

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN JAPAN

—Taishō Democracy : Its Flowering and Breakdown—

MATSUO TAKAYOSHI

I

What are the fundamental characteristics of political modernization? Judging from the examples of European and American countries which have completed modernization, at least one common political characteristic may be pointed out, although opinions may somewhat vary. This is the existence of a complete guarantee of political and civil freedom to the common people under a constitutional system established on the basis of the above freedom and designed to protect it. The basic characteristic of such a constitutional system is the superior authority of parliament as the representative of the common people over all other state organs.

“Taishō Democracy” may be called the tide of the conspicuous democratic trends of the Taishō era, which extends from 1905 to 1925 in the author’s opinion. Its political objective was the modernization of politics in the terms stated above.

Compared with the attention paid to the Meiji Restoration, to the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement (*Jiyū Minken Undō* 自由民権運動) of the Meiji era, and to Fascism in the Shōwa era, the interest of historians in this topic has been extremely slight. Therefore research results have been comparatively scarce, and only three books on Taishō Democracy have so far been published—Shinobu Seizaburō 信夫清三郎, *Taishō Seijishi* 大正政治史 (Political History in the Taishō Era), 4 vols., 1951–1952, Shinobu Seizaburō, *Taishō Demokurashi-shi* 大正デモクラシー史 (The History of Taishō Democracy), 3 vols., 1954–1956, and Matsuo Takayoshi 松尾尊先, *Taishō Demokurashi no Kenkyū* 大正デモクラシーの研究 (Studies of Taishō Democracy), 1966.

Two reasons may be given as the cause of this poor progress. One reason is the fact that the democratization of Japan after the Second World War got under way very rapidly under pressure of compulsion

from the Occupation Forces. Research workers who had lived for a long time under the coercion of the Fascist Imperial system could not believe that this democratization after the Second World War was the fruit of the democratic tradition of Japan in the past. Taishō Democracy was generally regarded as a temporary phenomenon which was superficial and therefore easily replaced by Imperialistic Fascism. Since the avowed objects of Taishō Democracy were easily realized after the Second World War and greatly surpassed, the targets it set were regarded as much too moderate and hardly worth the name of democracy at all by those enjoying the fruits of liberty brought about by the democratization that followed the Second World War. As a result, Taishō Democracy was not considered to be worth studying.

The other reason is the result of the Comintern theses of 1932. The yardstick of historical analysis by Marxist scholars, who have been influential in promoting studies of Japanese modern history, has been the distribution of classes in Japanese society according to these theses. These theses see class conflicts in Japan at the stage of 1932 as "monopolistic capital and landowners versus workers and peasants." This way of grasping class distribution may be correct for 1932, and many Marxist historians believed that this distribution of class could be traced back to the period of the establishment of Japanese Imperialism at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. The above interpretation led to the formalistic assumption that the bourgeoisie were always reactionary. As a result, the Marxist scholars insisted that the drive behind bourgeois democracy was shifted to the working classes after the failure of the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement of the 1880's. The historical roles of middle class groups, such as the petit-bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia were thus completely ignored and Taishō Democracy was thought to be entirely based on monopoly capitalism and to be unconnected with the middle class. The unsurmountable limitations of Taishō Democracy were strongly emphasized and its historical role was almost completely overlooked. Shinobu Seizaburō reflects this opinion in his first book, *Taishō Seijishi* (1951-1952).

From about 1960 scholastic interest in Taishō Democracy has become gradually stronger. Two kinds of attitude towards Taishō Democracy can be seen in this new approach. One is the evaluation of Taishō Democracy as part of a widespread interest in studies of modernization in Japan. The reason why Japan succeeded in modernization in contrast to the growing countries of Asia is an extremely important question. But if Japan is cited as a shining example of political modernization to

them, there is a danger that the militaristic and imperialistic aspects of modernization in Japan will be overlooked or insufficiently considered. There is a danger that Taishō Democracy will be too highly appraised and that too much credit will be given to the part played by the bourgeois political parties as promoters of Taishō Democracy.

The second attitude attempts to obtain measures to remedy the defects of democracy which we face today through an analysis of Taishō Democracy. Since the conclusion of the Japan-American Security Treaty in 1951, there has been a continuous tendency for the backbone to be taken out of democracy. The ruling party has frequently indulged in oppressive actions on the strength of its majority in the Diet. Substantial control over freedom of speech, meeting, and association has gradually been established. Movements to revise the present democratic constitution have been increasingly active. In order to withstand this series of reactionary attacks it is a national necessity to organize a united campaign to protect democracy by organizing the working class and the middle class to provide a bridge between socialism and liberalism. Studies of democratic movements in Japan have been recommended in order to provide a solution for this problem. At the present time, the comprehensive analysis of Taishō history has become the special task of progressive-minded historians. Such a study is still in its infancy, so I would like to make it clear that this is the approach I am about to follow in my own study of the problem.

What were the special characteristics of Taishō Democracy? It is the object of this paper to make these clear, but I will begin with a general outline of the topic. As to the content of the period, two kinds of opinion are held. This is due to a difference of opinion about the nature of Taishō Democracy. According to a first opinion the period ranges from 1918 to 1932; this is maintained by scholars of political science, such as Professor Oka Yoshitake 岡義武.¹ They regard the formation of the Hara Cabinet, the first party cabinet in Japan, as the beginning of Taishō Democracy and the resignation of the Inukai Cabinet as the end on the grounds that the recognition of party political

¹ Oka Yoshitake 岡義武, "Taishō Demokurashi no Kitei 大正デモクラシーの基底 (Bases of Taishō Democracy)," *Sekai* 世界, No. 171 (March, 1960). Recently some scholars of political science have agreed with the view that 1905 marks the beginning of Taishō Democracy: e.g. Mitani Taichirō 三谷太一郎, "Seitōseiiji Kakuritsu-katei ni okeru Seiji-shidō to Sono Jōkyō—Hara Takashi wo chūshin to shite 政黨政治確立過程に於ける政治指導とその状況—原敬を中心として (Political Leadership during the Process of Establishing Party Politics—Centred on Hara Takashi)," *Kokkagakkai Zasshi* 國家學會雜誌, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 3—Vol. LXXIX, No. 2. (1964-65)

government is the fundamental characteristic of Taishō Democracy, which was driven forward by political parties.

According to a second opinion the period extends from 1905 to 1925. This opinion is maintained by Professor Shinobu Seizaburō and Matsuo Takayoshi. In their view, the period of Taishō Democracy begins with the Campaign against the Peace Terms of the Russo-Japanese War and ends with the political reforms of the Katō Cabinet, established after the Second Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution (*Dai-ni-ji Goken Undō* 第二次護憲運動). They maintain that the existence of nation-wide campaigns among the common people demanding democracy was the fundamental characteristic of the period. Generally speaking, the bourgeois political parties were not the driving force of these campaigns; they rather either exploited the campaigns or opposed them. Party political organization was the result of a reorganization of the ruling class against these campaigns.

A third opinion intermediate between the above two maintains that the period ranges from the First Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution (*Dai-ichi-ji Goken Undō* 第一次護憲運動) of 1913 until the Universal Suffrage Law of 1925. Since this period falls within the Taishō era, it is easily acceptable as a common sense view. But since a demand for responsible cabinets and the existence of a national popular campaign, both fundamental characteristics of the First Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution, were quite noticeable in the Campaign against the Peace Terms of 1905, it is very hard to accept 1913 as the beginning of the period from a historical point of view.²

In order to grasp the general idea of Taishō Democracy, let us compare it with its forerunner, the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement, the first democratic movement in Japan. This movement had three objectives: (1) The establishment of a national representative parliament, that is, a constitutional political structure. This was its most central political demand; (2) A reduction of the land tax, that is, the abolition of feudal landowning. This was its principal economic demand; (3) The amendment of the unequal treaties, that is, the achievement of full independence for Japan. This was its chief diplomatic demand. The corresponding demands in the period of Taishō Democracy were as follows: (1) The establishment of the parliamentary principle, and

² For the present state of studies on Taishō Democracy and its problems, see Kimbara Samon 金原左門, "Taishō Demokurashī 大正デモクラシー (Taishō Democracy)," *Nihon Rekishigakkai* 日本歴史學會, *Nihonshi no Mondaiten* 日本史の問題點 (Problems of Japanese History), Tokyo, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1965.

guaranteed freedom of speech, meeting, and association, that is, the abolition of the semi-feudal, controlling organization of the Emperor system (*Tennō-sei* 天皇制); (2) The abolition of the semi-feudal tax system and the improvement of the pre-modern exploitative relations between capitalists and workers, and between parasitic landowners and peasants; (3) The rejection of imperialistic power policies. These demands were not necessarily insisted upon with same strength. The combinations of these demands and the irrespective emphasis varied considerably within the period.

The difference in the demands of these two democratic campaigns, which were primarily stimulated by a conception of human dignity and freedom, were due to differences in the economic stage of development. The Liberty and Popular Rights Movement developed at a period when capitalistic production was still elementary, so the driving force of this movement was provided by farmers, particularly upper class farmers, and intellectuals from the *ex-samurai*. In the Taishō Democracy period the driving force came from the new middle class of the city. In the first half of the Taishō period, this driving force was assisted by unfavoured capitalists, and in the second half by the working and tenant farmer classes.

An important difference between the two campaigns was the presence or absence of a definite political organization to provide leadership for the campaign. In the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement, leadership was in the hands of political party organizations; the *Aikoku-kōtō* 愛國公黨 (Patriotic Party), followed by the *Risshisha* 立志社 (Hope Party), the *Aikokusha* 愛國社 (Patriot Party), and the *Jiyūtō* 自由黨 (Liberty Party). More distinctively, this campaign was symbolized by Itagaki Taisuke 板垣退助, its leading politician. In other words, this campaign was equipped with a definite image as a coherent political movement. In the case of Taishō Democracy, on the other hand, political party leadership such as the above did not exist. The leaders of the campaign consisted of radical politicians within the existing parties, journalists, university professors, and members of labour unions. No unified and enduring political organization arose capable of welding together these diverse elements. As a result Taishō Democracy had many fringe elements and did not have the character of a coherent political movement to the same extent as the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement. It is difficult to point out any person comparable to Itagaki Taisuke as a character symbolizing the movement. Yoshino Sakuzō 吉野作造 may just about be cited as such a figure. That this non-profes-

sional politician and liberal thinker has to be cited illustrates the ambiguous and complex character of Taishō Democracy, and the difficulty of grasping it by theoretical scholarship.

In the following pages Taishō Democracy will be divided into three stages—(I) from 1905 to 1913, (II) from 1914 to 1918, and (III) from 1919 to 1925—and the main characteristics of each stage will be pointed out.

II

The Meiji Constitutional system, which was established after the dissolution of the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement, was a semi-absolute political system, though its outward appearance was that of a constitutional monarchy. The rights of the House of Representatives which represented the people were confined to partial scrutiny of the budget and the approval of legislation. The right to vote in the election of the members of the House of Representatives was given to landowners and capitalists who represented only 1 per cent of the nation. Freedom of speech, meeting, and association were severely restrained by the Meeting and Association Law (*Shūkai Seisha-hō* 集會政社法), later revised to the Public Safety and Police Law (*Chian Keisatsu-hō* 治安警察法), and the Newspaper Law (*Shimbunshi-hō* 新聞紙法). Moreover, a pre-modern tax system prevailed alongside the almost unlimited exploitation of workers by capitalists and of tenant farmers by parasitic landowners.

The people who controlled the governing power were invested with the authority of the Emperor, and exercised extensive rights in the Executive, the Judiciary, and the Legislature. They were strongly entrenched in the Privy Council, the House of Peers, and various executive bodies. In particular the Army and the Navy were protected against interference from the House of Representatives by carefully contrived legal devices.

The political parties fought against the bureaucratic forces to enlarge the rights of the Diet in its initial period prior to the Sino-Japanese War. After the War, however, a section of the bureaucratic forces made a compromise with the political parties, and the *Seiyūkai* 政友會 was organized in 1900 with Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 as its President. After this, co-operation between the *Seiyūkai* and the bureaucratic forces lasted fundamentally until 1924. In this period the influence of the *Seiyūkai* became relatively stronger, but no efforts were made during the first decade of 1900 to improve the legal rights of the Diet either by the *Seiyūkai* or by its opposing party, the *Kenseihontō* 憲政本黨.

The democratic objectives at which the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement had aimed were thus abandoned by the political parties. But the task of pursuing them was now taken up by the intelligentsia in Tokyo, the capital of Japan, with journalists and lawyers playing the central role. Around 1900 such men organized the Association for Universal and Equal Suffrage (*Futsūsenkyō Kisei Dōmeikai* 普通選舉期成同盟會), and the Association for Organizing Labour Unions (*Rōdōkumiai Kiseikai* 勞働組合期成會). The more radical elements organized the Social Democratic Party (*Shakai Minshutō* 社會民主黨). The objective of this party at that time included such democratic demands as the abolition of the House of Peers, the abolition of the Public Safety and Police Law, the reduction of armaments, the establishment of universal suffrage, and others: that is to say, the setting up of a state structure consisting of a constitutional monarchy centred on parliament. These demands were supported by the progressive intelligentsia of the time. Even though the Social Democratic Party was banned immediately after its formation, educational propaganda for these demands was energetically put out by early socialists and liberals who supported this movement. In later years Yoshino Sakuzō wrote on the basis of his own experience: "A group of so-called socialists are, after all, the pioneers of democratic political ideas in recent years."⁸ These people were certainly the forerunners of Taishō Democracy, and formed the link between the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement and Taishō Democracy. Their influence was, however, limited to the middle class in Tokyo; the common people in general had no political consciousness and tamely followed the government's policy of expansion on the Asiatic Continent. Among the progressive intelligentsia also, disagreement arose as to the rights and wrongs of imperialistic policies. Most liberals, with the exception of the socialists, supported the Russo-Japanese War, and the democratic movement lost much of its momentum on the outbreak of this war.

However, after the Russo-Japanese War the democratic movement developed by leaps and bounds. That war, which was destined to decide the future of Japan, involved the whole nation and required its total military and financial strength. As a result the people were awakened to their national rights and duties. At home and abroad the Japanese government proclaimed that the War was between Japan, a representa-

⁸ Yoshino Sakuzō 吉野作造, "Mimpon-shugi Kosui Jidai no Kaiko 民本主義鼓吹時代の回顧 (Recollections on Advocating Mimpon-shugi). *Shakai Kagaku* 社會科學, Vol. IV, No. 1 (Feb. 1928).

tive of the civilized nations, and Russia, a barbarous and tyrannical nation. In order to get support from Great Britain and the United States of America, comparative freedom of speech was allowed within the country even while the War was being fought. The journalists were co-operative towards the government, but government by clan oligarchy and the bureaucratic forces was frequently attacked.

This democratic current that had stealthily progressed during the War suddenly came to the surface as the Campaign against the Peace Terms. The people who had suffered under heavy burdens during the War were eager to see it ended, but the conditions of peace, which were suddenly announced, sounded extremely disadvantageous to the people who had been led to believe by the Government's propaganda that an overwhelming victory had been won. Dissatisfaction exploded against the clan oligarchy and the bureaucratic forces for having arbitrarily concluded disadvantageous peace terms without giving a satisfactory explanation to the nation. In Tokyo, a "National Meeting" (*Kokumin Taikai* 國民大會) was prohibited, and many people who protested against this action were killed or injured. This oppressive attitude of the government resulted in the burning down of police stations all over the City of Tokyo. This also provided the occasion for citizen meetings in many cities all over Japan. At these meetings the imperialistic slogan of opposition against the peace terms was accompanied by the democratic slogan of overthrowing the non-constitutional cabinet, but more emphasis was given to the latter. Local businessmen, lawyers, and journalists were the leaders at these meetings, and a large number of citizens of various classes participated. This movement was the very first step in the broad political awakening of the common people, and in its scale and character was the first definite nation-wide citizen movement against absolutist government which characterizes Taishō Democracy. For this reason the Campaign against the Peace Terms of the Russo-Japanese War may be regarded as the starting point of Taishō Democracy in spite of its militaristic outward appearance.

The idea of "constitutionalism at home ; imperialism abroad," which captivated the common people in the Campaign against the Peace Terms of the Russo-Japanese War aptly summarizes the meaning and content of *Mimpon-shugi* 民本主義, the leading ideology of Taishō Democracy in the initial stage. Briefly speaking, constitutionalism in this sense signified simply the establishment of a responsible cabinet ; the establishment of party cabinets and universal suffrage were not advocated. Yoshino Sakuzō at this time ceased to call constitutionalism in this sense *Mimpon-*

shugi, naming it instead “*Shumin-shugi*” 主民主義.⁴

The ideology of this initial *Mimpon-shugi* gradually changed after the Russo-Japanese War. The common people continued to support expansionism and welcomed the annexation of Korea in 1910. But at the same time they began to oppose the growth of the military establishment necessary for the maintenance and enlargement of expansionism. Since not a single yen was obtained as an indemnity after the Russo-Japanese War, the whole nation was burdened with the War expenses. Special taxes levied during the War were continued thereafter, and in addition a general tax increase was enforced. The bourgeoisie, who were faced with a post-war depression, and the urban middle class, with the exception of privileged capitalists who had made profits from military expansion, now campaigned against the heavy taxes at each session of the Diet, using the local Chambers of Commerce as their headquarters. These campaigns gave rise to the trend to attack the clan oligarchy and the bureaucratic forces centred on the military, and to press for the establishment of political party cabinets. A section of the radical bourgeoisie further demanded the enactment of a bill for universal suffrage. Supporters of this demand also increased within the Diet, and the House of Representatives passed such a bill in 1911. The bureaucratic forces regarded universal suffrage as inseparably connected with popular sovereignty, and the bill was defeated in the House of Peers, but no protests were made by the House of Representatives as a result. At this time, universal suffrage was still far from being a national issue.

The most prominent product in the field of political thought at this stage of the democratic trend was the Imperial Organ Theory (*Tennō Kikansetsu* 天皇機關説) of Minobe Tatsukichi 美濃部達吉. He maintained that the national sovereignty lay not in the Emperor, but in the nation as a legal personality, and that the Emperor held a legal position as the highest organ of the nation. This new interpretation of the Meiji Constitution denied the divinity and the absolute authority of the Emperor. Minobe also maintained that the Emperor, as the highest organ of the state, is ultimately bound by the will of a nation through the following route—Nation→Diet (representing the nation)→Cabinet→Emperor. The superiority of the House of Representatives as representing the nation in national affairs and the political party cabinet system were thus justified for the first time in an inter-

⁴ Yoshino Sakuzō 吉野作造, *Hompō Rikkenseiji no Genjō* 本邦立憲政治の現状 (Japanese Constitutional Politics), *Shinjin* 新人, Vol. VI, No. 1 (Jan., 1905).

pretation of the constitution. The Minobe theory was criticized as completely mistaken by the orthodox scholars of the Meiji Constitution, but it provided the main stream of studies of the constitution from the Taishō Upheaval of 1912 to the Imperial Organ Theory Incident of 1935.⁵

The fact that the demand for civil freedom became more widespread against the background of the demand for political freedom should also not be overlooked. The formation of the *Seitōsha* 青鞮社 (Blue Stockings Society) in 1911 centred on Hiratsuka Akiko (Raichō) 平塚明子 (雷鳥) was aimed at the liberation of women from a position of dependence. Outcast communities whose inhabitants suffered from discrimination as the descendants of the *eta* and outcasts of the *Edo* period but who were still regarded as of inferior social status after the Meiji Restoration set up Outcast Liberation Organizations under their own leadership. For example, the *Yamato Dōshikai* of Nara 奈良 Prefecture and the *Chinzei Kōmyōkai* of Fukuoka 福岡 Prefecture were both established in 1912, and are both the products of this period. Naturalistic literature and the literary movement of the *Shirakaba* 白樺 school, which appealed principally the modern concept of self, and the modern dramatic movement also made their appearance at about this time. The principal works of Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, Shimazaki Tōson 島崎藤村, and Kunikida Doppo 國木田獨步, which are still popular among young people in Japan, were written at this period and are good reflections of the spirit of the time.

However, the first socialists who had taken the lead in the democratic trends before and during the Russo-Japanese War completely abandoned this role after the War. After 1907 most of these initial socialists came under the sway of anarcho-syndicalism. Katayama Sen 片山潜 and his group who had striven for the reform of politics through universal suffrage and parliament now became isolated. Anarcho-syndicalism in Japan was syndicalism without labour organization. After the Russo-Japanese War workers in governmental arsenals and mine workers, who were impatient at the extremely poor labour conditions, started strikes and riots on a large scale. Almost no labour unions existed at the time. Socialists were strongly stimulated by these riots and gave up their modest organizing campaigns in favour of more radical action.⁶ As a result the ties between the socialists and common people were broken. The clan oligarchy and the bureaucratic forces took advantage of this

⁵ Matsuo Takayoshi, *Taishō Demokurashī-shi no Kenkyū*, Tokyo, Aoki-shoten, 1966.

⁶ Ōkōchi Kazuo 大河内一男, *Reimeiki no Nihon Rōdō Undō* 黎明期の日本労働運動 (Dawn of the Japanese Labour Movement), Tokyo, Iwanami-shoten, 1952, p. 152.

opportunity. They contrived the Treason Incident (*Taigyaku Jiken* 大逆事件)⁷ and completely destroyed the socialist movement. This was the beginning of the "winter period" for the socialists. But the government was unable to restrain the democratic trend as it had hoped, as was clearly demonstrated by the outbreak of the First Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution.

From the termination of the Russo-Japanese War until the end of 1912 cabinets were organized alternately by Saionji Kimmochi 西園寺公望, President of the *Seiyūkai*, and Marshal Katsura Tarō 桂太郎, the young *Chōshū* 長州 leader and representative of the clan oligarchy and the bureaucratic forces. During this period, the authority of the *Genrō* 元老, or Elder Statesmen, who had constructed the cabinets in former years now gradually declined, and the power of the *Seiyūkai* increased against the background of the democratic tide. The death of the Emperor in the summer of 1912 was a tremendous blow to the old forces. During his reign Japan, starting as a small island country in the Far East, had developed into the only imperialistic nation in Asia. He was the very emblem of increasing national prestige and enjoyed the absolute respect of the nation. This divinified Emperor was indeed the great pillar of the old governing forces. In addition, the Emperor Taishō, his successor, was of feeble mind and body. In this situation, the old ruling forces planned to reorganize the state structure and strengthened their resolve to join battle with the tide of democracy. The old forces encouraged the Army Minister to resign his post and refused to provide a successor on the grounds that the Second Saionji Cabinet had declined to advocate military expansion. As a result, the cabinet fell, and Katsura Tarō formed his third cabinet.

This reversal policy of the old ruling forces aroused the anger of the unfavoured capitalist class and the urban middle class. With the slogan "Defend the Constitution; Destroy the Oligarchy," the First Campaign for the Protection of the Constitution developed in the principal cities of Japan, such as Tokyo, Ōsaka, Kyōto, and Nagoya. Compared with the fact that the Campaign against the Peace Terms after the Russo-Japanese War was tinged with anti-foreign feeling, and that the struggle against heavy taxes was confined to the economic field, the First Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution was a purely political and democratic struggle.

The leading executives of the *Seiyūkai* such as Hara Takashi

⁷ Shiota Shōbei 塩田庄兵衛 & Watanabe Junzō 渡邊順三 eds., *Hiroku Taigyaku Jiken* 秘録大逆事件 (Memoirs of the Treason Incident), 2 vols., Tokyo, Shunjū-sha, 1961.

planned to compromise with Katsura, but on the urging of the reformist group within the party consisting of such men as Ozaki Yukio 尾崎行雄 who enjoyed the support of the people, the *Seiyūkai* united to oppose Katsura. Katsura tried to suppress the opposition of the *Seiyūkai* by use of the Imperial rescript, but this action was attacked as unconstitutional and had no effect. Katsura talked most of the members of the *Kokumintō* 國民黨, a powerful party comparable in strength to *Seiyūkai*, into supporting him, but the popular movement to overthrow the cabinet grew more intense. The Katsura Cabinet feared that this would give rise to a revolutionary riot, and resigned without even dissolving the Diet.⁹

Thereafter the *Seiyūkai* again compromised with the old ruling forces, and Admiral Yamamoto Gonnohyōe 山本權兵衛, head of the Satsuma 薩摩 clan oligarchy, formed the cabinet. However, this Taishō Upheaval showed conclusively that no cabinet could survive without the co-operation of the majority party of the House of Representatives. Also, the fact that the decisive authority once attached to the Emperor's rescript produced no political effects at all, clearly symbolized the declining political weight of the old ruling forces encircling the Emperor. Here it is perfectly clear that the above-mentioned Imperial Organ Theory of Minobe aptly corresponded to the needs of the time. Finally, the political upheaval gave proof that the common people had become strong enough to exert political influence. The First Katsura Cabinet was overthrown partly by the campaign against the Peace Terms, but the change of cabinet was due also to a secret understanding with the *Seiyūkai* during the War. The resignation of the Third Katsura Cabinet was the first incident in which the strength of the common people was directly effective in overthrowing the cabinet. This incident therefore resulted in enhancing the political awareness of the common people.

III

The Yamamoto Cabinet laboured to pacify public opinion by extending the qualifications for appointment as Army or Navy Minister to other than serving officers and by various extensions in the qualifications for official appointments. But the common people with the exception

⁹ Yamamoto Shirō 山本四郎, "Taishō Seihen 大正政變 (The Taishō Upheaval)," in *Iwanami Kōza: Nihon Rekishi* 岩波講座: 日本歴史 (Iwanami Lectures: The History of Japan), Vol. 18, Tokyo, Iwanami-shoten, 1963. Masumi Junnosuke 升味準之輔, "Taishō Seihen to Sono Zengo 大正政變とその前後 (The Taishō Upheaval, Before and After)," *Tokyo Toritsudaigaku Hōgakkai Zasshi*, 東京都立大學法學會雜誌, Vol. III, No. 1-Vol. IV, No. 1 (1963).

of privileged capitalists showed no good feeling towards this clan oligarchy cabinet. In the spring of 1914 the campaign for the abolition of the pre-modern business tax was waged more extensively than in the previous year of 1913 in many cities all over Japan.⁹ Thereafter the Siemens Incident involving the bribery of high-ranking naval officers was seized upon to mount a movement for the overthrow of the cabinet and the Yamamoto Cabinet collapsed after only one year in office.

Thereafter the cabinet was formed by Ōkuma Shigenobu 大隈重信, one of the leaders of the Meiji Restoration, who was popular with the common people as the previous leader of the *Kaishintō* 改進黨, but he was regarded with suspicion in bureaucratic circles. His cabinet was based upon the *Rikken Dōshikai* 立憲同志會, the political party which had developed from the *Kokumintō* organized by Katsura. The demand for the abolition of the business tax continued to be made against this cabinet also. The Meiji Constitutional system of the old order was now faced by an unprecedented critical situation brought about by the expansion of the political influence of the common people.

The outbreak of the First World War was truly a great relief to the old order. The government immediately joined the War and along with applying itself to the invasion of the Chinese Continent, it succeeded in diverting the interest of the people to the outside world. The campaign for the abolition of the business tax suddenly died away. Moreover, the abnormal boom brought to the Japanese economy by the War completely dissolved the fighting energy of the unfavoured capitalists who had led the opposition campaign. They withdrew their hands from political disputes and devoted themselves to making money.

This situation helped the old governing forces to revive, led by Yamagata Aritomo 山縣有朋, one of the greatest *Genrō*. The Ōkuma Cabinet increased the Army by two divisions in response to the wishes of the *Genrō*. Moreover the cabinet adopted aggressive overseas policies exceeding even those of the military oligarchy, forcing the Yüan Shih-kai 袁世凱 régime of China to accept Twenty-one humiliating demands. After the resignation of the Ōkuma Cabinet, Marshal Terauchi Masatake 寺内正毅, the heir to Yamagata after the death of Katsura Tarō, now became the premier. He had enforced military rule as the Governor-General of Korea, when it was a newly acquired colony of Japan; he

⁹ Eguchi Keiichi 江口圭一, "1922-nen no Eigyōzei Hantai Undō 1922年の營業稅反對運動 (The Campaign against Business Taxes in 1922)," in *Tokushikai Kokushi Ronshū* 讀史會國史論集 (Collected Papers of the Studies of Japanese History), Vol. II, Kyōto, Tokushikai, 1959.

had helped the anti-revolutionary régime in northern China, and now started to fight against the Russian Revolution. At home he suppressed all democratic movements, campaigns for universal suffrage, labour union campaigns, and others, and enforced severely oppressive policies against freedom of speech, such as ordering the prohibition of certain newspapers. This reactionary cabinet was chiefly dependent upon the *Seiyūkai* for support. These reactionary policies not only answered to the demands of the clan oligarchy and the bureaucratic forces, but also served the interests of the imperialistic bourgeoisie.

Democratic trends in Japan did not weaken in this politically reactionary period during the First World War. The urban middle class which came into existence as the result of the rapid development of capitalism was the principal social foundation for these trends. This class had grown gradually more independent since the Russo-Japanese War, but its political role remained in the background to that of the unfavoured capitalist class. When the unfavoured capitalist class moved over to the side of the ruling structure, the urban middle class came to the surface and began to play the leading role in demands for political freedom. They began to form small political groups in many cities, and political associations which were not subject to any pre-established political parties started to spread roots among the citizens, raising slogans centred upon the demand for universal suffrage. The *Rikken Seinenkai* (Constitutional Youth) of Namerikawa 滑川, Toyama 富山 Prefecture, the *Rengō Seinenkai* (Youth Association) of Tottori 鳥取 City, Tottori Prefecture, and the *Yūbenkai* (Speech Association) of Takamatsu 高松 City, Kagawa 香川 Prefecture can be cited as examples of such associations.¹⁰

They were unable to organize a single nation-wide political party, but their demands were represented by the newspapers in many cities, the *Ōsaka Asahi Shimbun* being the leader. This newspaper, which had the greatest circulation in Japan, was at the same time the most radical newspaper. Not only the policies of the Terauchi Cabinet, but also the very existence of the Cabinet itself were the special objects of its attacks. The standpoint of the leading articles of the *Ōsaka Asahi Shimbun*, and the common determination of many journalists in Japan at this time was as follows: "The Japanese political parties are associations of bureaucrats out of power, and not political parties representing the people. Therefore the newspapers must play the role of the political parties, and must become the critics of the government." The constant theme of the newspapers representing citizen standpoints was *Mimpon-*

¹⁰ Matsuo Takayoshi, p. 119.

shugi. The characteristics of *Mimpon-shugi* are most clearly shown in the statements of Yoshino Sakuzō, who gave the word content as a definite conception in political thought, and gave it widespread currency in society in general.

Yoshino, in explaining the meaning and content of "democracy," drew a distinction between *Minshu-shugi*, which meant "the sovereignty of the people," and *Mimpon-shugi*, which meant the democratic application of sovereignty. He maintained that *Minshu-shugi* was not permitted by the constitution and expressed the word "democracy" by the phrase *Mimpon-shugi*. *Mimpon-shugi*, in his sense, was a modification of the words of Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, "the government of the people, by the people, for the people." In order to escape persecution at a time when the subject of sovereignty was looked upon as taboo, Yoshino left out the words "government of the people" while adopting the rest of the phrase, and this interpretation also made it possible for the people in general to accept his definition of democracy without unnecessary opposition. The concrete demands of his *Mimpon-shugi* were the adoption of a parliamentary cabinet system on the basis of universal suffrage and the exercise by parliament of actual rights of decision on national affairs. His object was the realization of constitutional monarchy or in other words, true parliamentary sovereignty. This was the principal demand of his *Mimpon-shugi* and was clearly defined in his article, "The Cardinal Principle of Constitutional Government and the Way to Its Achievement," which appeared in *Chūō Kōron* 中央公論 in January 1916.¹¹ He had thus made a considerable step forward from the previous *Shumin-shugi*.

The second demand of *Mimpon-shugi* was to relinquish the policy of overseas aggression. Yoshino had previously supported the Russo-Japanese War on the grounds that it was the war of an enlightened Japan against Russia, the military despot of Europe. He had also argued that the Twenty-one Demands on China were appropriate. However, he changed his attitude completely in 1916, and condemned the government's policy of supporting the anti-revolutionary régime in north China. He maintained that the future of China would be brighter with the victory of the revolutionary forces and advocated friendly contacts with them.¹² He was naturally opposed to the Siberian Expedition

¹¹ "Kensei no Hongi wo Toite Sono Yūshū-no-bi wo Nasu no Michi wo Ronzu 憲政の本義を説いて其の有終の美を濟すの途を論ず."

¹² Yoshino Sakuzō, "Taishi Seisaku ni kansuru Wagakuni Seijika no Konmei 對支政策に關する我國政治家の昏迷 (The Erroneous Policies towards China of Japanese Politicians)," *Chūō Kōron*, March, 1916.

of the Japanese military. It should particularly be noted that he severely criticized military rule in Korea, the newly acquired colony, and advocated self-government and even independence for the Korean nation.¹³ In these respects also, he rose above the previous *Shumin-shugi*. The fact that his change of attitude in these two respects took place in 1916 closely corresponds to the previously mentioned change in the sources of support for the democratic trend.

Finally, I would like to note that a new demand was made in *Mimpon-shugi* which had been completely lacking in *Shumin-shugi*; this is the demand for equality between workers and capitalists. As has already been mentioned, the Public Safety and Police Law in effect took the right to organize and the right to strike away from the workers. Thus the relations between workers and capitalists were almost the same as between feudal master and servant. Yoshino insisted that this relationship must be swept away and that a modern relationship should be established between workers and capitalists by means of equal negotiations between labour unions and capitalists. This recommendation was actually put into practice by Suzuki Bunji 鈴木文治, Yoshino's close friend, who organized the *Yūaikai* 友愛會 (Friendship Association) in 1912. This organization was the direct ancestor of the present labour union movement. Supported by the democratic trends of the time, it progressively developed into a national labour union with 30,000 members by 1918. Within this movement the political awareness of the workers was enhanced and it reared Asō Hisashi 麻生久, Nosaka Sanzō 野坂參三, Matsuo Komakichi 松岡駒吉, Nishio Suehiro 西尾末廣, and others who played important roles not only in the labour movement, but also in democratic and socialist movements from the period following Taishō Democracy up to the present time.¹⁴

Mimpon-shugi which contained the above demands was not the creation of Yoshino alone. Professors Kawakami Hajime 河上肇 and Sasaki Sōichi 佐々木惣一 of Kyōto University and Ukita Kazutami 浮田和民 and Ōyama Ikuo 大山郁夫 of Waseda University along with other university professors basically advocated the same points and led the world of academic criticism. The trend of democracy containing these new elements was later to severely shake the Meiji Constitutional structure in the form of the rice riots, and to expand and develop towards new stages.

¹³ Yoshino Sakuzō, "Man-Kan wo Shisatsu shite 滿韓を視察して (An Inspection Tour of Manchuria and Korea)," *Chōō Kōron*, June, 1916.

¹⁴ Matsuo Takayoshi, p. 138.

IV

Rice riots raged all over Japan for a month and a half from the end of July to the middle of September, 1918. These riots broke out in 38 cities, 155 towns, and 177 villages, and only five prefectures in Japan did not experience them. The abnormal boom during the First World War made the capitalists and landowners very wealthy, but the proletariat and urban middle class suffered from the abnormally high prices of commodities. The price of rice, the staple food of the Japanese people, soared up considerably. The anger of the masses was directed not only against the rice merchants, but also against the absolutist government, which had failed to control prices and which tried to suppress the movement demanding lower rice prices by military strength. All the newspapers attacked the Terauchi Cabinet, and demanded the extension of the suffrage and freedom of speech, meeting, and association. The Cabinet finally resigned in the face of the severe attacks of the masses. The old ruling forces now faced a dangerous crisis. In order to pacify public opinion, they nominated as premier Hara Takashi, the President of the *Seiyūkai*. This was the first political party cabinet in Japan.¹⁵

It was about this time that epoch-making events in world history burst forth one after another; the Russian Revolution, the victory of the Allied Forces over Germany, and the establishment of the League of Nations. These events marked the emergence of the masses to a position of influencing world history as a decisive political force for the first time. Japan was also involved in this tide of world history. Awakened to their political power at the time of the rice riots, the masses formed various organizations one after another from 1919 to 1922, and raised democratic demands. The demand for universal suffrage had lain dormant since 1911, but now revived on the base of the masses. In the principal cities of Japan citizen political organizations were formed in continuance to those of the previous stage, and universal suffrage was adopted as a slogan by all such organizations. Many labour unions and tenant farmers unions followed the same line. At the beginning of 1922 Imai Yoshiyuki 今井嘉幸, nicknamed the doctor of universal suffrage, canvassed groups in the districts west of Kinki, and organized the General Association for Universal Suffrage in Western Japan (*Nishi Nihon Fusen Dai-rengō* 西日本普選大聯合). Fifty-one organizations joined this Association.¹⁶ The

¹⁵ Inoue Kiyoshi 井上清 & Watanabe Tōru 渡部徹 eds., *Komesōdō no Kenkyū* 米騒動の研究 (Studies of the Rice Riots), Tokyo, Yūhikaku, 1959-1962.

campaign for female suffrage started in 1920, and progressively grew in strength.¹⁷

The development of the labour union movement was also extremely rapid. Only 107 labour unions existed at the end of the First World War, but their number soared to 432 in 1923. They unanimously demanded the abolition of the Public Safety and Police Law, and in 1923 they mounted a great campaign against the enactment of a new law to suppress political freedom under the guise of preventing socialism, the Law to Control Extreme Socialist Movements (*Kageki Shakaiundō Torishimari-hō* 過激社會運動取締法).

In the spring of 1922 the *Zenkoku Suiheisha* 全國水平社 (National Association of Levellers) was also organized.¹⁸ The fact that people at the bottom of society struggling against discrimination now demanded the abolition of social barrier and the improvement of economic standards, and that they organized a nation-wide organization clearly illustrates that an awareness of fundamental human rights had finally begun to take root in Japan. Following upon this, the tenant farmers, who were ordinarily more or less isolated and scattered, had united on a nation-wide scale, demanding the reduction of high semi-feudal tenant rents and the establishment of cultivation rights, organizing the Japan Farmers Association (*Nihon Nōmin Kumiai* 日本農民組合).¹⁹

The distinctive characteristics of new democratic trend after the First World War may be seen in the following points. The first point was that the trend was widely based upon the masses; in addition to the middle class, who had acted hitherto as the upholders of democratic trends, the extensive proletariat of the cities and agricultural villages had appeared on the political stage. The second point was that the masses began to join various organizations such as those cited above. Although the laws restricting political freedom were not amended, the masses acquired a considerable degree of freedom of speech, meeting, and association by their own strength. The third point was that the masses

¹⁶ Matsuo Takayoshi, "Taishō Demokurashī-ki no Seiji Katei 大正デモクラシー期の政治過程 (The Political Process at the Time of Taishō Democracy)," *Nihonshi Kenkyū* 日本史研究, No. 53 (1960).

¹⁷ Ide Fumiko 井手文子, "Nihon ni okeru Fujin Sanseiken Undō 日本に於ける婦人参政權運動 (The Female Suffrage Movement in Japan)," *Rekishigaku Kenkyū* 歴史學研究, No. 201 (Nov., 1956).

¹⁸ Inoue Kiyoshi 井上清 & Kitahara Taisaku 北原泰作, *Buraku no Rekishi* 部落の歴史 (The History of Outcast Communities), Tokyo, Riron-sha, 1956.

¹⁹ Nōmin Undō-shi Kenkyūkai 農民運動史研究會, *Nihon Nōmin Undō-shi* 日本農民運動史 (The History of the Japan Farmers Unions Movement), Tokyo, Tōyōkeizai-shimpō-sha, 1961.

demanded social democracy as well as political democracy. "Reconstruction" (*Kaizō* 改造) and "Emancipation" (*Kaihō* 解放) became their common catch-words. The concrete meaning of such catch-words varied considerably, ranging from the abolition of capitalistic modes of production at one extreme, to the establishment of the right of equal negotiation between capitalists and labour unions on the other. But in any event, the demand was made for some kind of modification of the semi-feudal capitalist system existing on the sacrifices of workers and tenant farmers who had no political rights. The fourth point was that the aspiration for peace among the masses became stronger. In 1919 the traditional aggressive policies by military strength were strongly condemned in two anti-Japanese movements—the March First Movement in Korea and the May Fourth Movement in China. As a result, the military administration of Korea was abolished, at least formally.²⁰ Opposition against the military expedition to Siberia was also very strong, and most of the soldiers were evacuated in 1922. The Washington Naval Disarmament Conference was welcomed by the masses, and the Army was obliged to undergo some cuts in the military budget. Generally speaking, at no time in the modern history of Japan were professional soldiers more unpopular; when they went out into the town, they had to change their uniform to civilian clothes in order to escape the hatred of civilians.

The Meiji constitutional state structure was much shaken by the rapid development of democratic trends after the rice riots. It was clear to everybody that the masses could no longer be controlled by the clan oligarchy and the bureaucratic forces. Political parties which to some extent represented the will of the people now had to take charge of the régime.

There were three courses open to the political parties. The first course was to take the lead in the democratic trend, to destroy the old ruling structure, and to establish a state structure in which complete sovereignty was legally vested in the Diet. The second course was to keep the state structure as it was, but for the political parties to occupy the central position in its management. This second course could further be followed either by (A) rapid progress, or (B) gradual advance. In the case of (A) the demands of the masses could be met to a certain extent; and taking advantage of their power, the political parties could achieve their desires by certain amendments of the old ruling structure. In the case of (B) the political parties would have to rely heavily on

²⁰ Nakatsuka Akira 中塚明, "Nihon Teikoku-shugi to Chōsen 日本帝國主義と朝鮮 (Japanese Imperialism and Korea)," *Nihonshi Kenkyū*, No. 83 (March, 1966).

dealings with the bureaucratic forces; and the demands of the masses would be suppressed as much as possible. The amendment of the old structure would be limited to the bare minimum.

The political parties did follow the first course. Japanese political parties consisted of men of relatively high social standing and represented the interests of big capitalists and the parasitic landowner class. These classes depended heavily upon the old ruling structure both to defend them against the attacks of workers and tenants, and also to draw their profits from the colonies. To follow the first course was considered likely to endanger the existence of political parties themselves. The alternative was naturally to follow the second course; the *Kenseikai* 憲政會 and the *Kokumintō* selected (A) and the *Seiyūkai* selected (B).

The *Seiyūkai*, led by Hara Takashi, rested content with expanding the suffrage for election to the House of Representatives to 6 per cent of the total population, and opposed universal suffrage. This was because they were afraid of the expansion of popular influence. They showed no desire to revise the Public Safety and Police Law. A university professor was even punished because of his academic studies of socialism (the Morito Case). Hara Takashi attempted to reform the military structure in order to deprive the military authorities of political independence which interfered with *Seiyūkai's* control of national politics, but he thought that dependence on mass pressure for military reform might weaken the military forces. His chief hope was that the military would reform themselves, and as a result no reform of the military structure was carried out. The attitude of the *Seiyūkai* in resisting democratic trends was much appreciated by the old ruling forces headed by Yamagata Aritomo. The *Kenkyūkai* 研究會, the biggest political party in the House of Peers, came forward to support the *Seiyūkai*. The *Seiyūkai* did not choose the course of establishing a political party cabinet system in co-operation with the *Kenseikai*, the biggest opposition party, but sought by all means to prevent the transfer of political power to the *Kenseikai*. The attitude of the leading members of the *Seiyūkai* did not change after the assassination of Hara Takashi in 1921. After the *Seiyūkai* Cabinet of Takahashi Korekiyo 高橋是清, Admirals Katō Tomosaburō 加藤友三郎 and Yamamoto Gonnohyōe successfully organized bureaucratic cabinets supported by the *Seiyūkai*.

The *Kenseikai*, headed by Katō Takaaki 加藤高明, a former Ambassador to Great Britain and a son-in-law of Iwasaki Yatarō 岩崎彌太郎, the founder of the Mitsubishi *Zaibatsu*, and the *Kokumintō*, led by Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅 who had fought consistently against the clan oligarchy

since the days of the *Kaishintō*, were far more progressive than *Seiyūkai*. From 1920 these two parties insisted on the implementation of universal suffrage, and demanded the legal recognition of labour unions. Katō Takaaki advocated the early withdrawal of the soldiers from Siberia, and for a time advocated self-government for Korea.²¹ Inukai Tsuyoshi vigorously proclaimed the necessity for disarmament. These opinions captivated the urban middle class, and citizen political associations in many districts were attracted to the above two parties, particularly to the *Kenseikai*. This is the reason why from the beginning of the Shōwa era the *Kenseikai* (*Minseitō* 民政黨 of later years) became as strong as the *Seiyūkai*, which had previously enjoyed an overwhelming majority in the Diet on the basis of its strength in rural districts.

On the other hand it became impossible for a concentration of the various democratic forces to materialize. The urban middle class was perennially isolated and scattered; the most they could do was to form small local groups. This meant that the organizations of the proletariat had to become the centres for concentrating the influence of the masses. But the percentage of organized workers was still very low, only amounting to 6.5 per cent of the total working force in 1925. Moreover, the principal labour unions were divided into two groups: those affiliated with the Japan Federation of Labour (*Nihon Rōdō Sōdōmei* 日本労働總同盟), the descendant of the Friendship Association, and those affiliated with Anti-*Sōdōmei* group. The Anti-*Sōdōmei* group generally supported anarcho-syndicalism, and despised political movements. The staff members of the *Sōdōmei* group were under the influence of the Japan Communist Party which was organized as the Japanese branch of the Comintern in the summer of 1922. The Japan Communist Party was also strongly influenced by anarcho-syndicalism. They declared that "the class consciousness of workers becomes dulled by participating in campaigns for universal suffrage, and the ruling structure of the bourgeoisie class which is now facing a crisis will be stabilized by the implementation of universal suffrage, thus delaying the realization of the socialist revolution."²² Had the Japan Communist Party followed instructions from Moscow (see Platform of the Japan Communist Party, 1922) and participated in the universal suffrage movement, and had they succeeded in getting the liberal middle class to concentrate around them, the tide

²¹ Matsuo Takayoshi, "Seitō Seiji no Hatten 政黨政治の發展 (The Development of Party Government)," in *Iwanami Kōza: Nihon Rekishi* 岩波講座: 日本歴史 (Iwanami Lectures: The History of Japan), Vol. 19, Tokyo, Iwanami-shoten, 1963.

²² Matsuo Takayoshi, "Taishō Demokurashī-ki no Seiji Katei."

of Japanese democracy would have been able to press more heavily for the transformation of the old ruling structure. Only at the end of 1923 were there signs of the formation of a proletariat party, and the masters of the ruling structure now started to reorganize themselves before it was too late.

The violent confusion that resulted from the Great Kantō Earthquake of September, 1923²³ was followed by the Toranomon Incident, in which an anarchist unsuccessfully tried to assassinate the Crown Prince. The ruling class was agitated by the fear that a socialist revolution was now imminent. Disagreement arose as to what should be done to prevent such a socialist revolution, and this developed into the Second Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution. After the Second Yamamoto Cabinet, Viscount Kiyoura Keigo 清浦奎吾, a politician of the Yamagata camp, formed a new cabinet, supported by the *Kenkyūkai*. But the *Kenseikai* and the *Kakushin Kurabu* 革新俱樂部, the descendant of the *Kokumintō*, were determined to overthrow this bureaucratic cabinet on the ground that it would intensify class conflicts; but on the other hand they also now gave up their opposition to legislation for the suppression of socialism. Meanwhile, within the *Seiyūkai* a minority group centred on the President Takahashi Korekiyo approved of the structural reforms advocated by the *Kenseikai*, and supported the implementation of universal suffrage. They made it clear that they were opposed to the Kiyoura Cabinet, together with the *Kenseikai* and the *Kakushin Kurabu*. But the majority group in the *Seiyūkai* stuck firmly to the line of policy maintained since the time of Hara Takashi and announced their support of the Kiyoura Cabinet. The *Seiyūkai* now divided into two, and the majority group was named *Seiyū-hontō* 政友本黨. The *Kenseikai*, the *Kakushin Kurabu*, and the minority group of the *Seiyūkai* formed the Three Groups for the Defence of the Constitution (*Goken-sampa* 護憲三派) and mounted a campaign against the Kiyoura Cabinet, their slogans being the establishment of a political party cabinet system, the adoption of universal suffrage, and the reform of the House of Peers. The Cabinet lost the support of the majority in the Diet as a result of this Second Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution, and dissolved the House of Representatives. But the three anti-government parties won the ensuing election, and the Kiyoura Cabinet resigned. Katō Takaaki, the head of the majority group of the three, the *Kenseikai*, now formed a cabinet based on their support.

²³ Matsuo Takayoshi, "Kantō Daishinsai-ka no Chōsenjin Gyakusatsu Jiken 關東大震災下の朝鮮人虐殺事件 (The Incident of Murdering Koreans after the Great Kantō Earthquake)," *Shisō* 思想, Nos. 470 and 476 (Sept., 1963 and Feb., 1964).

V

The Second Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution was a conflict between the two different political approaches aimed at amending the Meiji Constitutional system. Compared with head-on collision between the Meiji Constitutional system and the democratic trends in the First Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution, the progressive nature of the Second Campaign for the Defence of the Constitution was very slight. In the Second Campaign democratic trends were exploited and controlled in a completely one-sided way by the Three Groups of the Defence of the Constitution who stood for a radical revision of the state structure. The spontaneous citizen movements frequently seen in many cities of the country in previous times were completely absent in this case. The energy of these citizen movements was completely absorbed in the election campaign of the three groups.

The *Goken-sampa* Cabinet passed a universal suffrage law in the 50th Diet in the spring of 1925 as they had publicly promised during the election campaign. From this time on until the collapse of the Inukai Cabinet in 1932 as a result of the May Fifteenth Incident planned by the military fascists, the *Seiyūkai* and the *Minseitō*, the progeny of the *Kenseikai*, came to power alternately in a continuous period of political party government. This fact may at a first glance seem to signify the victory of Taishō Democracy. But what was it in reality? Let us now recollect what the demands of Taishō Democracy were and estimate to what extent these demands had been realized by the end of the Taishō era.

In the first place, from the point of view of its political demands the implementation of universal suffrage and the realization of party political government were great achievements. But these did not signify the birth of parliamentary sovereignty. Various organs characteristic of the Meiji Constitutional system and beyond the control of the Diet were not abolished, and their legal authority remained unchanged. The *Goken-sampa* had advocated the reform of the House of Peers along with universal suffrage, but they simply revised the ratios of members selected from the various categories of the peerage, and nothing was done to limit the authority of the House of Peers or to establish the superiority of the House of Representatives over it. Thus the political party cabinet system enjoyed only customary recognition. This situation greatly weakened the resistance of the political parties to fascist offensives from various organs of the Emperor system, particularly those of the

military sector (the Army Ministry, the Navy Ministry, and the Army and Navy General Staffs).

The new Peace Preservation Law (*Chianiji-hō* 治安維持法) which came into existence at the time universal suffrage was approved should specially be noted. This notorious law which took away freedom of thought, speech, meeting, and association under a new form, diminished by half the political fruits of universal suffrage eagerly hoped for by the common people. Since the political activities of the political organizations representing the proletariat class were considerably restricted, it became almost impossible for the will of the common people to be effectively reflected in the Diet. This worked for a while to the advantage of the bourgeois political parties, but on one hand, it brought about the corruption of political party government, and on the other hand, it diminished the confidence of the common people in the Diet, and consequently turned out to be one of the principal reasons for bringing a fatal crisis to political party government itself.

Secondly, from the point of view of its economic demands the objective of abolishing the semi-feudal national tax system was largely achieved. The business tax law was changed to the business profit law in 1922. But the relations between labourers and capitalists were still far from modern and quite immature. The Law for the Regulation of Labour Disputes (*Rōdōsōgi Chōtei-hō* 労働爭議調停法) of 1926 recognized the legality of workers' strikes. But labour unions up to the end of the Second World War were not protected by law and labour strikes suffered from strong interference from the police authorities. The semi-feudal landownership system was not improved at all.

Thirdly, from the point of view of its diplomatic demands fair success was achieved in that imperialistic military expansion was considerably arrested until 1925. In 1927 the attitude of the Wakatsuki 若槻 Cabinet of the *Minseitō* towards the Northern Expedition of the Chinese Nationalists was considered to be too effete by the old ruling forces entrenched in the Privy Council, and hence consent was refused to temporary measures necessitated by the financial panic which happened to break out at the time. This caused the Wakatsuki Cabinet to fall. The Tanaka 田中 Cabinet of the *Seiyūkai* which succeeded the Wakatsuki Cabinet vigorously despatched troops to Shantung in order to head off the Chinese Nationalists. Incidents revealing Japan's ambition to dominate Manchuria, such as the assassination of Chang Tso-lin 張作霖, now followed one after another. These incidents were the direct results of the failure of the political party forces to reform the old state structure and especially the failure

to strengthen legal civilian control over the military organs, thus finally leading to the Manchurian Incident.

In this way the demands of Taishō Democracy were incompletely realized under the political party government system. Where then should the political party government system be placed historically? The main content of the reform of the ruling structure in 1925 was the replacement in the leading positions of the Meiji Constitutional state structure of the clan oligarchy and bureaucratic forces by political party forces representing monopoly capitalists. This reform reflected politically the progress of capitalism to higher levels in the economic system, and it certainly marks a step forward in the political system, but since the political freedom of the common people was still not guaranteed, this reform cannot be said to have been democratic. The system realized in 1925 may be termed a pseudo-democratic imperialistic ruling structure.

Thus the political party government structure established in the later Taishō period was not the result of the victory of Taishō Democracy. In exactly the same way, the Meiji Constitutional system was not the outcome of the victory of the Liberty and Popular Rights Movement. It may rather be said that these two governing systems were established after the breakdown of the two democratic movements in question.

Why did the bourgeois democratic movement of Taishō Democracy break down? The first reason was that the bourgeois political parties which should naturally have led the movement had already been made a part of the old ruling system when the movement began, and had already lost the will to reform it. In their fears of the world-wide development of the socialist movement, even comparatively progressive parties such as the *Kenseikai* and the *Kokumintō* drew closer to the old ruling forces. The second reason was that the unprivileged capitalist class which was one of the principal bases of the movement came under the sway of monopolistic capital when this was firmly established and lost their position as an independent political force opposed to the ruling structure. Again, the urban middle class, that is to say the petit-bourgeois class, were agitated by fears of socialism, and were taken in by the feigned extension of political rights by the ruling forces. A third reason was that the pioneer labour organizations in a position to lead the proletarian classes vainly dreamed of realizing a socialist system in a single bound, and were almost totally ignorant of the value of the struggle for political freedom.

In this way Taishō Democracy broke down. But whereas the democratic movement lay dormant for some time after the Liberty and

Popular Rights Movement, the objectives of democracy were immediately taken up anew by the "Movement for the Emancipation of the Proletariat" in the case of Taishō Democracy. Realizing the importance of political freedom, the advanced groups of the proletariat organized a political party and made the realization of political freedom their first objective. But after 1928 this movement began to decline as a result of the Peace Preservation Law.

The above history of Taishō Democracy in Japan shows how difficult it is to achieve the political modernization, or democratization, of a backward capitalistic country at the stage of Imperialism. It also suggests what kinds of political forces have to come together in order to realize democracy.