

大逆事件の反響

MIYANAGA, Takashi / 宮永, 孝

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The Influence of the Affair of High Treason at Home and Abroad.

Abstract in English by Prof. *emeritus* Takashi Miyanaga at Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan

This essay examines the influence of the execution of 12 convicts and a tacit challenge of the literati to the monarchy of Japan. The criminals were executed on 24 and 25, January, 1911. It was a world-shocking event. Not only the news was circulated by Reuter's Agency in Europe and America but appeared in different newspapers in Japan. But the general public in this country remained silent for fear of inviting a disaster. The masses knew well the proverb; 'Walls have ears'. Especially the secret police kept a close watch on group behaviour nation-wide.

Roka Tokutomi [徳富蘆花] (1868-1927, a novelist in the Meiji-Taisho period) made utmost efforts to save the accused by using human relations. Roka was a Christian with deep humanity. But his efforts proved abortive. About a week after the execution, he made a speech on Revolt (謀叛論) at the First Highschool. He said that those traitorous subjects devoted themselves to the new world where people enjoy freedom and equality. Though their conduct bordered upon madness, their motive deserved our sympathy. In his view, we had nothing to fear from socialism but the narrow-minded Japanese government was nervous about it. Without the government's policy of suppression on the socialists, the bomb plot wouldn't have arisen from it. Kotoku and the others were killed as being rebels by the government. Roka maintained that we should be revolt-defying people. Something new was always treason. In short Roka criticized the government's harsh treatment of socialists in Japan.

Four days after Roka's address, public speaking was held at Kokugakuin University to exorcise evil spirits from Japan on 5, February, 1911. Among the speakers was found Setsurei Miyake [三宅雪嶺] (1860~1945, a critic in the Meiji-Showa period), who made a speech on Four Favours (四恩) — parental love, people's kindness, monarch's favour, and Buddha's Grace. In his address, Miyake made a frank criticism of the policy of government and the judicial authorities. He said that villainous vassals enjoying the warm reception at the Court earned the rebels' grudge. This observation aggravated the atmosphere at the assembly hall, causing a great stir among congressmen.

Roka Tokutomi and Setsurei Miyake were the sole accusers of the government's suppression of socialists who groaned under it. Those who criticised the government's policy would meet with various calamities. Many literary men in Japan were moved by the harsh, unwarrantable measure of the government though, they had no nerve to open a public campaign against the authorities.

Instead, they used light mocking in their novels, poems, and dramas as a mute resistance. The following list shows the names of writers and their works.

Ogai Mori [森鷗外] (1862~1922, a surgeon general, critic and novelist in the Meiji-Taisho period) …… “沈黙の塔” (Towers of Silence), “食堂” (Dining room), “妄想” (Wild fancies), “かのように” (As if), “吃逆” (Hiccup), “藤棚” (Wisteria Arbor), and “鎚一下” (Strike with a hammer)

Naoe Kinoshita [木下尚江] (1869~1937, a lawyer, social activist, and novelist) …… “基督抹殺論をよむ” (In reading Kotoku’s book on liquidation of Christ) [an address delivered at Waseda University]

Katai Tayama [田山花袋] (1871~1930, a novelist in the Meiji-Taisho period) …… “ある墓” (A Grave)

Tekkan Yosano [与謝野鉄幹] (1873~1935, a *Tanka* poet in the Meiji-Taisho period) …… “誠之助の死” (The Death of Seinosuke)

Iwasaburo Okino [沖野岩三郎] (1876~1956, a churchman and novelist in the Taisho-Showa period) …… “宿命” (Fatality)

Shu Hiraide [平出 修] (1878~1914, a lawyer, *tanka* poet, and novelist in the Meiji-Taisho period) …… “畜生道” (The World of Beasts), “計画” (A plan), “逆徒” (The Revels)

Kafu Nagai [永井荷風] (1879~1959, a novelist in the Meiji-Showa period) …… “花火” (A Firework)

Hakucho Masamune [正宗白鳥] (1879~1962, a novelist in the Meiji-Showa period) …… “危険人物” (A dangerous man)

Ujaku Akita [秋田雨雀] (1883~1962, a playwright in the Meiji-Showa period) …… “森林と犠牲” (The Wood and Victims)

Takuboku Ishikawa [石川啄木] (1886~1912, a poet in the Meiji period) …… “ココアのひと匙” (A spoonful of cocoa)

Haruo Sato [佐藤春夫] (1892~1964, a poet and novelist in the Meiji-Showa period) …… “愚者の死” (A death of a fool), “街上夜曲” (A nocturne on the street)

Naoharu Muto [武藤直治] (1896 ~ 1955, a critic and playwright in the Taisho-Showa period) …… “蘇らぬ朝” (Morning that never revives)

Shiro Ozaki [尾崎士郎] (1898 ~ 1963, a novelist in the Showa period) …… “蜜柑の皮” (A Mandarin orange peel), “大逆事件” (The affair of high treason)

In the world of politics, some dietmen hurled questions at key figures in the Cabinet regarding the conduct of the affair. Prime Minister Taro Katsura (桂太郎) [1847~1913] said he was concerned

about the affair with great anxiety, tightening control of dangerous ideas and their diffusion on 25, January, 1911 (i.e. the very day that Suga Kanno was executed). Two congressmen, Takuzo Hanai (花井卓蔵) (1866~1931, former lawyer) and Saburo Shimada (島田三郎), (1852~1923, former journalist) also condemned the Government for its oppressive measure on the socialists and the bane of hard living at the Standing Committee on Budget that occurred the next day.

The high treason in Japan became internationally famous, causing protest movement in America and Europe. The local agencies of the Japanese government (i.e. the Consulate General, Legation and Embassy) were annoyed by complaints and throngs of people. The affair also created wide comments in the press around the world. The execution of 11 men was 24, January, 1911. On the same day of the previous year, a red star (赤い星——^{はっこう}白虹) leaving a gaseous trail was seen in the night sky. People say that a shooting star forebodes a portent.