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We foresaw, however, that the destruction once accomplished, somebody would take charge of construction." Thus the first step was to consist of individual, uncoordinated acts of violence against representative figures in society.

ASAHI HEIGO

Call for a New "Restoration"

The first important murder in the campaign against the capitalist leaders came a full decade before the ultranationalist terrorism of the 1930s. On September 3, 1921, Asahi Heigo, a leader of the *Shinshū Gidan*, or Righteousness Corps of the Divine Land, assassinated Yasuda Zenjirō, head of the Yasuda *zaibatsu* house, at Yasuda's home. Asahi left a statement explaining his reasons which illustrates his thorough contempt for the established political and social leaders. Like the young army officers of the 1930s who worked for a "Shōwa Restoration," Asahi called for a "Taishō Restoration" (*Taishō* being the reign name of the emperor ruling from 1912-1926, and *Shōwa* of his successor, known to the West as Hirohito).

[From Shinobu Seisaburō, *Taishō seiji shi*, III, 749-51]

The *genrō* set up the model, and today our political affairs are run by scoundrels. Fujita Densaburō became a baron by making counterfeit bills by order of Itō Hirobumi. Ōkura [another *zaibatsu* house] became a baron by contributing a part of the money he dishonestly made through selling canned goods containing pebbles. Yamamoto Gombei [a premier whose cabinet was overthrown in 1914 by the discovery of corruption in warship contracts] built an enormous fortune by his performance in the Siemens warship scandal. Ōkuma, Yamagata, and other old notables are wealthy now because of their corruption while in office. The *Kenseikai* is backed by Iwasaki [head of the Mitsubishi interests] and the *Seiyūkai* [the government party] raises its campaign funds from the South Manchurian Railroad and from opium. The other statesmen and dignitaries too are all skilled in evil-doing and they work with only self-interest in mind. And while the great individual fortunes have been built up by Mitsui, Iwasaki, Ōkura, Asano, Kondo, Yasuda, Furukawa, and Suzuki, the other plutocrats are no better. . . .

Alas, this is a time of danger. Foreign thought contrary to our national polity has moved in like a rushing torrent. The discontent of the needy

masses who have been mistreated for long years by this privileged class but who have hitherto kept their bitter feelings deeply hidden is now being stirred up. The cold smiles and reproachful eyes of the poor show that they are close to brutality. There is a growing likelihood that the desperation of the people will take account of neither the nation nor the emperor.

Some of our countrymen are suffering from tuberculosis because of overwork, filth, and undernourishment. Others, bereaved, become street-walkers in order to feed their beloved children. And those who were once hailed as defenders of the country are now reduced to beggary simply because they were disabled in the wars. . . . Moreover, some of our countrymen suffer hardships in prison because they committed minor crimes under the pressure of starvation, while high officials who commit major crimes escape punishment because they can manipulate the laws.

The former feudal lords, who were responsible for the death of our ancestors by putting them in the line of fire, are now nobility and enjoy a life of indolence and debauchery. Men who became generals by sacrificing our brothers' lives in battle are arrogantly preaching loyalty and patriotism as though they had achieved the victory all by themselves.

Consider this seriously! These new nobles are our enemies because they drew a pool of our blood, and the former lords and nobles are also our foes, for they took our ancestors' lives.

My fellow young idealists! Your mission is to bring about a Taishō Restoration. These are the steps you must take:

1. Bury the traitorous millionaires.
2. Crush the present political parties.
3. Bury the high officials and nobility.
4. Bring about a universal suffrage.
5. Abolish provisions for inheritance of rank and wealth.
6. Nationalize the land and bring relief to tenant farmers.
7. Confiscate all fortunes above 100,000 yen.
8. Nationalize big business.
9. Reduce military service to one year.

These are initial steps. But the punishment of the traitorous millionaires is the most urgent of all these, and there is no way of doing this except to assassinate them resolutely.

Finally, I want to say a word to my colleagues. I hope that you will live

up to my principles. Do not speak, do not get excited, and do not be conspicuous. You must be quiet and simply stab, stick, cut, and shoot. There is no need to meet or to organize. Just sacrifice your life. And work out your own way of doing this. In this way you will prepare the way for the revolution. The flames will start here and there, and our fellow idealists will band together instantly. So forget about self-interest, and do not think about your own name or fame. Just die, just sleep. Never seek wisdom, but take the road of ignorance and come to know the height of great folly.¹

THE PLIGHT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

In contrast to the cult of the all-powerful State which distinguished the ultranationalist movements in Europe, a great deal of Japanese ultranationalism was marked by a nostalgic longing for the values of primitive agrarian society. Several theorists turned from the evils of their society to envision a society with less government, more local autonomy, and more closely knit ties of familial solidarity. These ties would of course culminate in the person of the emperor as father of the nation, but the total structure they envisioned would necessarily remain very different from the highly centralized and industrialized society which Japan was developing.

The most influential exponents of this position were Tachibana Kosaburō (still alive) and Gondō Seikei (1866-1937). Both of them owed much to traditional Taoist-utopian ideals of social organization. Tachibana wrote that a state could exist forever only under agrarian communalism, and he warned that "Japan cannot be herself if separated from the earth." Gondō, for his part, felt that Japan had been founded on the principle of autonomous living, in which "the sovereign does not go far beyond setting examples, thereby giving his people a good standard." Gondō felt that the small-scale groupings of society in primitive times were the only natural and desirable ones, and his writings show a profound distrust of big government and big army.

Together with this praise of primitive society came laments for the distress of the villagers in modern Japan. Victimized by big government,

¹ A notion adapted from the Chinese Taoist classics, *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu*.

big business, and by the burden of the wasteful military the villagers were being deprived of their autonomy and their livelihood. Instead of the equality of primitive communalism, Japanese society was showing a very unhealthy class differentiation. For Tachibana this was an evil of urbanization; "according to a common expression," he wrote, "Tokyo is the hub of the world. But I regret to say that Tokyo appears to me nothing but a branch shop of London." Gondō too lamented the decline of agrarian life, "the foundation of the country and the source of habits and customs," while "Tokyo and other cities have expanded out of all proportion to agrarian villages and are built up with great tall buildings." Inequalities of this sort presaged the doom of what he called the "bureaucratic administration patterned after the Prussian style of nationalism."

Thus the agrarian-conscious rightists found traditional grounds for a strong attack against their society. They did not entirely renounce industrialization and machinery, for it had its necessary role in livelihood and national defense. But the unjust social structure upon which Japan's modern society rested was, they thought, likely to make all plans for defense and reform go wrong.

Writings of this sort had a considerable appeal to the young officers in the army. By the Shōwa Period Japan's officer corps was no longer dominated by members of the samurai class, but it was increasingly drawn from the countryside and the peasantry. Discontented with what they saw in the urban sector of Japanese life, unable to understand why their senior commanders worked with the politicians and businessmen, the young officers were prepared to accept Gondō's explanation that the military clique was just another wing of the bureaucratic ruling class.

GONDŌ SEIKEI

The Gap between the Privileged Classes and the Commoners

Gondō's works, *Principles of Autonomous People (Jichi mimpan)* and *Essay on the Self Salvation of Farm Villages (Nōson jikyū ron)*, were written during the years of the Great Depression when distress in the villages was most acute. His writings served in a measure as the ideology of the young officers who struck down Premier Inukai in May of 1932. Gondō himself, however, had little or no connection with the extremists who were moved to action by his writings.

[From Gondō, *Jichi mimpan*, pp. 185-88]