese diet⁶⁴ were made against a political background where stringent property qualifications restricted the electorate to approximately 1 per cent. of the population!⁶⁵

64 See, for example, 'Rōdōsha To Shakaishugi' ('Workers And Socialism'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 33, 1 April 1899, p 5 and 'Mazu Seiken O Tore' ('First Take Political Power!'), Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 49, 16 October 1904, p 1.

65 Nishikawa Kōjirō gave the property qualifications in an article 'Sekai Kakkoku Futsū Senkyo Kakutoku Undō Shi Ippan' ('An Outline Of The History Of The Movement For Universal Suffrage In The Countries Of The World') in Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 51, 30 October 1904, p 4. Voting rights were extended only to those a) who had paid more than ¥10 per year in land taxes for a period of more than one year or b) who had paid more than ¥10 per year in direct taxes (or partly in land tax and partly in direct

The hopelessness of this imported strategy, borrowed from the SPD, was highlighted by Kinoshita Naoe's standing in a by-election in the Tōkyō constituency in May 1905. Kinoshita was one of the original organisers of the suppressed Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party) and one of the reasons why he stood was that the socialists believed that simply by putting a candidate forward they were somehow demonstrating that their party existed in fact, even though banned by the authorities. "Founding Of The Socialist Party" was the headline of one of the articles in Chokugen (Straight Talking) dealing with Kinoshita's candidature⁶⁶ and the Japanese socialists were careful to use other expressions such as "the people who voted for our party"⁶⁷ and so on. Far from being an impressive demonstration that the Shakai Minshutō was alive and well, however, Kinoshita's campaign achieved little more for the socialists of the time than a succession of bruising at the hands of the state. Polling day was 16 May 1905 and public meetings were arranged nightly from 7 May up to the eve of the poll. Every one of these meetings was broken up by the police and the audience ordered to disperse. The police also prevented the distribution of Kinoshita's election address and, as Chokugen (Straight Talking) put it, "were always on the heels of our comrades engaged in the movement, confiscating the leaflets and even arresting some of our comrades."⁶⁸ On top of this, Kinoshita was appealing for votes from 16,800 electors (comprised

taxes, the total being more than ¥10 per year) for a period of more than two years. Nishikawa gave the number of people with the right to vote as approximately "22 in every 1000" - ie 2.2 per cent. Low though even this figure was, it considerably overstated the true size of the electorate (c. 1 per cent.) and what Nishikawa probably meant to say was that 22 in every 1000 men had the right to vote (women being completely disenfranchised). The fact that Nishikawa ignored women's fate tells us something about the Meiji socialists in general. Quite often, when they demanded universal suffrage, what they were actually envisaging was universal manhood suffrage.

66 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 16, 21 May 1905, p 2.

67 Ibid., p 2 (my emphasis).

68 Ibid., p 1 (English column).

exclusively of the rich) out of Tōkyō's total population of about 1,800,000!⁶⁹ Given all these factors militating against him, the surprising thing is not that Kinoshita received only 32 votes but that he managed to get any votes at all.

The Japanese socialists attempted to put a brave face on Kinoshita's performance. Even before election day they had written, in particularly flowery language, that "winning or losing in the electoral arena is not our purpose. All we want to do is merely to scoop up several sacred votes from out of the mire, raise them on high and allow them to shine like brilliant stars...."⁷⁰ After the results were announced, the same simile of stars shining in a clear sky was still being employed to describe the miserable 32 votes which Kinoshita had received and, conscious that they were imitating the electoral strategy of the social-democrats in Europe, the socialists in Japan assured themselves that "our comrades throughout the world are bound to have seen these from afar and to be applauding and cheering".⁷¹ Yet however enthusiastic the temporary euphoria, it could only be a matter of time before a more realistic assessment of the situation forced itself on the socialist movement in Japan. Gradually it was to dawn on a majority of the Japanese socialists that they were attempting to fight to a set of Queensberry rules which they - and they alone - observed. The government in Meiji Japan was incomparably more vicious than the regimes of western Europe and for the movement in Japan to adopt the parliamentary strategy of the SPD was nothing short of disarming itself before the state. Bit by bit the more clear-sighted among the Japanese socialists were to come to see this.

69 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 15, 14 May 1905, p 1.

70 'Gotō No Kōhosha' ('Our Party's Candidate'), Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 15, 14 May 1905, p 1.

71 'Gotō No Senkyojin Ni Sha Su' ('Thanks To Those Who Voted For Our Party'), Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 16, 21 May 1905, p 2.

European Social-Democracy And The Russo-Japanese War

Whatever the criticisms one might otherwise be able to make of it, the socialist movement in Meiji Japan has it to its undying credit that it opposed the mass slaughter of the Russo-Japanese War. Having said this, however, it remains the case that although the movement as a whole opposed the war (and suffered severe government persecution as a result) there were definite signs, as the war progressed, of some of the socialists in Japan wavering in their anti-war commitment. One of the reasons for this may well have been the lamentable example set the Japanese socialists by the social-democrats in Europe, many of whom were openly clamouring for a Japanese victory.

August Bebel took the opportunity provided by the Russo-Japanese War to make a speech in the German Reichstag saying that the SPD would fight if Germany went to war with Russia⁷² (a foretaste of the SPD's mockery of internationalism 10 years later when it voted for the war credits on 4 August 1914) and a Spanish social-democrat wrote to Shakaishugi (Socialism): "You will know, even without our saying, why we socialists hope for a Japanese victory."⁷³ The anarchist-inclined Domela Nieuwenhuis in Holland was another who went on record calling for a Russian defeat, saying that if Japan won it would - quite unconsciously - be performing a great service for humankind.⁷⁴ Almost all the European social-democrats, in fact, seemed unaware (or indifferent) to what 'victory' would mean for the Japanese working class - the Russian Menshevik (and internationalist) Julius Martov being one of the very few to point out that it was not the job of socialists "to assist the ruling classes of Japan to destroy reactionary Russia and thus to lay a

72 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 34, 3 July 1904, p 3.

73 Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VIII, No. 13, 3 November 1904, p 364.

74 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 34, 3 July 1904, p 3.

solid foundation for the reactionary suppression of the Japanese proletariat."⁷⁵

Martov's was a voice in the social-democratic wilderness, however, and the Japanese ruling class was naturally delighted to receive support from such an unexpected quarter as European social-democracy. If nothing else, it provided a useful stick with which to beat the already sorely pressed anti-war movement in Japan and the discomfiture of the Japanese socialists can be imagined when no less a person than the Emperor himself expressed satisfaction with "the splendid attitude of the European socialist parties' newspapers"⁷⁶ towards the war. Stung by this, the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) delivered one of its very few rebukes to the European social-democrats - although it was extremely mild in the circumstances: "... we hope that our European comrades will not, because of a passing passion, turn their back on their principles"⁷⁷, it wrote.

The group publishing Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) was centred on Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko, both of whom were successful journalists who had resigned their positions with one of the leading Tōkyō daily newspapers because of their opposition to the war. It was mainly due to them that Heimin Shimbun remained firm in its

75 Martov, Israel Getzler, Cambridge, 1967, p 96. The report of Bebel's speech in Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 34 provoked a correspondent to write in the following issue (No. 35, 10 July 1904, p 7) that, if Bebel wanted a Russian defeat in order to bring about a revolution in Russia, then - bearing in mind what was likely to happen in Japan following a Japanese victory - wasn't victory worse than defeat? Having said this, however, the correspondent (who signed himself Kyokukawa) retreated from such an 'extreme' position and went on to declare that he hoped that universal suffrage would be achieved in Japan after the war and - referring to the position of the SPD in German society - that Japan would become a second Germany.

76 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 25, 1 May 1904, p 3.

77 Ibid., p 3.

condemnation of the war and its reaction to reports of the fall of Port Arthur to the Japanese army was a fine example of internationalism. While official Japan was crowing over the blood-bath which had taken place, the lead article in Heimin Shimbun was saying: "We know that the first thing which the fall of Port Arthur means is that tens of thousands of workers - Japanese and Russian alike - have spilt each other's blood."⁷⁸ Unfortunately, though, the English columns of the paper (which generally seem to have been the responsibility of Abe Isō) were far more suspect in their statements on the war.⁷⁹ Also Katayama Sen's Shakaishugi (Socialism) reproduced a number of pro-Japanese declarations on the war by social-democrats abroad without adding any critical comments of its own, which was equivalent to endorsing them.⁸⁰ This was hardly surprising because, despite his famous handshake with Plekhanov in Amsterdam, Katayama Sen had shown quite early on in the war that he was not immune to patriotism.⁸¹

78 'Ryojun Kanraku No Igi' ('The Meaning Of The Fall Of Port Arthur'), Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 42, 28 August 1904, p 1.

79 A few examples: -

".... the people must consider it their duty to make an ample recompense for those who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of the fatherland." ('Pensions For Soldiers', Heimin Shimbun - Common People's Newspaper - No. 34, 3 July 1904, p 1.)

"We have enough reasons to congratulate ourselves on our victory at Liaoyang, but our idea of courtesy and humanity forbids us to indulge in childish exaltation, if we bear in mind that our success means the defeat, humiliation and despair of the Russian people." ('The Japanese Victory At Liaoyang And National Festivity At Home', Heimin Shimbun - Common People's Newspaper - No. 45, 18 September 1904, p 1.)

"The victory at Liaoyang was glad tidings for us and the people have been busy in (sic) expressing their joy by lantern processions and other performances...." ('The Victory At Liaoyang', Heimin Shimbun - Common People's Newspaper - No. 46, 25 September 1904, p 1.)

80 Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VIII, No. 9, 3 July 1904, pp 262-263 and Vol. VIII, No. 13, 3 November 1904, p 364.

81 "I am opposed to this war, but as a Japanese I do not wish Japan to be beaten by Russia who in the past treated the Jews as she has in Kishineff, and is still dealing with Fins in the most brutal fashion, and moreover she has shot down many laborers during strikes!" ('Attitude Of Japanese Socialists Toward Present War', Sen Katayama, International Socialist Review Vol. IV, No. 9, March 1904, p 514.)

Thanks to those like Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko, the socialist movement as a whole in Japan held fast to internationalist principles throughout the Russo-Japanese War, but European social-democracy bears part of the blame for those within the Japanese socialists' ranks who wavered and fell prey to patriotism.

Marx and Engels

I will conclude this chapter by saying a little about the slightness of the influence which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels exerted on the socialists in Japan prior to 1905.

As early as 1881 Kozaki Hiromichi had touched on Marx's theories in an article 'Kinsei Shakaitō No Genin O Ronzu' ('A Discussion Of The Origins Of Modern Socialism') in the Rikugō Zasshi (Universe Magazine), although the treatment was so confused that little, if anything, could be learned from it.⁸² Other attempts to expound Marx's theories followed. For example, there was Kusakatei Ujirō's 'Marukusu To Raseru' ('Marx And Lassalle'), which appeared in the Kokka Gakkai Zasshi (National Academic Society Magazine) in 1893,⁸³ and a talk which Murai Tomoyoshi gave on 16 April 1899 to the Shakaishugi Kenkyū Kai (Society for the Study of Socialism) on 'Karl Marx's Socialism' was published in the Rikugō Zasshi the following month.⁸⁴ A more substantial effort was the booklet Kaaru Marukusu (Karl Marx) which was written by

- 82 'Kinsei Shakaitō No Genin O Ronzu' ('A Discussion Of The Origins Of Modern Socialism'), Kozaki Hiromichi, Rikugō Zasshi (Universe Magazine) No. 7, April 1881. Collected in Nihon Shakai Undō Shisō Shi (History Of The Thought Of The Japanese Social Movement), Itoya Hisao and Kishimoto Eitarō (eds.), Tōkyō, 1971, Vol. II, p 116.
- 83 'Marukusu To Raseru' ('Marx And Lassalle'), Kusakatei Ujirō, Kokka Gakkai Zasshi (National Academic Society Magazine) Vol. VI, Nos. 77, 79, 82, July-December 1893. Collected in Ibid., Vol. II, pp 206-219.
- 84 'Kaaru Marukusu No Shakaishugi' ('Karl Marx's Socialism'), Murai Tomoyoshi, Rikugō Zasshi (Universe Magazine) No. 220, 15 May 1899. Collected in Meiji Shakaishugi Shiryō Sōsho (Materials On Meiji Socialism), Arahata Kanson and Ōta Masao (eds.), Tōkyō, 1973, Vol. I, pp 187-192.

Nishikawa Kōjiro in 1902, but even this was inadequate in its explanation of Marxist theory, being largely biographical.⁸⁵

As time went by, Marx and "Engel" (as Engels was frequently called⁸⁶) became reasonably well known to the socialists in Japan and were even elevated into objects of considerable hero worship in papers such as Rōdō Sekai (Labour World). Kawakami Kiyoshi called Marx "a great man of the German Socialist Party" in a talk he gave in 1899, which was written up in Rōdō Sekai⁸⁷, and Nishikawa Kōjiro, writing in Shakaishugi (Socialism), described Engels as "this benefactor who deserves our gratitude".⁸⁸ In fact, at times the hero worship went beyond all reasonable bounds, such as the occasion when an anonymous writer - referring to "saviours to whom we owe our deep gratitude" - cited Buddha, Christ, Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle all as examples!⁸⁹

If by the turn of the century Marx and Engels' names were appearing fairly frequently in the socialist press in Japan, however, this was a very different thing from their ideas being correctly understood. In the period which came to an end with the Russo-Japanese War the socialists

85 Kaaru Marukusu (Karl Marx), Nishikawa Kōjiro, Tōkyō, 1902. Reproduced in Arahata and Ōta, op. cit., Vol. V, pp 227-275.

86 See, for example:

'Shakaishugi Ni Tai Suru Gokai' ('Misunderstandings Regarding Socialism'), Kōtoku Shūsui. Collected in Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kōtoku Shūsui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kōtoku Shūsui, Tōkyō, 1968, Vol. IV, p 161.

'Furederiiku Engeru Shakaishugi No Haha' ('Frederick Engel: The Mother(!) Of Socialism'), Nishikawa Kōjiro, Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 8, 18 March 1903, p 748.

87 'Kokka No Ryūsei To Rōdōsha' ('National Prosperity And The Workers'), Part II, Kawakami Kiyoshi, Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 33, 1 April 1899, p 6.

88 'Furederiiku Engeru Shakaishugi No Haha' ('Frederick Engel: The Mother Of Socialism'), Part I, Nishikawa Kōjiro, Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 8, 18 March 1903, p 749.

89 'Ōshio Heihachirō', Part II, Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 19, 3 September 1903, p 1105.

in Japan already knew enough about European social-democracy to realise that it was the accepted custom among the parties of the Second International to refer to Marx and Engels with respect. They even knew sufficient about the details of Marx and Engels' careers to imitate some of their exploits. For example, when the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) was at last forced to give up its lengthy battle with the police and ceased publication, its final number was printed in red, just as the last issue of Marx's Neue Rheinische Zeitung had been. Yet the haziness of the Japanese socialists' views on Marxist theory is well summed up by Sakai Toshihiko, writing in Chokugen (Straight Talking) as late as June 1905:

We have been constantly hoping to publish a book giving a simple explanation of the fundamentals of Marx's theory but our own lack of understanding, as well as the fact that we are so busy, does not allow us to do this very easily.

90

An admission such as the above appears rather strange at first because works such as Engels' Socialism, Utopian And Scientific and Marx's Capital had been recommended in Chokugen's predecessor, the Heimin Shimbun⁹¹, and Kōtoku Shūsui claimed to have made use of both - together with the Communist Manifesto - in the writing of his Shakaishugi Shinzui (Quintessence Of Socialism).⁹² Kōtoku, for his part, may well have referred to Socialism, Utopian And Scientific while writing his book⁹³, but whether he read either the Communist Manifesto or Capital is far more doubtful. The fact is that, although such works were 'recommended' or cited as authorities for reasons of prestige, it is open to doubt whether any of the socialists in Japan (apart from Kōtoku's dipping into

90 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 18, 4 June 1905, p 4.

91 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 2, 22 November 1903, p 7 and No. 3, 29 November 1903, p 4.

92 Shakaishugi Shinzui (The Quintessence Of Socialism). Collected in Kotoku Shusui Zenshu (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1968, Vol. IV, p 454.

93 Nihon Shakaishugi No Shisō (Socialist Thought In Japan), Matsuzawa Hiroaki, Tōkyō, 1973, p 40.

Socialism, Utopian And Scientific) had read any of these basic Marxist texts until Sakai and Kōtoku jointly translated Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto into Japanese for the first time in 1904. The following year Kōtoku appears to have read Engels' Feuerbach during a spell of imprisonment⁹⁴ and also a special issue of Chokugen, devoted to the problems facing women, carried a short extract from The Origin Of The Family, Private Property And The State by Engels.⁹⁵ Finally, in July 1906 (strictly speaking, outside of the period we are concerned with here) a translation of Socialism, Utopian And Scientific appeared in Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism).⁹⁶

In other words, the socialists in Japan started to read Marx and Engels' works for themselves only towards the very end of the period extending up to the end of the Russo-Japanese War and Marx's Capital certainly remained a closed book for them. In confirmation of this, we have the recollections of Arahata Kanson who, at the time when I talked to him in December 1974, was perhaps the last survivor of the movement of 70 years before:

.... Marx and Engels' works were very difficult to come by at that time - in the middle of the Meiji era. Then again, opportunities for study were few as well. In the Heiminsha* we had the three volumes of Capital in English translation** but probably no one had read it, I should think. Kōtoku Shūsui gave Marx's Capital as a reference work in his Shakaishugi Shinzui but Shūsui hadn't read it himself, I think.... (After translating the Communist Manifesto, Sakai was once asked) "When did you first read the Communist

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- * The Heimin Society (the group which brought out Heimin Shimbun)'s office.
- ** Arahata's memory must have been playing tricks on him here. Only the first volume of Capital could have been in the Heiminsha office, since volumes II and III still had not appeared in English translation in the period 1904-05.
- 94 Letter from Kōtoku Shūsui to Sakai Toshihiko, 30 May 1905. Collected in Kōtoku Shūsui No Nikki To Shokan (The Diaries And Letters Of Kotoku Shusui), Shiota Shōbee (ed.), Tokyo, 1965, p 192.
- 95 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 12, 23 April 1905, p 7.
- 96 Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) No. 4, 1 July 1906, pp 1-43.

Manifesto?" Sakai's reply was: "When I translated it!" (Arahata laughs.) Most people would probably have thought it better to have said that they had read it long before, rather than when they translated it, if they wanted to be known as 'authorities' on Marxism, but Sakai was a person completely without airs and graces.... Probably it was the same in Kōtoku's case as well. Probably neither of them had read the Communist Manifesto until Kojima* suggested their translating it. There wasn't the opportunity for study then as there is now when even university students know Marx and Engels' works. We were very busy.... Our knowledge was quite 'un-Marxist', if one can use that word....

97

Even when the early socialists in Meiji Japan did get down to translating basic Marxist texts such as the Communist Manifesto, they were confronted by some major difficulties. As always, one of these was the repressive activities of the state. The Communist Manifesto was translated by Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko for appearance in issue No. 53 of the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) to mark the first anniversary of the paper in November 1904 and an extra large run was printed in anticipation of the interest it was thought likely to arouse. Predictably, the police stepped in and banned all sales of the issue carrying the Communist Manifesto and Nishikawa Kōjirō, Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko were subsequently fined ¥80 each following their prosecution.⁹⁸ Eighteen months later, however, Sakai Toshihiko did manage to publish the same translation of the Communist Manifesto in the first issue of his Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism). Sakai succeeded on this occasion by means of a skilful manoeuvre. In the previous trial the court had included in its ruling a passage which said that it was acceptable to publish material for

* Kojima Ryūtarō.

97 Interview with Arahata Kanson on 9 December 1974 in Tōkyō. Yamaji Aizan also wrote in 1908 that "even Mr. Abe Iso, who had the reputation of being the best read person among the socialists of that time, was said still not to have read that Communist Manifesto in its entirety." (Genji No Shakai Mondai Oyobi Shakaishugisha - Today's Social Problems And Socialists, Yamaji Aizan. Collected in Itoya and Kishimoto, op. cit., Vol. II, p 350. Yamaji's essay first appeared in the Dokuritsu Hyōron (Independent Review) No. 3, 3 May 1908.)

98 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 59, 25 December 1904, p 1.

historical or scholarly purposes providing that it did not disturb the social order. Sakai therefore inserted on the first page of Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) a prominent notice to the effect that he was publishing the Communist Manifesto "simply as historical information" and as "material for scholarly study"⁹⁹ - and probably the fact that Shakaishugi Kenkyū was a theoretical journal and not an agitational paper as Heimin Shimbun had been allowed the ploy to work. It was one of those small coups which gave the socialists of the time a tremendous boost in morale, but Sakai was not to know that his was to be the only legally published, complete edition of the Communist Manifesto to appear in Japan until after the Second World War.¹⁰⁰

Apart from the obstacles raised by the authorities, simply the task of rendering the Communist Manifesto into language which would be intelligible to the average Japanese gave rise to problems which it is hard to convey at this distance in time. Kōtoku and Sakai could not read German, so they worked from Samuel Moore's English version of the Manifesto (first published in 1888).¹⁰¹ A few errors crept into their translation but these were of fairly minor importance.¹⁰² Their difficulties really started when it came to finding acceptable Japanese terms for many of the words which Marx and Engels regularly used and which had no recognised equivalents in the Japanese language. Kōtoku Shūsui mentioned some of these in his essay Honyaku No Kushin (The Anguish Of Translating): 'bourgeoisie', 'class consciousness', 'proletarian', 'exploitation' and so on.¹⁰³ The problem was not so much one of the

99 Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) No. 1, 15 March 1906, p 1.

100 'Sakai Toshihiko', Kawaguchi Takehiko, Shakaishugi Kōza Vol. VII - Nihon No Shakaishugi (Lectures On Socialism Vol. VII - Japanese Socialism), Ōkōchi Kazuo (ed.), Tōkyō, 1956, p 278.

101 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 53, 13 November 1904, p 1.

102 For example, "Dutch" ("Oranda No") on p 2 (Heimin Shimbun - Common People's Newspaper - No. 53, 13 November 1904) should read "Danish".

103 Kimura, op. cit., pp 76-77.

mechanics of translation as the fact that Marx and Engels had described a capitalist system which was only beginning to take shape in Japan in the Meiji era and which was only slowly making impressions on the popular consciousness. It is worth illustrating this by reference to the terms which Kōtoku and Sakai came up with for the English 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat' because here, in a nutshell, was one reason for socialism's failure to strike real roots in Japan in this early period.

In later years the problem was solved by transcribing 'bourgeois' and 'proletariat' in Japanese syllabary and thus coining two new Japanese words 'burujoa' and 'puroretaria'. This became possible as a modern capitalist class and a modern working class took on a concrete existence in Japanese society, since the unfamiliar ring of the new words to the average Japanese ear was compensated for by this time by familiarity with the social reality which they expressed. In Kōtoku and Sakai's day such a solution was impossible, however. Their problem was to render the Communist Manifesto intelligible to the average Japanese if they could by describing the still unfamiliar social structure of capitalism in more or less traditional language and the words they therefore hit upon to express 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat' were 'shinshi batsu' ('gentleman clique') and 'heimin' ('common people').

As Kōtoku himself admitted, at the turn of the century 'shinshi batsu' probably conjured up the same image for most Japanese as the expression 'danna ren' ('the masters').¹⁰⁴ It was vague because the specifically capitalist nature (derived from their control of means of production which function as capital) of this particular class of 'masters' was not made clear and, as a rendering of 'proletariat', 'heimin' was even more unsatisfactory. Traditionally, 'heimin' had referred to all the non-samurai lower classes. It was a generic term, covering peasants, artisans and even the proto-capitalist merchants, and was thus roughly equivalent to the English 'commons' (as in House of Commons) or

104 Ibid., p 76.

'third estate'. This made it totally inappropriate in the context of the Communist Manifesto because, despite the existence of landless peasants and artisans who were de facto wage labourers, as social classes both the peasantry and the artisanat (not to mention the merchants, of course) were owners of means of production, even though of low social status. This was in direct opposition to the most essential feature of the wage-earning working class found in capitalist societies which, as Engels noted in the Communist Manifesto when he defined the term 'proletariat', is a "class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live."¹⁰⁵

The central message of Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto was that, as it developed, capitalism inexorably created its own grave-digger in the form of the proletariat as defined above. "... not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons - the modern working class - the proletarians"¹⁰⁶, was what Marx and Engels had written early on in the Manifesto. Replace 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletarians' here by 'gentleman clique' and 'commons'/'common people' (as Kōtoku and Sakai did¹⁰⁷) and one begins to get an idea of how the Communist Manifesto struck those Japanese socialists who managed to read it in 1904/1906. Further on in the same section there was another passage:

The lower strata of the middle class - the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants - all these sink gradually into the proletariat....

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105 Manifesto Of The Communist Party, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Collected in Selected Works, Karl Marx (sic), London, 1947, Vol. I, p 110.

106 Ibid., p 116.

107 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 53, 13 November 1904, p 3.

108 Manifesto Of The Communist Party, p 118.

In Kōtoku and Sakai's translation this was rendered meaningless, because the "lower strata of the middle class - the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants" (all constituent parts of the 'common people') were said to be sinking gradually into the.... 'common people'!¹⁰⁹

Similarly, what were those who read Kōtoku and Sakai's translation to make of the assertion that "Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class"?¹¹⁰ Nothing but confusion could result from inserting 'gentleman clique' and 'common people' here¹¹¹, since the term 'common people' was being used as a translation for "the proletariat" at the same time that it was synonymous in popular understanding with "all the classes that stand face to face with the gentleman clique today".

Whether, in fact, Marx and Engels deserve to be included in a chapter on social-democracy is arguable. Certainly, they shared some of the illusions of the social-democrats (and, indeed, must bear part of the responsibility for the ultimate fate of social-democracy) but I would be the first to admit that there is an entire area of their writings which amounts to an often brilliant and penetrating exposition of socialism - something which most of the social-democrats could never be accused of. As far as the Japanese socialists are concerned in this earliest phase of the socialist movement in Japan, however, it makes little difference either way. The lessons which the socialists in Japan learned from European social-democracy were disastrously wrong and they turned to Marx and Engels' works too late in this period which extends up to 1905 to gain a great deal from them. Besides, as I have shown, the poorly developed state of capitalist society in Japan at this time stood like an impenetrable barrier between the Japanese socialists and their

109 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 53, 13 November 1904, p 3.

110 Manifesto Of The Communist Party, p 120.

111 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 53, 13 November 1904, p 4.

gaining a correct understanding of the positive elements in Marxism.
The difficulties posed by even the - at first glance - straightforward
task of translating the Communist Manifesto into Japanese make this
amply clear.

CHAPTER 4.

Influences From English-Speaking Countries -
America, Britain, New Zealand

"Christian Socialism", wrote Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in mid-nineteenth century Europe, "is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heartburnings of the aristocrat."¹ By the end of the century, however, 'Christian Socialism' had become a placebo for soothing the uneasy conscience of an entirely different class in the non-aristocratic USA. America was changing from a largely agricultural economy into an industrialised society and, as it did so, conscience-stricken Christian intellectuals reacted in horror to the plight of the working class caught up in this process. A Society of Christian Socialists was organised in Boston in 1889 and in 1894 an American Institute of Christian Sociology was set up at Chautauqua with R. T. Ely (professor of political economy at the University of Wisconsin) as its president and George Herron (professor of applied Christianity at Iowa - later Grinnell - College) as its principal instructor. The American Fabian Society, founded in 1895, can also be regarded as part of the Christian Socialist movement since its most prominent member was the clergyman W. D. P. Bliss, who had earlier been active in the Society of Christian Socialists.²

Japanese Students In America

Ely, Herron, Bliss and other American Christian Socialists and social gossellers exerted a major influence on the early socialist movement in Japan. For many young Japanese intellectuals in the Meiji era Christianity symbolised the West and was identified uncritically by

1 Manifesto Of The Communist Party, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works, Karl Marx (sic), London, 1947, Vol. I, p 133.

2 History Of Socialism In The United States, Morris Hillquit, New York, 1910, pp 292-293.

them with 'civilisation' and 'progress'. Even when their religious motivations were not particularly strong, Christianity in the shape of the educational opportunities it provided in missionary-sponsored colleges in Japan and sympathetic universities in the USA exercised a powerful attraction for these young Japanese. It was a sign of the times that when the group of six men whom I referred to before (Chapter 3, note 45) took the decision to try to form the Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party) in Tōkyō in 1901 all but Kōtoku Shūsui were Christians. Two of these men - Abe Isō and Katayama Sen - had studied theology in the USA and their experiences in that country will be outlined below. In addition, another participant in the attempt to found a political party - Kawakami Kiyoshi - was to enter an American university to read for a higher degree soon after the suppression of the Shakai Minshutō.

Abe Isō was already a clergyman when, at the age of 26 in 1891, he went to study for three years at Hartford Theological Seminary in the USA. When he returned to Japan in 1895, it was not only as a Christian but as a socialist too. According to Abe's recollections, Edward Bellamy's immensely popular novel Looking Backward had a stunning impact on him when he read it as a student at Hartford in 1893.³ In Looking Backward Bellamy gave an account of an imaginary, state-capitalist society⁴ (where, incidentally, Christianity was still well in evidence) set in Boston in 2000 A.D. It did not occur to Abe that the society which Bellamy described was simply a variation on capitalism as it already

3 'Yo Wa Ika Ni Shite Shakaishugisha To Narishi Ka' ('How I Became A Socialist'), Abe Isō, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 19, 20 March 1904, p 7 and 'Watakushi O Shakaishugi Ni Michibiita Bungaku' ('The Literature Which Led Me To Socialism'), Abe Isō. Reproduced in Nihon Shakaishugi No Chichi Abe Isō (Abe Iso: The Father Of Japanese Socialism), Takano Zenichi, Tōkyō, 1970, p 227.

4 "The nation.... organized as the one great business corporation in which all other corporations were absorbed; it became the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalists, the sole employer, the final monopoly...." (Looking Backward, E. Bellamy, London, 1893, pp 43-44.)

existed in the USA. On the contrary, as far as Abe was concerned, it was Looking Backward which "finally made me a socialist".⁵ In addition to his reading, Abe also seems to have been influenced by the Christian Socialists among his fellow students at Hartford and like them (respectable rebels that they all were) sported a red tie as a demonstration of his conversion to 'socialism'.⁶

Katayama Sen came from a much poorer background than Abe and consequently it took him 11 long years in America (1884 - 1895) to work his way through a succession of colleges and universities. These included Grinnell College, Andover Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School. In later years Katayama claimed that he became a socialist while at Grinnell (1889-1892)⁷ and in his case it was not Bellamy's but the social gospeller R. T. Ely's influence which appears to have been the important one. Hyman Kublin - Katayama's biographer - records how Katayama "was a faithful reader of Ely's writings"⁸ during his student days and the habit persisted long after his return as a Christian lay worker to Japan. Despite his perennial poverty during his years in America, Katayama recalls in his Jiden (Autobiography) that Ely's The Social Aspects Of Christianity impressed him so much that he bought 2 or 3 copies and gave them as presents to his friends while at Grinnell.⁹

Like Katayama, Murai Tomoyoshi¹⁰ was another activist in the early

5 Takano, op. cit., p 227.

6 Abe Isoo And The Role Of Christians In The Founding Of The Japanese Socialist Movement: 1895-1905, Cyril H. Powles, Papers On Japan, Cambridge, Mass., 1961, Vol. I, pp 102, 124.

7 Jiden (Autobiography), Katayama Sen, Tōkyō, 1964, p 176.

8 Asian Revolutionary, Hyman Kublin, Princeton, 1964, p 70.

9 Katayama, op. cit., pp 175-176.

10 Yamaguchi Koken says that Murai Tomoyoshi was an alias, his real name being Toyosaki Zennosuke. (Nihon Shakaishugi Undō Shi - A History Of The Socialist Movement In Japan, Yamaguchi Koken. Collected in Nihon Shakai Undō Shisō Shi (History Of The Thought Of The Japanese Social Movement), Kishimoto Eitarō (ed.), Tōkyō, 1971, Vol. VI, pp 515, 516.) Matsuzawa Hiroaki has kindly informed me in a personal communication, however, that Yamaguchi is mistaken here and that Murai and Toyosaki were entirely different individuals.

socialist movement in Japan who studied both at Andover Theological Seminary and at Grinnell College. Murai was in many ways typical* of the succession of bright young men who went to the USA and embraced 'socialism' as the last word in modern, Western civilisation. Returning to Japan, these young men would 'agitate' (respectably) for a while, only to eventually accept official government posts (in Murai's case he became professor of English at the government's Foreign Languages School) which, of course, meant abandoning their 'socialism' entirely. Murai doubled both as a Unitarian preacher and as president of the Shakaishugi Kenkyū Kai (Society for the Study of Socialism) when it was formed in 1898 and, when he published the book Shakaishugi (Socialism) the following year, it was "dedicated.... to Prof(essor) Herron, whose influence he feels led to the study of this noble subject".¹¹ Murai had been taught by George Herron at Grinnell.

Christianity And 'Socialism'

The political doctrine preached by American social gospellers and Christian Socialists like Ely, Herron and Bliss derived from Christian notions of charity and for the Christians among the early socialists in Japan as well their politics were an extension of their religious beliefs. The Christian flavour of the early socialist movement in Japan was particularly noticeable in the English columns of Rōdō Sekai (Labour World), where it was constantly being reiterated that "Our ideal is in a socialism based upon the religion of the Galilean Carpenter...."¹² Indeed, very often the implicit assumption during this period was not merely that the socialists' politics should be "based upon" Christianity but even that socialism and Christianity were one and the same thing.

* More so than Abe and Katayama who - irrespective of the doubtfulness of their 'socialism' - have to be given credit for adhering over the years to what they believed.

11 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 39, 1 July 1899, p 10 (English column).

12 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 14, 15 June 1898, p 10.

When Katayama Sen was prosecuted in 1901 for having published the manifesto of the Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party), Rōdō Sekai maintained on its English page that "It will be the very first time in Japan that Socialism as well as Christianity will be tried before the law."¹³ The climate of opinion is also well illustrated by Kōtoku Shūsui's protest against the fact that "In Japan socialism is regarded merely as a special product of Christianity, or as its appendage. People even go to the extreme of believing that 'socialist' is synonymous with 'Christian'."¹⁴

In view of what he said here, it is interesting to take note of the claims which even a non-Christian like Kōtoku sometimes made. In one of his articles he wrote: "Christ died on the cross in order to save our souls. Socialism will release us from our material fetters and it is this which will bring about the saving of our souls."¹⁵ This may well seem an odd way for a non-Christian to have expressed himself, but it has to be remembered that even those pioneer socialists in Japan who were not Christians and who were unable to visit America during this early period extending up to 1905 were still exposed to powerful blasts of Christian Socialist propaganda from their mentors in the USA.

R. T. Ely's and W. D. P. Bliss' works (such as the former's Socialism And Social Reform and French And German Socialism In Modern Times and the latter's A Handbook Of Socialism and The Encyclopedia Of Social Reforms) were widely read by the socialists in Japan. Heimin Shimibun (Common People's Newspaper) recommended all 4 of these books as "material for the study of social questions"¹⁶ and drew attention to Ely's Socialism

13 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 82, 21 June 1901, p 6.

14 Shakaishugi To Shūkyō (Socialism And Religion). Collected in Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1968, Vol. IV, pp 390-391.

15 'Hishakaishugisha Ni Oshiyu' ('Counsel For Anti-Socialists'), Kōtoku Shūsui, Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 61, 15 May 1900, p 5.

16 Heimin Shimibun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 2, 22 November 1903, p 7 and No. 3, 29 November 1903, p4.

And Social Reform in particular as a "good" socialist primer.¹⁷
 Ely was looked up to as "the famous American economist"¹⁸ (although his fame certainly did not derive from his grasp of Marxian economics, which left a lot to be desired¹⁹) and it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter that Sakai Toshihiko (like Kōtoku, another non-Christian among the socialists) identified French And German Socialism In Modern Times as the book which set him on the path to 'socialism'.²⁰
 Ely and Bliss were generally read in English by the better educated among the Japanese socialists but their influence was felt even by those who did not know that language, since passages from their works were also frequently translated into Japanese and published by the socialist newspapers.²¹

Washington Gladden ("the father of the social gospel", as he has been called²²) was another American Christian who was quoted with respect by the socialist press in Japan in the Meiji era. Rōdō Sekai (Labour World)'s 'Shakaishugi' ('Socialism') column, for example, referred at length in its issue of 1 July 1899 to Gladden's prediction that the USA was on the verge of revolution.²³ In the face of this supposedly

17 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 28, 22 May 1904, p 5.

18 'Shakaishugi' ('Socialism'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 77, 1 May 1901, p 2.

19 In explaining Marx's economic theories in French And German Socialism In Modern Times Ely wrote that "The capitalist buys the commodity labor". (French And German Socialism In Modern Times, New York, 1883, p 181.) According to Marxist economic theory, however, the commodity the capitalist buys is labour power and, as anyone who has read Marx's writings carefully knows, this distinction between 'labour' and 'labour power' is crucial to his analysis of capitalism.

20 'Yo Wa Ika Ni Shite Shakaishugi(sha) To Narishi Ka' ('How I Became A Socialist'), Sakai Toshihiko, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 8, 3 January 1904, p 9.

21 See, for example:

Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 18, 4 June 1905, p 4 and No. 19, 11 June 1905, p 4.

Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) No. 2, 15 April 1906, pp 33ff.

22 Socialism And American Life, D. D. Egbert and S. Persons, Princeton, 1952, Vol. I, p 117.

23 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 39, 1 July 1899, p 4.

imminent revolution, Gladden believed that it would be better for society to be 'changed' gradually through the extension of municipalisation and nationalisation. Not unnaturally - in view of the prominent Japanese socialists who had studied at Grinnell College, where he had taught - George Herron too also came in for frequent references in the columns of the radical press in Japan.²⁴

Shying Away From The Class Struggle

In works such as Ely's French And German Socialism In Modern Times and Bliss' A Handbook Of Socialism, the Christian axe was unashamedly ground. Ely concluded his study on the inaccurate note that "we rejoice that men of all shades of opinion are turning to Christianity for help in the solution of social problems, and trust that the poor and needy, where they are now estranged from the Church, may ere long be led to recognize in her their best friend."²⁵ Similarly, Bliss in the preface to his volume wrote about himself as follows:

He believes that no Socialism can be successful unless rooted and grounded in Christ, the Liberator, the Unifier, because the Head of Humanity. The Church he believes to be the world's first, greatest, and necessary International. Modern Socialism he believes to have sprung from Christianity....

26

It was not only this overtly Christian doctrine which the Meiji socialists all too frequently adopted, however. American social gospellers and Christian Socialists were, as well as being proselytizers of the Christian faith, very different sorts of men in other ways too from European social-democrats such as the leaders of the SPD. Although the reformist and state capitalist core of what they had to say was identical

24 See, for example:

Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 73, 1 March 1901, p 5.

Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 15, 3 July 1903, pp 978-979.

25 Ely, op. cit., p 261.

26 A Handbook Of Socialism, W. D. P. Bliss, London, 1895, p viii.

to that of the SPD, their overall approach to politics was different, since they tended to shy away from the slightest scent of the class struggle. Daniel Bell talks somewhere about "the pale Christian piety of a George Herron"²⁷ and this remark rather neatly sums up the character of the American Christian Socialist movement as a whole, based as it was on appeals to good will and hopes of voluntary renunciation on the part of the capitalists. It was this basic approach which was absorbed by many of the early socialists in Japan as well and which came for a time to permeate the theory and practice of the socialist movement there. Brimming over with feelings of 'good will to all men' (including the capitalists), those who returned from America joined forces with home-bred socialists, who were also influenced by American 'Christian Socialism', and together launched themselves into a flurry of activity which - at least until some of their illusions started to wear thin - was often based on nothing more than appeals to the employers' sense of fair play.

Abe Isō not only bestowed equal praise on Karl Marx on the one hand and 'General' Booth (of the Salvation Army) on the other²⁸, but was insisting in 1904 that socialism would benefit the capitalist class as well as the workers.²⁹ Kawakami Kiyoshi was another who gave a convincing performance of a man beating his head against a brick wall. For example, in an article 'Chingin To Seisan No Kankei' ('The Relation Between Wages And Production'), which appeared in November/December 1898 and was subtitled 'Advice To The Employers'³⁰, he set out to prove that higher wages were in the employers' own interests and that therefore there was no real conflict between labour and capital. Not surprisingly, the

27 Marxian Socialism In The United States, Daniel Bell, Princeton, 1967, p 45.

28 Takano, op. cit., p 91.

29 Shakaishugi Nyūmon (Introduction To Socialism), Heiminsha, Tōkyō, 1904, pp 73-75.

30 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 24, 15 November 1898, pp 7-8 and No. 25, 1 December 1898, p 7.

employers were totally unimpressed but the real damage done by Kawakami's arguments was not that they failed in what was an impossible objective anyway (to persuade the capitalists to voluntarily favour higher wages) but that they could only have a negative effect on working men and women's awareness of the nature of the society which they were living in and on socialists' understanding of the struggle that lay before them. In the first place, arguments such as Kawakami's were bound to undermine the spirit of self reliance which it was essential for the working class to acquire as it started to emerge in Meiji Japan. And secondly, Kawakami's gospel of collaboration between classes could only serve to obscure the fact that the way to achieve socialism has to lie through the defeat of that class in capitalist society which controls the means of production and maintains them in their role of capital.

Christianity was not, of course, the only factor at work here. In part, Kawakami's arguments derived from traditional Confucian attitudes, which will be dealt with in the next chapter. Yet Christianity was at least partially to blame for the early socialists' blindness to the class struggle and the same criticism which has been directed at Kawakami can also be levelled at Katayama Sen's article 'Shihonka Ni Tsugu' ('A Word To The Capitalists') which, like Kawakami's, also appeared in 1898.³¹ There Katayama pleaded for the employers to take an understanding attitude, maintaining that trade unions were simply means for educating the workers and therefore not inimical to the capitalists' interests. Even the Meiji government had a better grasp than Katayama of the potential offered by trade unions as organs for prosecuting the class struggle and, as has already been explained in Chapter 1, it acted to nip the unions in the bud by introducing in 1900 the 'chian keisatsu hō' ('police peace preservation law') as a ban on labour organisations. Rōdō Sekai (Labour World)'s reaction to the new law (under Katayama's editorship) was as predictable as it was pathetic. A lead article

31 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 5, 1 February 1898, p 2.

'Chian Keisatsu Hō To Rōdōsha' ('The Police Peace Preservation Law And The Workers') published on 1 March 1900 claimed that it was "not in the interests of the state" and also denounced it as unconstitutional.³² Comments such as these could only serve to strengthen illusions about the nature of the state and of the constitution among those interested in socialist ideas and, indeed, among the entire working class.

Perhaps, however, the supreme example of the emasculated limits to which the socialist movement in Japan was, for a time, driven by Christianity is provided by Kinoshita Naoe's propagandist novel Hi No Hashira (The Pillar Of Fire). Hi No Hashira first appeared in serial form in the daily newspaper Mainichi Shimbun³³, which employed Kinoshita as a journalist, and was subsequently published in book form by the Heiminsha (the publishing company of the group which brought out Heimin Shimbun) in 1904. By the standards of the time, it was a huge success,³⁴ Heimin Shimbun reporting in December 1904 that it was topping the list of sales of all the Heiminsha's publications with a total of 3,469 copies already sold.³⁵ Despite the fact that its excessively didactic style made it all but worthless as literature, Kinoshita's novel was the most popular 'socialist' book of its day.

Hi No Hashira's very high-minded and moralising hero was a young man called Shinoda, who was an ardent Christian. Speaking about 'socialism', he says:

What is socialism? If we put it in one word,
it is the heart of god. It is the heart of god,
which Christ declared.

36

It would be superfluous to comment on this but Shinoda's reaction to the news that he is about to be arrested, which forms the (intended)

32 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 56, 1 March 1900, pp 1-2.

33 Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VIII, No. 8, 3 June 1904, p 241.

34 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 1, 5 February 1905, p 1.

35 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 59, 25 December 1904, p 1.

36 Hi No Hashira (The Pillar Of Fire), Kinoshita Naoe, Tōkyō, 1904, p 295.

dramatic climax to the book, is worth explaining. Shinoda tells his sweetheart what he intends to do at his trial:

It certainly is not pleasant for me to go either. Yet, if I can explain to the government, to the nation and to society in general that we comrades are thinking only pure white thoughts, there would be no greater glory than this for an insignificant nobody like me.

37

At the very time when the Heiminsha's Hi No Hashira went on sale, the socialist movement in Japan was locked in a struggle of its own with the government of the day over the war that was being fought with Russia. Shinoda's naive sentimentality, which led him to hope to talk reasonably to the government and persuade it of his comrades' good intentions, was representative of the Christian wing of the socialist movement in Japan and of its view of the struggle which the socialists were engaged in. Sakai Toshihiko recalled in later years the song Tomi No Kusari (Chains Of Wealth) which "was always sung at all our meetings"³⁸ in the Heiminsha period (1903-1905). As Sakai put it, "the words of that song: 'Righteously, purely, beautifully, Friend let's join hands and stand up now' convey just how sodden with Christianity the movement was at that time."³⁹

Henry George

As it happened, the most prominent advocate in Japan of Henry George's proposals for curing society's ills was an American clergyman and ex-army captain by the name of Charles Garst, who took charge of the Disciples of Christ Mission in Japan in 1883.⁴⁰ In Garst's case it is not easy to

37 Ibid., p 293 (emphasis added).

38 Nihon Shakaishugi Undo Shōshi (A Short History Of The Socialist Movement In Japan), Sakai Toshihiko. Serialised in Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. IX, No. 1 (sic), 1 March 1921, p 40.

39 Ibid., p 41.

40 History Of Christianity In Japan, Frank Cary, Tōkyō, 1959, p 121. Interestingly enough, Garst's brother-in-law - W. E. Macklin - worked as a Disciples of Christ missionary in China from 1886 onwards and likewise propagandised Henry George's ideas. (See 'Henry George On Two Continents', Harold Schiffrin and Pow-Key Sohn, Comparative Studies In Society And History Vol. II (1959-1960), pp 101 ff. and Chinese Socialism To 1907, Martin Bernal, London, 1976, pp 41, 52-53.)

decide whether it was his Christianity or his belief in George's ideas which was the more responsible for his calls for class collaboration but, at any rate, the nub of what he had to say to the Japanese working class was unmistakable:

I hope that wage workers may always be able
to cry out
Labor Forever! and Capital Forever! 41

Henry George's approach to social problems was basically a very simple one. For him the root of society's evils lay in the private ownership of land. The private landlord was therefore to be eliminated, either by the state taking over the land altogether or by the more indirect method of "concentrating all taxation into a tax upon the value of land, and making that heavy enough to take as near as may be the whole ground rent for common purposes."⁴² This panacea was known as the 'single tax' and it was a measure of Charles Garst's single-minded insistence on it that he sometimes went by the Japanese name of Tanzei Tarō (Jack Singletax)!

Henry George repeated his arguments tirelessly in a number of books such as Progress And Poverty (San Francisco, 1879) and Social Problems (London, 1884), the latter being translated into Japanese and published in 1892.⁴³ Also, the first issue of Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend), which appeared in February 1887, carried a translation of part of an article by George on 'Hito No Kenri' ('People's Rights') and he was described there as a "famous American socialist scholar".⁴⁴ The remainder of the article appeared later in issue No. 3 of Kokumin No Tomo the following April. Together with Henry George's Progress And

41 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 7, 1 March 1898, p 10 (English column).

42 Social Problems, Henry George, London, 1884, p 276.

43 Nihon Shakaishugi Shi (A History Of Japanese Socialism), Kimura Tsuyoshi, Tōkyō, no date given but probably 1926 or 1927, p 44. Kimura also writes that another book of George's was published in Japanese in 1892 under the title Tochi Mondai (The Land Question). This would appear to have been a translation of The Irish Land Question (Harold Schiffrin and Pow-Key Sohn, op. cit., p 97).

44 Kokumin No Tomo (The Nation's Friend) No. 1, February 1887, pp 23-24.

Poverty, the eminent naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace's Land Nationalisation (London, 1882) - which put essentially the same case as George argued in his writings⁴⁵ - was recommended by Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) in one of the lists of suggested "materials for the study of social problems" which it drew up.⁴⁶

Despite the socialist claims which were made on George's behalf, there was actually nothing socialist about his proposals whatsoever. Garst was following in his master's footsteps when he urged the Japanese workers to adopt the slogan "Labour Forever! and Capital Forever!" because, in effect, what George was advocating was for the working class to ally itself with the capitalists in the struggle that was taking place both in Europe and in the USA between industrial capital and landed interests. Whatever George's conscious purpose, his books read like an attempt to deflect the workers' struggle away from their immediate and direct enemy - the capitalists - to the enemy of their enemy - the landlords. The low level of capitalist development in Japan in the Meiji era, however, meant that the battle lines between the classes were drawn up differently from those which applied in countries such as Britain and the USA. In Meiji Japan clashes between landlords and peasants dwarfed the as yet limited struggles which occurred between the still relatively puny forces of capital and labour, so it was only to be expected that Henry George's attacks on those who lived off rent would appeal to many Japanese radicals. The call for nationalisation of the land was taken up by some of those on the left wing of the 'jiyū minken undō' ('people's rights movement')⁴⁷ and it is interesting to note that when Kōtoku Shūsui,

45 "His (Henry George's) conclusions support and his mode of argument supplements my own...." (Land Nationalisation, Alfred Russel Wallace, London, 1882, p 20.)

46 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 3, 29 November 1903, p 4.

47 Nihon Shakaishugi Shi (A History Of Japanese Socialism), Ishikawa Kyokuzan (Sanshirō) and Kōtoku Shūsui. Collected in Meiji Bunka Zenshū (Collected Works On The Culture Of The Meiji Era), Tōkyō, 1929, Vol. XXI, p 350.

whose intellectual roots extended back to the jiyū minken undō, wrote in 1904 about 'How I Became A Socialist' he acknowledged the important influence exerted on him by Henry George's writings.⁴⁸

Like Henry George himself, Charles Garst was an indefatigable propagandist. Yamaguchi Koken recalled in 1919⁴⁹ how Garst was often to be seen in front of Waseda University in Tōkyō, looking for all the world like a tramp as he stood in his threadbare clothing haranguing the crowds in broken Japanese. Among those who stopped to listen was the young Nishikawa Kōjiro, then a student at Waseda, who later went on to write the pamphlet Tochi Kokuyū Ron (Land Nationalisation) which was issued by the Heiminsha in 1904. As well as his tongue, Charles Garst used his pen too. The first issue of Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) published on 1 December 1897 carried a letter from him which announced, among other things, that "There is no conflict between Labor and Capital"⁵⁰ and a fortnight later he wrote an obituary of George for the same journal's English page. Entitled 'Henry George, Single Taxer', it read in part: "Henry George the great friend of labor and capital, and the Apostle of Freedom has passed from (the) Earth, having lately died in New York."⁵¹ Garst became a member of the Shakai Mondai Kenkyū Kai (Society for the Study of Social Problems) when it was formed in Tōkyō in 1897 and was thus in contact with its members such as Katayama Sen. Although Garst died in Japan in December 1898, some of his writings continued to be published after his death. A talk he had given on 'Tochi, Rōryoku Oyobi Shihon No Kankei' ('The Relation Between Land, Labour And Capital') was written up as an article and put the familiar

48 'Yo Wa Ika Ni Shite Shakaishugisha To Narishi Ka' ('How I Became A Socialist'), Kōtoku Denjiro (Shūsui), Heimin Shimibun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 10, 17 January 1904, p 5.

49 Yamaguchi, op. cit., p 512. (Yamaguchi's Nihon Shakaishugi Undō Shi - A History Of The Socialist Movement In Japan - first appeared in Kaizō (Reconstruction), 1 October 1919.)

50 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 1, 1 December 1897, p 12 (English column).

51 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 2, 15 December 1897, p 10.

arguments in Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) in March 1899⁵² and his book Tanzei Keizaigaku (Single Tax Economics) came out in 1900.⁵³

In some ways the Japanese socialists' attitude towards Henry George resembled their views on those like A. Schäffle whom I dealt with in the previous chapter. As time went by they came to pay less regard to George, as they learned that he was not evaluated highly by the European social-democrats - particularly the SPD. Yet, for all that, they continued to pay him a measure of respect and as late as 1926 one still finds Abe Isō rating George's Progress And Poverty very highly as a 'socialist' text. "It may not be right to call him (George) a socialist", wrote Abe, "but at least we can say that the theory which he used was extremely socialistic."⁵⁴ Coming from someone like Abe, this was perhaps not surprising but even Sakai Toshihiko had the following to say about Charles Garst in later years:

At the time (1897-1898) the intellectual influence exerted by him on Japanese society was certainly not a slight one. It was Henry Georgism - single taxism, in other words; state ownership of the land. You could say that it represented a mid-way stage between capitalism and socialism.

55

This was at a time when Sakai was already calling himself a Marxist, so it is as well to recall the verdict which Marx once gave on George and those with similar ideas to his: "All these 'socialists'.... have this much in common that they leave wage labour and therefore capitalist production in existence and try to bamboozle themselves or the world into believing that if ground rent were transformed into a state tax all the evils of capitalist production would disappear of themselves. The whole thing is therefore simply an attempt, decked out

52 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 32, 15 March 1899, pp 5-6.

53 Nihon Shakai Undō Shi (History Of The Social Movement In Japan), Akamatsu Katsumaro, Tokyō, 1974, p 62.

54 Takano, op. cit., p 229.

55 Nihon Shakaishugi Undō Shōshi (A Short History Of The Socialist Movement In Japan), Sakai Toshihiko. Serialised in Shakaishugi (Socialism) No. 1, 1 September 1920, p 39.

with socialism, to save capitalist domination and indeed to establish it afresh on an even wider basis than its present one."⁵⁶ The fact that Sakai mistook this consolidation of capitalism for a half-way stage between capitalism and socialism tells us something about the type of 'socialism' which he was hoping for.

Fabianism

Ishikawa Sanshirō and Kōtoku Shūsui drew a parallel between the Fabian Society in Britain and the Shakaishugi Kenkyū Kai (Society for the Study of Socialism, later renamed Shakaishugi Kyōkai - Socialist Association) in their Nihon Shakaishugi Shi (A History Of Japanese Socialism), which was serialised in the Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) early in 1907.⁵⁷ Yet perhaps it was Kawakami Kiyoshi who most clearly demonstrated the extent to which the members of the Shakaishugi Kenkyū Kai/Shakaishugi Kyōkai consciously identified with the Fabians. This was in the thesis The Political Ideas Of Modern Japan which he wrote for his A.M. degree at Iowa State University, after he had left Japan following the collapse of the Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party) in 1901. Still in its original English, Kawakami's study was published in book form in Tōkyō in 1903 and today it provides an extremely interesting insight into, if not exactly the political ideas of Meiji Japan, at least the political ideas of one of those who was calling himself a socialist in the period before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. At one point, Kawakami writes:

Five years ago (i.e. 1898) a coterie of men inaugurated an association under the title of the Socialist Association, having for its object social reform on the basis of socialism. Its motto, as that of the Fabian Society of England, is this: "For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently, when

56 Letter from Karl Marx to Friedrich Sorge, 30 June 1881. Collected in Correspondence Of Marx And Engels, Dona Torr (ed.), London, 1941, pp 395-396 (emphases in original).

57 Ishikawa and Kōtoku, op. cit., p 363.

warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain and fruitless."

58

The fact was, of course, that the most significant thing about the Roman general Fabius was not that he waited but that, in the end, he won. It is not merely the benefit of hindsight which today allows one to see that, unlike Fabius, the Fabian Society's strategy never did offer any prospects of victory - not, at any rate, of a victory for socialism. This was lost on Kawakami because, as with the Fabians themselves, it was reform of the existing society (for which Fabian strategy was undeniably well suited) which concerned him, not the achieving of a new and radically different social system. Describing the goal and the activity of the Shakaishugi Kyōkai (Socialist Association), Kawakami borrowed "the official statement of the aim and work of the Fabian Society, hoping that it will.... convince the reader of the similar nature of the two associations"⁵⁹ and, just in case the point had still escaped anyone, added that the Shakaishugi Kyōkai "may be regarded in many respects as the Japanese counterpart of the Fabian Society."⁶⁰

As well as looking up to the Fabian Society as an example to be copied in Japan, Kawakami made it clear from the references given in The Political Ideas Of Modern Japan that he was familiar with the famous Fabian Essays In Socialism,⁶¹ which had first been published in London in 1889. Representative of these essays was George Bernard Shaw's contribution on economics, where 'socialism' was described in such a way as to involve the abolition of all unearned incomes - except profits!⁶² In the Fabian scheme of things, the money derived from the

58 The Political Ideas Of Modern Japan, Karl Kiyoshi Kawakami, Tōkyō, 1903, p 184.

59 Ibid., p 184.

60 Ibid., p 185.

61 Ibid., pp 180, 182, 187, 192.

62 Fabian Essays In Socialism, G. Bernard Shaw (ed.), London, 1889, pp 26-27.

unearned incomes to be abolished was to be added to so-called 'earned incomes', with the result that - although those working for wages were to be better paid - they were, nonetheless, to remain wage labourers and to continue to engage in the production of commodities. In other words, the 'socialism' which Shaw envisaged was a society where the core of the capitalist economy (wage labour and commodity production) was to remain intact - and it is clear that contradictory notions of this type held by the Fabians had their repercussions in Japan as well as in Britain. In an early essay Rōdō Mondai To Shakaishugi (Labour Problems And Socialism) which Kōtoku Shūsui wrote in 1899 he quotes from the Fabian Society's programme in order to show how it favours a blend of nationalisation and municipalisation.⁶³ The image projected by the passage which Kōtoku quotes is one of a society incorporating many elements derived from capitalism. Money, central government and the nation state are just some of the features which occur and, in this early period, Kōtoku accepted them as constituting 'socialism' just as readily as his Fabian teachers did.

Percy Alden

It was perfectly in tune with the Fabians' ideas of what 'socialism' was that they should have expected it to be eventually handed down by benevolent authorities above, rather than achieved by independent working class initiative from the base of society directed against the status quo. The most striking example of this in the Japanese context was Percy Alden, who visited Japan in 1898. In later years Alden was to become a minor official in Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government of 1924 but at the time of his visit to Japan he was still a left-wing member of the Liberal Party (a Lib-Lab, as they were called), as well

63 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. II, p 213.

as being on the executive committee of the Fabian Society. During his time in Japan he interviewed Itagaki Taisuke who, it will be remembered from Chapter 2, had once been prominent in the 'jiyū minken undō' ('people's rights movement'). By this stage of his career, Itagaki was Minister of Home Affairs (as well as having been made a Count). Percy Alden is reported to have had talks with "the higher officers" of Itagaki's department "on factory legislation, prison reforms and socialism"(!)⁶⁴ and, writing about the interview he had with Itagaki himself, the imagery employed by Alden was characteristic. In an article 'The Industrial Revolution In Japan' which Alden wrote for Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) the workers figured as children and the despotic Meiji government as their father!

Many of the evils of the factory system are clearly recognized by count Itagaki (sic) and his colleague the Minister of Agriculture....

As civilization becomes more complex paternal government becomes more necessary. May the present ministry be willing to act the part of a wise and sympathetic father to its industrial sons and daughters!

65

Percy Alden established a close relationship with Katayama Sen and the group around Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) during his stay in Japan. In Britain Alden was active both as a settlement worker and as a Liberal councillor in the Canning Town district of East London and, after his return from Japan, Rōdō Sekai kept in touch with him and reported on his career because of the socialist lessons they imagined could be drawn from it. The Japanese socialists had already been much impressed by what they had heard* about supposedly 'municipal (gas and water) socialism' in various cities in Britain. Indeed, Katayama Sen referred to Glasgow as

* Or seen, in the case of Katayama Sen and Abe Isō. Both Katayama and Abe had (separately) made brief visits to Britain from the USA in 1894 and Katayama had met Percy Alden in London then.

64 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 19, 1 September 1898, p 10 (English column).

65 Ibid., p 10.

"the most socialist place in the world"!⁶⁶ Bearing this in mind, it was hardly surprising that, when Alden became deputy mayor in Canning Town, Rōdō Sekai should have announced that - under his guidance - the local council had been able to implement 'socialism'.⁶⁷ This claim to have put socialism into practice was illustrated by reference to rises in the council workers' wages, the introduction of an 8-hour day and the construction of corporation housing - all pure and simple reforms of capitalism, of course. Not only is one struck by the fact that these reforms were identified with socialism, however, but the sort of bright comments they gave rise to among Alden's admirers in Japan also catch one's eye. "Socialism is truly the saviour of the people"⁶⁸ and "Isn't this kind?" ("kore wa.... shinsetsu na mono de wa nai ka")⁶⁹ were the appreciative expressions they used to show their approval of Alden's typically Fabian, municipal paternalism.

Labour Leaders

As far as labour leaders went, though, Alden was only a small fish. There were others who had climbed on the backs of the working class in Britain to positions of power and influence far exceeding Alden's and the fascination which men like John Burns and Will Crooks held for some of the socialists in Meiji Japan is worth noting too. In 1905 the Heiminsha (the publishing company of the group which brought out Heimin Shimbun - Common People's Newspaper) re-issued a biography of John Burns by Nishikawa Kōjirō which had first been published by the Rōdō Shimbun Sha (Labour Newspaper Company) in 1902. Burns was described on the title page as "a great man in British labour circles"⁷⁰, but perhaps the oddest thing

66 'Katayama Sen Shi No Shakaishugi' ('Mr. Katayama Sen's Socialism'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 46, 15 October 1899, p 4.

67 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 50, 1 December 1899, p 3.

68 Ibid., pp 3-4.

69 Ibid., p 4.

70 Jiyon Baansu, Nishikawa Kōjirō. Reproduced in Meiji Shakaishugi Shiryō Sōsho (Materials On Meiji Socialism), Arahata Kanson and Ota Masao (eds.), Tōkyō, 1972, Vol. VI, p 125.

about this book was that it had been written by Nishikawa under the misapprehension that Burns was already dead. Not only was John Burns still very much alive but only a year after the re-issuing of his biography (ie in 1906) he was to show his true colours beyond any shadow of doubt by taking office in a Liberal government, first as President of the Local Government Board and later as President of the Board of Trade.

It was Nishikawa Kōjirō who also wrote the profile of Will Crooks ('Uranagaya Yori Kokkai' - 'From The Slums To Parliament') which appeared in the first issue of Heimin Shimbun in November 1903.⁷¹ Crooks was described here as a paternal figure to whom the workers in the Poplar district of East London would turn whatever their problems. Even domestic quarrels between husbands and wives were allegedly resolved by the antagonists shouting at one another "Let's go to Crooks Sensei!" (sensei being an untranslatable Japanese term which literally means one who is senior but which is usually used in the sense of 'teacher' or 'master'). Nishikawa could barely find the words to adequately express his regard for Will Crooks ("Even if the foregoing were all that could be said about him, he would be truly admirable but I respect him much more than this....") because, according to Nishikawa, Crooks was a model of self-sacrifice who thought only of helping other people. The reactionary undertone to the whole article was also emphasised in its concluding section where the author lamented the fact that people like Crooks were unfortunately becoming fewer and fewer these days, the implication being that those motivated by altruism had been commoner in the Tokugawa period.

It is because we are now living in a period when this type of person has become rarer than ever before that I particularly hold him in esteem.

71 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 1, 15 November 1903, p 6.

To this, Nishikawa added:

I envy Britain for having a person like this. But, when we look at Japan, I cannot help but be moved to tears by the misfortune of the workers in our country (sic) in not having a person like Crooks.

72

Nishikawa could have saved his tears. Labour leaders such as John Burns and Will Crooks were parasites on the working class. In Britain the militants of the time showed their contempt for politicians of this kind by talking not of labour leaders but of "labour bleeders" and - as Japanese workers were to find to their cost - no sooner had the labour movement in Japan developed sufficiently to offer some rich pickings of its own, than Japanese equivalents of Burns and Crooks were quickly to emerge. That is another story, however - outside of the period being dealt with here.

New Zealand's Lib-Labs

New Zealand was another country which, around the turn of the century, produced a number of Lib-Lab politicians who became heroes of the socialist movement in Japan. Up till the late nineteenth century New Zealand's economy had been dominated by the production of wool. It followed that it was the owners of the vast sheep estates who held

72 Compare this with what Nishikawa had also written in Jiyon Baansu:

"The reason why a great organisation has yet to be established in Japan's labour world, and why it has repeatedly collapsed on the point of being established, is none other than the fact that there is no-one at all like John Burns in Japanese labour circles.

As long as there is no-one about whom people will say "It's only this person who is above suspicion" - a person who will sacrifice everything for others - a really great organisation cannot be established." (Arahata and Ōta, op. cit., p 158.)

".... we cannot but fervently hope that a person like John Burns will emerge in Japanese labour circles. Ah! Which factory can it be that Japan's John Burns is now hidden in? We feel like rushing out and searching high and low for him." (Arahata and Ōta, op. cit., p 149.)

political sway and who looked after their own interests to the detriment of not only the working class but the small farmers too. The development of efficient methods of refrigeration in the final decades of the nineteenth century, however, meant a shift in emphasis away from wool towards meat and dairy products. This had the effect of putting the smaller farmers in a stronger economic position vis-à-vis the big estates than they had been previously. Changes in the economic balance of forces were subsequently reflected in political alignments and the Liberal governments headed by John Ballance (1891-1893) and Richard Seddon (1893-1906) weighted taxation against the big estates and encouraged small farmers to settle on the land.⁷³

As well as introducing a number of reforms such as old age pensions, another of the Liberal governments' concerns was to enforce a system of compulsory arbitration on workers and employers who were in dispute. Incongruously, this gave rise to a lot of loose talk about 'socialism' and the result was that the often oppressively paternalistic policies followed by New Zealand's Liberal governments around the turn of the century came to be highly evaluated by the socialist movement in Japan. Yano Fumio, a former Japanese minister to China who had embraced 'socialism', probably spoke for most of the early socialists in Japan when he described New Zealand in his popular book Shin Shakai (The New Society), which was published in 1902, as a country which was putting socialism into effect⁷⁴ and by 1905 New Zealand was figuring in the columns of Chokugen (Straight Talking) as an "advanced, socialist country".⁷⁵ In particular, Prime Minister Richard Seddon came in for considerable hero-worship. When Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) published a letter written by Seddon to Katayama Sen in February 1901, Seddon was portrayed in the accompanying commentary as a man "famous for having put

73 A History Of Socialist Thought, G. D. H. Cole, London, 1963, Vol. III, pp 885 ff.

74 Shin Shakai (The New Society), Yano Fumio, Tōkyō, 1902, p 253.

75 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 9, 2 April 1905, p 3.

modern socialism into practice and for having perfected labour protection".⁷⁶ A biographical piece on Richard Seddon which appeared in Shakaishugi (Socialism) in December 1903 went even further and, under a headline which read "Seikō Bidan" ("An Admirable Story Of Success"), piled superlative upon superlative in assessing his political career.⁷⁷

The socialists in Japan were able to react to New Zealand as "a country which is setting a fine example of establishing socialism"⁷⁸ only because, for the most part, they were completely indifferent to what for socialists should have been the most vital aspect of the policies being implemented by its Liberal governments. This facet of the Liberal governments' measures was the New Zealand workers' loss of independence, for the price which the working class had to pay for such minor benefits as came its way under first John Ballance's and then Richard Seddon's governments was its loss of the right to strike. In 1894 a Compulsory Arbitration Act was introduced in New Zealand by the then Minister of Labour, William Reeves (about whom G. D. H. Cole remarked that he was "an ardent believer in a sort of 'State Socialism' which involved the public regulation of labour conditions, the abandonment of the strike weapon, and the nationalisation of key enterprises..."⁷⁹). Reeves' labour legislation not only outlawed work stoppages and provided for penalties for any workers who did go on strike but worked in practice to eventually cut real wages. Notwithstanding this, the Japanese socialists not merely sung the praises of the compulsory arbitration system in its New Zealand context but an article in Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) in December 1903 even took the dangerous

76 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 71, 1 February 1901, p 3.

77 Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 25, 3 December 1903, pp 1285-1286.

78 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 85, 21 July 1901, p 1.

79 Cole, op. cit., p 891.

course of recommending the example set by New Zealand to the government in Japan.⁸⁰ The article claimed that the existence of Courts of Arbitration in New Zealand made strikes unnecessary, but the course of events alone proved this to be wrong, since opposition in New Zealand to compulsory arbitration eventually built up among those very workers who the Japanese socialists imagined were benefiting. Although the Compulsory Arbitration Act succeeded in smothering labour disputes in New Zealand up till 1906, from then on rank and file trade unionists - finding the Act working against them and their wages lagging behind - increasingly took the law into their own hands and went on strike regardless.

All in all, it was a strange form of 'socialism' which the movement in Japan thought it was witnessing in New Zealand.

Stony Ground

So far in this chapter the major influences deriving from English-speaking countries which affected the development of socialist thought in Japan in the period extending up to the end of the Russo-Japanese War have been discussed. This is not to say, however, that American 'Christian Socialism', British Fabianism and New Zealand's Lib-Labism were the only influences which were felt.* It is not possible, nor is it necessary, to give an account of all those who wrote in English

* The categories American 'Christian Socialism', British Fabianism and New Zealand Lib-Labism were not, of course, water-tight compartments. Fabianism was British in its origins but - as has already been made clear - W. D. P. Bliss of the American Fabian Society was influential in Japan. Similarly, although the 'Christian Socialism' which was felt in Japan was predominantly American, Christians from countries other than the USA were in touch with the socialists in Japan. There was, for example, a certain Annie Clegg ("a British Workman's Daughter", as she described herself - Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 34, 15 April 1899, p 10) whose letters in the English columns of Rōdō Sekai read like Sunday school texts.

80 'Nyū Jirando No Hanashi' ('Talking About New Zealand'), Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 6, 20 December 1903, p 5.

whose books or articles were read in Japan by the socialists of this period. Some of the writings of H. M. Hyndman and other leaders of the British Social-Democratic Federation, for example, were translated into Japanese⁸¹ but this need not concern us here - since their message was much the same as that of the German social-democrats, which was dealt with at length in Chapter 3. Robert Blatchford's Merrie England was also translated on more than one occasion. It was serialised in Shakaishugi (Socialism) from March 1903⁸² and again in Chokugen (Straight Talking) from February 1905.⁸³ Yet Merrie England illustrates very well the difficulty one sometimes experiences in trying to trace back with certainty to authors such as Blatchford influences acting on those in Japan who read works from abroad in translation. If one compares the two translations of Blatchford's work which I have mentioned, one finds them very different and - set against the original - it is doubtful whether the version which appeared in Chokugen can really be called a translation at all. It was Sakai Toshihiko who was responsible for what appeared in Chokugen over Blatchford's name and, as Sakai admitted⁸⁴, what he did in this case was to render in his own words some of Blatchford's arguments. The result was as far from Blatchford's original text as the title which Sakai chose to use (Tsūzoku Shakaishugi - Popular Socialism) was from Merrie England.

Even if it is not possible to examine all the English-language books which were translated into Japanese, though, it is worthwhile singling out for attention one or two which had something to say that was

81 For example:

'Seisan Hōhō No Hensen' ('Changes In The Mode Of Production'), H. M. Hyndman. Serialised in Chokugen (Straight Talking) from No. 20, 18 June 1905, p 4.

'Shakaishugi To Aikokushin' ('Socialism And Patriotism'), H. Quelch, Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 29, 20 August 1905, p 1.

82 Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 7, 3 March 1903, p 725.

83 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 2, 12 February 1905, p 6.

84 Ibid., p 6.

qualitatively different from the sources which have been considered so far. One such book was William Morris' novel News From Nowhere, and another was Edward Carpenter's Civilisation: Its Cause And Cure. The fact that works of this sort were published in Japanese at all illustrates the point that there was naturally a great deal of chance involved in the ideas from abroad which found their way to Japan in the Meiji era - and just as much of the hit and miss as well in the books which happened to get translated. On the other hand, the very lack of influence which Morris' and Carpenter's books were able to exert even when translated indicates the stony soil which Japan offered in the Meiji era for the implantation of genuinely socialist ideas.

Morris' News From Nowhere became available in an abbreviated translation under the title Risō Kyō (An Ideal Country) brought out by the Heiminsha in 1904. It was issued in a uniform edition with another utopian novel - Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (in Japanese Hyakunengo No Shin Shakai - The New Society A Hundred Years On), the same book as had made such an impact on Abe Isō during his student days in America. Both novels were translated by Sakai Toshihiko (who made a more faithful job of them than he did of Blatchford's Merrie England), Looking Backward appearing in March 1904 and News From Nowhere in December of the same year. It was unfortunate that these two books should have been published in a uniform edition - and doubly unfortunate that Bellamy's was released first, since William Morris had originally been prompted to write News From Nowhere as a reaction against Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward.⁸⁵ As a socialist, Morris had been appalled on reading Bellamy's novel by the regimented, state capitalist society portrayed there. Reacting against Looking Backward, Morris therefore

85 See William Morris, Jack Lindsay, London, 1975, p 337 in conjunction with Morris' letter to J. Bruce Glasier of 13 May 1889, collected in The Letters Of William Morris, Philip Henderson (ed.), London, 1950, p 315. In this letter, Morris says of Bellamy:
 "Thank you, I wouldn't care to live in such a cockney paradise as he imagines."

wrote in News From Nowhere about the free, creative and uncommercialised society that he wanted to live in.

Despite this, in Japan News From Nowhere was overshadowed by Bellamy's Looking Backward. Partly this resulted from Morris' book being issued subsequently to the release of Looking Backward, but a more fundamental reason was that Bellamy's views were more in harmony anyway with the Japanese socialists' predominantly state capitalist inclinations (inherited from the SPD and elsewhere) than was Morris' concept of socialism. Their translator - Sakai Toshihiko's own remarks are revealing in this respect. In a survey of supposedly socialist literature available in Japan, which was included in the first issue of Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism), Sakai recommended his own translation of Bellamy as a good introduction to 'socialism'.⁸⁶ In contrast to this, Morris' book was said by Sakai to describe the "anarchist ideal".⁸⁷ The fact is that there is nothing particularly anarchist about Morris' account of socialist society in News From Nowhere and, during the course of his political activity, Morris himself had sometimes criticised the anarchists of his day.⁸⁸ The fact that Sakai should have referred to News From Nowhere in the way he did is clear evidence of the state capitalist prejudices which even the better of the Japanese socialists (one of whom was Sakai) held during this period.

Edward Carpenter's Civilisation: Its Cause And Cure was, for its part, first brought out in a Japanese translation by the Minyūsha (People's Friend Society - the publishing group behind the journal Kokumin No Tomo - The Nation's Friend) soon after it first appeared in English in 1889.⁸⁹ As its name implies, it was written in a spirit of

86 'Shakaishugi Kankei Bunsho Kaisetsu' ('A Commentary On The Literature Relating To Socialism'), Shakaishugi Kenkyū (The Study Of Socialism) No. 1, 15 March 1906, pp 84-85.

87 Ibid., p 85.

88 See William Morris' letter to J. Bruce Glasier, 15 December 1888. Collected in Henderson, op. cit., p 304.

89 Kimura, op. cit., p 44.

revolt against industrial capitalism as it existed in Britain in the late nineteenth century. Even if Carpenter did not assume that all his readers would share his feeling of revolt, he did expect them all to be familiar with the loathsome aspects of a capitalist industry whose effects they could see all around them. Yet, while this might have been the case in Britain, it obviously was not so in Japan.

The "cure" for civilisation which Carpenter talked about was not simply a variation on the capitalism to be found in Britain (nationalised or state-controlled capitalism instead of private capitalism, for example) but a radically different society altogether. Carpenter expected this difference to make itself felt in even the details of everyday life - the clothes people chose to wear, say, or the houses they would wish to live in. At one stage he writes:

Thus, in order to restore the Health which he has lost, man has in the future to tend in this direction. Life indoors and in houses has to become a fraction only, instead of the principal part of existence as it is now. Garments similarly have to be simplified. How far this process may go it is not necessary now to enquire. It is sufficiently obvious that our domestic life and clothing may be at once greatly reduced in complexity, and with the greatest advantage - made subsidiary instead of erected into the fetishes which they are.

90

Clearly there was an element of back-to-nature crankiness in this - as there also was in Carpenter's talk about "the elementary raiment that allows thro' its meshes the light itself to reach the vital organs".⁹¹ But, in spite of its crankiness, there was a valid point too. What Carpenter was saying was that, if socialism were to be a genuinely new society, then in creating it men and women would have to rethink the whole pattern of their lives. This might have been the 'message' which Carpenter hoped to convey to his British readers but it does not take much thought to see that in Japan Civilisation: Its Cause And Cure was

90 Civilisation: Its Cause And Cure, Edward Carpenter, London, 1903, p 36.

91 Ibid., p 36.

open to a very different interpretation indeed. Calls for simplified housing and clothing could easily look like a reactionary justification of traditional Japanese society against encroaching capitalism. Whether this was the reason for Civilisation: Its Cause And Cure's lack of impact in a Japan where traditional values were crumbling it is difficult to say now at this distance in time. Whatever the reason, however, Carpenter's book, which enjoyed considerable popularity in Britain (it ran through 7 editions in 14 years), created barely a ripple in Japan. The scant attention it was given in the period up to 1905 which I am concerned with here is made clear in a letter written a few years later by Ishikawa Sanshirō to Edward Carpenter. Having recently started work on a translation of Civilisation: Its Cause And Cure, Ishikawa explains to Carpenter in March 1910 that he was unaware that it had been translated before. "I was translating your 'civilisation' with most gladness", he writes in his ungainly English. "But just when I finished the first chapter of it, on one hand, I found out that its translation was already published about twenty years ago, though it is not literally (sic) translated...."⁹²

Drowned in the state capitalist tide, those like Morris and Carpenter, who took a different line to the prevailing ideas on 'socialism' which the socialists in Meiji Japan learned from their various teachers abroad, were liable either to be labelled as 'anarchists' or simply to be overlooked.

92 Manuscript letter from Ishikawa Sanshirō to Edward Carpenter, 27 March 1910, Carpenter Collection, Sheffield City Libraries, MSS 380-22.

CHAPTER 5.

The Legacy From The Old Society

Money And The Samurai

On 9 February 1900 the popular Tōkyō daily newspaper Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) carried an article written by Kōtoku Shūsui with the striking title 'Kinsen O Haishi Seyo' ('Abolish Money!')*. At first glance, here was a modern idea borrowed from Western socialist theory - and Kōtoku himself claimed in the article that "the modern European socialists.... have the abolition of money and the suppression of the private ownership of capital as their ideals."¹ The fact was, however, that although the European social-democrats (Kōtoku's "modern European socialists") might on rare occasions have sought to prove their Marxist pedigree by parading slogans such as 'Abolish money!' and 'Abolition of the wages system!', in practice they were committed to maintaining the monetary economy in existence. Kōtoku referred to "modern European socialists" in his article in order to bolster his argument (the implication being that, if an idea was believed in the West, it was self-evidently correct - a common enough assumption in the Meiji era) but the actual argument itself owed far more to traditional samurai attitudes than it did to socialism. In fact, the ideals which Kōtoku attributed to the "modern European socialists" were unmistakably those of the samurai and were as remote from social-democracy as they were from genuine socialism itself:

.... (the socialists) want to replace money
by strength and honour, by right and duty.
Indeed, truth and righteousness lie in
doing just this.

2

* Translated here as Appendix 1.

1 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. II, p 289.

2 Ibid., p 289.

Samurai Among The Marx Socialists

Kōtoku Shūsui was not a samurai himself. Yet, although his ancestors on his father's side had been merchants for generations,

they had cultivated that Kōtoku's father ranking samurai influence over the closely with political identify with the of 1869.



Kōtoku Shūsui

As for many with the samurai in Kōtoku's case, Shinano Prefecture his father sought becoming a police refusing to call As one consequence

strong in the family.⁴ The Isō was another who came from a samurai background. His father was accomplished in a number of the martial arts and taught Isō to be young master of the Chōkōsan dojo in north-west Japan, Isō starting his own martial training at the age of 7 or 8.⁵ Like many others of their class, the family felt the strain of poverty following the upheaval of 1869 and the new class impoverishment of the samurai as one of the factors which drove him towards radical politics.

⁴ See glossary.
⁵ Kōtoku Shūsui, P. G. Kōtoku, ed., London, 1971, p. 7.
⁶ Kōtoku Shūsui in his 'Introduction' to Pillar of Fire, London, 1972, p. 30.
⁷ Shūsui Shūsui no Ichikōshi Isō (The Isō: The Father of Japanese Socialism), London, 1970, p. 47.

Samurai Among The Early Socialists

Kōtoku Shūsui was not a samurai himself. Yet, although his ancestors on his father's side had been merchants for generations, they had cultivated relations with the local samurai so assiduously that Kōtoku's father was able to marry the daughter of a gōshi (a low-ranking samurai*). Not only did Kōtoku's mother exercise a powerful influence over Shūsui - her youngest son - but, having "always associated closely with gōshi families, it was only natural for(his) family to identify with the warrior's cause"³ in the years following the revolution of 1868.

As for many of the other early socialists in Japan, identification with the samurai and their values came even more naturally than it did in Kōtoku's case. Kinoshita Naoe's family had been samurai in the Shinano fief in central Japan prior to the revolution and, although his father sought accommodation with the new regime to the extent of becoming a policeman, one of his grandfathers showed his defiance by refusing to cut off his samurai top-knot as the government had ordered. As one commentator has explained, "Old loyalties seem to have remained strong in the family."⁴ Abe Isō was another who came from a samurai background. His father was accomplished in a number of the martial arts and taught jūdō to the young samurai of the Chikuzen fief in south-west Japan, Isō starting his own martial training at the age of 7 or 8.⁵ Like many others of their class, the family felt the strain of poverty following the upheaval of 1868 and Abe saw this impoverishment of the samurai as one of the factors which drove him towards radical politics.

* See glossary.

3 Kotoku Shusui, F. G. Notehelfer, Cambridge, 1971, p 7.

4 Kenneth Strong in his 'Introduction' to Pillar Of Fire, Naoe Kinoshita, London, 1972, p 10.

5 Nihon Shakaishugi No Chichi Abe Isō (Abe Iso: The Father Of Japanese Socialism), Takano Zenichi, Tōkyō, 1970, p 409.

"A change came over the lives of us of the samurai class", he wrote.⁶
 "There was a sudden change and I was plummeted down from a life of relative ease to one of poverty."⁷ It was the same in Sakai Toshihiko's case. His family were samurai in the Buzen fief⁸ (again in the south-west of Japan) and it is known that in the Meiji era some of Sakai's relatives fell on hard times and were eventually driven to suicide under the burden of accumulating debts.⁹ An extremely revealing article of Sakai's was one which he wrote for the Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) newspaper (on which, like Kōtoku, he was employed as a journalist) in October 1901. Entitled 'Shizoku To Shinshi' ('Samurai And Gentlemen'), it read in part:

Society has completely forgotten the samurai. But the samurai have still never once forgotten themselves.... It is not that the samurai have not forgotten themselves because they dream of the power they wielded in the old days or because they resent their current loss of prestige. It is just that the samurai refuse to forget themselves and that this helps cultivate the character of society as a whole.... In the final analysis, the samurai are not recognised by society by virtue of their numbers or their property but still they have sunk deep roots into society's foundations by virtue of their character.... Society today has completely forgotten the samurai. Yet the reason why society's morality can be maintained depends very much on the character of the samurai. Alas! Alas! Although the samurai will soon be ruined, their successor has still not arisen. Bushidō (the way of the samurai) has collapsed but shinshidō (the way of the gentleman) has still not arisen. It is the responsibility of we thoughtful people to develop this shinshidō (way of the gentleman).

10

6 Ibid., p 107.

7 Ibid., p 106.

8 Han Taisei O Ikite (Living My Life Against The System), Arahata Kanson, Tōkyō, 1974, p 86.

9 Nihon No Kakumei Shisō (Revolutionary Thought In Japan), Takahata Tetsurō (ed.), Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. V, p 74.

10 Translated here from Nihon Shakaishugi No Shisō (Socialist Thought In Japan), Matsuzawa Hiroaki, Tōkyō, 1973, p 61.

As Matsuzawa Hiroaki has aptly commented, "what one can hear here is the cry of a dying class at a turning point in history."¹¹

Even in the case of those early Japanese socialists about whom it is more difficult to discover biographical details, there is often circumstantial evidence suggesting their samurai origins. For example, in an article 'Kokka No Ryūsei To Rōdōsha' ('The Prosperity Of The State And The Workers') which Kawakami Kiyoshi wrote for Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) in March 1899, he drew a strange parallel between samurai and wage workers. "In olden days, war was an everyday occurrence for the state, but now it is industry which becomes the mainstay of the country", said Kawakami. "In times of war, samurai formed the majority, but in an industrial age workers become the majority. In barbarous, warfaring days the country could not have existed for a single day without the samurai. In exactly the same way, how can the country maintain itself in an enlightened, civilised age without the worker?"¹² It was, of course, factually incorrect to say that samurai had ever formed a majority. Under the old regime the samurai had been the minority which had held political power, while it was the peasants who had formed the overwhelming majority of the population. One would guess that Kawakami came from a samurai family himself, since otherwise it seems inconceivable that he should have compared the wage-earning working class with the samurai, rather than with its obvious equivalent - the exploited peasantry. Strange though Kawakami's attitude now seems, however, it was far from being unusual. An unsigned lead article which appeared in Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) on 3 April 1901 carried the headline "The Union Is The Flower Of The Workers; The Worker Is The Samurai Of The Industrialised Country!"¹³

11 Ibid., p 61.

12 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 32, 15 March 1899, p 6.

13 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 75, 3 April 1901, p 1.

The Samurai Ethos

Behind those early socialists who had absorbed the samurai ethos lay a centuries old tradition of hostility to commerce. The reverse side of this coin was that, in contrast to the antagonism which the samurai had traditionally displayed towards the merchants as a class and towards trade in general, a long line of scholars throughout the more than 250 years of the Tokugawa period had sung the praises of the peasantry and of agriculture. Less than honest though this praise was, since it was accompanied by an unremitting exploitation and repression of the peasants, it nonetheless expressed the samurai's at least theoretical adherence to agrarian values.

The official class hierarchy of the Tokugawa regime was Shi Nō Kō Shō (samurai, peasants, artisans, merchants) - the merchants supposedly being the lowest class of all, although the economic influence they were able to exert belied their allegedly low social status. Like all ruling classes, the samurai defended their rule with an ideology which sought to explain and to justify their power and privileges. According to this, peasants were seen as the bedrock of society, fulfilling an essential economic function, while the samurai governed and maintained 'law and order'. Even the lowly artisans were sometimes recognised as being engaged in useful economic activity, but the merchants were condemned outright as parasites, mere "money-grubbers (who) buy cheap grain with dear coin and increase their goods", as one scholar (Muro Kyūsō, 1658-1734) put it.¹⁴ The grip of this ideology on the dominant thinkers in Tokugawa society is particularly well illustrated in the writings of Yamagata Bantō (1748-1821), for Yamagata presents the interesting example of a scholar, himself of merchant origins, who was yet highly critical of trade. Although to an extent advocating policies

14 Sources Of Japanese Tradition, R. Tsunoda et al. (eds.), New York, 1958, p 441.

which the merchant class could have turned to its own advantage, Yamagata was still at root an unambiguous champion of agrarian and samurai values. "Governing the country", he wrote, "consists of encouraging the peasants on the one hand, and suppressing manufacture and commerce and weakening the towns on the other. When the towns prosper, the countryside goes into decline. When the countryside prospers, the towns go into decline. It is nature's way."¹⁵

The contempt with which the samurai of the Tokugawa period regarded trade can also be conveyed by a few extracts from Fukuzawa Yukichi's autobiography. Born into a samurai family in 1835, Fukuzawa went on to play an important role in introducing Western thought into Japan in the Meiji era. Recalling his childhood, he writes:

I must mention a very important characteristic of our family. My father was really a scholar. And the scholars of the time, different from the Western scholars of today, disdained to spend any thought on money, or even to touch it. 16

Fukuzawa then tells the story of how his father sent the elder children to a teacher to study calligraphy and for general education.

.... having some merchants' children among his pupils, (the teacher) naturally began to train them in numerals: "Two times two is four, two times three is six, etc." This, today, seems a very ordinary thing to teach, but when my father heard this, he took his children away in a fury.

"It is abominable," he exclaimed, "that innocent children should be taught to use numbers - the tool of merchants. There is no telling what the teacher may do next." 17

Finally:

.... according to the convention among the warrior class, they were ashamed of being seen handling money. Therefore, it was customary for samurai to wrap their faces with hand-towels and go out after dark whenever they had an errand to do. 18

15 Nihon No Kakumei Shisō (Revolutionary Thought In Japan), Arisaka Takamichi (ed.), Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. II, p 161.

16 The Autobiography Of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Tōkyō, 1960, p 2.

17 Ibid., p 3.

18 Ibid., p 11.

Once traditional samurai thinking on money and commerce has been explained, the source of many of the ideas advanced by Kōtoku Shūsui in his apparently socialist article 'Abolish Money!' becomes clear. When Kōtoku argued: "Truly, a person lives by other things than money. Over and above money, there is strength and there is honour. There is right and there is duty...."¹⁹, he was echoing countless mouthpieces of the samurai class who had preceded him. As Muro Kyūsō had said more than 150 years before Kōtoku: "Nothing is more important to the samurai than duty. Second in importance comes life, and then money.... When faced with however unpleasant a duty, the way of the samurai consists in regarding his own wishes - even his life itself - as of less value than rubbish. How much less should he value money?"²⁰ In repeating these sort of sentiments, Kōtoku was writing more as a samurai than as a socialist.

Commodity Production

It is also important to understand that, despite its extravagant title, in 'Abolish Money!' Kōtoku was not presenting a criticism of capitalism which penetrated to the heart of the monetary economy. The socialist critique of capitalism - most forcefully expressed in Karl Marx's Capital - proceeds from the analysis of commodity production itself. It endeavours to show that the fundamental problems of capitalism arise from its being a system where production is carried on for the purpose of exchange on markets, rather than for the direct satisfaction of human needs. Rival capitals, which can be anything from petty companies to multinationals or nationally integrated blocs of capital, compete with each other (ultimately at the level of the world markets) to sell their products, and regulate their production

19 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. II, p 289.

20 R. Tsunoda et al., op. cit., pp 437-438.

according to what the markets can absorb. As a result, production is not under rational, human control - geared to the satisfaction of human needs - but is dictated instead by the blind forces of the world markets, which are a law unto themselves. Production thus slips out of conscious, human control and this gives rise to the problems which everyone is familiar with, such as chronic deprivation and need existing side by side with technically attainable - but economically unrealisable - levels of production.

As Marx put it in Capital, the paradox arises that although "Commodities are things, and therefore without power of resistance against man"²¹, nevertheless men's "relations to each other in production assume a material character independent of their control and conscious individual action. These facts manifest themselves at first by products as a general rule taking the form of commodities."²² Basing itself on this Marxist analysis of capitalism, socialist objections to money have rested not on moral strictures on the corrosive effect of lucre on human morals, but on a fundamental rejection of commodity production. Socialists have seen money as a problem firstly because it is itself a commodity, and secondly because it performs the special function of acting as the essential lubricant for the system of generalised commodity production known as capitalism.²³

Kōtoku's objections to money were of an entirely different order to those I have outlined above. Despite the catchword 'Abolish money!', Kōtoku was not opposed to money as such but only to the "unlimited"/ "omnipotent"²⁴ power which he felt money had come to have in the world.

21 Capital, Karl Marx, Chicago, 1919, Vol. I, p 96.

22 Ibid., p 105.

23 "Hence the riddle presented by money is but the riddle presented by commodities; only it now strikes us in its most glaring form." (Ibid., pp 105-106.)

24 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. II, pp 288ff.

He spelt this out in a further contribution to the Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) which appeared a couple of weeks after the original 'Abolish Money!' article. Also entitled 'Abolish Money!', this second article read in part:

Of course, we do not hate money when it serves simply as a medium of exchange, when it represents prices, or acts as a standard. In fact, if its use were restricted so that it was on a par with weights and measures, railway tickets, doctors' prescriptions and so on, no-one would see the need for its abolition. 25

This was the very opposite of the socialist objection to money. To say "we do not hate money when it serves simply as a medium of exchange" etc. was tantamount to accepting commodity production, the economic system of producing articles for the purpose of exchange on markets. Further on, Kōtoku wrote:

The trouble is, however, that money has unlimited power over and above its original use and purpose. Because of this, human nature is degraded, morality is ruined, freedom destroyed and equality overthrown. There will be no end to it until society and the state are driven to their ruin. So what our cry 'Abolish money!' signifies is the eradication of the meaning which so-called 'money' has nowadays. In other words, it signifies the eradication of the unlimited power which money has. 26

There were moral strictures aplenty here. Besides which, just as Kōtoku's previous insistence that honour and duty were more important than money brought to mind Muro Kyūsō, so his contention here that money is harmless providing it is kept in its place as a medium of exchange is reminiscent of the ideas of other Tokugawa scholars such as Miura Baien (1723-1789). For Miura, as for Kōtoku, money was an essentially neutral agency:

The function of gold and silver as well as of copper coins is to act as media of exchange and we call them money. They are scarce and

25 Ibid., pp 299-300.

26 Ibid., p 300.

small and help the movement of goods. Thus their functions are similar to those of ships and waggons.

27

Problems occurred only when "Money which should serve as a means of moving goods has become a master."²⁸ In a similar fashion to Kōtoku, Miura imagined that this trouble arose in a purely voluntaristic fashion - simply because people arbitrarily attached too great an importance to monetary symbols: "When gold and silver are esteemed highly, the Six Essentials* are depreciated and the national foundations become weakened."²⁹ Instead of seeing market forces as a Frankenstein monster outside of the rational control of individuals or classes, Miura - again like Kōtoku - insisted that "money being impersonal has no power of itself to cause suffering to humanity." "How can we imagine that gold and silver can harm humanity(?) Alas! It is humanity itself which causes money to do this harm".³⁰ This was the tradition from which Kōtoku Shūsui's attack on money derived and, unfortunately, it did not provide sufficient leverage for a socialist critique which could have cut through to the very roots of the monetary economy.

Yet, however strongly one might be able to criticise this samurai thinking on money as being inadequate from the socialist point of view, it ought to be added that, while its influence lasted, it did at least offer a potential for the development of a current of genuinely socialist thought in Japan. In contrast to the ideological barriers which obstruct the spread of socialist ideas in long-standing capitalist societies - where the aura surrounding money is such that any mention of dismantling

* Water, fire, wood, metal, soil and grain. Sometimes soil and grain were classified together; sometimes they were classified separately. This gave 5 or 6 'Essentials' ('elements') accordingly.

27 'An Introduction To Some Japanese Economic Writings Of The 18th Century', Neil Skene Smith, Transactions Of The Asiatic Society Of Japan, 1934, 2nd Series, Vol. XI, p 84.

28 Ibid., p 87.

29 Ibid., pp 84-85.

30 Ibid., p 87.

the monetary economy strikes most people as preposterous - there existed in Japan in this period a sizeable body of opinion that was (up to a point) hostile to money. The tragedy was, of course, that the social-democratic and other major, supposedly socialist influences from abroad which were acting on the early socialist movement in Japan were incapable of catalysing this potential. In addition, the opportunity disappeared rapidly anyway, as the social class which was the embodiment of this hostility to money was destroyed.

Money And The Peasants

By way of contrast to some of those early socialists who were of samurai origin, someone like Katayama Sen, who came from a peasant family, had little conception of the need for abolishing money. His book Wa Ga Shakaishugi (What Socialism Means For Me - Tōkyō, 1903) contained no such clear demand and, as far as one can tell, this was an accurate reflection of peasant attitudes towards money both before and after 1868. Although studies such as Shōji, Hayashi and Yasumaru's Minshū Undō No Shisō (The Thought Of Popular Movements)³¹ and Hugh Borton's Peasant Uprisings In Japan Of The Tokugawa Period³² disprove Katayama's idyllic representation of peasant life under the old regime,³³ they provide little evidence of peasant hostility to money. The samurai were opposed to the expansion of trade and to the increasingly crucial role which money came to play as the Tokugawa period progressed. For the samurai, this was a matter of 'principle', as it were, since in the long run their position as the ruling class was at stake in the struggle

31 Minshū Undō No Shisō (The Thought Of Popular Movements), Shōji Kichinosuke et al. (eds.), Tōkyō, 1970.

32 Peasant Uprisings In Japan Of The Tokugawa Period, Hugh Borton, Transactions Of The Asiatic Society Of Japan, 1938, 2nd Series, Vol. XVI.

33 "In the old days, there was in fact peace of mind in society. Society was happy too." (Wa Ga Shakaishugi - What Socialism Means For Me, Katayama Sen, Tōkyō, 1903, p 4.)

which was taking place throughout the Tokugawa period between a declining natural economy on the one hand and a rising monetary economy on the other. With the peasantry, though, it was different. Naturally, the peasants reacted fiercely against those additional hardships which the monetary economy imposed on them and they hated the merchants who, by their manipulation of the rice market and other devices, were doing better out of the monetary system than themselves. But they knew too well the oppression and the forced expropriation of their crops which the samurai practised to echo the samurai's defence of agrarian values. Incomplete though the evidence is, it suggests that, on balance, the Japanese peasantry favoured the monetary economy, even while lashing out in frequent uprisings at some of its harsher effects.

It is true that much of the violence of the peasants' uprisings was directed against merchants and money-lenders. An anonymous author writing about an uprising which he had witnessed in what is now Fukushima department in north-east Japan in 1866 expressed his antipathy for money-lenders with a true peasant's turn of phrase when he wrote that "those bastards who raise the interest rates on pawned articles are like the leeches which live in the rice seedling beds."³⁴ Yet, strong language though this was, it was far from being a condemnation of the monetary system itself. Indeed, there is nothing to suggest that Miura Meisuke (1820-1864) - who was accused by the Nambu fief (modern Iwate department in north-east Japan) authorities of having led an uprising there about 1854 - was anything but a typical peasant when he urged his children from his prison cell to "set their hearts on getting money".³⁵ This advice was given in a long letter he wrote home after he had been imprisoned as a rebel by the fief authorities and before he died in captivity. Part of Miura's instructions to his family in a later letter

34 Shōji et al., op. cit., p 284.

35 Ibid., p 43.

on how to become rich centred on undercutting competitors by selling cheaply in the struggle for economic survival.³⁶ Likewise, on another occasion, he encouraged them to "study the art of making money every night".³⁷ It would seem, in other words, that, unlike their samurai contemporaries, peasants such as Miura Meisuke entertained few qualms about the monetary economy.

Even though it is admittedly the views of the richer peasants and village headmen which tend to survive in the records of the Tokugawa period, one is still left with the impression that the Japanese peasantry - faced with the penetration of the money economy into their lives - displayed little opposition to money itself. It seems that by the Tokugawa period money was already too firmly established to provoke such a response from the peasants, that the peasants were already too accustomed to thinking in terms of (at least partial) production for the market to be able to consider the abolition of money as a possibility. Among the samurai, however, there were already even in Tokugawa days significant numbers who - despite the fact that their class as a whole continued to hold political power - economically were being driven to the wall. Samurai scholars understood that the relative impoverishment of their class could be traced back to the development of the market economy and the rise of the merchants as an economic force in society - and expressed this conviction in their attacks on money, confused though these often were. Thus one can say that Katayama Sen was remaining true to his peasant background when he wrote Wa Ga Shakaishugi (What Socialism Means For Me), just as Kōtoku Shūsui was revealing the samurai influences acting on him when he wrote 'Kinsen O Haishi Seyo' ('Abolish Money!'). Paradoxically, it was some of those political activists who (like Kōtoku) identified with the impoverished sections of the old ruling class who came closest to genuine socialism in the period extending up to the end

36 Ibid., p 55.

37 Ibid., p 65.

of the Russo-Japanese War and not those like Katayama with their roots in the perennially oppressed peasantry.

Confucianism

Another constituent element in the thought of the Meiji socialists was Confucianism. Lengthy study of the Confucian classics was, during this period, part and parcel of a normal education but there were those among the early socialists whose familiarity with these texts went far beyond the passages they had been forced to commit to memory during their schooldays. Sakai Toshihiko was said in 1903 still to be "someone who regularly loves to read the Analects Of Confucius and the Mencius"³⁸ and both he and Kōtoku Shūsui referred to the Confucian influence on them in their 'Yo Wa Ika Ni Shite Shakaishugisha To Narishi Ka' ('How I Became A Socialist') contributions to Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper).³⁹ Kōtoku also wrote in a letter to Hayashi Sanjūrokurō: "I came to socialism from Confucianism"⁴⁰, while Sakai in his Jiden (Autobiography) said that it was the Confucian concept of 'michi o okonau' (acting virtuously - literally, 'practising the way') which led him to become a socialist.⁴¹ To the extent that they were saying that an important area of their thought remained rooted in Confucianism, these assertions of Kōtoku's and Sakai's were perfectly correct. Their claims that they had followed a Confucian path to 'socialism', however, need to be treated with a considerable amount of scepticism.

To give them their due, those like Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko did try to apply their Confucianism to the problems of the day and made

38 'Ko Chōmin Koji Tsuitō Kai No Ki' ('Report Of The Meeting To Commemorate The Late (Nakae) Chomin'), Kōtoku Shūsui, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 6, 20 December 1903, p 6.

39 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 8, 3 January 1904, p 9 and No. 10, 17 January 1904, p 5.

40 Undated letter to Hayashi Sanjūrokurō. Collected in Kōtoku Shūsui No Nikki To Shokan (The Diaries And Letters Of Kotoku Shusui), Shiota Shōbee (ed.), Tōkyō, 1965, p 343.

41 Kōtoku Shūsui, Nishio Yōtarō, Tōkyō, 1964, p 13.

an attempt to draw conclusions that were both Confucian and socialist. In particular, during the period of the Russo-Japanese War, they did their best - while starting from Confucian premises - to argue for an internationalist and anti-war position. Thus Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) carried an article in January 1904 on 'Mōshi No Kokusai Kan' ('Mencius' International Outlook')⁴² and the opening words of an anti-war speech which Sakai made at a public meeting in Tōkyō on 8 October 1903 were:

Friends! This morning I sat down quietly by myself and read Mencius in order to gain inspiration for this speech.... His clear, concise statement about "abhorring the killing of people" sunk deep into my brain and impressed me as being indeed the words of a noble and benevolent person.

43

What followed were numerous references to Confucius and several further quotations from Mencius' writings but, of course, on the basis of this Confucianism, Sakai could develop his case no further in this speech than simple pacifism. There was nothing in Mencius that could provide the inspiration for an analysis of the coming war in terms of social class, showing which classes' interests were at stake in the struggle between Russia and Japan and which classes would pay the price in deaths and general hardship.

If Confucian teachings left a lot to be desired on the question of war, they were downright reactionary in their implications in many other spheres. Confucianism may be a doctrine of 'benevolence' ('rén' in Chinese; 'jin' in Japanese) and 'righteousness' ('yì' in Chinese; 'gi' in Japanese) but these and the other Confucian virtues are still to be exercised within the framework of a society that is stratified along class and other lines. Mencius might have asserted that "a wise

42 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 11, 24 January 1904, p 7.

43 'Sensō Wa Jinrui No Saidai Zaiaku Nari' ('War Is Humankind's Greatest Crime'), Sakai Kosen (Toshihiko), Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 23, 3 November 1903, p 1204.

ruler is always modest and respectful to those below him and restricts the amount that he takes from the people".⁴⁴ Yet that same ruler - however 'wise' he may be - continues both to rule and to take, no matter how 'modestly' and 'respectfully' he does so and despite the limitations which he imposes on himself. During the period which is being considered here, which extended up to 1905, the socialists in Japan expressed very few doubts about these Confucian nostrums. On the contrary, Kōtoku Shūsui publicly declared himself in favour of Confucianism as an instrument of "moral education" in Japan⁴⁵ and another feature of the article 'Kokka No Ryūsei To Rōdōsha' ('The Prosperity Of The State And The Workers') by Kawakami Kiyoshi, which has already been referred to in relation to the parallel it drew between wage workers and samurai, was its Confucian minponshugi. Minponshugi is a word which the dictionaries choose to translate as 'democracy' but what it literally means is 'making the people the basis'. In practice, minponshugi concerns itself not with the attainment of a democratic condition where all men and women can relate to one another as equals but instead with the problem of ensuring that those in positions of power treat those beneath them with compassion. In his article Kawakami Kiyoshi concentrated his attack not on the existence of political power as such but on the fact that too few politicians in Japan showed sympathy for the workers. As an example of how politicians should behave he offered.... Gladstone! Since the people are the basis of the state, one should look after them well, insisted Kawakami. One's motives for doing so were exactly the same as those of the builder who ensures that a house has good foundations - and, to illustrate the point, Kawakami referred to the semi-mythical fourth century Japanese Emperor Nintoku.

44 Mencius, Section T'eng W'en Gōng, Part 1, 3.

45 'Ko Chōmin Kōji Tsuito Kai No Ki' ('Report Of The Meeting To Commemorate The Late (Nakae) Chōmin'), Kōtoku Shūsui, Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 6, 20 December 1903, p 6.

Nintoku was supposed to have been a model of benevolence, since he was said to have exempted the people from taxes for three years at one stage during his rule.⁴⁶ The example of Emperor Nintoku is one which the early socialists were particularly fond of quoting and it is one which I shall have cause to come back to again below.

Steeped in Confucianism as the pioneer socialists in Japan were, they were quite unable to see the state as the instrument by means of which one social class maintains its rule over other classes, which it oppresses. Mencius and the Confucian scholars who had followed him had constantly looked back to a golden age of supposedly 'good government', when semi-mythical rulers had "comforted the people like a timely fall of rain".⁴⁷ Mencius had said that "the former kings could not bear to let people suffer and therefore they ruled compassionately. If - not bearing to let people suffer - one ruled compassionately, one could govern the world as easily as turning it over in one's hand."⁴⁸ Having been brought up on a doctrine of this type, it was perhaps only natural that the early Japanese socialists should have been opposed not to the state and to the institution of government itself, but simply to the way in which the state manifested itself in Meiji Japan and to the corrupt governments of the time. Just as the case argued by Kōtoku Shūsui in his 'Kinsen O Haishi Seyo' ('Abolish Money!') article fell short of what its title suggested, so another contribution to Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) - 'Hi Seiji Ron' ('Against Politics!') - which he wrote in January 1899 was not, in the end, the socialist piece it appeared to be. Despite its opening declaration ("Do not believe in politics!"⁴⁹), taken as a whole, the article was more a criticism of

46 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 32, 15 March 1899, p 6 and No. 33, 1 April 1899, p 6.

47 Mencius, Section Liáng Hui Wáng, Part 2, 11.

48 Ibid., Section Gōng Sūn Chǒu, Part 1, 6.

49 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. II, p 165.

the quality of the Meiji governments than it was of government itself, was more a condemnation of the priorities of Meiji politics than of politics as such and was more a denunciation of the ends to which the autocratic rule of the oligarchs (genrō*) was directed than it was a protest against authority stifling freedom. In a similar vein, an anonymous article in Rōdō Sekai (Labour World)'s regular 'Shakaishugi' ('Socialism') column, which appeared in the issue for 1 July 1901, blamed what it saw as the deplorable situation in Italy on the government of that country. It commented: "There is the proof of Confucius' saying that tyrannical government is more terrifying than even the tiger".⁵⁰ Due in a large measure to their Confucianism, it was tyrannical (as opposed to 'compassionate') government and bad (as opposed to 'good') government that the socialists of this period were opposed to; not government itself.

Taoism

Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko's attitude towards the Russo-Japanese War and the views of the early socialists on the state were not the only ways in which the influence of Confucianism manifested itself in this period. Confucianism also contributed to the elitist inclinations of the early socialists and to the support they gave to the monarchy. Before going on to consider these other aspects of socialist thought as it emerged in Japan, however, I want to pursue the question of the state a little further and briefly mention the unrealised potential which Taoism offered the socialists for developing a more critical approach to governmental power.

* See glossary.

50 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 83, 1 July 1901, p 2. I am grateful to Midorikawa Taeko for drawing my attention to the fact that this description of despotic government derives from the Li Ji (Section Tān Gōng, Part 2). The Li Ji is one of the Confucian classics.

In China Taoism had a centuries old tradition of opposition to the official Confucian ideology of the imperial regime, although one of the problems encountered in trying to define Taoism at all accurately arises from the fact that there was a tendency in China to apply a 'Taoist' label to almost any doctrine that lay outside the pale of Confucian orthodoxy. This is not a problem in the Japanese context, since - unlike China - in Japan Taoism never existed in any organised fashion. Despite Taoism's lack of an organised following in Japan, however, the Taoist classics were known and were reasonably widely read. Fukuzawa Yukichi mentions in his autobiography how at school he studied Láo-zǐ and Zhuāng-zǐ⁵¹, along with many of the other ancient Chinese philosophers, and the type of early education he received seems to have been common among the samurai of his day. As for the socialists, Kōtoku was probably quite typical when he wrote in 1906 that he too had been reading Láo-zǐ and Zhuāng-zǐ from an early age.⁵² It also cannot be without significance that Kōtoku's assumed personal name of 'Shūsui' ('autumn floods' - his real name was Kōtoku Denjirō) was taken from the opening words of Chapter 17 of Zhuāng-zǐ: "At the time of the autumn floods...."⁵³ Indeed, as late as 1974 I found evidence of the former influence of Láo-zǐ in Japan when I was interviewing some of the oldest surviving anarchist militants, men such as Wada Eitarō⁵⁴ and Shirai Shimpei.⁵⁵

51 Fukuzawa, op. cit., p 8.

52 'Ōkubo Yori' ('From Okubo'), Kōtoku Shūsui, Hikari (Light) No. 30, 15 December 1906, p 5.

53 I am grateful to Matsuzawa Hiroaki for pointing out to me that Kōtoku inherited the name Shūsui from his teacher, Nakae Chōmin, who also greatly appreciated Láo-zǐ and Zhuāng-zǐ.

54 Wada Eitarō was a founder-member of the newspaper printworkers' trade union, the Sei Shin Kai, formed in 1919, and was active in the anarchist trade union movement for many years after that. (See Nihon Anakizumu Rōdō Undō Shi - History Of The Anarchist Labour Movement In Japan, Hagiwara Shintarō, Tōkyō, 1969, pp 60, 94, 114, 174.) I interviewed Wada in Tōkyō on 28 April 1974.

55 Shirai Shimpei was active in the Kantō Rōdō Kumiai Rengō Kai (Federation of Kanto*-district Trade Unions) and in the Kokushoku Seinen Renmei (Black Youth League - black being the traditional colour of the anarchist flag), set up in 1926 and normally referred to as the Kokuren. (See Hagiwara, op. cit., pp 173-174.) In an interview with Shirai in Tokyo on 29 April 1974, he explained

Both Wada and Shirai were born in the Meiji era and both readily quoted Láo-zǐ at me - something which I found differentiated them from later generations of militants, anarchist or otherwise.

In contrast to Confucianism, with its emphasis on the need for a wise ruler and compassionate government, the Taoist classics implied that the less government there was the better. Both Láo-zǐ and Zhuāng-zǐ argued against authority and the imposing of constraints on people and, oblique though their language was, some of their pronouncements sounded remarkably like denunciations of the state. As Zhuāng-zǐ put it at one point:

I have heard of leaving society alone but
I have never heard of governing it....
If society's natural character is not
debased and its natural goodness not
interfered with, there will be no need
for anyone to rule society.

56

Yet, taken as a whole, Taoism was not a doctrine of militant opposition to the state. Rather it was a philosophy based on quiescence, characterised by mystical calls for abstention from all action. "When people study, day by day they accumulate knowledge, but when one practises the way, day by day one divests oneself of encumbrances", was what Láo-zǐ was alleged to have said. "One throws off encumbrances - and then throws off still more, until a stage is reached where one has nothing to do. One does nothing and yet there is nothing that one leaves undone."⁵⁷ In the final analysis, political rule was not excluded from the Taoist scheme of things but the principle of inaction applied to the rulers as much as (if not more than) it did to anyone else. "The best rulers are those whose subjects are unaware of them except for the mere fact of their existence", one finds in Láo-zǐ⁵⁸ and Zhuāng-zǐ

to me that he knew Láo-zǐ long before he became acquainted with Western anarchist ideas.

* See glossary.

56 Zhuāng-zǐ, Chapter 11 (Zài Yòu).

57 Láo-zǐ, Chapter 48.

58 Ibid., Chapter 17.

quotes Chí Zhāng Mǎn Jī to the effect that "In a world of perfect virtue.... rulers are no more than the higher branches of the trees while the people are like the wild deer."⁵⁹

As can be seen, there was an element within Taoism that was anti-state and anti-government, but it was muted by the mystical obscurantism with which it was presented. Because of this, in Japan the writings of Láo-zǐ and Zhuāng-zǐ were ineffective even in the limited sense of providing a counter-balance to Confucian notions of 'good government'. How much more inadequate were they, then, as a basis for a socialist analysis of the state? It was only at a later stage, outside of the period being dealt with here, that - following the absorption of anarchist ideas from abroad - the 'anarchist' element within Taoism was recognised and Láo-zǐ and Zhuāng-zǐ were belatedly adopted into the pantheon of 'anarchist' thinkers.⁶⁰ Until that time, and without the impetus provided by Western anarchist thought, the criticism of the state implicit within Taoism had no effective influence on the early socialists in Japan.

Elitism

There was nothing surprising in the fact that the early socialists in Japan should have regarded themselves as an elite. On the contrary, it would have been strange had they not done so when one considers the ideas they inherited from traditional Japanese society. Elitism came naturally to those who identified with the samurai. A common saying of the Tokugawa period declared: "Among blossoms, it is the cherry which takes pride of place. Among people, it is the samurai." Those socialists who came from samurai families did not easily relinquish this image of themselves as the flower of society. Secondly, as was

59 Zhuāng-zǐ, Chapter 12 (Tiān Dì).

60 For example, as a modern anarchist commentator puts it: "In the East, anarchism is normally represented by Láo-zǐ and Zhuāng-zǐ." (Anakizumu Shisō Shi - A History Of Anarchist Thought, Ōsawa Masamichi, Tōkyō, 1971, p 28.)

mentioned before, Confucianism also inclined the socialists towards elitism. The distinction between 'gentry' and 'people' was crucial to the Confucians and - so the story went - it was not the mere ownership of material possessions which separated the 'gentry' from the rest. Again and again one finds in Mencius: "It is only the gentry whose hearts can remain constant even when they have no fixed livelihood. In the case of the people, if they have no fixed livelihood, their hearts are not constant either."⁶¹ The attraction of this teaching for the impoverished samurai of the Meiji era needs no special stressing. In addition, its appeal was bound to be heightened still further if, as well as being of samurai origin, one was also a hard-up intellectual (as so many of the early socialists were) deprived of a secure career in journalism or one of the other professions because of one's beliefs. There are no prizes for guessing where the distinction between 'right-minded gentlemen' and 'ordinary people' came from in Sakai Toshihiko's article 'I Shoku Jū No Yoku' ('The Desire For Food, Clothing And Shelter') which appeared in the Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) on 24 December 1902.

Right-minded young gentlemen must sternly control their desire for food, clothing and shelter and admonish all thoughts of idleness and luxury. But one certainly should not hope to see such attitudes emerge among the majority of ordinary people, on a scale wider than among what I call 'right-minded' people.

62

Even when Sakai developed this argument further to the point of introducing the concept of what he imagined to be 'socialism', he was not straying from Confucianism's well-worn paths. For had not Mencius constantly urged the rulers of his day to see to it that their subjects' bellies were full, since only when they were assured of the basic comforts would they prove amenable to improvement? Thus Sakai persisted:

61 Mencius, Section Liáng Hui Wáng, Part 1, 7.

62 Translated here from Matsuzawa, op. cit., p 62.

If one wishes to stimulate the ordinary people into desiring something higher than food, clothing and shelter, one must reform the present organisation of society from its very basis. In other words, one must build a society which guarantees the ordinary people their food, clothing and shelter. One must build a society which achieves equality of food, clothing and shelter for the common people. To put it in a nutshell, one must put socialism into practice. Only after socialism has been put into practice, when food, clothing and shelter have been guaranteed and made equal, should one begin to hope that the ordinary people will truly start to desire something higher than food, clothing and shelter.

63

In the true elitist Confucian style, society was to be reformed for the 'ordinary people'. Until this had been done for 'them', 'they' could hardly be considered responsible for their actions - let alone for their own emancipation.

A third (and perhaps, in the end, the most compelling) reason for the elitism of the early Japanese socialists was that they were continually haunted by the capitalist revolution of 1868 and by the shishi revolutionaries who had brought it about. In the period which extended up to 1905, the upheaval of 1868 was still an event within living memory for many people and the shishi were popular heroes. For the socialists in particular 1868 was their constant touchstone, a boiling up of resentment against a corrupt regime which they tirelessly referred back to⁶⁴ and which they expected to re-occur at any moment - only this time in the form of a 'socialist' revolution. Similarly, the shishi - the relative handful of courageous and self-sacrificing revolutionaries who had been prepared to throw away their lives for what they believed in - were the ideal types on whom the Meiji socialists sought to model themselves. Yet, just because 1868 had been a capitalist revolution, the fascination which its shishi heroes had for the early socialists in Japan became another barrier to the latter's

63 Ibid., p 62.

64 Examples are legion but see, for example, Abe Iso's Shakaishugi Ron (Socialism), Tōkyō, 1903, p 7.

understanding the type of social change that would be needed in order to achieve a socialist society. If socialism is to be a new society, fundamentally different from capitalism, it requires new men and women, who become 'new' by changing themselves as they struggle to change society. With the example of the romantic heroes of Japan's capitalist revolution to haunt them, however, the early socialists looked to elitist action by a small minority instead of to a movement for self-liberation at the base of society.

In November 1898, in yet another of his contributions to the Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) newspaper ('Shakai Fuhai No Genin To Sono Kyūji' - 'The Causes Of Society's Decay And Its Cure'), Kōtoku Shūsui maintained that social reconstruction had to come from an elite composed of "people of virtue and righteous persons" (the expression is a Confucian one) who act for the people as a whole.⁶⁵ The type of political activist Kōtoku envisaged when he used a phrase like "people of virtue and righteous persons" was the shishi revolutionary Yoshida Shōin. What appealed to Kōtoku and the other early socialists about Yoshida was his spirit of self-sacrifice and his dedication to the revolutionary cause. That Yoshida had also been intensely nationalist and a monarchist into the bargain did not diminish their admiration for him and, interestingly enough, the Japanese socialists were greatly inspired as well by the legend of Ferdinand Lassalle⁶⁶, the German labour leader who had exhibited similar traits to Yoshida's. In fact, in a book which he wrote on Lassalle, Kōtoku specifically compared the German labour leader with Yoshida Shōin and wrote that among modern revolutionaries Lassalle and Yoshida were the "persons who exhibited best of all, without

65 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1970, Vol. II, p 155.

66 ".... Lassalle appealed more to Katayama's romanticism than to his intellect. Many other pioneers in the Japanese social movement were also to be attracted to the German socialist...." (Asian Revolutionary, Hyman Kublin, Princeton, 1964, p 71.)

any flaws, the true characteristics of full-blooded men".⁶⁷ It was a fine samurai compliment which Kōtoku paid them. But, precisely for that reason, it failed to criticise the elitist flamboyance which characterised both Yoshida and Lassalle.

Needless to say, the socialists pictured themselves as shishi in the Yoshida and Lassalle moulds. Sakai Toshihiko and Kōtoku Shūsui struck the pose of shishi fulfilling their duty to society in the joint statement which they issued on resigning from the Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) when it came out in support of war with Russia in 1903.⁶⁸ Sakai also paid both Kōtoku and Kinoshita Naōe the intended compliment of describing them as "oriental shishi" in his Nihon Shakaishugi Undō Shōshi (A Short History Of The Socialist Movement In Japan).⁶⁹ Yet perhaps it was the Ōsaka Shū Hō (Osaka Weekly News) which best captured the spirit of the times in its references to "shishi and people of virtue". According to an article in its first issue in 1899, the mark of "shishi and people of virtue" was that they made socialism their principle and gave their sympathy to the poor and to the workers.⁷⁰ 'Socialism' for the Ōsaka Shū Hō was a doctrine of mercy - in other words, of selfless 'socialists' coming to the assistance of 'the poor' and 'the workers'. Perhaps understandably (given the weakness of the working class in Japan at that time) the early socialists could envisage 'socialism' only as a gospel of elitist self-sacrifice, never as a means of working class self-liberation.

67 Rasaaru, Kōtoku Shūsui. Reproduced in Meiji Shakaishugi Shiryo Soshō (Materials On Meiji Socialism), Arahata Kanson and Ōta Masao (eds.), Tōkyō, 1972, Vol. IV, p 237.

68 Kanson Jiden (Kanson's Autobiography), Arahata Kanson, Tōkyō, 1974, p 3.

69 Nihon Shakaishugi Undō Shōshi (A Short History Of The Socialist Movement In Japan), Sakai Toshihiko, Shakaishugi (Socialism) No. 3, 1 December 1920, p 46.

70 Nihon Shakaishugi Shi (A History Of Japanese Socialism), Kimura Tsuyoshi, Tōkyō, no date given but probably 1926 or 1927, p 50.

The Monarchy

To cap it all, support for the monarchy was rife among the early socialists in Japan. As with their elitism, the awe with which so many of the socialists regarded the imperial family was, to a certain extent, inevitable. Caught under the spell of a capitalist revolution whose principal rallying cry had been "Sonnō Jōi" ("Revere the Emperor and Expel the Barbarians!") and influenced by a philosophy which took its standards of benevolence, righteousness and so on from the supposedly model kings of antiquity, support for the monarchy came all but naturally. On 18 April 1903, for example, the magazine Shakaishugi (Socialism) quoted with appreciation a poem by "her majesty the Empress".⁷¹ There was also an interesting juxtaposition of remarks on the English page of Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) in its May Day issue for 1900. One of the news items read:

On the 10th of May 1900, the Imperial Wedding of the (sic) H.I.H. the Crown Prince and Princess Kujio will take place. The whole nation will rejoice at (sic) this occasion by lighting lanterns and raising the flags. Our laborers, who can not get a Sunday rest will get an opportunity to celebrate this grandest, solemest (sic) and gladdest occasion of the Empire!

72

The above was in odd contrast to the 'May Day!' editorial, with its confident announcement that "We are class conscious already....!"⁷³

There was a glaring contradiction here. Socialism signifies the construction of a classless society and yet here in Japan were so-called socialists justifying a blatant symbol of class divisions within society such as the monarchy. The way in which the early Japanese socialists attempted to resolve this contradiction was to argue that oriental monarchies were somehow different from royalty as it existed in the West.

71 Shakaishugi (Socialism) Vol. VII, No. 10, 18 April 1903, p 810.

72 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 60, 1 May 1900, p 8.

73 Ibid., p 8.

Perhaps the best example of this line of argument was Kōtoku Shūsui's essay 'Shakaishugi To Kokutai' ('Socialism And The National Polity') which was published in the Rikugō Zasshi (Universe Magazine) in November 1902. Here Kōtoku contrasted a despotic European king such as Louis XIV of France with two proverbially benevolent oriental rulers - the fourth century Japanese Emperor Nintoku (the same Emperor as Kawakami Kiyoshi had praised) and the ancient Chinese King Wén (a byword for virtue among Confucians).⁷⁴ Kōtoku's conclusion was that, with a monarch such as Emperor Nintoku or King Wén on the throne, a supposedly socialist society could perfectly well incorporate Japan's imperial institutions. In painfully loyal and patriotic prose, he wrote:

.... according to its normal interpretation, in Japan our monarchical form of government is called the kokutai.* Nay, rather than a mere 'monarchical form of government', it is our imperial line lasting unbroken for 2500 years which we call the 'kokutai'. This 'imperial line lasting unbroken for 2500 years' is certainly something the like of which has never been heard before - in the past or in the present, in the East or in the West. For we Japanese it can only be something in which we take the greatest pride. It is not without reason that when we hear words such as kokutai all of us alike feel our hearts begin to throb. Yet doesn't socialism really stand in direct contradiction to what is called the kokutai - in other words, to the existence of our imperial line unbroken for 2500 years? Confronted by this question, I can reply emphatically that it does not.

75

Kōtoku Shūsui was not simply saying here that 'socialism' could somehow be harnessed to monarchical authority. As far as he was concerned, in the Orient at any rate, the great monarchs of the past had all been splendid "democrats", whose rule had itself amounted to

* Generally translated as 'national polity'.

74 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1968, Vol. IV, p 535.

75 Ibid., p 532.

"a form of socialism"! ⁷⁶ "A socialist like King Wén" was one of the phrases Kōtoku used ⁷⁷ and "an imperial will like the Emperor Nintoku's was", he claimed, "in exact conformity and agreement with socialism". ⁷⁸ These were things which "oriental socialists should be proud of". ⁷⁹ Kōtoku believed that the reigns of these largely mythical rulers had been periods of outstanding benevolence but whether this belief bore any relation to historical fact is neither here nor there from the point of view of this study. What it is important to realise is that for Kōtoku "a form of socialism" could be something bestowed from above onto a grateful and compliant people below! The same went for Yano Fumio in his novel Shin Shakai (The New Society). The 'new' society described by Yano was itself a monarchy and Yano gave the "wisdom" of its emperor as one of the reasons for its having been attained. (Additional reasons were the foresight of its scholars and the altruism of the capitalists!) ⁸⁰

Ideas such as these had tenacious roots within the early socialist movement in Japan and, more than that, reflected just how widespread respect for the Emperor and deference towards authority were throughout Japanese society in the Meiji era. A full twenty years before Kōtoku wrote his essay on 'Shakaishugi To Kokutai' ('Socialism And The National Polity') and Yano Fumio his Shin Shakai (The New Society), the very first political group in Japan which had chosen to call itself socialist had been briefly organised. This was the Tōyō Shakaitō (Oriental Socialist Party) which, as was indicated in Chapter 2, was formed in the Saga/Nagasaki region of south-west Japan on 25 May 1882 and subsequently ordered by the government to disband on 7 July of the same

76 Ibid., p 533.

77 Ibid., p 535.

78 Ibid., p 535.

79 Ibid., pp 535-536.

80 Shin Shakai (The New Society), Yano Fumio, Tōkyō, 1902, p 14.

year. In the Tōyō Shakaitō's case, its plans for 'socialism' were based, if not on imperial charity, then at least on the efforts of a former lord of the Nabeshima fief to help impoverished peasants during the final years of the Tokugawa period. Lord Nabeshima was said to have put the lands of the rich at the disposal of poor peasants, free of any charges, and this led Tarui Tōkichi - one of the founders of the Tōyō Shakaitō - to write that Nabeshima's policy "was the first instance of putting socialism into practice in modern times"!⁸¹

The equating of imperial and aristocratic benevolence with 'socialism' was thus well established in the Japanese socialist movement and it continued well beyond the period extending up to the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 which I am concerned with here. To give just one example, it has already been mentioned in Chapter 2* how in 1909 Abe Isō was still referring to the monarchical origins of 'socialism' in Japan - and similar claims were to be made even as late as the 1930s. The best that can be said for the socialist movement in Japan is that, under the strain of the war against Russia and in response to the increasing repression which they suffered, the better elements among the socialists started to perceive the iron fist of the state lurking inside the deceptive softness of the imperial glove. It was exceedingly dangerous to publicly criticise the monarchy but an item which appeared in the English-language column of Chokugen (Straight Talking) in March 1905 gave a hint of what some of the socialists were secretly beginning to think by this stage. Under the headline 'A Lawsuit Between The Imperial Household And The People', there was a report of a case which had been heard in a district court which involved land held by the royal family on one of its estates. The article concluded:

It was all nonsense as usual. But the fact
- the bare fact of dispute of the Imperial

* See Chapter 2, note 1.

81 Reimeiki No Nihon Rōdō Undō (The Labour Movement In Japan In The Dawn Period), Ōkōchi Kazuo, Tōkyō, 1973, p 30.

household against the people - means very much in itself. We can not say of this matter more than "means very much".

82

Presumably, the very fact that this cautiously worded piece appeared in English was significant, since there was less chance of the police grasping its meaning than had it been in Japanese.

Given the views which he had held on the monarchy only a short while before, the impact of the war on Kōtoku Shūsui's thought was particularly remarkable. Shortly after being released from prison (where he had served 5 months for offences against the press laws) on 28 July 1905, Kōtoku wrote to the American anarchist Albert Johnson that he wanted to travel abroad. Despite the oddities of the English in which he wrote this letter, Kōtoku's newly found hostility towards the Emperor was forcefully expressed. One of the reasons he gave for planning to visit the USA was that he wished to "criticize freely the position of the (sic) 'His Majesty' and the political, economic and institutions (sic) from foreign land where the pernicious hand of 'His Majesty' cannot reach."⁸³

Compared to his utterances of only 3 years before, Kōtoku Shūsui had certainly come a long way by the summer of 1905. Together with some of the other socialists, he had succeeded in shaking off at least one of the most crippling influences from the old society which had been acting on him up till then. The story of what was to happen after he visited the USA belongs to Part II of this study.

82 Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 6, 12 March 1905, p 1.

83 Letter to Albert Johnson dated 10 August 1905. Collected in Shiota, op. cit., p 434.

CHAPTER 6.

Japanese 'Socialism' To 1905

In this short chapter I will endeavour to draw together the threads of the discussion so far. It is hoped that by doing so a more integrated picture of 'socialism' as it existed in Japan up to 1905 can be conveyed and also that a decision can be reached about what it was precisely that this 'socialism' added up to.

It has been shown that this earliest phase in the history of the socialist movement in Japan took place against an economic background the main features of which were a low level of capitalist development and a numerically weak and physically unstable working class. It has also been shown that the socialist thought found in Japan in this period was derived from various sources in the West - principally Russian populism, German social-democracy and the different brands of 'socialism' which were currently popular in a number of English-speaking countries. On the other hand, the ways in which this Western socialist thought was understood by the Japanese socialists depended very much on those traditional influences which continued to act on them as a legacy from the old society of Tokugawa days. Hence it can be said that Japanese 'socialism' was an amalgam of the new and the old, of imported Western and traditional Japanese influences.

By the end of the period extending up to 1905 most socialists in Japan entertained a statist image of 'socialism'. They believed that the way to realise 'socialism' lay through the diet. They also held that socialists must engage in efforts to reform capitalism for as long as that social system lasts. The socialists regarded themselves as an elite and looked upon the working class as an object to be helped, rather than as the subject of a socialist revolution. Christianity had many adherents among the socialists in Japan and this religion coloured many of their attitudes, as also did the philosophy of Confucianism.

By 1905 there were signs that some of the socialists had shaken off the illusions they had formerly held about the monarchy. In Japan in the 1880s 'socialism' had tended to be identified with terrorism. Later the influence exerted by the SPD had counter-acted this tendency but, as the Russo-Japanese War drew to a close, there were indications that Kōtoku Shūsui was becoming impressed by the Russian SRs and their tactic of assassination.

These were the elements from which 'socialism' in Japan was made up, yet the actual process of synthesising these different elements into a doctrine which would be seen to relate to conditions in Meiji Japan presented the Japanese socialists with problems which were not easy to solve. It was tempting, especially for those socialists who had been educated abroad, to mimic the language of Western socialist texts. Abe Isō, for one, talked in his Shakaishugi Ron (Socialism) about the "third" ("san kyūdan") and "fourth estates" ("yon kyūdan")¹, terms which must have been completely incomprehensible to most Japanese. Then again, even the section heading "Socialism Or Slavery?" ("Shakaishugi Ka Dorei Ka") found in one of the essays by American social-democrats which were collected in the volume Shakaishugi Nyūmon (Introduction To Socialism)² would have mystified many readers, for - unlike the situation in the West - slavery had never at any stage in Japan's history been widely practised and the word dorei (slave) was not understood by many Japanese in the Meiji era. In his Heiminsha Jidai (The Heiminsha Period) Arahata Kanson recalls a meeting held during this period where one of the speakers slipped into the clichés of European social-democracy and used the expression "wage slaves" when talking about the working class. Nonplussed, one of the blue-collar workers in his audience wanted to know: "What is a slave?"³

1 Shakaishugi Ron (Socialism), Abe Isō, Tōkyō, 1903, p 40.

2 Shakaishugi Nyūmon (Introduction To Socialism), Heiminsha, Tōkyō, 1904, p 24.

3 Heiminsha Jidai (The Heiminsha Period), Arahata Kanson, Tōkyō, 1973, p 54.

Some of the best attempts that were made to deal with these problems were short leaflets distributed by the Heiminsha (Heimin Society - the publishing group which brought out first the Heimin Shimbun and later Chokugen) in which the socialists sought to explain their ideas in popular language, using imagery that would be readily understood. Two of these leaflets have been translated and appear in this volume as appendices 2 and 3. As can be seen by referring to these translations, both these tracts are still open to serious criticisms. 'Socialism' was described in them as though it could exist within the confines of Japan and totally misleading expressions were used, such as "the common ownership of.... capital". Also, class divisions were formulated as though between the "rich" and the "poor".* Despite these and other criticisms which can be made, however, these leaflets probably showed the Japanese socialists of this period at their best.

The very idea of holding a "Workers' Cherry Blossom Viewing Outing" (see Appendix 2) was an attempt by the socialists to adapt political activity to Japanese customs and preferences and the language in which the leaflet for distribution at this outing was written was simple but attractive. For example, the parallel drawn between a socialist society and a "family picnicking in the park and enjoying the cherry blossom"⁴ was cleverly chosen and was likely to appeal to the average Japanese working man or woman. At any rate, the police evidently feared that it would, since it was reported that they broke up the outing and made several arrests - although it appears that the socialists still managed to distribute copies of the leaflet.⁵ Similarly, Sakai Toshihiko showed

* I have already discussed the inadequacy of "gentleman clique" and "common people" as renderings of bourgeoisie and proletariat (in the final section of Chapter 3 - in connection with Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto).

4 'Shakaishugi No Geki' ('A Socialist Appeal'), Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 9, 2 April 1905, p 7.

5 'Rōdōsha Kanōkai No Ki' ('Report Of The Workers' Cherry Blossom Viewing Outing'), Ishikawa Sanshiro, Chokugen (Straight Talking) No. 10, 9 April 1905, p 7.

considerable skill as well when (in the leaflet to commemorate the first anniversary of his wife's death - Appendix 3) he described the hardships facing the poor in Meiji Japan by means of constant reference to the glaring injustices of the class-ridden society of Tokugawa days. When he compared the slow death by starvation which faced the unemployed in 1905 with sudden, violent death at the hands of a sword-wielding samurai, which had often been the fate of the lower classes in Tokugawa days, it could not have failed to have made a powerful impression on many of his readers. Leaving aside the theoretical deficiencies of these tracts, the example of these leaflets does at least show the better elements among the Japanese socialists making serious efforts to creatively apply Western ideas to a society that was significantly different from the West in many of its traditions.

The Socialist Movement

This study is concerned with the history of socialist thought in Japan and not with the socialist movement as such. Yet it may be helpful to indicate here the main landmarks in the movement of this period. A reference to the main 'events' (such as they were) which occurred in the socialist movement up to 1905 will possibly add to readers' understanding of the development of socialist thought in Japan at this time. Quite apart from this consideration, however, some mention of these 'events' will also underline the fact that the Japanese socialists were first and foremost political militants, whose thought was developed in the course of an often hectic whirl of activity. Most of the organisations and periodicals tabled below have already been mentioned (together with their dates) at one point or another in the previous chapters, but it is hoped that by collating them in the form of a chart readers will be able to form a clearer picture of 'socialism' as it emerged in Japan in the period which extended up to the end of the Russo-Japanese War.

Main Events In The Socialist Movement In Japan, 1882-1905Tōyō Shakaitō

(Oriental Socialist
Party).

Formed 25 May 1882.

Ordered by the
government to disband,
7 July 1882.

First diet
convened,
November 1890.

Sino-Japanese
War began,
August 1894.

Sino-Japanese
War ended,
April 1895.

Rōdō Sekai

(Labour World).

1st issue,

1 December 1897.

Appeared 2/3

times per month

up till

21 December 1901.

Shakaishugi

Kenkyū Kai

(Society for
the Study of
Socialism).

Formed -

18 October 1898.

(Shakaishugi
Kenkyū Kai)

Renamed the
Shakaishugi
Kyōkai
(Socialist
Association) on
28 January 1900.

'Chian Keisatsu
Hō' ('Police
Peace Preser-
vation Law').
March 1900.

(Rōdō Sekai)

Members of
the Shakaishugi
Kyōkai attempted
to launch the
Shakai Minshutō
(Social-Democratic
Party). Manifesto
published 20 May 1901.
Banned by the
government the
same day.

Shakai Heimintō
(Social Common
People's Party).
Formation announced
3 June 1901.
This was a fresh
attempt to form
a political party,
the socialists
trying to take
advantage of a
change of govern-
ment that was
taking place.
The Shakai
Heimintō too was
immediately banned
by the new govern-
ment, however.

(Rōdō Sekai)

Naigai Shinpō
(Japan And
Overseas News).

1st issue,
1 January 1902.
Appeared daily
for a few weeks
but proved
unviable.

Rōdō Sekai
reappeared from
3 April 1902.

Renamed
Shakaishugi
(Socialism).
1st issue,
3 March 1903.
Appeared twice
per month up
till February
1904 and then
monthly up till
3 December 1904.

(Shakai Heimintō)

Shakaishugi

Kyōkai.

Reversion
to the form
of a 'social-
ist association'
following the
failure to
organise a
political party.

(Shakaishugi Kyōkai)

Conference of
socialists held
in Ōsaka on
5/6 April 1903
in order to
coincide with
an 'Eastern
Exposition' which
was in progress
there.

Heiminsha

(Common People's
Society)

publishing group
formed November
1903.

1st issue of

Heimin Shimbun

(Common People's
Newspaper), 15

November 1903.

Appeared weekly

up till

29 January 1905,

when it ceased

publication in

order to forestall

its suppression

by the government.

Russo-
Japanese War
began,
February 1904.

Sakai Toshihiko
imprisoned 21
April 1904 for
2 months because
of his article
'Aa Zōzei' ('Ah!
Rising Taxes'),

(Shakaishugi Kyōkai)

Shakaishugi

Kyōkai

dissolved 16
November 1904,
by order of
the government.

(cont.) which
had appeared in
Heimin Shimbun
No. 20, 27 March
1904.

Katayama Sen
attended the
congress of
the IInd
International
held in
Amsterdam in
August 1904.

Kōtoku Shūsui,
Nishikawa Kōjiro
and Sakai Toshihiko
fined ¥80 each on
18 December 1904
because of the
translation of
The Communist
Manifesto which
had appeared in
Heimin Shimbun
No. 53,
13 November 1904.

Heimin Shimbun

replaced by
Chokugen (Straight
Talking). 1st
issue, 5 February
1905. Appeared
weekly up till
10 September 1905.

Kōtoku Shūsui
and Nishikawa
Kōjirō imprisoned
28 February 1905,

(Heiminsha) Kōtoku for 5 months

and Nishikawa for
7 months. This
was because of
material published
in issue No. 52
of the Heimin Shimbun.
In addition, both men
were fined ¥50 and the
printing machinery
was confiscated.

Kinoshita Naoe
stood as a candidate
in an election
held in Tōkyō on
16 May 1905.
Received 32 votes.

Russo-Japanese
War ended,
September 1905.

Heiminsha
dissolved,
October 1905.

One must beware, of course, of imagining that this range of organisations and publications represented a sizeable movement. Police estimates that there were 3000 socialists in Japan in 1904⁶ were completely unrealistic and were probably deliberately designed to arouse apprehensions. The real figure was more like 200.⁷ A majority of these 200 or so appear to have been students⁸ and many of the most prominent socialists were journalists. Kinoshita Naoe, Kōtoku Shūsui, Nishikawa Kōjirō and Sakai Toshihiko - to name only the best known - were on the staff of some of the leading newspapers of their day.

Despite the intellectual composition of the movement, there is another important point relating to the socialist movement of this period which also needs to be brought out. This is that - at least for some of the socialists like Katayama Sen - the early socialist movement in Japan was a substitute for frustrated trade unionism. As can be seen from the chart, the move away from the format of a study circle to a more actively oriented grouping (the Shakaishugi Kyōkai - Socialist Association) coincided with the passing of the 'police peace preservation law' in 1900. Then, the following year, there were two attempts to form a political party (the Shakai Minshutō - Social-Democratic Party - in May 1901 and the Shakai Heimintō - Social Common People's Party - in June). The 'police peace preservation law' in effect put meaningful trade union activity outside of the law and it was significant that Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) should have commented when the law was introduced that the "one thing left to the working man to do" was to "carry the battle into the enemy's camp by changing the labor agitation to the political agitation."⁹ As Katayama put it in later years, "There

6 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 42, 28 August 1904, p 1 (English column).

7 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 31, 12 June 1904, p 1 (English column).

8 Heimin Shimbun (Common People's Newspaper) No. 42, 28 August 1904, p 1 (English column).

9 Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 56, 1 March 1900, p 8 (English column).

was.... more freedom of speech for labor and Socialist politics at public meetings than there was freedom on the subject of trade unions, strikes and the boycott, since the latter were directly concerned with the existing industries of the country."¹⁰ And again: "At the time that propaganda for a pure and simple trade union movement was more and more severely dealt with by the authorities, our labor politics and Socialist agitation had comparative freedom...."¹¹

Thus, while on the face of it it seems little less than absurd that a mere half-dozen socialists should in 1901 have tried to launch an organisation with a grandiose title like the Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party), it has to be realised that the background to this move was a situation where there was considerable enthusiasm for the idea of fighting the trade union struggle in the political arena. Partly as a result of the efforts of the Rōdō Kumiai Kiseikai (Society for the Promotion of Trade Unions), which had been formed in Tōkyō in 1897, trade unions had been organised among certain categories of skilled workers. Engineering workers' and railway workers' unions had been established in 1897 and 1898 respectively, and the printing workers had followed suit in 1899. The engineering workers' union had gone into decline soon after its formation but the railway workers became for a while the heroes of the nascent trade union movement when they carried out a well-coordinated and successful strike in north-east Japan in 1898. Although it came under increasing pressure due to the effect of the 'police peace preservation law', the railway workers' union battled on until finally it was forcibly disbanded by the government in 1910. What is particularly interesting for us is that there are indications that in 1901 this union had been in touch with the socialists

10 The Labor Movement In Japan, Sen Katayama, Chicago, 1918, p 60.

11 Ibid., pp 62-63.

and had promised support, should the attempt to form a political party succeed.¹²

It hardly needs to be added that such trade union support, even had it been forthcoming, would in no way have guaranteed the socialist character of the Shakai Minshutō (Social-Democratic Party). Infinitely weaker and less influential than their British counterparts though the embryonic Japanese unions were, they shared the same basic concern for improving the conditions of their members within capitalism - not for doing away with capitalist society. Some writers have placed a great deal of emphasis on the resolution passed at the conference of the railway workers' union held in the spring of 1901, which called for "labour problems to be solved by means of socialism".¹³ Unfortunately, there is no evidence whatsoever that a sound grasp of socialist principles lay behind this paper commitment of the union to 'socialism'. Had the Shakai Minshutō not been suppressed by the Japanese government, and had it instead developed with trade union support, there can be no doubt that it would have stood as little chance of becoming socialist as, for example, the Labour Party was to in Britain.

'Socialism' As An Alternative Form Of Capitalism

This brings me, then, to the vital question of what it was precisely that the 'socialism' of this period amounted to.

Although the various facts relating to Japanese 'socialism' can be tabled as in the chart which appeared above, they do not tell us very much about the nature of 'socialism' in Japan in this early phase. They do not tell us that, far from mounting a theoretical assault on capitalism, the socialists in Japan were suggesting no more than an alternative method of constructing capitalism in that country. Irrespective of what

12 Nihon Shakaishugi Shi (A History Of Japanese Socialism), Kimura Tsuyoshi, Tōkyō, no date given but probably 1926 or 1927, p 55.

Tazoe Tetsuji, Okamoto Hiroshi, Tōkyō, 1971, p 45.

13 Nihon Anakizumu Rōdō Undō Shi (History Of The Anarchist Labour Movement In Japan), Hagiwara Shintarō, Tōkyō, 1969, p 13.

they thought they were doing - and genuinely appalled though they were by many features of the capitalist society that was growing up around them - the option which the socialists presented was not that of a new society which would have been fundamentally different from capitalism. On the contrary, all they could offer by way of an 'alternative' to the capitalist policies being pursued by the Meiji governments was an alternative form of the same social system. While it is quite possible that the policies favoured by the socialists might indeed have been relatively more humane than the methods of accumulating capital which in the event were actually put into practice in Japan, it has to be stressed that the end result would have been essentially the same. In other words, quite apart from their excusable inability to organise an effective practical campaign against the development of capitalism in Japan, the socialists failed to pose even a theoretical challenge to the system they imagined themselves to be combating.

What the early socialists disliked most about the particular form of capitalism which they saw being built in the Japan of their days was its feature of jiyū kyōsō (free competition). "Free competition can only result in economic anarchy", wrote Kōtoku Shūsui in his Shakaishugi Shinzui (The Quintessence Of Socialism)¹⁴ and the other socialists echoed this, objecting that it reduced human beings to the level of wild animals. What justifiably disturbed the socialists about "free competition" was the spectacle of the strong preying on the weak but they had no accurate grasp of the mechanics of capitalist exploitation, nor of the Marxist concept of surplus value. Instead, their objection to "free competition" was largely an emotional one. The sight of "barbaric free competition and individualism and the weak serving as meat for the strong"¹⁵ repelled

14 Kōtoku Shūsui Zenshū (Collected Works Of Kotoku Shusui), Editorial Committee for the Collected Works of Kotoku Shusui, Tōkyō, 1968, Vol. IV, p 478.

15 'Shakaishugi' ('Socialism'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 29, 1 February 1899, pp 3-4.

them and 'socialism' was seen as the remedy for this. As far as it went, this was laudable enough - but it did not get to the root of what it is about capitalism which compels it, come what may, to function against the interests of the working class. This was because the socialists' denunciation of "free competition" left untouched the relationship of capital to wage labour which lies at the heart, not just of the 'free enterprise' variety of capitalism, but of any and every form of the capitalist economy.

As an illustration of just how unaware most socialists were of the real significance of wage labour, one can refer to the series of lectures which Abe Isō gave on the subject of 'Wages' at the Kingsley Hall in Tōkyō in 1899. Abe's intention - far from being to call the wages system into question - was to help the "small but earnest (group of) working men" who attended his talks "in their career as a wage earner":¹⁶ Abe advised his audience on practical points such as how best to manage their lives on the meagre wages which they received. Food is the highest priority, more essential than even clothing and shelter in preserving one's health, he maintained, and he therefore urged the workers to make sure that they ate well. If you nourish yourselves sufficiently, you will be able to work better, improve and educate yourselves, and hence your wages will naturally rise, he claimed.¹⁷ Needless to say, there was no perspective of socialism - of the abolition of the wages system - in such remarks at all.

Yano Fumio seemed, at first glance, to be taking a more radical stance on the question of wages than those like Abe Isō when he outlined a blueprint for payment to be in kind in his book Shin Shakai (The New Society).¹⁸ Yet far from there being anything novel about this aspect

16 Katayama Sen in the English-language columns of Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 51, 15 December 1899, p 10.

17 'Chingin Ron' ('Wages'), Rōdō Sekai (Labour World) No. 59, 15 April 1900, pp 3-4.

18 Shin Shakai (The New Society), Yano Fumio, Tōkyō, 1902, pp 251-253.

of his supposedly 'new society', what Yano was really betraying here was an attachment to the values and institutions of the old society that were already in the process of being abandoned. Yano wanted the bulk of people's wages to be supplied in kind (as food, clothing and shelter) and only a portion (for incidental expenses) to be paid in the form of money. This had precious little to do with the vision of a genuinely new society, based on the principle of free and unrestricted access to articles of consumption, which socialism represented. Rather, Yano was hearking back to the system which had been common among those who had worked for wages in Tokugawa days, when food, clothing and shelter (of a sort) had normally been supplied as part of people's wages. Far from being inspired by any kind of vision of the future, Yano displayed a lingering nostalgia for the miserable 'security' which the archaic wages system of the Tokugawa period had provided - and presented this as 'socialism'!

The socialists committed a fatal theoretical error when they incorporated wages in any form into their presentation of 'socialism'. This was because it is wages themselves which signify the continuation of capitalism. The existence of a class of working men and women who, in order to obtain the means of life, are forced to sell as a commodity their ability to work is the very hallmark of capitalism and, once the socialists had introduced wages into their discussions of 'socialism', all the other features of capitalism necessarily followed. Thus, even when it came to "free competition", there was a flaw in the socialists' logic. Although they thought they could overcome competition by the nationalisation measures which they advocated, at most all the socialists could have achieved - had they been able to put those measures into effect - would have been to have shifted the problem to a higher (and more intense) sphere. Instead of having individual entrepreneurs and rival companies competing to sell their goods within Japan, the socialists would have brought all competition to the pitch of united blocs of nationally

integrated capital confronting each other and struggling for advantage at the level of the world markets.

The socialists themselves did not often think out their schemes for reorganising society to the point where this type of contradiction became obvious, but here again Yano Fumio's book-length exposition of the 'new society' is revealing. One of the ideas Yano floated in Shin Shakai (The New Society) was that wages rates would need to be regulated internationally.¹⁹ Only by enforcing equal rates of pay throughout the world, argued Yano, could the situation be avoided where one country would be able to undercut others by producing commodities more cheaply. He still feared, however, that it would prove impracticable to impose the same wage rates as applied in western Europe on undeveloped countries such as China or India. Hence it would be necessary for the 'advanced' countries (these were to include Japan) to raise tariff barriers against China, India and so on, since the latter had vast supplies of cheap labour power with which to manufacture cut-price commodities.

There was, in fact, a chain reaction involved in this whole line of reasoning. Having first accepted labour power as a commodity which was to be bought and sold for wages, the socialists were led to accept generalised commodity production. And once production of commodities for sale on the world markets had been countenanced, it was only a step further to depicting - as Yano did - a group of 'advanced' countries in league against more 'backward' nations. Rail though the socialists might against the horrors of "free competition", even the undoubted sincerity of their criticisms could not save them from drawing patently capitalist conclusions such as Yano Fumio's. It is true that few of the other socialists in Japan actually spelt out the implications of their theory as frankly as did Shin Shakai but Katayama Sen believed

19 Ibid., pp 261-268.

that Yano had "work(ed) out the problems of modern socialism thoroughly"²⁰ and even Kōtoku Shūsui, despite his reservations, wrote that Yano's policies, if adopted, would make "our (sic) Japan in truth the most advanced socialist country (sic) in the world".²¹

In fact, had Yano's recommendations been adopted, they would have converted Japan not into a "socialist country" (imagining, for a moment, such a contradiction in terms to be possible) at all, but rather into an early model of the kind of state capitalist economy which we have since become familiar with in Russia and elsewhere. At the end of the day, it was state capitalism - and not socialism - which the young socialist movement in Japan had its sights set on. Undeniably sincere and even talented though many of the early Japanese socialists were, they were not able to raise 'socialism' to the level where it could have begun to offer a serious challenge to capitalism. This was the case not only in the sphere of concrete political struggle against the forces of the state, but even in the realm of theory and social thought.

20 Sen Katayama, op. cit., p 76. Katayama added: "He (Yano) showed the most skill in picturing the transition stage from the present capitalist state to a socialist state (sic), adjust(ing) admirably every phase of society and international relations under socialism"! (Ibid., p 77.)

21 'Shin Shakai O Yomu' ('Reading The New Society'), Kōtoku Shūsui. Collected in Kōtoku, op. cit., p 101. This book review first appeared in the Yorozu Chōhō (Morning News) on 7 July 1902.