

ABSTRACT

Left-wing Theatre in Japan: its Development and Activity to 1934.

This thesis is a historical account of left-wing theatre in Japan from its early beginnings in the 1910s to the collapse of the organized proletarian drama movement in 1934. It is set within the context of the general history of shingeki from the earliest attempts to reform existing traditional theatre soon after the Meiji Restoration.

The choice of this subject was encouraged by several factors. The Japanese classical theatre has much of interest to the foreign scholar and several substantial studies of its various forms have been published. Shingeki, on the other hand, has as yet not been studied seriously by any Western scholar and it was at least partly a curiosity concerning the problems that would have confronted a modern drama in Japan that prompted this study of left-wing drama.

The subject was limited to left-wing drama for several reasons. Firstly some limitation was required. The history of shingeki can now be said to extend over approximately one hundred years and such have been its vicissitudes and the volume of work contributed to it by its practitioners that only a very general history would be possible in the limited scope of a thesis. Within the one hundred years of shingeki five separate periods can be discerned: the Meiji period, when the idea of a new drama for the new state was discussed and developed; the late Meiji and early Taishō periods, when the first experiments at a practical realization of new drama took place; the 1920s and early 1930s, when shingeki became an exciting new cultural form in the eyes of young intellectuals and when it became left-wing, as they did; the later 1930s, when a more sober approach to drama was taken by socialists and a more self-confident attitude was observable in those theatre people who were

not left-wing; and the post-war period, with its complex mixture of self-examination and experiment. The 1920s and early 1930s - the left-wing period - were chosen because this can be confidently described as the formative period of modern Japanese drama. The struggle with the past was mainly over and the legacy left to future shingeki artists by these years was greater than that of any other period.

The Introduction to the thesis describes the first two periods of shingeki history mentioned above. At the time of the Meiji Restoration kabuki was the main drama form. It had fallen far below the high standards set by the masters of the 17th and 18th centuries, but it was fortunate in being represented by a playwright and several actors of great ability. Not only did they try to restore kabuki to its former dignity by re-establishing the lost standards, but they were also responsible for introducing some cautious innovations. Soon, when the relatively high social position of the theatre in Europe was appreciated, there was some co-operation between kabuki actors, scholars and public figures to make kabuki into a respectable entertainment for the new middle class. This 'drama reform movement' was the first example of people outside the main kabuki acting families taking action that might affect the form of the drama. It was not long before other outsiders invaded this previously closed society and in the later 1880s drama became part of the Freedom and Popular Rights movement.

'Drama reform', however, meant the reform of kabuki, and the drama that developed out of the sōshi shibai of the Freedom and Popular Rights movement - shimpa - soon took on many of the main characteristics of kabuki. A new drama for Japan now began to be discussed by eminent scholars and the interest of men of letters generally was stimulated by the translations of Western plays that appeared around the turn of the century. The culmination of these tendencies was the establishment of

two drama groups, each dedicated to the practical creation of a new drama, at the end of the Meiji period. Neither had a long active life and this can be attributed in both cases to various tensions that arose as a result of the conditioning of theatrical art by kabuki.

The treatment of these first two periods has necessarily been general. Detailed research has been done on them in Japan by Akiba Tarō and Kawatake Shigetoshi. The problems are much more numerous than has been implied in the Introduction and much work has still to be done on the period it covers. One can generalize, however, by saying that the common theme running through all the main attempts at the creation of a new drama in the Meiji and early Taishō periods was the necessity to define one's relationship, either by accommodation or rejection, with the established commercial theatre.

The main body of the thesis is concerned with left-wing theatre from 1926 onwards. Because this left-wing theatre was linked in terms of personalities and, initially, of outlook with a new theatre group which was founded in 1924, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, and with early sporadic experiments in political drama by left-wing workers and intellectuals, the first two chapters are devoted to these latter two manifestations of shingeki. Tsukiji Shōgekijō made a determined attempt to deny all previous Japanese theatre and by so doing became identified with progressive intellectuals, all subscribing to one variety of left-wing thought. Many of them were readers of Bungei Sensen, a socialist magazine of the arts, some of whose dōjin had tried their hand at amateur dramatics.

An organization to co-ordinate development of left-wing arts was first established in November, 1925, and one of its sections was concerned with drama. 1926 and 1927 were years of great debate about Marxism and they also saw the formation of legal left-wing political parties and the resurrection of the still illegal Japan Communist Party. Many splits and

realignments took place among the various political groupings and the arts, including drama, were also subject to this. By the end of 1926 all artists who wished to be acknowledged by the left-wing arts federation had to show their 'consciousness of a (Marxist) objective' in their works. Playwrights emerged who tried to accomplish this. After the mass arrests of suspected Communists and sympathizers in March, 1928, some unification was achieved in the left-wing drama movement and in 1929 a federation for drama alone, called PROT in its conventional abbreviation, was formed. By this time the political requirements made of 'proletarian' writers (as they may now be called) had been narrowed and 'proletarian realism', which enjoined seeing the world from a strictly Communist viewpoint, was the creative method to be followed. In 1929 and early 1930 proletarian drama achieved some notable successes and its influence rapidly spread. Tsukiji Shōgekijō split in 1929 and one of the resulting two groups drew close to the proletarian drama movement. Late in 1930 the Communist Party was successful in exerting its influence inside PROT and a new form of 'agit-prop' drama was initiated, whose object was strictly political. In 1932 a bold, but misguided, declaration of the movement's international links (with Moscow) brought the intensified police drives that finally smashed the PROT organization completely in 1934.

The method used in the writing of the thesis has been mainly historical. Clearly such a subject lends itself to a variety of methodologies, and in a study of a period of drama literary criticism might appear preferable. In the case of left-wing drama, on the other hand, it could be said that much of it might only be worth studying as literature if sociological methods and evaluations were combined with literary criticism. During the research for this thesis, however, it became clear that the writing of left-wing plays could not be separated from the historical development of the left-wing literary and later the proletarian

drama federations. Left-wing drama was itself one phase in the history of shingeki. In addition the development of shingeki has been greatly influenced by technical problems, such as acting technique, theatre construction and the composition of drama groups. For these reasons it was thought that a historical approach, which would also be used for the plays themselves, would be useful in providing a general picture of the period. The individual problems which this method exposed might then form the subject of further study, for which different approaches might be used.

The sources used have been of five main kinds. Secondary materials have been used for the Introduction. As far as possible general histories of the period have only been used if they have been written by established scholars or theatre historians. This criterion has sometimes been relaxed in other parts of the thesis if the author has himself been part of the events he is describing. Some of the latter accounts would also come into the second category of materials, autobiographical writings by actors, directors, playwrights, etc.. There is a wealth of these and they have been used extensively, unless checking with contemporary sources has revealed the distortions to which such writings are naturally subject. The contemporary sources have been journals connected with shingeki and the left-wing cultural movement, theatre programmes and advertising material. These have been supplemented and balanced by the fourth category of sources, contemporary and near contemporary police materials. The Ministry of Justice was very active in research into the left-wing movement in general during this period and many highly detailed reports were issued internally. The fifth category is the plays themselves and as far as possible contemporary texts have been used.

The conclusions which the thesis has produced are limited but perhaps not without significance. A study of the contemporary writings,

creative, political and descriptive, which are connected with the left-wing drama movement, has re-emphasized the hold which Marxism had over a certain section of the intelligentsia at the time. It is clear that the final collapse of PROT as an organization and the subordination of drama, both in form and content, to narrow political ends were due to its relationship with the Japan Communist Party. There is a distinction to be drawn between the direct political control over the proletarian drama movement exercised by the Communist Party, which was disastrous, and the adoption of a left-wing ideology by shingeki artists from 1926 onwards. The former affected one phase of the movement; the latter has been a major conditioning factor for most shingeki since. In the historical context of the development of shingeki from the Meiji period it seems improbable that a period of left-wing theatre could have been avoided and any description of subsequent Japanese modern theatre must take this into account.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	The Development of a New Drama	1
Chapter 1	Tsukiji Shōgekijō, 1924-1926	47
Chapter 2	Early Left-wing Drama	82
Chapter 3	The Left-wing Theatre Movement, 1926-1928	104
Chapter 4	Plays and Playwrights, 1926-1928	150
Chapter 5	The Left-wing Theatre Movement, 1928-1930	204
Chapter 6	Plays and Playwrights, 1928-1930	235
Chapter 7	Proletarian Drama, 1930 and 1931	264
Chapter 8	Proletarian Drama, 1931-1934	304
Chapter 9	Conclusion	331
	Plates	337
	Bibliography	349

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INTRODUCTION

The Development of a New Drama.

I

The history of Japanese left-wing theatre and the history of Japanese shingeki ('new drama') are inextricably intertwined.¹ Between 1929 and 1932 there was little shingeki in Japan that was not left-wing, and there was no sudden break with previous developments in shingeki when this period of left-wing domination began. Similarly the surge of shingeki activity in the mid-1920s, out of which the left-wing theatre movement grew, was linked closely with the Taishō and late Meiji periods in terms of personalities and problems. Nor can there be any doubt that the influence of the left-wing period on later shingeki up to the present day has been great. Left-wing drama's place in the general history of shingeki is such that it cannot be considered in isolation and in this Introduction a brief survey of the early development of Japan's new drama will be made.²

Drama in the late Tokugawa period meant kabuki, puppet theatre, nō and kyōgen - the forms that are now regarded as classical. Of these by far the most active and widespread was kabuki.³ Puppet theatre, after its overwhelming popularity in Osaka during what is referred to as the Genroku period, declined during the later 18th and 19th centuries. Nō had been developed artistically as a court entertainment and apart from a few

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1. In general in this thesis Japanese words will only be italicized if they are not already familiar in the West. Thus kabuki would not be italicized whereas jidai-mono would. The major forms of classical Japanese drama (kabuki, nō, kyōgen, bunraku) will not be italicized, nor will shimpa. The word shingeki is certainly not widely known in the West, but it occurs so frequently in this thesis that it will not be italicized.
 2. In common with most Japanese theatre histories the term shingeki itself will not be applied to any drama in Japan before the widespread introduction of Western plays in the early 1900s. As will be seen, however, this was only one stage in the development of a new Japanese drama to its maturity in the mid-1920s.
 3. Kawatake Shigetoshi, Shingeki Undō no Reimeiki (Yūsankaku, 1946), p.9. Referred to below as Kawatake, Shingeki Undō.

festival performances was not generally watched by large socially-mixed audiences. Kabuki adopted elements of both bunraku and nō, and the decline of the former may have partly been due to the more effective presentation of these elements by the kabuki actors.

All three of these drama forms depended heavily on music and dance for their total effect. Although it appears likely that the sarugaku existing just before the time of Kan'ami and Zeami contained strong elements of realism and although the sewa-mono type of kabuki and bunraku often portrayed actual events, the overwhelming majority of plays of all types presented consisted of the kabuki jidaimono. Some of these 'period pieces' were simply vehicles for the display of a single actor's ability at dance and posturing, and all contained scenes where explanation of the plot was secondary.

There was, however, a tradition of recitation where the clear exposition of a plot or topic was the central element of the performance. There were various forms of this, which were not necessarily related in any artistic way. One of these, the kōwaka, was esteemed as highly as the nō drama by the latter's main patrons in the 16th century.¹ The most popular and lasting kind of recitation was that of the biwa-hōshi, who retold the stories associated with the wars between the Taira and the Minamoto in the 12th century. Dramatic entertainment of this second type existed at all levels of society throughout the Tokugawa period. It was, however, essentially performances by individuals and these individuals could not

1. James T. Araki, Kōwaka : Ballad Dramas of Japan's Heroic Age, Journal of the American Oriental Society, LXXXII. iv (Oct.-Dec., 1962), 545.

have influenced the development of full-scale drama in the Meiji period. They are mentioned because the principles embodied in their art were later adopted into what became one of the main manifestations of resistance to kabuki.

It seems reasonable to consider kabuki as the most influential form of drama at the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868. It had four features which distinguished it sharply from most European drama of the same period. The first concerned the position of the actor. In kabuki the actors had always been paramount. It is said that Chikamatsu, who is regarded with Zeami as one of Japan's two great classical playwrights, devoted his energies to bunraku after his initial activity in kabuki because the wooden puppets allowed him more freedom as a playwright. From the second half of the 17th century the control of the actors over all aspects of kabuki became progressively stronger. This process was helped by the establishment of acting traditions within families of actors. In the latter half of the 18th century it became the practice for teams of playwrights to produce plays conforming with the specific instructions of the actors. The playwright Nagawa Tokusuke (1764-1824) admitted in his book A Writer's Inheritance that the actor was more important than the playwright and it appears that during most of the Tokugawa period the salary of the playwright was much lower than that of the chief actor.¹ Indeed the playwright was also required to perform such tasks as beating the interval clappers and prompting. There were also no directors, the actors arranging the performance to demonstrate their own individual skills. The acting itself required

1. Earle Ernst, The Kabuki Theatre (New York, 1956), p.214. Referred to below as Ernst, Kabuki Theatre.

long and rigorous training and a very high degree of technical accomplishment was often achieved. Thus in almost every way the kabuki theatre was dominated by the actor and this situation still existed at the beginning of the Meiji period.

The second basic difference was that all parts were played by adult male actors. During the 17th century the shogunal authorities had found it necessary for reasons of public morality to ban all women and all young boys from the stage. The actors who played women's roles - the onnagata - developed their own highly stylized technique of acting and their performances became an inseparable part of any kabuki presentation.

Kabuki plays themselves were bound by a combination of artistic conventions unknown in the West. Plays were divided into types but this division was based upon traditionally defined areas of subject matter. In the 18th century there were two main types, the jidai-mono, dealing with events in Japanese history, and sewa-mono, involving the lives of one of the four social classes - the townsmen. A third was added in the early 19th century, that of ki-sewa-mono. These plays concerned characters even lower on the social scale than the sewa-mono. There were also various other minor subdivisions. These designations, however, revealed little concerning the form of play, in the way in which the words 'tragedy' or 'comedy' would; they rather told the prospective audience what kind of acting, costume, setting and story they were going to see. There was also the further limiting convention concerning jidai-mono that all the plays in a day's programme had to be set in a single sekai or 'world'. These 'worlds' themselves were not numerous. The ethical content of the plays was always strong and highly conformist. The predilection of the audiences for spectacle, their

unquestioning acceptance of the system of ethics imposed by the samurai rulers as part of their domestic policy, and their apparent contentment with a lack of fundamental variety in subject matter all contributed to the special character of kabuki plays. The plays existed only within the theatre, often associated with one or two actors; they were not considered as pieces of literature and part of a wider culture, nor did they treat the familiar Western dramatic issue of man and his destiny.

Serious criticism of plays did not exist outside writers professionally connected with the theatre. This was the fourth feature which distinguished Japanese theatre from that in the West. The cultural position of the plays and the performances and the social position of the actors were in the eyes of the feudal authorities very low. But kabuki was after all part of the townsmen's culture and the townsmen were the lowest of the four social classes. Kabuki was closely integrated with other aspects of townsmen's culture, notably the woodblock print, but its social basis was still very narrow at the end of the Tokugawa period. The townsmen played little positive part in the Meiji Restoration and there was no reason why their theatre should be regarded by the new government as having any more importance in the cultural life of post-Restoration Japan than before.

This is not to imply any comparison between Western drama and kabuki to the detriment of the latter. Many Japanese kabuki experts would say that kabuki was superior to Western drama precisely because of these four characteristics. Moreover, few modern Western scholars would consider the mid-19th century to have been one of the brightest periods of Western theatre history. The French theatre of the time was dominated by the 'well-made plays' of Scribe and Sardou and the English theatre was suffering from a

dearth of playwrights. Whether the Japanese and Western theatres of this period are to be admired or criticized, they were different in the four main ways suggested here and in many other minor respects. It would have been unthinkable for Marguerite in La Dame aux Camellias to have been played by a man. Though playwrights often wrote parts with a particular actor or actress in mind, the playwright's position as an independent artist was not questioned in 19th century Europe. The main theatres in London and Paris were the fashionable meeting places of the rich and respectable. Even Royalty would go to see Kean. The theatre was an accepted part of the social and cultural life of those who set contemporary standards of taste.

Such fundamental differences existed in other art forms apart from drama. We know that after the opening of Japan to the West new cultural forms based on those of the West were developed and that there was much debate over the relationship these modern forms should have with their existing, 'traditional' counterparts. In the case of drama kabuki was the 'traditional' form which occupied the most influential position for most of the Meiji period and the growth of a Western-style drama was inevitably affected by it. The circumstances of a theatrical performance were such that a new drama would be dependent on the existing form to a very great degree. A company of actors would have to be assembled, and the only actors available were kabuki actors. None of the people involved in the other aspects of the production - financial sponsors, scene painters, propertymen, poster designers, etc. - would have had any experience outside kabuki.

The obstacles confronting a Western-based drama form when it should be introduced were formidable. As happened with every other art form, there were going to be demands that Japan have a Western-style drama, whether this

was desirable or not. To establish it within existing kabuki would require modification of the four fundamental differences noted above. To establish it independently would require the great outlay of money and time needed to equip and train a new theatrical organization. In these circumstances it was fortunate for the growth of shingeki in the Meiji period that the first fifteen years of Meiji were a period of cautious reform in kabuki that was initiated from within by those who were dissatisfied with the generally acknowledged decline of the form in the mid-19th century.

It is significant that one of the three leading kabuki figures of this period was a playwright. His name was Kawatake Mokuami, and he is well known in Japan even today, thus having achieved the rare distinction for a kabuki playwright of having his name widely known to posterity outside professional kabuki circles.

Mokuami had achieved fame in the kabuki world during his association with an actor named Ichikawa Kodanji in the fifteen years before the Meiji Restoration. Kodanji's style of acting was particularly suited to sewa-mono and Mokuami created many for him. During the corresponding period after the Restoration, Mokuami was associated with Ichikawa Danjūrō 9th and Onoe Kikugorō 5th, and he suited the plays he wrote to these two actors. Kikugorō was a sewa-mono actor and Danjūrō a jidai-mono actor. These three men, separately and by collaborating with each other, were responsible for a number of innovations. For Kikugorō Mokuami created a new type of sewa-mono called zangiri-mono. The new category still referred primarily to subject matter - zangiri-mono dealt with post-Restoration Japan and its Western novelties - while the underlying dramatic ideas remained the same. The central theme remained kanzen-chōaku¹ and the traditional kabuki techniques

1. Rewarding of virtue and punishing of vice.

of acting and presentation were generally observed.¹ In a situation where the incorporation of new subject matter entailed an increase in the very limited number of accepted categories, the zangiri-mono probably represented a considerable innovation. They were never very popular, however, and as Kikugorō himself preferred to perform more conventional sewa-mono, they only had a short lifetime. They are now regarded as an interesting reflection of life in the first years of the Meiji period, but of no real consequence in the history of Japanese modern drama or even kabuki.

Mokuami received more encouragement from Danjūrō, acknowledged as the pre-eminent jidai-mono actor in this period but also exceptional in his interest in historical accuracy. His passion for antiques has been cited as a manifestation of this.² He seems to have disliked the more extreme absurdities of kabuki - especially in its ignoring of historical facts and its histrionic techniques - and in spite of coolness on the part of his audiences, he practised his beliefs in his performances. As early as 1871 he gave performances where certain kabuki conventions, such as the use of interval clappers and exaggerated gestures, were discarded.³ In 1878 he formed the Kyū-ko-kai,⁴ which was composed of men concerned with the arts, historians and men of culture generally. Research was done into historical events which might form the subjects of plays with a view to achieving some measure of historical accuracy.

Mokuami was primarily a sewa-mono playwright, but from the beginning of the Meiji period he began writing jidai-mono for Danjūrō. Artistically the early plays were not exceptional but, probably in part because he was

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1. Akiba Tarō, Nihon Shingeki-shi (Risō-sha, 1955), i.20. This two volume work, to which frequent reference will be made, will be referred to below as either Akiba, i, or Akiba, ii.
 2. Toita Kōji, Engeki Gojūnen (Jiji Tsūshin-sha, 1956), p.6. Referred to below as Toita, Engeki Gojūnen.
 3. Ibid., p.5.
 4. Society for Searching into the Past.

writing for Danjūrō and in part due to his preference for sewa-mono, they diluted the normal grotesquerie and there was more concentration on the characters' individuality.¹ These characteristics were developed throughout the 1870s and in 1878 what had now developed into a new genre of kabuki was given the name katsureki-geki² by Kanagaki Robun.³

By their katsureki-geki Mokuzai and Danjūrō (and also the influential actor-manager Morita Kan'ya 3rd⁴) seriously challenged some of the established conventions of kabuki. Although the plays stimulated among scholars and men of letters an interest in historical drama, kabuki was still fundamentally a merchant entertainment and the conservative audiences of the early Meiji period did not welcome these changes. Both sangiri-mono and katsureki-geki soon came to be regarded as out of date; Kikugorō preferred conventional sewa-mono and Danjūrō returned to classical jidai-mono during the last ten years of his life. The traditions of kabuki had proved successfully resistant to fundamental change and kabuki entered a period of temporary decline in the face of new drama forms created by people outside the acting families.

From its very early history, however, the development of kabuki had been watched closely by the social class which provided the officials of the Tokugawa state and the scholars. This was not because it was part of a general culture in which the members of this class might be expected to participate, but as a potentially disruptive phenomenon.⁵ Constant

1. Akiba, 1.17.

2. Plays of living history.

3. Toita, Engeki Gojūnen, p.7.

4. Ishisawa Shūji, Shingeki no Tanjō (Kinokuniya Shinsho, 1964), p.14.
Referred to below as Ishisawa, Shingeki no Tanjō.

5. Ernst, Kabuki Theatre, p.217.

restrictions were placed on the persons of the actors, who were regarded as occupying a particularly low social position. Siting of the theatre buildings themselves had been confined to the pleasure quarters of the main towns and samurai were forbidden to attend them.

During the first few years after the Meiji Restoration this attitude continued. The government and administration of Japan during these years were almost entirely in the hands of samurai and nobles, and if they had had any inclination at all to consider kabuki as part of the new Japan, consciousness of their social position and concern with matters of national urgency would have stifled this. Kabuki had, however, been a fairly consistent purveyor of the code of ethics enforced as part of the feudal system. The necessity for a nationally observed system of ethics was a potent idea in the minds of the Japanese leaders throughout the Meiji period - its most famous manifestation was the Education Rescript of 1890 - and the possibility of drama playing a more important part in this than before was early recognized. In 1872 they placed drama under the Kyōbu-shō - a department of government concerned with religious and moral education - and demanded that the object of drama should be kanzen chōaku, as it had been for over two hundred years previously. In 1873 actors were officially defined as 'popular educators', and they were confirmed in a more exalted social position than ever before by being made subject to tax in 1875. Theatres were freed from their locational restrictions in 1872, and theatres with modern facilities were established for the first time (the first of these by Morita Kan'ya in the centre of Tokyo).¹

1. Akiba, 1.6-9.

There was increasing contact during the 1870s between scholars and officials of the new government on the one hand and the leaders of kabuki on the other. It has already been seen how Danjūrō was able to involve scholars in his search for historical accuracy. His new type of jidai-mono received increasing encouragement from scholars after 1877, and he performed one of them in 1878 at the first season of a new theatre which has been seen as a symbol of many of the tendencies in the drama world of the 1870s. This was the Shintomi-za. The theatre was mainly Western in style and it was run as a joint-stock company by Morita Kan'ya. The first play was a katsureki-geki written by Mokuami and performed by Danjūrō. The opening ceremony was attended by high officials and dignitaries, scholars and foreign guests, all dressed in tails. (This was the only time that Mokuami ever put on Western dress.¹) The Shintomi-za represented an identity of views between the official and the theatre world. It was to be a fashionable place of entertainment for the new bourgeoisie and their foreign acquaintances.² Foreign actors were later invited to perform at the theatre, and, finally, the first opportunity any Japanese outside kabuki circles had of taking any part in dramatic activity was furnished by the Shintomi-za. One of the collaborators in the script for a play performed there in June 1878 was a Secretary in the Home Ministry (later governor of Tokyo).³ The Shintomi-za represents the meeting point of the internal reforms within kabuki and the external influences to which it was bound eventually to be exposed.

On 28 April 1878 this first outsider, Matsuda Michiyuki, invited a

1. Toita, Engeki Gojunen, p.7.

2. Ishisawa, Shingeki no Tanjō, p.15.

3. Akiba, 1.48.

number of people connected either with the kabuki theatre or with government to his residence. Among those invited were Danjūrō, Kikugorō, Morita Kan'ya and the eminent statesman, Itō Hirobumi. This meeting marks the formal association of the theatre with one of the most influential men in the Meiji period and Itō's views on drama had to be respected. He had just returned from Europe where he had been impressed at the position the theatre in general enjoyed. He explained to this group meeting in Matsuda's house that the audiences were respectable, the actors occupied a high social position and were people of considerable culture and that their plays were noble and refined.¹

It was some eight years after this meeting that a formal organization was created to consider whether the impressions of travellers such as Itō had any relevance to the kabuki theatre. This was in the middle of an approximate five year period during which there was an unprecedented and feverish examination of many things Japanese in the light of their Western counterparts. 'Reform societies' of every conceivable kind were formed to improve aspects of Japanese life which had been shown to fall short of Western standards.² So many travellers had had experiences similar to those of Itō that drama soon received the attention of enthusiastic reformers. One such reformer, a journalist and poet named Suematsu Norizumi, returned from an extensive study tour of Europe in 1886 and founded the Engeki Kairyō-kai.³ Suematsu was himself a relative of Itō by marriage and it was noticeable that the main supporters of the Engeki Kairyō-kai were identified with Itō in some

1. Ishizawa, Shingeki no Tanjō, p.14.

2. C.Yanaga, Japan Since Perry (McGraw-Hill, 1949), p.97.

3. Drama Reform Society.

way. The society's members were mainly drawn from the worlds of government, business and learning.¹

A good part of the energies of the Engeki Kairyō-kai was directed towards making drama, that is kabuki, respectable and fashionable, as the theatre was in the West. Most kabuki plays were criticized as being full of obscurity and nonsense, obscenity and vulgarity. Drama should be characterized by beauty and should be something which could be watched by ladies and gentlemen without misgivings.² Within a year the Emperor had viewed a kabuki performance for the first time.

It is at least questionable whether one can designate as an achievement the conversion of a very popular form of drama into a refined middle-class entertainment as a result of a feeling of inferiority. The movement for drama reform, however, can claim an important place in Japanese theatrical history through being initiated by a powerful group of outsiders who were prepared to apply criteria other than those hallowed by kabuki tradition. Some of these outsiders were scholars and one of the most important positive advocacies of the Engeki Kairyō-kai was that plays should be written by learned men, students of literary composition, and that their plays should be based on historical facts.³

There were several other drama reform societies in the late 1880s, but the movement collapsed in 1889. The collapse was probably the result of the impasse in which these societies found themselves in having only kabuki to reform. There was still little evidence of the imminent rise of a serious new drama which these reformers would think worthy of their attention and

1. Ishizawa, Shingeki no Tanjō, p.24.

2. Ozaki Hirotsugu, Gendai no Engeki, in Nihon Bungaku-shi (Iwanami Shoten, 1958), xi.3 (in pamphlet).

3. Ibid.

which would provide a vehicle for their ideas.

In this way during the first twenty years of the Meiji period there was pressure from within kabuki for limited change and also pressure from outside, from government and from scholars who in the changing society of that time might have been expected to re-examine the whole range of cultural phenomena. As yet these circumstances had stimulated no radically new form of drama. Drama reform was supported and encouraged by the government and drama was to some extent to reflect its wishes. The 1880s, however, were characterized by an intensity of political argument which was unprecedented in Japan. In 1881 the Emperor had promised the establishment of a constitution and constituent assembly, and during the subsequent ten years it was to be decided what practical form of political system Japan should adopt. The distinction between political opposition and treason was yet to be precisely formulated, however, and repressive measures were adopted to stifle any criticism. As a result, supporters of opposition political groups were forced to find indirect means of spreading their political beliefs.¹ 'Freedom and popular rights' was the catchphrase for this period and out of the movement associated with it several new cultural phenomena appeared. One of them was the political novel. As the political novel replaced political tracts, when the latter were banned, so political kōdan replaced political speeches.² The kōdan was a form of narrative recitation, of which, as we have seen, several types existed before the Meiji period. Closely linked with the kōdan were the enka, treating of the same subjects but using a song form with a strong rhythm.³ Both were very

1. Akiba, i.264-5.

2. Ozaki Hotsuki, Taishū Bungaku (Kinokuniya Shinsho, 1964), p.117.

3. Soeda Tomomichi, Enka no Meiji-Taishō-shi (Iwanami Shinsho, 1963), p.1.

popular, but the enka were particularly so in that they were in the familiar 5/7 syllable form and contained easily memorized repetitions. A new drama developed from these cultural manifestations of the Freedom and Popular Rights movement. As will be the case with several of the types of drama to be mentioned later in this thesis, direct connections with what is sometimes called the mainstream of modern drama development were few and the effect on that development was slight. The new drama of the 1880s, however, was important in establishing the practical possibility of certain new principles which had not before been applied to drama.

The new drama is given the general name of sōshi-shibai.¹ Their fame at the time was due to two men. The first was Sudō Sadanori, an ex-samurai who became a sōshi at the beginning of the 1880s. He wrote political novels, and became a newspaper reporter, in itself a highly political profession.

He was apparently excited by the moderate tendencies toward realism within kabuki and in 1888 organized a group of fellow sōshi to perform a dramatization of one of his own political novels. Most of the plays performed by Sudō and his group until his death were adaptations of Western or Japanese political novels. A performance by Sudō's group was watched on one occasion by another sōshi Kawakami Otojiro. After arriving in Tokyo at the age of 14, Kawakami had engaged in a varied collection of professions, emerging finally as a sōshi. His activities as a sōshi caused him to be gaoled no less than 180 times and from 1888 he began appearing in yose (the Japanese equivalent

1. Sōshi plays. Sōshi were professional political activists, associated with the Freedom and Popular Rights movement of the 1880s. Until about 1885 their work was organizational and educational, being mainly limited to activities such as speech tours and the preparation of petitions. Later, as Japanese politics became more intense and even violent, the sōshi assumed a more positive role in providing leadership for various political groups. The majority of them came from ex-samurai families. Tokino Tanimasa ed., Nihon Kindai-shi Jiten (Tōyō Keizai Shinchō-sha, 1958), p.335.

of music hall).¹ He soon became famous for his political adaptations of the songs and sketches which usually formed part of a yose programme. His visit to a performance of Sudō's group encouraged him to form his own, which he called shosei niwaka.² They performed plays similar to those performed by Sudō and his company, but there was rather more use of yose material, enka and kōdan. Most of the members of the group were by profession yose artists.³ The subsequent history of Kawakami and his group after the end of the Freedom and Popular Rights movement has only limited relevance to this survey of the development of a modern theatre in Japan. There was from the beginning an element of chauvinism in Kawakami's performances⁴ and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5 encouraged him to substitute patriotic war material for political canvassing. Sudō had also moved away from politics in the early 1890s, and a new group had been formed by an actor in Kawakami's group who was opposed to the predominantly political content at the time. There were fluctuations in the fortunes of these three groups, but they achieved great popularity and the decline of kabuki in the early 1900s, which followed the deaths of its three most famous actors, Danjūrō, Kikugoro and Ichikawa Sadanji 1st, confirmed the new type of drama as an established part of Japanese theatre. The name given to this new form of drama was shimpa. Literally this means 'new school' and the purpose of the name was to distinguish the form from the kabuki of the traditional acting families, which was referred to as kyūha, 'old school'. Some interesting experiments were carried out by the various shimpa groups. For example, one of them

1. Miyake Shūtarō, Engeki Gojunen-shi (Masu Shobō, 1942), p.81. Referred to below as Miyake, Gojunen-shi.

2. Student minstrels.

3. Ibid., p.82.

4. E.g., the description of his performance of Oppekepe in Soeda, Enka, pp.22-3.

instituted a project concerning Chikamatsu, in which the plays were performed by actors (without the gidayū accompaniment) as faithfully as possible to the original text. Adaptations of Shakespeare plays and of famous Japanese novels were also produced in this period.

In general, however, shimpa was no more than superficially updated kabuki. Its acting technique was based on that of kabuki. Although actresses were used, onnagata also appeared regularly, and a scene between two female characters might be played by one actress and one onnagata. Even those groups most intent on experiment sometimes performed kabuki plays, and a lingering affection for kabuki was always evident. Counterparts of the most popular kabuki features appeared - Eighteen Favourite Shimpa Plays,¹ followings for individual actors, tricks of delivery or posture, purple passages,² and others. The shimpa plays of this period were not essentially different from the domestic tragedies of kabuki. They became uninspired reworkings of the giri-ninjō theme set in a later period. Many of the novel adaptations were of the most popular newspaper serials of the time.³ Shimpa became popularized kabuki without the latter's long tradition as an artistic basis.

In this way what had appeared to be forces for the growth of a new theatre from the existing classical forms ceased their development before they had gone beyond some of the characteristics which hindered the adaptation of those classical forms to the modern age. It is perhaps interesting to note in passing that those whose participation in the Freedom and Popular Rights movement had been of a directly political nature had also by this time

1. Shimpa Jūhachiban.

2. Sawari.

3. Kawatake Shigetoshi, Nihon Engeki Zenshi (Iwanami Shoten, 1966), p.1015.

been absorbed into the deeply conservative Meiji government system. Two practical principles had been established, however, which were of great importance to the development of a modern theatre. The first of these was the principle of outsiders giving performances whose administrative concomitants (theatre facilities, etc.) were on no less grand a scale than those of kabuki. Indeed, Kawakami and his group played several times at the Kabuki-za. Secondly licence was given for the use of subject matter and acting techniques that went far beyond the restricting conventions of kabuki.

Meanwhile developments were taking place in the spheres of literature and literary criticism which affected drama much more fundamentally. Already by the drama reform period, the scholar who was to provide the basis for Japanese drama criticism, was including drama in his writings on literary theory. One chapter of Tsubouchi Shōyō's Shōsetsu Shinzui is concerned with a comparison between drama and the novel. Shōsetsu Shinzui is regarded as the first major work of modern literary criticism in Japan, and it is significant that despite the previous general refusal to accord drama the status of literature, Tsubouchi should not have hesitated to consider it a subject worthy of critical examination.

The development of a branch of literary criticism depends on a diffusion of the ideas put forward among those scholars or writers directly concerned. Although it would be impossible accurately to assess the relative importance and influence of the innumerable ideas concerning drama that came to Japan from various sources in the early Meiji period, the

development of the drama theory evolved from these ideas is crystallized in the literary ronso.¹ Much also depended on the characters of the participants, and it is probably due to the energetic and active personality of Tsubouchi Shōyō that his was the major influence in the formation of a Japanese dramaturgy.

Tsubouchi wrote Shōsetsu Shinzui in 1885, and although this work was primarily concerned with the novel, the ideas put forward in it were derived mainly from Tsubouchi's study of Shakespeare. He had once been severely criticised by his American professor of literature for analyzing the character of Gertrude in Confucian moral terms. He was soon reading literary reviews in Forum, the Fortnightly Review and the Contemporary Review, and he developed the conviction that characters in literary works should rather be analyzed by means of psychological realism. Avoidance of moral judgements and a faithful depiction of real life, especially in the matter of describing characters, were the basic tenets of Shōsetsu Shinzui. The writer was urged to concentrate his attention on the mental or psychological states of his characters.

Shōsetsu Shinzui sowed the seeds of the modern novel in Japan and Ukigumo was its first fruit. It also provoked the first of a long series of ronso between Tsubouchi and Mori Ōgai. This was the debate over 'submerged idealism'², in which Mori Ōgai defended the right of idealism to a prominent place in any literary work. Tsubouchi, drawing his examples again from Shakespeare, urged that, if present, it should be beneath the surface. Mori

1. Battles of theory.

2. Botsu-risō.

Ōgai was concerned in many debates about dramatic theory during the next twenty years. His preoccupation was generally with the status of plays as literature rather than as part of a larger artistic phenomenon. He had attacked some of the exponents of drama reform in the late 1880s because they seemed to be more interested in reforming the theatres rather than the plays. Much credit must be given to Mori Ōgai for confirming drama as a recognized literary form. It seems that by the late 1900s writing plays was accepted as a literary exercise in which writers felt it necessary and useful to indulge.¹ It is also probable that Mori Ōgai's frequent debates with his great friend Tsubouchi Shōyō helped to shape the latter's ideas. Tsubouchi was much more active in putting his ideas into practice and it was this which caused his influence on modern Japanese drama to be the greater.

Very soon after the publication of Shōsetsu Shinzui and the novel which followed it, Shosai Katagi, Tsubouchi was encouraging a similar attitude towards characterization in drama as in the novel. His first attempts to influence drama in a practical way took the form of participation in two drama reform societies towards the end of their existence. It was immediately evident, however, that his approach to drama was gradualist. While little harm could result from discarding pre-Meiji fiction entirely, the aesthetic achievements of Japanese classical drama were not lightly to be cast aside. It is significant that soon after the demise of the last of the drama reform societies, Tsubouchi immersed himself in the study of Chikamatsu and Shakespeare. This was in preparation for his second major contribution to

1. Akiba, i.333.

Japanese arts theory, Nagakuni no Shigeki,¹ published as essays in issues of Waseda Bungaku in 1893 and 1894.

The essays were primarily a detailed criticism of Japanese historical drama from Chikamatsu to Mokuami, combined with proposals for the reform of this type of drama. Tsubouchi's three main themes were that 1) there should be a clear distinction between narrative poetry and the poetry in drama, 2) all plays should embody unity of purpose and 3) priority should be given to characterization and dialogue.

With the appearance of Nagakuni no Shigeki the first phase of the search for a new drama came to an end. The introduction of Ibsen in numerous translations around the turn of the century was soon to bring what appeared on the surface to be new ideas into the modern drama movement. Apart from his important technical innovations, Ibsen treated in his plays problems that were beginning to be discussed by the Japanese intellectuals of the time. The strong influence of European naturalism and the formation of societies for the study of socialism in the last decade of the 19th century, together with a fetish for science and scientific method, had created a receptivity in the minds of Japanese intellectuals for the ideas brought onto the stage by Ibsen.

Much attention was paid to Ibsen by intellectuals interested in the drama at the beginning of the 20th century. Most of their discussion of the Norwegian playwright concerned the fact that he had brought such ideas onto the stage, and the ideas themselves. The case of Ibsen illustrates how much the history of shingeki was linked with Japanese intellectual history. Immediately after the basic requirement of realistic characterization had been

1. Japan's Historical Drama.

established with enough authority to be accepted, playwrights and theatre people in Japan were confronted with the wide range of social ideas being employed by the major European playwright of the time. Tsubouchi's insistence on realistic characterization in drama was the first step in the creation of a drama which would be meaningful to a society in a continuous process of Westernization. But before Tsubouchi's theory could possibly be realized in practice, a large number of new ideas and concepts were being introduced into the very drama that was bound to be the greatest influence on Japan.

Much has been written on the subject of the relativeness of the terms 'modernization' and 'Westernization' in the Meiji period. It is possible to construct many models of 'modernization' and any very extensive examination of this problem is beyond the scope of this Introduction. One can say, however, that the major preoccupation of the Meiji government for reasons of national pride, in an age where there was the real possibility of national peril and a traditional social basis for the total acceptance of ideas imposed from above, was to change Japan so that she would conform to the notions of 'civilization' held by the most powerful 19th century nations. Japan was to become 'modern', as opposed to 'feudal', by becoming like the major Western nations of the time.

From the Meiji government's point of view this involved great changes in institutions, in particular the political and legal systems which were crucial in the diplomatic efforts to erase extraterritoriality from the treaties. But the intellectuals of the Meiji period, especially those

concerned with the novel, were becoming increasingly aware that Western institutions only reflected certain fundamental attitudes about the individual status of men. There was a constant search by novelists such as Natsume Sōseki for a redefinition of 'man' and his 'ego' in the Japanese context.

It was very easy to incorporate the content of Western naturalistic works into Japanese novels or plays, but it was very difficult for Japanese writers to have understood enough of the assumptions behind the works for their 'spirit' to have been re-created. The position was complicated by the often uncritical acceptance of the ideas or content of Western literature for use in Japanese works. Maruyama Masao devotes much of his book Nihon no Shisō to the problem of the adoption of Western ideas, especially Marxism, unaccompanied by an understanding of the social and intellectual factors that encouraged and shaped them.

This is clearly a very complex problem which concerns the whole of Japanese intellectual and literary history in the modern period. One can say that in some respects Japanese novelists were able to achieve the creation of naturalist novels as relevant to the social history of Japan and as laudable artistically as the most famous novels of European naturalism. Shimazaki Tōson's Hakai may be cited as an example. But such examples are few and in Japan drama and the novel have inevitably progressed at different rates. Shōsetsu Shinzui appeared in 1885, but it was nearly ten years before anything even remotely comparable was written concerning drama. The technical problems of style confronting the novelist were much less numerous than

these facing the playwright. With the appearance of Ukigumo in 1887 most of the major problems were solved. The novelist's novel was his own individual creation and complete in itself. He had only to support himself by his art. A Meiji playwright, however, had a long tradition of popular drama behind him containing hard conventions of performance. Determined attempts to break free of these conventions did not start until 1909. By this time there had been a flood of new literary theories from the West which the playwrights could not ignore. In every respect the task of the Japanese playwright in creating 'modern drama' was a much more complex one than that confronting the novelist.

As has been explained in the early part of this Introduction, the technical problems to be overcome were formidable. Some of the most fundamental of these (for instance, the training of actresses) had hardly begun to be discussed even by the 1910s, when regular performances of modern plays by 'modern' groups started being given. For these reasons ^{the} early history of modern Japanese drama will be examined here from the point of view of its concrete realization. Drama as literature was written experimentally by novelists such as Mori Ōgai from the 1890s onwards and there were always coterie magazines in which to publish it. But for the reasons stated above little progress could be made in the development of a modern drama meaningful to socially mixed audiences until shingeki groups were able to experiment practically.

Drama as literature in Japan requires an examination of the ways in

which new subjects were incorporated and invites comparison with the novel. Drama as performance before an audience in Japan requires firstly consideration of basic technical matters such as realistic characterization and dialogue, artistic unity of the performances, and presentation of new subject matter to the audience. Much had been achieved during the first forty years of the Meiji period in breaking away from the conventions of classical drama. These conventions, however, remained popular enough for kabuki to be commercially profitable, and this very popularity helped confirm the conservatism of the acting families. Many of the conventions of the later shimpa were similar to those of kabuki. How difficult it was, artistically and practically, for men of literature and the theatre to build a modern drama can be seen from the efforts that were needed over a period of forty years to establish acceptance of even the most fundamental requirements. The second part of this Introduction examines the activities of shingeki groups until 1924.

II

The last few years of the Meiji period and the succeeding Taishō period saw energetic experimentation in the working out of the problems of the composition of modern drama groups and modern theatre technique. The social environment of drama changed radically several times during the Taishō period and this hindered ordered development in terms of these problems. The rise of theatrical commercialism was responsible for much waste of serious dramatic ability. The leader of a group called the Toridesha is reported to have considered adapting Faust into a play revolving around a heroine, because of the very great popularity of a certain actress.¹ The rise of the film industry in the late 1910s took many young actors and especially actresses away from their groups. The intellectual appeal of drama, sometimes aroused by factors unconnected with the theatre, and the traditional tendency of Japanese artistic groups to form around a leader, led to the formation of over one hundred small, ephemeral theatre groups in the later 1910s.

The circumstances of Taishō drama were very complicated. But in terms of continuity with the development of new drama in the Meiji period and with what was to follow in the Shōwa period, and again in terms of the individuals recognised by posterity as the leaders of shingeki in the 20th century, it will be sufficient here to concentrate attention mainly on the activities of two groups, Bungei Kyōkai and Jiyū Gekijō.

Bungei Kyōkai² may be said to have been the first organization to have made sustained and constructive efforts to further the performance and

1. Toita, Engeki no Gojūnen, p.107.

2. Literary Arts Association.

appreciation of modern drama in Japan. Most of the leadership and initiative in the founding and administration of Bungei Kyōkai came from two men, whose names are famous in Japanese literary and theatrical history.

The elder of these two men was Tsubouchi Shōyō. Very soon after the appearance of Wagakuni no Shingeki a department of literature was established at Tōkyō Seimon Gakkō (later Waseda University) and Tsubouchi held meetings devoted to readings and discussion of drama for the students of this department. Most of the texts studied were his own historical plays.¹ Events in the traditional and commercial drama world during the first four years of the 20th century encouraged Tsubouchi's students to believe that they should plan actual performances and they prevailed upon an unwilling Tsubouchi to form a society (called the Ekifū-kai) which would give performances as well as readings.² Matsumoto Kappai, who has recently published a book on this period and who was personally acquainted with many of these shingeki pioneers, suggests strongly that during these few years Tsubouchi was constantly prompted into bigger and progressively less secure ventures by pressure from his students.³

In spite of his alleged reservations about attempting what he believed was beyond the powers of his actors, Tsubouchi grasped the opportunity to give practical realization to his artistic ideas. He was still concerned with the problem of creating a new modern drama which would retain the most valuable elements of the classical forms. During the first few years of the 20th century, however, he had become increasingly preoccupied with the

1. Kawatake, Shingeki Undō, p.184.

2. Ibid., p.188.

3. Matsumoto Kappai, Nihon Shingeki-shi, Shingeki Bimbo Monogatari (Chikuma Shobō, 1966), pp.28-9. Referred to below as Matsumoto, Shingeki-shi.

development of a new dance drama in Japan.¹ Western opera and ballet, as well as Shakespeare, had excited his interest. The first 'trial performance'² of the Ekifū-kai was of a jōruri play adapted so that the dialogue was in the courtly style of the Nara period. The name gagēki³ was given to this new drama form. The use of Nara courtly Japanese for the dialogue was in response to some dissatisfaction on the part of the students with the traditional 5/7 pattern used in all Tsubouchi's plays up to this time.⁴ It aroused much favourable comment and was regarded as an important step forward in the development of a new drama. It was also significant that the play was performed entirely by Tsubouchi's students, who had not been trained in traditional acting methods and who used a new style of 'recitation'⁵ which Tsubouchi had been developing. The performance also showed, however, that a new drama movement under the direction of Tsubouchi would be based on extensive study and sympathetic assessment of Japanese classical culture.

The success of this first venture was such that the society's members urged the establishment of a larger, more permanent organization. Tsubouchi was again hesitant, preferring to wait and ask the advice of a trusted pupil and friend, Shimamura Hōgetsu, who was at the time in Europe.⁶

Shimamura (b.1871) was a recently appointed young lecturer at the

1. Akiba, 1.86.

2. Shien. Staged by groups wishing to show the results of their study of drama, but not having the confidence to mount a full-scale production. Kawatake Shigetoshi et al ed., Engēki Hyakka Daijiten (Heibon-sha, 1967), iii.62. Referred to below as Engēki Hyakka Daijiten.

3. Elegant drama.

4. Akiba, ibid..

5. Kōdoku.

6. Kawatake, Shingeki Undō

Tōkyō Seimon Gakkō (his own university) and had established his position in the literary world just before departing for Europe in 1902 by the publication of an 'epoch-making' work Shin Bijigaku.¹ He was favoured by Tsubouchi's friendship while a student and although influenced greatly by him, inclined more towards the ideas of Tsubouchi's rival, Mori Ōgai.² During the first ten years of the 20th century Shimamura was gradually transferring his intellectual support from romanticism to naturalism, and he was soon to become one of the main theorists of the latter literary school.

On his return to Japan Shimamura enthusiastically joined the cause of those who wished to expand Ekifū-kai into a more ambitious undertaking. After discussions between members of the society and sympathetic literary men from the university plans were put forward for a large-scale cultural organisation, to be called Bungei Kyōkai, which was to concern itself with a wide range of activities. Tsubouchi was asked to be president, but refused for reasons of health and lack of time and because he was convinced that their preparations were inadequate.³ His prognostications were correct. At the end of the first three years of its life (1906-9), Bungei Kyōkai's only regular activity was the publication of a journal. Tsubouchi urged that those responsible for Bungei Kyōkai recognize the limits of their own capabilities and refrain from high-sounding announcements and policy statements.⁴

From April, 1907, the managing committee of Bungei Kyōkai, headed by Shimamura, had planned the construction of a drama study centre, but the project had never been realized because of lack of funds. In 1909 Shimamura and one other member of the committee appealed to Tsubouchi on behalf of Bungei Kyōkai. Tsubouchi responded by making available a part of the plot of land on which his own house stood as a site for the proposed drama study

1. New Aesthetics. Fujimura Tsukuru ed., Nihon Bungaku Daijiten (Shinchō-sha, 1950-51), 111.440.

2. Kawazoe Kunimoto, Shimamura Hōgetsu (Naseda Daigaku Shuppan-bu, 1953), p.5. Referred to below as Kawazoe, Shimamura.

3. Kawatake, Shingeki Undō, pp.192-3.

4. Ibid., p.197.

centre and then paying all the building costs.¹ The centre was completed by September and consisted of a lecture room, rehearsal room, an office and common rooms.²

Tsubouchi's action may appear surprising in the circumstances. Various reasons are suggested for his apparent willingness to involve himself in a major enterprise of this kind. To some extent the possibility of refusal had been taken away from him by a prior, and successful, approach to Ōkuma Shigenobu, President of Waseda and a great statesman, to become titular president of Bungei Kyōkai in its new venture. Tsubouchi felt it was his duty to assume full public responsibility for the future activities of the association.³ Apart from this Tsubouchi had already started work with several friends on the development of a new type of dance drama and this ambitious programme was itself based on his own home.⁴ Whatever were Tsubouchi's reasons, Bungei Kyōkai's activities were now effectively confined to drama. This situation was formalized by a reorganization and redefinition of the association in 1911, and as a result of this Tsubouchi was confirmed as its all-powerful head.

Thus in 1909 Bungei Kyōkai started a new life as a drama study centre. It is usual in Japanese theatre histories to distinguish between the new Bungei Kyōkai and its predecessor, and the name Bungei Kyōkai II will be used for it here whenever it is necessary to make such a distinction.

At the beginning of the study centre's existence the student body numbered twenty-two.⁵ The fact that they were 'students' was important. Bungei Kyōkai was now an educational establishment. It had both male and

1. Akiba, 11.93-5.

2. There is a diagram in Matsumoto, Shingeki-shi, p.41.

3. Kawatake, Shingeki Undō, p.194.

4. Matsumoto, op. cit., p.30.

5. Akiba, 11.95.

and female students and was one of the first such institutions in Japan to be mixed.¹ It drew its male students mainly from the English literature department of Waseda University. The female students were also mainly from institutions of higher education, including the Peers' Women's School. Bungei Kyōkai II was dedicated to the practical fostering of modern drama in Japan. Tsubouchi considered that this aim could best be furthered by using people who had had no regular, active contact with existing theatre. The future actors of modern drama whom he was training were essentially amateur; indeed one of the students recalls of his days at Bungei Kyōkai that almost all his companions were youths fresh from the country.²

Classes were held only in the evenings, to allow those still pursuing full time education at Waseda and those with employment to continue with these during the day.³ Three hours of classes were normally given each evening. Overall artistic direction was firmly in the hands of Tsubouchi. The basis of the acting method taught was the 'rōdoku' style, developed by Tsubouchi over a period of more than thirty years. Its origin has been traced to the traditional hon-yomi - the practice of kyōgen playwrights reading their scripts aloud to those who were likely to be connected with a future performance.⁴ Tsubouchi considered this technique of rōdoku to be important for drama. He seems also to have been influenced through his teachers of English by the current American vogue for elocution and oratory. He apparently regarded Danjūrō 9th as one of its highest practitioners. By the time of the drama study centre Tsubouchi's rōdoku was a declamatory

1. Matsumoto, op.cit., p.42.

2. Yamada Takaya in Toita Kōji ed., Taidan Nihon Shingeki-shi (Seisa-bō, 1961), p.59. Referred to below as Toita, Taidan

3. Matsumoto, op. cit., p.35.

4. Ibid., p.22.

method using full body gestures, which retained many features of kabuki technique, notably the sound quality.¹ Through his experience and theoretical conviction Tsubouchi was far superior in rōdoku technique to all his students and assistant teachers and everyone felt obliged to copy Tsubouchi as exactly as he could. The style of acting that was produced by this training became known as the Bungei Kyōkai-chō or the Bungei Kyōkai manerizumu.² Its employment as a basic technical requirement for Bungei Kyōkai II students reflected Tsubouchi's continuing determination to preserve elements of an older tradition.

Bungei Kyōkai II gave its first public performance³ in May, 1911, and its last in June, 1913.⁴ The organization split up soon after the last performance. It mounted six public and two private productions⁵ in Tokyo and four public productions in Osaka.

The plays selected for performance by the new Bungei Kyōkai reveal the presence of opposing ideas inside the organization. The first public production was Hamlet, translated and directed by Tsubouchi with due regard for Japanese classical traditions. This was followed by a private production consisting of A Doll's House, directed by Shimamura (jointly with another member), and a dance drama⁶ under the direction of Tsubouchi. These two items were repeated as the second public production, with the addition of the court scene from The Merchant of Venice, directed by Tsubouchi. The third public production was of Heimat by Sudermann and was directed by Shimamura. Tsubouchi directed new dance dramas and Shakespeare, whom he

1. Ibid., pp.23-6

2. Bungei Kyōkai style; Bungei Kyōkai mannerism.

3. Kōen.

4. Tanaka Eizō, ed., Meiji Taishō Shingeki-shi Shiryō (Engeki Shuppan-sha, 1964), pp.99-101. Random checking of this reference work has not revealed any inaccuracies, and all details of Meiji and Taishō performances (excluding Nihon Rōdō Gekidan, Rōdō Gekidan and Tsukiji Shōgekijō) given in the text below will be taken from it.

5. Shi (watakushi) - en. Attendance at a shien was usually by invitation only. Compounds with -en are used to denote a programme either as a single performance or as a run. A programme may consist of more than one item.

6. Buyō-geki.

valued much more highly than Ibsen and other naturalists, as a playwright transcending time and ideology. He had little hand in the other productions - of Ibsen, Sudermann, Shaw and Meyer-Forster, although the same rōdoku-trained actors were used. These latter plays had all had recent successes in the West and belong generally to naturalism. As such they represented to some Japanese the modern man's view of what was new and significant. The dialogue style in which they were written was realistic and rōdoku seemed out of place, when it was grudgingly accepted for Shakespeare. Above all, most of these plays presented problems that a modern Japanese of the time would have regarded as central to the development of Japanese society. In particular the list of plays is marked for the high incidence of female characters who rebel against fettering traditional conventions. The selection of these plays may not only reflect progressive intellectual interest - the unprecedented popularity of the actress Matsui Sumako may have contributed. But she herself was a symbol of new social ideas, among which the position of women held an important place.

Although Tsubouchi was officially in sole control of Bungei Kyōkai II, there was much artistic disagreement among its members, and this was epitomized in the differing views of Tsubouchi himself and Shimamura Hōgetsu. Temperamentally they were very different. Tsubouchi was generally a cautious person. He felt very deeply the obligations that certain circumstances laid on him. He was very sensitive to the delicate position Bungei Kyōkai occupied in contemporary society and he enforced strict rules of morality on his students.¹ Shimamura Hōgetsu, by contrast with Tsubouchi, was by

1. Matsumoto, Shingeki-shi, pp.42 and 46.

temperament much less aware of practical matters such as the necessity of observing prevalent social conventions. From early, hard years, he had immersed himself in reading, in particular books where the element of romantic pathos was strong. Kawazoe Kunimoto, his biographer, notes one other characteristic of his which is relevant to the Bungei Kyōkai period. This was a laziness and sense of ennui, which seems to have caused a lack of any sense of responsibility. He could be enthusiastic about making plans but was not able to maintain his enthusiasm sufficiently to see them through to completion.²

The disagreement within Bungei Kyōkai was reflected in the comments of those who saw the performances. The problems of assessing dramatic criticism at this time are immense. There would be enthusiasm from some progressives that any small advance had been made, dissatisfaction from others that not enough had been achieved. There could not yet be any established critics of shingeki, as there were of kabuki and even shimpa. Distinguished critics of the latter two forms had no standards by which to judge the Bungei Kyōkai II productions of foreign drama. Few people seem to have given unqualified approbation to Bungei Kyōkai II, and a general feeling of cultural insecurity pervades the writings on the performances.

It is tempting to lay the major part of the blame for artistic disunity on Tsubouchi Shōyō. It is also possible, however, that the very qualities which exacerbated the problems, may have assisted the continuance and relative security of Bungei Kyōkai within Japanese society at the time. But they were not enough. The police banned Heimat as being contrary to the

1. Kawazoe, Shimamura, p.7.

2. Ibid., p.13.

Rescript on Education.¹ Within the group Tsubouchi's strict moral control was not extended to his protégé Shimamura Hōgetsu, whose love affair with Matsui Sumako was one of the reasons leading to the final split.² The early months of 1913 saw Bungei Kyōkai II in great internal disorder and it finally dissolved itself in July of that year.

Bungei Kyōkai II is important in the history of shingeki for two main reasons. It was begun and directed by a scholar who had been the leader in the theoretical and practical reform of Japanese theatre and drama. It trained and gave experience to a new generation of actors and actresses who were active in shingeki throughout the Taishō period. Neither of these two things can be said about Jiyū Gekijō, which is to receive consideration next. The importance of this group lies elsewhere.

Jiyū Gekijō³ was formed in 1909. Like Bungei Kyōkai II it was under the direction of two men, Osanai Kaoru and Ichikawa Sadanji 2nd. Osanai and Sadanji, however, were very different from Tsubouchi Shōyō and Shimamura Hōgetsu, both in background and in their approach to the group they led.

Both were young men - about thirty - when the group was formed, whereas Tsubouchi Shōyō was already over fifty. Osanai had only graduated (from the English literature department of the Imperial University) three years before, in 1906. During his period at the university he had taken part in many extra-curricular literary activities. He wrote novels, but they were apparently not considered to be of a very high standard.⁴ He also published a poetry

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1. Imai Seiichi ed., Taishō Demokurashii, Nihon no Rekishi (Chūō Kōron-sha, 1965-7), xxxiii (1966). 110.
 2. Matsumoto, Shingeki-shi, p.52.
 3. Free Theatre.
 4. Mizushina Haruki, Osanai Kaoru to Tsukiji Shōgekijō (Machida Shoten, 1954), p.7. Referred to below as Mizushina, Osanai Kaoru.

magazine together with six friends. In drama he was attracted by naturalism, and after graduation he joined the Ibsen Society, among whose other members were distinguished Japanese naturalists such as Shimazaki Tōson and Iwano Hōmei. He is said to have admired Tōson greatly as a novelist and Mori Ōgai as a drama critic and playwright.¹ Ōgai was strongly opposed to naturalism, but Osanai preferred to follow him in drama criticism rather than the only other critic of comparable eminence - Tsubouchi Shōyō.

Osanai wished to make the theatre his profession, but he was not in Tsubouchi's circle and shimpa was the only branch of theatre open to him at the time. He became the literary adviser of the shimpa group which was at the time experimenting with adaptations of famous Japanese novels. Osanai soon became disillusioned with shimpa, however, and retired to his study. There he devoted himself to literature, in particular the publication of Shin-shichō, a journal intended to introduce Western literature, especially the plays of Ibsen, to Japan.² Within six months Shin-shichō had stopped publication and Osanai had returned to the theatre, first directing kabuki actors in Molière for the young Ichikawa Sadanji 2nd, then as a teacher at the newly founded Tōkyō Haiyū Yōsei-jo,³ and finally as Sadanji's partner in Jiyū Gekijō.

The background and training of Ichikawa Sadanji 2nd would seem to be such as to preclude him from being a pioneer in the shingeki movement. Born the son of a famous kabuki actor, he was trained with all the rigour that was associated with acting families. He was early to be burdened with heavy responsibilities. While he was only in his early twenties, his father, Ichikawa Sadanji 1st died, following the recent deaths of Danjūrō 9th and

1. Ibid., p.6.

2. Hisamatsu Sen'ichi et al. ed., Gendai Nihon Bungaku Daijiten (Meiji Shoin, 1965), p.570. Referred to below by its title alone.

3. Tokyo Actors School.

Kikugorō 5th, the other two great kabuki actors of the Meiji period. Sadanji 2nd (referred to subsequently here simply as Sadanji) inherited responsibility for his father's kabuki company and the Meiji-za, a large theatre, together with accumulated debts of nearly ¥60,000. Sadanji soon proved that in the world of kabuki, he could be very successful, and the first production at the Meiji-za under his administration made enough profit for him to be able to undertake an eight-month trip to Europe.¹

Sadanji was a man of great passion and enthusiasm, and there are many testimonies to this. Stimulated by performances in Japan of Western opera, he applied himself passionately to the task of creating a modern Japanese drama.² He was convinced that this could never be born from either kabuki or shimpa, but depended on a thorough absorption of Western ideas and life. To this end he even entertained hopes (frustrated finally) of marrying a Western woman.³ His trip to Europe from December 1906, during which he saw many plays and was particularly impressed by the English Stage Society, confirmed his beliefs and he returned to Japan determined to put them into practice.

This was a courageous thing to do, for he aroused the hostility of many of his associates. His attempt to use the Meiji-za company to create the new drama resulted in failure, as did an enterprise in partnership with Kawakami Otojirō. Finally he even parted from his associate Matsui Shōyō, who had greatly helped him in the running of the Meiji-za and had accompanied him in Europe. The reason for this parting is said to have been the decision by Sadanji to join Osanai Kaoru in a completely new venture.

1. Matsumoto, *Shingeki-shi*, p.4.

2. *Ibid.*, p.142.

3. *Ibid.*, p.143.

This was Jiyū Gekijō, which gave its opening performance in November 1909 in the Yūrakū-za.¹ It was a group formed by two men who were disenchanted with established theatre. It was modelled on the English Stage Society and other European little theatre groups and dedicated to the introduction of Western drama. Its original promise was of two productions per year and this was fulfilled in 1910, 1911, and 1912. During 1913 and 1914, however, only one production was mounted in each year, and from then until the production just before the dissolution of the group in 1919 there were none at all. The active period of Jiyū Gekijō therefore corresponds roughly to that of Bungei Kyōkai II. In all nine productions were mounted, the first four being referred to as trial productions.² The Western plays chosen for the first three of these (by Ibsen, Hedderkind, Chehov, and Gorki) can generally be described as naturalistic or realistic. From its fourth production, however, Jiyū Gekijō, echoing the developments in other genres, showed an increasing interest in romanticism and symbolism (Maeterlinck, and Andreiev). This era of literary transition was also reflected in the Japanese playwrights performed.

From the beginning Jiyū Gekijō was never subject to such internal artistic disagreement as was Bungei Kyōkai. As men of the theatre, both Sadanji and Osanai were disillusioned with established drama and determined to build a new drama based on Western importations. Both were modernists in wishing to be 'new' Japanese, free from traditional restrictions. The literary advisers to the group were mainly Osanai's associates in Shinshichō, as anxious as he was for Japan's literary achievements to keep pace

1. A large, luxurious theatre built near Sukiwabashi in central Tokyo in 1908 to be a place of high-class entertainment. It is famous as having incorporated features of Western theatres. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, v.480.

2. Shien. See above, p. 32.

with those of the West. They represented the new intelligentsia, the shinjin ('new men') of the literary and artistic worlds.¹ Their intention for Jiyū Gekijō was to abandon a theatre and drama where 'form' obtruded, such as kabuki, and to create a Western type of theatre and drama which, relative to Japan, was without 'form'.²

The group at its inception did not have a building which could provide a focus for its activities, as did Bungei Kyōkai. Sadanji was unwilling to let the Meiji-za serve this purpose, as he was well aware of the problems of mixing kabuki with shingeki. A membership system was planned to give a corporate identity to the venture and to provide financial support. Membership was open to anyone over eighteen.³ It was hoped to maintain membership numbers at about 1500, but this target figure was never reached. Jiyū Gekijō was beset by financial difficulties throughout its existence, but during its period of greatest activity the spirit and enthusiasm of its leaders, its actors and technicians, and its closest advisers and supporters ensured that these difficulties had no serious effect. It was only later when this enthusiasm waned, the leaders taking on other interests, that financial problems were effective in preventing the continued active existence of Jiyū Gekijō.

Thus, if one compares Bungei Kyōkai and Jiyū Gekijō as societies of like-minded people, it would seem reasonable to summarize by saying that although Jiyū Gekijō lacked a central building and a leader with money and willingness enough to support it financially, this was compensated for by the co-operative spirit and vigour of its active members. The fundamental difference between the two organizations came in their approach to their actors.

1. Toita, Taidan, p.57.

2. Mizushima, Osanaï Kaoru, p.5. There are many references to this idea in comments on Jiyū Gekijō and the language used is by no means standardized. From a comparison of all the instances available, however, it is clear that the idea is a basic rejection of the preoccupation of established Japanese drama with formalized technique.

3. Jiyū Gekijō Kiyaku, quoted in Akiba, ii.150.

Bungei Kyōkai II actors were students, mostly without previous connection with established theatre. One of the leaders of Jiyū Gekijō, on the other hand, was a famous kabuki actor and he intended to appear in Jiyū Gekijō productions. The other actors needed were recruited from his own kabuki company at the Meiji-za. It is not clear whether this choice of kabuki actors was deliberate policy, or whether it represented a resignation in the face of circumstances. The latter would seem more likely, given the financial situation and the preoccupation of both the leaders and the advisers with the importation of Western plays.

The use of kabuki actors had two important consequences for Jiyū Gekijō, in technique and in the casting of female roles.

It was obvious to these actors that the training they had received and the technique they had acquired were not suitable for productions of plays such as John Gabriel Borkman. But they were not employed full-time by Jiyū Gekijō; kabuki was still their main occupation and provided their livelihood.¹ During the third production (of The Lower Depths) by Jiyū Gekijō the actor playing Klestch was simultaneously appearing in kabuki.² This situation meant that not only did the actors not have adequate free time for Jiyū Gekijō rehearsals, but they also had a vested interest in not acquiring a new technique that might interfere with their careers in kabuki.

In addition to this, the performance of Western plays presented many technical problems to the kabuki actor beyond those (such as movement and diction) that would appear immediately obvious to an outside observer. It was quite a new experience for Sadanji to have to speak his lines while walking

1. Akiba, ii.152.

2. Nihon Shingeki-shi Tokushū (N.H.K. transcript of discussion programme, Jan., 1963), p.31.

about the stage and he frequently 'dried' in mid-speech.¹ Then there was the difficulty of the dialogue itself. It is inevitable that Japanese translations of Western plays are longer than the original and Mori Ōgai's translation of Borkman was no exception to this. Osanai Kaoru, the director, singles out the particular problem of long passages which had to be delivered without a pause for breath.² Kabuki actors were accustomed to extemporizing if they could not remember their lines exactly. While this was easy for them in kabuki plays, it was almost impossible in an unfamiliar Western play and every line had to be learnt perfectly.³

The second consequence of using kabuki actors was that onnagata played the female roles. All the parts in Borkman were played by men. Circumstances forced Osanai to consider employing actresses after the return of the Borkman production from its Osaka tour, when onnagata became unavailable.⁴ It was only after he returned from a trip to Russia in 1913 that Osanai was convinced that female parts in Jiyū Gekijō productions should be played by actresses.⁵

Osanai's dictum to his actors 'Become amateurs!' is quoted in almost every reference to Jiyū Gekijō. It is usually contrasted with Tsubouchi's policy of taking amateurs and making them into professionals. This is sometimes less than fair, as the situation seems to some extent to have been forced on Osanai. But a solution had to be found, and Osanai's own lack of first-hand experience of Western theatre made the problem even worse. He had

1. Toita, Engeki Gojūnen, p.58.

2. Quoted in Akiba, ii. 155.

3. Nagata Hideo, Shingeki no Reimei (Guroria Sosaete, 1941), p.42.

4. Ibid., p.40.

5. Nihon Shingeki-shi Tokushū, p.33.

had some little experience in Japan in directing Western drama, but had never attempted anything of the scale of John Gabriel Borkman.

The method Osanai used to overcome these difficulties was one which was to become familiar over the next decade. He found out as much as he could about actual performances of Borkman in the West and then tried to reproduce them in his own production. In this instance he relied on letters and sketches provided by a friend studying in Vienna, but later he was himself to travel twice to the West taking meticulous notes on every gesture he saw in stage productions. This system resulted in much of the movement on stage being mechanical and awkward. To the audiences, however, this was not of great importance. They were mainly composed of people connected with the arts and students, distinguished for their youthful enthusiasm.¹ As in the case of the Bungei Kyōkai audiences, they were mainly interested in the play and would not have been very worried about the actors' technique.²

The plays performed by Jiyū Gekijō can be said to have given much more general satisfaction to their audiences than those of Bungei Kyōkai II. Most of the Western plays performed were currently in vogue in the West, and the Japanese plays were mainly written by young playwrights known to be influenced by contemporary Western schools. The literary advisers of Jiyū Gekijō were regarded as leaders of the new literature, and in literary terms there was a unity of outlook between the group and its audiences that did not exist in Bungei Kyōkai. Shimazaki Tōson wrote that there was also an artistic unity in the production (of Borkman) because due respect was paid to the play and the production rather than to the actors.³

It would seem that in terms of progress in creating a new Japanese

1. Matsumoto, Shingeki-shi, p.6.

2. Akiba, 11.160.

3. Ibid., p.157.

drama, Jiyū Gekijō was slightly more successful than Bungei Kyōkai. It is true that it did not train its actors and that it did not send out 'graduates' to continue its work; but it is also true that most of the major developments that occurred later in shingeki were the work of people who acknowledged the influence of Jiyū Gekijō rather than Bungei Kyōkai. It can be said that through its performances of plays with emancipated women as heroines Bungei Kyōkai had more influence on social attitudes during the early Taishō period. Jiyū Gekijō was forced to avoid such plays through its lack of actresses. But the notoriety of Matsui Sumako was not necessarily beneficial to shingeki, and the concentration of actors, advisers and audiences on the plays in the case of Jiyū Gekijō was probably responsible for the veneration paid it later as a pioneer shingeki group.

Both groups made clear progress towards their object - a new Japanese drama free from Japanese theatrical tradition - but the final experience of both was only to demonstrate how daunting the artistic problems still remained. The ever-present established theatre was shown still to be capable of minimizing the success of efforts towards modernization. Bungei Kyōkai had actors free from the effects of traditional training, but had also a director keen to effect a compromise with Japan's theatrical heritage. Jiyū Gekijō had no such restricted training, but used professional kabuki actors. Audiences too were still conditioned by the traditional plays they had seen. Both Tsubouchi and Osanai on occasion found it necessary to give a lecture, perhaps lasting over an hour, to the audience before the start of the play. This encouraged an already existing tendency to regard a performance of a Western or new Japanese play as having a social and intellectual, rather than an artistic and theatrical, importance. This helped to establish among

intellectuals the idea that shingeki was necessary to Japan, but it did nothing to attract wide middle-class support, which might have provided a sounder financial basis for the movement. Among the intellectuals interested in Western literature, who formed the core of shingeki supporters, there were differences of critical opinion according to which contemporary Western literary school ~~a~~ they supported. The shingeki movement itself was throughout the Taishō period subject to the debilitating splits and realignments that are familiar in almost any Japanese grouping. One can summarize by saying that a general insecurity, both imposed from without and induced from within, pervaded the movement.

Not least did this exist as a result of financial problems. Both Dungei Kyōkai and Jiyū Gekijō suffered considerably from them, although the former was able to rely on Tsubouchi's own wealth. Money was to become the major concern of all shingeki groups later in the Taishō period. The only commercially viable theatre was that which played what the Japanese theatre-going public wanted to see - kabuki and shimpa. Admission prices to Jiyū Gekijō productions at the Yūrakū-za were even more expensive than those to kabuki at the Meiji-za. A solution to this problem was achieved to some extent by Geijutsu-za,¹ one of the three groups to result from the splitting-up of Dungei Kyōkai II. Shimamura Hōgetsu, its leader, decided to promote two types of production; one was to be popular and to make money, the other was to be of serious, 'study drama'. The plan aroused much adverse comment, and Shimamura himself had only considered it after much anxious deliberation. After a brief period of achieving its object, the idea failed

1. Arts Theatre.

partly at least because Matsui Sumako, the actress whose appearance in the popular productions caused their financial success, began to demand exorbitant sums as payment for appearing in study-drama productions.

All the negative factors mentioned above served to limit the size of shingeki groups after Bungei Kyōkai II had gone out of existence and Jiyū Gekijō had stopped activity. Over a hundred small groups were active in the late 1910s, and their insignificant size meant that this period is sometimes not regarded as important in shingeki history.

Their very existence, however, was the result of the positive factors in the experience of Bungei Kyōkai and Jiyū Gekijō and they gave opportunities to most of the subsequent leaders of the shingeki movement, when it revived in a more definite form during the 1920s. These positive factors may be briefly listed in summary as: 1) a desire to make a final artistic and technical break with kabuki, after this had not been achieved during the major part of the Meiji period; 2) use of actresses; 3) introduction of contemporary Western plays; 4) the fostering of an interest in creative writing for the theatre among intellectuals associated with the literature departments of the main universities.

Very little has been said in this introduction to the early history of shingeki about the plays written by Japanese playwrights. This is because they present an impossible critical problem. Much of the discussion of the shingeki movement here has been in terms of how far it succeeded in its objectives. It would not be possible to apply this standard of criticism to the many, very diverse playwrights active during the Meiji and Taishō periods. Apart from the very vague, final objective of creating a new drama for Japan, there was no consensus at a lower level (such as characterization or construction) by which the results might be judged. Had the contemporary

European drama movement been dominated by Ibsen and his followers until the 1920s, one might have judged the new Japanese playwrights by their success in absorbing naturalist techniques. But symbolism, neo-romanticism and early expressionism all had their enthusiastic advocates in Japan and many playwrights wrote plays which they affirmed were according to the theories of one or other of these schools.

At a very low critical level one could say that certain plays of the naturalist school, such as Nakamura Kichizō's Kamisori,¹ had 'dramatic qualities'. In this play the characters are realistically drawn and the structure is such that a certain amount of sustained tension might have been expected. But 'dramatic qualities' depend very much on the previous conditioning of the audience, and any study of this subject in the Taishō period would require very complex treatment. The fact that enormous numbers of plays were published as literary exercises in magazines and journals further magnifies the difficulties involved in making any general assessment.

The forty years that had passed since the first serious attempts to create a modern drama for Japan were a period of partial solutions to formidable problems. Above all a united effort was needed in which theatre artists, theatre technicians, theatrical sponsors, writers and intellectuals would take part. The vested interests of all these groups, however, were very strong and not always compatible. There was no potent unifying cry for the theatre as there had been politically for Meiji Japan.

This is not to belittle the achievements of these forty years. Much experience had been gained and the problems were being seen much more clearly at the end of the period than at the beginning. Many of those most active in Taishō shingeki were young and the contributions of their artistic maturity were still to come.

1. Razor.

CHAPTER 1

Tsukiji Shōgekijō, 1924-1926

A young Japanese nobleman travelling on the trans-Siberian railway in 1923 suddenly decided that he would build in Tokyo a new theatre devoted to shingeki. These somewhat romantic beginnings do not detract in any way from the seriousness of the plans that Hijikata Yoshi made while returning to Japan from Europe after news of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 3 September 1923. Hijikata was very determined in his early shingeki work during the late 1910s and was not deterred by a warning from the Imperial Household Ministry.¹ He was also an astute businessman and had made his European trip possible through the business skills he had himself developed to pay off the considerable debts left to him by his grandfather. His original plan had been to stay in Europe for ten years;² he was now returning after one year and had been able to take full advantage of the rampant inflation in post-war Germany. His plans for a new theatre were based on a sound financial position. His work in scenery design for the Meiji-za had been very successful and he had had much experience in directing for his own group, Tomodachi-za.³ Hijikata Yoshi was perhaps uniquely suitable as a Japanese to create a new shingeki movement out of the desolation of the Earthquake.

In the train Hijikata 'decided to construct a little theatre and organise a group which would have the theatre as its base, and

1. Ozaki Hirotsugu and Ibaraki Ken, Hijikata Yoshi (Chikuma Shobō, 1961), pp.33-4. Referred to below as Ozaki and Ibaraki, Hijikata Yoshi.
2. Akiba, ii.536.
3. Friends Theatre.

made other plans connected with this'. 'My dream in the train was to ask Osanai-sensei to be an adviser and to have Tomoda Kyōsuke and Shiomī Yō as my partners'.¹ Hijikata and Tomoda had been boyhood friends and had worked closely together in the group which Tomoda had formed in 1914.² Shiomī Yō had been building up a considerable reputation as a young shingeki actor in Kenkyū-za³ (founded in 1920).⁴ These two were to be his partners. Osanai Kaoru would be asked to be an adviser, a position of respect but with no direct participation in the many decisions of the central group. It is interesting to speculate on Hijikata's reason for deciding not to invite Osanai to be a full partner. Speculation is all that is possible because there is no evidence from the writings of those directly concerned. Akiba suggests that because of Osanai's eminence it would have been disrespectful to have wanted Osanai to be on the level of the young dōjin, and he then quotes the opinion of Kubo Sakae that Osanai may have been thought to be too controversial a figure to be suitable for inclusion.⁵ Sugai Yukio also suggests that Hijikata's motive was to keep Osanai at a distance.⁶ Osanai had made many enemies in the literary and dramatic worlds and these would be an embarrassment, and perhaps worse, to the new group.

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1. Hijikata Yoshi, Nasu no Yobanashi (Kappa Shobō, 1947), p.306. The word translated here as 'partners' is dōjin (or dōnin) - a term with strong emotional connotations indicating members of a group which has been formed to promote an artistic enterprise. The members are responsible to each other for the success of their venture.
 2. Toita Kōji, Shingeki-shi no Hitobito (Kadokawa Shinsho, 1954), pp.149- 52.
 3. Study Theatre.
 4. Akiba, ii. 359-61.
 5. Ibid., 537.
 6. Sugai Yukio ed., Osanai Kaoru Engeki-ron Zenshū (Mirai-sha, 1964-8), iii (1965). 340. Referred to below as Sugai, Osanai Kaoru Engeki-ron.

Hijikata had been Osanai's devoted pupil in stagecraft since 1920 and had great respect for his teacher. He had left Japan in 1922 almost with the intention of never returning.¹ His one link with Japan was the promise Osanai had made to him on his departure that they would build up a new shingeki group together when he returned.² In view of this close association with its clearly defined obligations and assuming from Osanai's own immediate rejection of the idea of being an 'adviser' that the proposal did not satisfy the demands of Japanese personal relations, it appears even more strange that Hijikata should have made this decision at the very beginning.

With hindsight it is possible to surmise that there was already in 1923 a serious generation difference between Hijikata and Osanai. A situation later developed comparable to earlier divergences between Shimamura Hōgetsu and Tsubouchi Shōyō in Bungei Kyōkai. Hijikata knew well the importance Osanai attached to the work of Stanislavski in the Moscow Art Theatre. By contrast, Hijikata himself had been very interested in the expressionist productions he had seen in Germany during nearly one year's stay. The strongest impression of his whole trip, however, had been given to him by what he saw of Soviet drama in the last few days before he left for Japan from Moscow. He is often quoted as having said that one week in Russia solved the problems of

1. Hijikata Yoshi, Haiiro no Tsukiji Shōgekijō in Minshu Hyōron Henshū-bu ed., Shingeki no Yonjūnen (Minshu Hyōron-sha, 1949), p.3. Shingeki no Yonjūnen is an important collection of autobiographical articles, to which frequent reference will be made below. After the first full reference individual articles will be referred to by the name of the author and the last word of the title of the book, thus: Hijikata Yoshi, Yonjūnen.

2. Ibid., pp.3-4.

one year in Germany. In the Soviet Union Hijikata had watched a Meyerhold production and had much admired this new theatre form, which had been created out of dissatisfaction with the realism of Stanislavski and the impressionism of directors such as Reinhardt. Appia, Craig and Fortuny had caused revolutionary developments in the European theatres, mainly in the years after Osanai's last visit to Europe, and Meyerhold under the initial stimulus of the October Revolution had superseded even these. An awareness of the tensions that might be created by his espousal of the newest and most controversial European theatre forms may well have influenced Hijikata's decision to involve Osanai in his new venture only indirectly.

On arrival at Kobe at the end of December 1923 Hijikata went straight to visit Osanai, who was in Osaka at the time, and outlined to him the plans for a new theatre and group. Osanai had left Tokyo some months before, deeply disillusioned by the commercialization of shingeki talent (mainly by the film companies) and above all in despair over what seems to have been a type of cultural ostracism. His outspokenness and refusal to deviate from his convictions on the one hand had made him many enemies, some of whom had been quite unprincipled in their personal attacks on him (as often happened in Japan in cultural quarrels involving groups with commonly guarded sets of ideas), and on the other had discouraged those by inclination sympathetic from wholeheartedly joining him in his cause.¹ He was therefore overjoyed to be visited by Hijikata and told of his plans. Hijikata, after returning to Tokyo, went back to Osaka to see Osanai again on 3 January 1924. Osanai expressed to Hijikata his strong wish to participate in the

1. Misushina, Osanai Kaoru, p.54.

venture as a full dōjin rather than just as an adviser. The relations existing between the two men make it unlikely that a true account of their conversations and feelings will ever be possible, but Hijikata returned to Tokyo having accepted Osanai as a full partner.

There are considerable differences in the various accounts of how the final group of six dōjin was formed and in what way the early decisions were taken. It seems clear, however, that Hijikata and Osanai were regarded as leaders and that major decisions were taken as a result of whatever accommodation could be reached between them. This happened in the case of the character of the theatre which was to be built. It appears that the views of Hijikata and Osanai differed on this important point and that the design finally accepted was as Osanai wished and had advocated.¹

Apart from Tomoda Kyōsuke and Shiomi Yō the other two members of the dōjin group were Wada Tadashi and Asari Tsuruo. Wada was originally regarded as a director, but was later in charge of lighting. Asari was included for his administrative expertise and showed himself particularly successful in attracting experienced members of other shingeki groups into the new company.²

A site for the theatre was selected (out of a possible thirty or more) in the Tsukiji area of Tokyo and from this the future theatre and the group attached to it took their name, Tsukiji Shōgekijō.³ In the matter of the selection of this site also there is a suggestion that Osanai overrode a previous decision by Hijikata.⁴ Construction

1. Akiba, ii. 538.

2. Osaki and Ibaraki, Hijikata Yoshi, p.113.

3. Tsukiji Little Theatre. To distinguish between the theatre building and the group, the former will be referred to as the Tsukiji Shōgekijō and the latter as simply Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

4. Ibid., p.84.

of the new theatre went ahead at a rapid pace and it was ready for the opening on 13 June, 1924, just over six months after Hijikata's return.

Meanwhile the company was being assembled. It consisted of thirty-four members at the opening.¹ The most conspicuous deficiency was in actresses, of which there were only two.

On 5 May 1924 the six dōjin sent out a printed card to all those who might be interested in Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Its wording was as follows:

'We have recently commenced construction of the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. From the middle of June, when the building will be completed, we shall give performances of a responsible nature during four periods of five days each every month. These will be known as the regular productions of Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

We have planned this little theatre in the expectation that we shall be able to equip it as near perfectly as possible. This we have done in an awareness of drama's many diverse elements and of its mission, and also for the sake of freedom of artistic creation and appreciation. In our theatre we have also done away with the middle-men of commercialism. We would like to take this opportunity of announcing to you the results of our sincere and united efforts in preparation for this venture.

Within our theatre we shall establish facilities for the training of actors and for the study of drama and stagecraft.

We look forward to your encouragement and to your friendly criticism of what we are doing'.²

Intellectual interest in Tsukiji Shōgekijō mounted rapidly and on 20 May there was organized in Keio University a 'Lecture Meeting on Drama on the occasion of the founding of Tsukiji Shōgekijō'. The great hall of the university was packed with people, among whom were many eminent shingeki personalities connected with a newly founded and

1. Okakura Shirō and Kinoshita Junji ed., Yamamoto Yasue Butai Shashin-shū, Shiryō-hen (Mirai-sha, 1960), p.9. This comprehensive collection of documents relating to the career of the actress Yamamoto Yasue and the groups with which she acted, will be referred to below as Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen. Much of the commentary was written by Sugai Yukio.

2. Quoted in Akiba, ii. 532.

already influential theatre magazine Engeki Shinchō.¹

After several talks on drama in general terms, the last three speakers in the meeting devoted what they had to say entirely to Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Wada Tadashi gave a detailed explanation of the technical facilities. Hijikata followed with a passionate exposition of the group's guiding principles. Osanai spoke last, entitling his talk 'Tsukiji Shōgekijō and I'. In his address he announced that for the time being, perhaps one or two years, Tsukiji Shōgekijō would perform only foreign plays in translation. Japanese shingeki playwrights, including himself, would not be performed, because their plays did not excite his interest as a director.² This statement aroused a furore within the Japanese theatrical world and ensured that controversy would surround the opening of the new theatre. Debate over Osanai's statement occupied much space in future issues of Engeki Shinchō.³

On 13 June 1924 Tsukiji Shōgekijō gave its first performance before an audience, on this occasion entirely invited. On the next day it gave its first public performance and thus commenced its regular repertory activity. Three one-act plays were performed: Reinhard Goering's Sea Battle, Chekov's Swansong, and Emile Mazaud's Holiday. By many accounts these two evenings were a great success.

The three plays were performed every day until 18 June, after which they went on tour to such places as Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and

1. New Tide in Drama. The first issue was published in January, 1924, by Shinchō-sha and there were eighteen issues in all. Publication was then taken over by Bungai Shunjū-sha. The numbering of the issues was not continued over the change in publisher, and to avoid confusion the magazine will be referred to as Engeki Shinchō (1) and (2).

2. Ibid., 542.

3. Especially July and August, 1924. See below p. 61

Fukuoka. Meanwhile another production was in rehearsal and on 21 June Romain Rolland's Wolves began its five day run.¹ New productions were mounted fairly regularly during the first two years of the theatre's existence, but the number of productions was less than in the partners' announcement. From June 1924 until the end of the year there was a total of fourteen first nights. In 1925 there were altogether twenty-three and three in the first two months of 1926. Until the middle of March 1926 every play produced was in translation. The range of playwrights performed was impressive. The list includes Goering, Chekov, Rolland, Karel Capek, Hirschfeld, Bjornson, Meyer-Forster, Kaiser, Ibsen, O'Neill, Gorki, Pirandello, Schnitzler, Strindberg, Shakespeare, Hauptmann, Gogol, the brothers Capek, Wederkind, Andreiev, Toller, Hasenclever, Maeterlinck and Shaw.

The Tsukiji Shōgekijō building had been completed within two months from the time when construction started. Its physical properties had been determined by two factors, the exigencies of the time in Japan and the desire to embody as many as possible of the newest European ideas on theatre architecture.

Hijikata's original plan had been for a little theatre of about 250 capacity, modelled on the 'chamber theatre' of Max Reinhardt. Osanai was in favour of a larger theatre of approximately twice this

1. The dating for performances by Tsukiji Shōgekijō and the later Shin-Tsukiji Gekidan is according to the chronological section of Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, pp.253-309. Chronologies abound in Japanese books with any historical reference and accuracy varies considerably. The chronology in this work is specifically related to the groups for which Yamamoto Yasue acted. It is therefore very detailed for both Tsukiji Shōgekijō and Shin-Tsukiji Gekidan. Random cross-checking with contemporary journals has not revealed any inaccuracy, and a personal assurance was given by one of the editors that the greatest pains were taken to ensure the absence of chronological mistakes.

capacity, and his views prevailed. Artistically the larger size probably allowed more freedom in the choice of plays; financially it was misguided, as the average audience for Tsukiji Shōgekijō performances was approximately 250.¹

After the Earthquake strict regulations governing the construction of buildings were framed. It is doubtful whether Hijikata could have obtained permission for the construction of a permanent theatre building. However, permission for 'barrack' type buildings was freely given and the Tsukiji Shōgekijō became a 'barrack theatre'. The word 'barrack' in Japanese signified a temporary building and at this time the length of time for which a 'barrack' might stand was limited to five years. Construction was therefore light and comparatively inexpensive.

The architectural style chosen was 'Gothic-Romanesque' and the external colour was uniformly grey. The grey décor was continued inside the building, where unnecessary decoration was kept to a minimum. Anything not directly connected with drama was eschewed. This resulted in a harmonious effect of simple beauty, but the impression it made on some of the audience was of an examination hall.² Every effort was made to create an atmosphere of serious and single-minded application to the task of appreciating the new drama.

The width of the three rows of seats and that of the stage were the same, and the seats were so arranged that as far as possible each one commanded a good view of the stage. This in itself was an innovation and was also influenced by certain contemporary European

1. Misushina, Osana! Kaoru, p.75.

2. Ibid., pp.63-4.

ideas of theatre seating. Wada Tadashi, writing in the first issue of Tsukiji Shōgekijō's own theatre magazine, says unequivocally that they will on no account favour the rich and give them better seats than other people.¹ Similarly all were equally subject to the cold. The theatre had been built too quickly for proper heating to be installed. Small radiators were placed against the side walls and it was not uncommon for the benumbed actors to play to empty seats while the side aisles were filled with ardent shingeki devotees trying to keep warm.²

The stage itself and its equipment were the result of much study. The experiences of Osanai and Hijikata in Europe, as much written material as was available, and hours of discussion among the partners and their friends all contributed to the final design. Wada Tadashi, who was to become the permanent stage manager of the theatre, took a very active part in these discussions. In the same article in the house magazine he describes its construction.³

The centrepiece of the stage was the Kuppelhorizont and it was justifiably a matter of some pride to the company. The Kuppelhorizont was basically an extended cyclorama and it came into its own with the great advances in indirect stage lighting which had taken place in Europe under the influence of Appia and Fortuny. The Kuppelhorizont formed an arc enclosing the back portion of the stage and curved into a dome at the top. The vertical sides could be made of canvas, but the most efficient examples were rigid with a plaster covering. By all accounts the Tsukiji Shōgekijō's Kuppelhorizont

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1. Wada Tadashi, Tsukiji Shōgekijō no Setsubi, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, I.i (June, 1924), 76.
 2. Misushina, Osanai Kaoru, p.132.
 3. Tsukiji Shōgekijō, I.i, 72-5.

was magnificent and the effects possible with it astounded the audiences. Its width was twelve metres, as was its height; the depth of its concavity was just over seven metres. The stage itself was divided into four sections, thus enabling its depth to be varied at will. The proscenium arch was approximately ten metres across and steps down to the audience level ran along its whole width. These steps were to provide direct contact with the audience if the play demanded this, but they were easily removable. The stage itself could be extended into the auditorium if a forestage was required. Similarly the stage could be foreshortened to bring the audience through the proscenium if the play required an unusually shallow stage. On each side of the proscenium, set at an angle and projecting out towards the audience, was a set of double arches, used mainly for crowd entrances.

Footlights, now scorned by the European theatre, had no place in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. All lighting was by means of adjustable spots and floods and it was controlled from a lighting box at the back of the auditorium and above the audience.

In design and equipment Tokyo's first little theatre could rival many of the newest such theatres in Europe. It had some serious deficiencies (the noise of rain on the roof could almost stop a performance), but these were due to the temporary nature of the building and the speed with which it was erected. From a technical point of view Japan could now provide an excellent environment for the growth of a new drama. The excellence of the theatre only increased the bitterness of those established Japanese playwrights whom the Tsukiji partners had excluded for the initial period.¹

1. For example, Engeki Shinchō (1), I. vii (July, 1924), 28-9.

Before the theatre could function, however, there had to be some reasonably secure financial arrangement and a workable organization. Hijikata had paid for the construction of the theatre and its equipment, and it was necessary for him to pay all the running costs until the first production opened. We have seen above how at Osanai's insistence the theatre building was considerably bigger than Hijikata had originally planned. Mizushima also states that Osanai opposed Hijikata's preference for a small company and advocated incorporating as many members as possible.¹ The expenditure of the rather ambitious enterprise that resulted was to be recouped by a membership system, as had been tried for Jiyū Gekijō.

Osanai expected the theatre to begin to show a profit and to build up reserves within two years. It is suggested that Osanai's calculations were based on the financial success of the Moscow Art Theatre.² It is also true that the Volkstheater in the German language area had employed the membership system with great success.³ But in Japan this system had failed in the case of Jiyū Gekijō and in spite of Osanai's hopes to the contrary Tsukiji Shōgekijō did not draw as widely based (and therefore potentially numerous) audiences as these European theatres. It also appears from correspondence between Osanai and Hijikata that the former may have presumed too much upon the latter's wealth.⁴

Tsukiji Shōgekijō never approached financial viability during these first two years. Already by June of 1925 its monthly losses amounted to the huge sum of ¥5,000.⁵ The actors had received

1. Mizushima, Osanai Kaoru, pp.75-6.

2. Akiba, ii. 542.

3. Julius Bab, The Theatre in the German Language Area since the World War, in T.H. Dickinson, The Theatre in a Changing Europe (Putnam, 1938), p.131.

4. Quoted in Ozaki and Ibaraki, Hijikata Yoshi, pp.102-3.

5. Yanamoto Yasuo, Shiryō-hen, p.19.

salaries from the beginning (these were unprecedented in shingeki history), even though the ¥30 that was received monthly was only just enough to keep a single person, and these were continued. But from the beginning of the theatre's second year it was necessary to cut back on productions (to two per month instead of the originally projected four) and to hire the theatre out for other functions. Artistically the reduction in performances was probably beneficial, as all accounts written by and about the actors at this time remark that they were severely overworked.

For the first six months after the opening the theatre and the company were administered by the dōjin, who met together regularly for the purpose of taking administrative and policy decisions. At the beginning of 1926 it was felt that a more democratic procedure was needed and these decisions were made the responsibility of meetings of all the full members of the company. (A number of student actors was attached to the company and they were allowed to send two representatives to the meetings). These general meetings, however, invariably ended in confusion and although they were retained as a forum for discussion, administration was soon entrusted to an oligarchy of selected representatives of the various interests involved in the running of the theatre.¹ For the remainder of the period under discussion here this latter system was efficient in the day-to-day administration of the theatre. As a result of the attempt at democratization, however, a body had been created whose views could not be ignored by the oligarchy.

What has been described above was the physical and organizational structure within which Tsukijo Shōgekijō did its work.

1. Mizushima, Osanaï Kaoru, pp.116-7.

The physical characteristics of the theatre at least ensured negatively that many features of contemporary Japanese commercial drama (kabuki and shimpa, and their derivatives) could not be reproduced there. This in itself would have contributed towards achieving one of the main objectives of the theatre's existence, namely 'to create a (new) dramatic art outside kabuki and shimpa....'¹ But the main contribution to the development of a modern Japanese drama had to come from the artistic achievements of those who worked in the theatre as part of the organization, above all the actors and the director-leaders.

As has been seen already in the Introduction to this thesis, there are considerable problems of methodology involved in any critical assessment of an artistic movement in the circumstances that existed in the first decades after the Meiji Restoration. In the case of the Introduction it was felt necessary to indicate the major tasks that had to be undertaken, given that there was a fundamental incompatibility between existing Japanese drama and Western drama on which a new Japanese movement was bound to be based. By 1924, however, the leaders of Tsukiji Shōgekijō had not only had several years' practical experience in the shingeki movement in Japan, but they had also had access to many of the Western publications on drama that had appeared during the previous decade and had even spent periods abroad seeing the work of the most famous European directors. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that they were well equipped to judge what their objectives should be in the new venture, after their separate ideas had been thoroughly examined and compared in the hours of daily discussion that preceded the formulation of an artistic policy for the new theatre. If one can accept that the objectives were artistically justifiable (and in the case of Tsukiji Shōgekijō it

1. Osanai Kaoru, Engeki Shinchō Danwa-kai, Engeki Shinchō(1), I. viii (Aug., 1924), 28.

would be very difficult to feel confident in criticizing them), one can then measure the artistic success by the effectiveness of the methods used to achieve the objectives.

There was much public discussion of the goals of Tsukiji Shōgekijō in the first half of 1924, particularly in the pages of Engeki Shinchō and the first issue of Tsukiji Shōgekijō (June, 1924). Engeki Shinchō conducted a round-table discussion between Osanai and Hijikata on the one hand and the main playwrights whose works had been excluded from the new theatre on the other. A verbatim account was subsequently printed in the August issue. The basis for discussion was a declaration by Osanai in the same number, entitled 'For what does Tsukiji Shōgekijō exist?' The subtitle was: 'To be read and thought about by Yamamoto Yūzō¹ and the other Engeki Shinchō partners'.² It is translated here in full because it summarizes the statements made by Osanai and other members of the dōjin group and expresses clearly the spirit in which the new enterprise was started.

'A. For Drama.³

Tsukiji Shōgekijō, like all other theatres, exists for drama. Tsukiji Shōgekijō exists for drama. It does not exist for plays. Plays are literature. Literature has its own organs - newspapers, magazines, books - things that are printed. Theatres do not exist for literature. The best place to appreciate plays - literature - is a quiet study.

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1. Playwright and novelist. Born 1887. Graduated from German literature department of Imperial University. Worked as resident playwright with two shimpa companies and gained notable successes through perceiving clearly the limits of the abilities of shimpa actors. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, v. 466.
 2. Engeki Shinchō, I. viii, pp.60-3.
 3. The force of this initial passage depends on the contrast made between the word engeki, indicating the total creative experience of a play performed by a company before an audience, and gikyoku, the play itself as a piece of literature.

Theatres are organizations which present drama.

Theatres are not places where plays are introduced.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō will look for plays to benefit drama. It will not look for plays to benefit plays.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō earnestly hopes to present something that has value as drama. As for the value of the plays which Tsukiji Shōgekijō will use, we will leave the literary critics to determine that.

The value of Tsukiji Shōgekijō will be the value of the drama it presents. It will not be the value of the plays it uses.

B. For the Future.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō exists for the future.

For future playwrights, for future directors, for future actors - for future Japanese drama.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō does not exist for the plays it is using now, for the directors who are engaged in their work now, for the actors who are treading the boards now - it is not for us that it exists.

It exists for those who come after us. If it does exist for us, it is not us as we are now but as we shall be in the future.

The reason for Tsukiji Shōgekijō using only Western plays for a certain period is not a love of novelty. It is not adulation of the West. It is not despair at Japanese plays.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō is working hard to create a future dramatic art for future Japanese plays.

The problems of presentation involved in present-day Japanese plays - in particular, those of established playwrights - can be solved by the training in pictorial¹ technique associated with kabuki and shimpa. The proof of this is surely in the fact that

1. Shajitsu-teki. Often translated as 'realistic', and used as a term of approval by early Meiji drama reformers. There are some aspects of kabuki and shimpa staging which are exactly realistic. Peter Arnott in The Theatres of Japan (1969) gives as an example a lantern swinging gently in the wind and comments on 'this perfection of realistic detail within the framework of a generally stylized performance' (p.155). It is a realism which is not constant and when it is present, it need not be of direct relevance to the subject matter of the play. By the 1920s such 'realism' was despised by shingeki people, who used the loan-word 'rearizumu' for their own type and denoted by it the realism of the Moscow Art Theatre.

kabuki and shimpa actors who have a smattering of the new knowledge perform (such plays) without much difficulty and are even achieving great successes.

The future Japanese plays for which we are waiting and hoping must contain problems beyond the scope of kabuki and shimpa. For the sake of these (future) plays we must develop our new dramatic art.

Let kabuki tradition remain kabuki tradition.

Let shimpa tradition remain shimpa tradition.

Let the inheritors of their traditions remain such.

The mission of Tsukiji Shōgekijō lies completely apart from these traditions.

In order to set ourselves apart we must acquire a deep knowledge of these traditions.

In this sense we shall never neglect a study of kabuki or an investigation of shimpa.

This is our path, at the present time.

There may be those who cannot agree with it - this is inevitable. We will have our work observed only by those who can.

We exist for the future.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō does not exist for the Tsukiji Shōgekijō of the present. It exists for the Tsukiji Shōgekijō of the future.

C. For the People.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō does not exist for litterateurs. It does not exist for the 'literary world'. It does not exist for the privileged classes.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō exists for all ordinary people for whom drama is as necessary as food. It exists to make ordinary people happy, to give them strength, to instil them with life.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō is undoubtedly a study centre for us.

But this is said only in reference to us, not in reference to the general public.

(Every kind of theatre serves as a study centre for those who work in it. If it does not, it is no true theatre.)

For the general public Tsukiji Shōgekijō will be above all a centre where drama is presented and performed.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō will be a 'little theatre' that welcomes all ordinary people.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō is not isolated in the Japanese theatre world. It stands in opposition to the Imperial Theatre, Kabuki-za, Hōgō-za and Shōchiku-za.¹

1. The main commercial theatres of the time. Quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, pp.14-15.

These, in Japanese at least, are brave words and they express the defiant, enthusiastic and idealistic mood that enveloped the first months of Tsukiji Shōgekijō's existence. The new theatre was a great adventure and the excitement it generated affected both company and audience alike. Yamamoto Yasue (Tsukiji Shōgekijō's first actress) testifies to this feeling of elation among the members of the company in her autobiography.¹ There are many references to the transports of joy experienced by the audience on the opening night, and Tsukiji audiences were noted from the beginning for the fervent attention with which they watched performances.²

Osanai's statement is essentially a collection of slogans, and it contains in good measure the ambiguities to which slogans are prone. The rather vague references to the 'future' invited demands for a more precise statement. In addition the lapses from the slogan style seem to suggest that Osanai was less than happy about writing it. There is much force in the passage, but parts of it give the impression of excessive defiance.

A clearer indication of this can be seen in Hijikata's statements of about the same time. He is also defiant in the face of criticism, but the categorical nature of his utterances is not sustained. Tsukiji Shōgekijō was above all an experiment and it was realized clearly by the leaders that the details of its future course could not be foreseen. Hijikata states as much in his

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1. Yamamoto Yasue, *Aruite Kita Michi*, in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.415.
 2. Asano Tokiichirō, Watakushi no Tsukiji Shōgekijō (Shuei Shuppan, 1970), p.35.

spirited reply to the criticisms of Engeki Shinchō's Kishida Kunio.¹ One of the main catchwords used to describe the new theatre was 'drama laboratory,' and this was fostered by Osanai himself. In the same speech at Keio as the one in which he had rejected Japanese plays, Osanai is reported to have summarized the initial stage as 'groping in the dark'.² Although the new group received enthusiastic support from intellectuals generally, it needed help especially from the many Japanese playwrights who, like Osanai, had been active in shingeki throughout the Taishō period. Far from obtaining their help, it was subject to their bitter hostility.

Sugai Yukio, who has recently edited all Osanai's writings on drama, criticizes as tactless the way in which Osanai made his announcement about Western plays in the Keio speech.³ He suggests this was directly responsible for the antagonism that developed between Tsukiji Shōgekijō and the Engeki Shinchō group. Osanai had said that in the case of Japanese plays a 'desire to direct them was not stimulated'. Comment on this phrase occurs frequently in writing critical of Tsukiji Shōgekijō and it is clear that it caused a great amount of offence.⁴ It is very difficult to assess what effect was caused by Tsukiji Shōgekijō's isolation from a powerful section of the theatre establishment which was interested in shingeki. From the Engeki Shinchō round-table discussion it can be seen that several of

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1. Ibid... Kishida Kunio: playwright, novelist and drama theorist. Born 1890. Studied French literature at Imperial University and subsequently attended drama school attached to Copeau's Vieux Colombier in Paris. Published first play in Engeki Shinchō. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, ii. 198.
 2. Misushina Haruki, Tsukiji Shōgekijō Kaiko-roku, quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.10.
 3. Sugai, Osanai Kaoru Engeki-ron, iii. 344.
 4. For example, Kubota Mantarō in Engeki Shinchō Danwa-kai, Engeki Shinchō (1), I. viii, 29.

the Japanese playwrights had been well disposed towards the new theatre and had even entertained hopes that it would free them from dependence on the large commercial theatres for the production of their plays. The alienation of this group meant that Tsukiji Shōgekijō seemed to be taking up a cultural position similar to that of the left-wing literary societies which had been forming from 1922 onwards. This may have been strengthened by the references to a theatre for the 'people' in Osanai's declaration in Engeki Shinchō and by contemporary remarks by left-wing writers such as that by Kaneko Yōbun that Sea Battle could only be appreciated by those who had an ideological sympathy.¹ At the time of the foundation of Tsukiji Shōgekijō such an identification was not the intention of the dōjin, whose progressive qualities were artistic rather than political. Hijikata himself refers to Tsukiji Shōgekijō as a 'purely artistic shingeki group' in the first issue of the theatre magazine.

Osanai's declaration contains several statements of artistic policy which would have drawn attention to it from literary and artistic quarters, even if it had not been involved in the notoriety of the quarrel with the leading shingeki playwrights. The first of these was the insistence on engeki rather than gikyoku. Though the distinction is false to the extent that a good play is written with the performance in the playwright's mind, in Japan it was a distinction which needed to be made. Most Japanese novelists toyed with play-writing in the Taishō period and inevitably their plays were published

1. Tsukiji Shōgekijō, I.ii (June, 1924), 54.

in the many coterie magazines. Relatively few of these plays were ever produced on the stage. In addition to this, in theatre practice the idea of a performance as a single artistic unity had never been developed. The commercial theatres of Japan in the 1920s were still similar in this respect to the major European theatres of the second half of the 19th century. The remarkable developments in theatrical art in Europe during the first two decades of the 20th century only re-emphasized to Osanai and Hijikata the necessity of keeping apart from the 'big theatres' of contemporary Tokyo. Osanai reveals clearly in his book 'Shibai Nyūmon'¹ - a collection of theoretical articles on drama written between 1916 and 1924 - that he had understood the significance of the European movement. In this work the influence of Gordon Craig is very strong, and it seems that Osanai's emphasis on engeki as opposed to gikyoku was the result of this influence.² Osanai's thought on the theatre had changed since the time of Jiyū Gekijō. Then he was advocating that the new group should be the means whereby 'plays' were introduced; the translation period of Jiyū Gekijō was to enable Japanese to see what plays were being written in Europe. Tsukiji Shōgekijō was to go beyond this and show its audiences new drama.

As in the case of Jiyū Gekijō this was to be done through translations of Western plays. Sugai explains that what Osanai meant at the Keio meeting was that there were few or no Japanese plays which were suitable for experimental production and which

1. From the contents this would best be translated Introduction to the Theatre. (Puraton-sha, 1924.)

2. Sugai, Osanai Kaoru Gekki-ron, iii. 344.

could not be performed by the existing commercial theatre companies. It is not made clear by Osanai whether he thinks the lack of suitable Japanese plays was due to the absence of a theatre such as the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, but his hope is that a period of translated drama will eventually stimulate Japanese playwrights to write plays with a complexity of emotional and social content that would make them unsuitable for kabuki or shimpa treatment.

Even if Osanai had explained his case in this way at the Keio meeting, it is unlikely that the Engeki Shinchō playwrights would have agreed with him. In the event such passions were aroused that it is impossible to say whether any co-operation could have been achieved, had the circumstances been different. But it can be said with some certainty that at least some of the Japanese playwrights were unhappy about the way in which their plays were produced at the big theatres. In the round-table discussion of Engeki Shinchō in the July 1924 issue, Yamamoto Yūzō laments the fact that plays with delicate variations in emotional texture cannot be performed in the existing big theatres.¹ Similarly at the discussion reported in the subsequent issue (August 1924, when both Osanai and Hijikata were present by invitation), Nagata Hideo² expressed the dissatisfaction of himself and his colleagues at the productions of their plays in the existing theatres.³ It was a great disappointment to these playwrights to be excluded from Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

1. Engeki Shinchō (1), I. vii, 29.

2. Playwright. Born 1885. Early influenced by Ibsen. Had play performed by Jiyū Gekijō. Attached later to Ichimura-sa, a large theatre specializing in wakate kabuki. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, iv. 233-4.

3. Engeki Shinchō (1), ibid..

Kikuchi Hiroshi,¹ one of Osanai's most intemperate critics and head of the organization which^{later} published Engeki Shinchō, said it made no sense to perform foreign plays in preparation for performing Japanese plays later.² Kume Masao³ suggested the decision in favour of foreign plays resulted from Hijikata's 'liking' for them, while Kubota Mantarō⁴ thought it was rather Osanai's 'liking'.⁵

This level of comment suggests either the outrage felt by these dramatists or that they were indeed unable to understand Osanai's motives. It is perhaps significant that the basic question of why Western plays were chosen was not discussed in depth by them and their attack was soon concentrated on how individual Western plays were chosen for the repertory. Here their position was much stronger. The Tsukiji opening night combination of Kaiser, Mazaud and Chehov gave an impression of artistic disunity to anyone familiar with Western drama, and attention was quickly called to this by the Engeki Shinchō group. They commented on it in their July discussion and pressed Osanai and Hijikata to state the policy behind play selection in the August discussion.⁶

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1. Or Kikuchi Kan. Playwright and novelist. Born 1888. Studied Wilde, Shaw and Irish drama at Imperial University. Plays performed by kabuki companies. Wrote popular novels serialized in major newspapers of the time. Began publishing magazine Bungei Shunjū in 1923. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, ii. 193.
 2. Engeki Shinchō (1), ibid..
 3. Playwright and novelist. Born 1891. Graduated from English literature department of Imperial University. Wrote for short-lived early Taishō shingeki group. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, ii. 321.
 4. Playwright, director, novelist and haiku poet. Born 1889. Graduated from literature department of Keio University. Wrote and directed for shimpa companies. ibid., 315-6.
 5. Engeki Shinchō (1), ibid., 28-9.
 6. Engeki Shinchō (1), I. viii, 27.

Osanai is evasive and Hijikata is silent (indeed he takes little part in any of the discussion). Finally Osanai says that in his personal view it is desirable to avoid plays by the Decadent School or its derivative the Symbolist School.¹ These were one-sided plays and Tsukiji Shōgekijō wanted to perform plays that would appeal to the public as a whole.

Both the Ingeki Shinchō attack and Osanai's defence expose the uncertainty that existed within Tsukiji Shōgekijō over the selection of plays. Formally, for the first six months, plays were chosen at meetings of the dōjin, but in practice it was the individual director who effectively made the choice. With one exception, all the plays performed in 1924 were directed either by Osanai or by Hijikata. As in the case of Bungei Kyōkai II they can be generally divided into two groups. Hijikata directs what may be called the 'new European drama' (Kaiser, Rolland, Capek), Osanai chooses plays of the early 20th century realistic type (Chekhov, Bjornson, Gorki etc.). This duality need not have prejudiced the ambitions of the group, as outlined by Osanai in his declaration. It could even have been helpful to the establishment of a 'drama for the future'. Tsukiji Shōgekijō, however, also existed for 'future actors' and it would be on its actors that its success in establishing a new drama would depend.

We have seen that the acting method which was predominantly used in Bungei Kyōkai II was Tsubouchi's rōdoku style and that there was little opportunity or incentive for the Jiyū Gekijō actors to develop a modern style. At least in the case of Tsukiji Shōgekijō it seems that there was an attempt to give systematic training to

1. Ibid.

the actors' physical equipment. In the months before the opening of the theatre the small band of actors and, at that time, one actress (Yamamoto Yasue) assembled daily at Hijikata's house and combined rehearsals with voice production and body exercises. There seems to be little information concerning the former, but the latter were according to the Dalorose system. This was a system of eurhythmics used in the West mainly for the training of opera singers. Osanai had visited the Dalorose school on his European trip and had seen it being used for the training of actors in the Moscow Art Theatre.¹ It appears that there was little other formal training for the Tsukiji actors at this time. It was certainly intended by the six dōjin that a full acting course should be given to all the actors and aspiring actors attached to the theatre. Wada Tadashi wrote in the first issue of the theatre magazine that by setting up facilities for basic actor-training they hoped that their ambition to establish a new drama would be fulfilled within a few years.² In August 1924 a Drama Summer School was organized by the theatre in the hope that new actors would be attracted and that a foundation would be laid for a future study centre for acting, planned for the end of the year.³ No study centre materialized and there was no systematic training within the theatre organization itself. Hijikata admitted in an article commemorating the 30th anniversary of Osanai's death that the Tsukiji actors and actresses had to achieve the development of their acting technique through the individual roles that they played.⁴ In this situation the variety of the repertory must have

1. Matsumoto, Shingeki-shi, p.555.

2. Wada Tadashi, Tsukiji Shōgekijō no Setsubi, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, I. 1, 71.

3. Sugai, Osanai Kaoru Engeki-ron, iii. 348.

4. Senda Koreya ed., Hijikata Yoshi Engeki-ron (Mirai-sha, 1969), p.376.

had a serious adverse effect.

In addition, much must have depended on the individual director. It was necessary for the director of each production to give instruction on acting technique during rehearsal. This was essential in the circumstances, but it was preferable that in addition there should be something common in the approach of the various directors to acting technique.

Neither of these conditions was fulfilled. Sugai notes the failure of the summer school through the artistic differences of the three directors.¹ (Aoyama Sugisaku did not begin regularly directing until 1925, but he had already been accepted as one of the group's three directors by the beginning of the summer school in August.) It would seem that both Osanai and Hijikata were more concerned with the overall artistic effect of their productions (for example, the staccato effect of the dialogue in Hijikata's production of Sea Battle) than the more mundane problems of technique (the sailors' words in Sea Battle were inaudible). This is particularly clear from Osanai's description of his production of The Cherry Orchard. He says he is concerned first to create an atmosphere and describes a cross questioning of an actor in the manner of Stanislavski. The tone of the article suggests clearly that he was not conscious of the need to be a teacher as well as a director.² There are frequent references in the autobiographical writings of Tsukiji Shōgekijō actors to the lack of contact between them and the two leaders. Tamura Akiko states that when Holiday was in rehearsal, Osanai was more interested in the total

1. Sugai, op.cit., 348.

2. Osanai Kaoru, Sakura no Sono no Enshutsu-sha to shite, Engeki Shinchō (2), I. viii (Nov., 1926), 64-7.

effect than concerned in paying attention to detail. She says that even during the preliminary read-throughs he never interrupted to put something right.¹ It is impossible to reach any conclusion on the reasons for this attitude on the part of Osanai and Hijikata. It may have been the result of misjudging either themselves, their actors or their audiences. Whatever was the reason, it severely inhibited the training of the new generation of Japanese shingeki actors.

Aoyama Sugisaku, on the other hand, was said by Senda Koreya (a student of Tsukiji Shōgekijō at the time) to have achieved a spiritual contact with the actors.² Aoyama had come into Tsukiji Shōgekijō as an actor and seems to have been drawn into directing somewhat against his will. He appears to have had some qualities of leadership and he frequently took over rehearsals in the absence of Osanai who even as late as September 1924 was only able to appear occasionally at the rehearsals of his productions because of his commitments in Osaka.³ Aoyama knew the shingeki actor's problems and he was a much more patient person than Osanai and Hijikata who were prone to become temperamental and demanding in rehearsal. There had in addition been one influence dominant in the development of his own technique. This was the opera technique of Giovanni Rosi who had been invited to the Imperial Theatre in 1912 to become the leader and instructor of its opera section.⁴ He remained in Japan

1. Tamura Akiko, Tsukiji no Kaimaku, Geijutsu Shinchō, II. ix (Sept., 1951), 142.

2. Sugai, op.cit., 350.

3. Aoyama Sugisaku Tsuitō Kinen Kankō-kai ed., Aoyama Sugisaku (private publication, 1957), p.38.

4. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, vi. 124.

(though not at the Imperial Theatre) until 1918 and provided instruction on gesture and movement for opera and ballet throughout that time. Aoyama was one of his devotees and while the technique he learnt might not be thought completely suitable for shingeki, the confidence he had in it gave him an assurance that greatly encouraged the Tsukiji actors.

In any discussion of shingeki acting it is important to emphasize the potentially insuperable obstacles in the attaining of self-confidence as an actor. The general cultural difficulties can hardly be imagined. Two examples from the experience of Tamura Akiko, who joined Tsukiji Shōgekijō as its second actress, can perhaps illustrate this. When she first went to see a rehearsal (of Sea Battle) at Hijikata's house, she thought she was among foreigners. The male actors dressed and behaved like foreigners. After rehearsal they all did Dalcroze exercises in bathing costumes, greatly shocking Tamura. Then they all took a shower and went off to eat lunch, which consisted of Western-type food. Tamura was so shocked she decided to have nothing more to do with Tsukiji Shōgekijō,¹ and yet she was if anything more prepared by her own upbringing for this kind of experience than many of the general public that Tsukiji Shōgekijō was trying to attract. At the other end of the scale, however, Engeki Shinchō sent a Frenchman, ignorant of drama, to see and criticize the production of Mazaud's Holiday. He criticized Tamura in the part of Marie for smiling when telling of her misfortune - a common Japanese habit, but not very French.² Tamura in her autobiography says that

1. Tamura Akiko and Koyama Yūshi, Hitori no Joyū no Ayunda Michi (Hakusui-sha, 1962), pp.20-22.

2. Louis Canne(?), Futsujin no Mitaru Yasumi no Hi, Engeki Shinchō (1), I. vii (July, 1924), 114-5.

this was the first time she had ever worn Western dress - she had never before worn a pair of Western shoes.¹ Criticism of even such a basic thing as expressing grief was of no use to her.

These are perhaps over-vivid examples, but they illustrate the complexity of the situation. It is very difficult to postulate an ideal for the period under discussion. What perhaps was crucial was the building-up of the actors' self-confidence. In the West it has usually been possible for someone without formal training to become a successful actor, provided that some quality of confidence is present. Although in Japan at this time it was almost impossible for this to happen, this was the only way open to aspiring actors. As Tamura observes, one or two Tsukiji actors, such as Senda Koreya and Maruyama Sadao, had the necessary qualities, but the others were simply at a loss and inevitably influenced by kabuki and shimpa acting styles.²

The danger of being influenced by the actors and actresses of the commercial theatres was ever-present. A contributor to the house magazine warns the Tsukiji Shōgekijō actors that once they overcome their natural feelings of awkwardness on the stage, they may begin to imitate famous actors of the commercial theatre. Critics would often praise the latter by using a word usually translated as "skilful". This term referred to the techniques used to achieve a special effect, always applauded loudly by the audience. The Tsukiji actors are warned not to strain after being 'skilful' but to concentrate on understanding the play as it is being directed.³

1. Tamura and Koyama, op.cit., p.24.

2. Ibid., p.35.

3. Honda Mitsuji in Tsukiji Shōgekijō Sakunen no Shigoto ni taisuru Hihyō, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, II. 1 (Jan., 1925), 25.

There were clearly many obstacles in the path of a dedicated Tsukiji actor and few positive aids. He was, however, helped by the scenery in front of which he played. Although the lighting was sometimes criticized (by critics who appeared to prefer the simple flooding of the kabuki stage),¹ the settings were usually commented on favourably. Much of this was probably due initially to the ecstatic welcome given to the Kuppelhorizont. But an examination of the surviving photographs of Tsukiji sets shows that the designer was careful to make his scenery a unified expression of the general atmosphere which the director wished to create. Yoshida Kenkichi² was responsible for stage design and when he did not design himself, he worked very closely with whoever had been invited to design for a particular production. Hijikata himself was very interested in stage design (it was through his own stage designs that he had originally been accepted as Osanai's pupil), and associated himself closely with this aspect of Tsukiji Shōgekijō's work. It was he who provided the main inspiration for the most celebrated stage setting in the first two years of the theatre's existence. This was Murayama Tomoyoshi's Constructivist setting for Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight, first performed in December 1924.³ The battle that had been won for stage design in Europe had confirmed the artistic independence of the stage designer, provided this independence was exercised within the director's conception of the play. It appears that this was the principle by which the Tsukiji

1. For example, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, I. v (Oct., 1924), 58.

2. Born 1897. Graduated in 1924 from design department of Tokyo School of Art. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, v. 510.

3. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Teatoro (Jan., 1940), quoted in Yamazato Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.24. For biographical information concerning Murayama, see below, p.188

designs were created, and it was generally recognized that design was one of the strengths of the theatre.

Finally, however, the overall success or failure of Tsukiji Shōgekijō depended on its directors - Osanai, Hijikata and later Aoyama Sugisaku. All productions centred on the director, as Osanai had advocated in his Shibai Nyūmon under the influence of Gordon Craig.¹ The artistic success of the Tsukiji directors is hardly measurable, either with regard to the individual productions or to the general effect the theatre had on contemporary cultural life. A contributor to the correspondence pages of the theatre magazine in December 1924 lists the three things for which Tsukiji Shōgekijō was known at the time. Firstly that it would not perform original Japanese plays; secondly that its actresses were no good; and thirdly that one really only went to the theatre to make sure one knew the play.² A more damning criticism of a new theatre movement can hardly be imagined.

Although both Osanai and Hijikata wrote 'production notes' for several plays that they directed, there is no detailed description of the process by which any production progressed from initial reading to final performance during Tsukiji Shōgekijō's first two years. A description of this kind would help considerably in assessing how realistically the Tsukiji directors went about achieving the objectives they had set themselves. From what they have written and from the scattered comments of their actors, one is forced to the conclusion that the realities of the situation were not understood by either of

1. Pp. 199-213.

2. Tsukiji Shōgekijō, I. vii (Dec., 1924), 49.

them. If the artistic goal of the director was to be attained in any Tsukiji Shōgekijō production, the actors needed minute instruction in the physical movements required to express a given emotion in a given situation. Both Osanai and Hijikata had been to the West; most of their actors had not, and even if they had had a full training programme in stage technique, would have needed detailed guidance for actual performances.

Osanai seems to have been aware of the problem itself. Yamamoto Yasue describes how he would collect photographs of Western productions and base his own production on them.¹ He also had four or five notebooks full of notes on productions he had himself seen in the West.² According to Yamamoto Yasue Osanai told his actors that the copying in exact detail of foreign productions would give them a foundation, on which they themselves could build. But Osanai apparently did not realize that this foundation depended not only on the larger elements of production - the positioning of characters and the movements of characters to their positions - but required also guidance in the more detailed techniques of emotional expression.

It is perhaps facile to suggest that Tsukiji Shōgekijō failed artistically in its first two years because the actors were dissatisfied with themselves and criticized on basic points of technique by others. But the actors were crucial to the full artistic success of Tsukiji Shōgekijō as a theatre, and they were clearly faced with insuperable difficulties. This conclusion has to be based on indirect statements in criticisms of the plays. It is not possible to rely on what is directly said in these criticisms. Another difficulty encountered by the actors and by the theatre as a whole was the lack

1. Yamamoto Yasu, Ashiato, in Sugao (May, 1936), quoted in Sugai Osanai Kaoru Engeki-ron, iii.348.
 2. Misushina, Osanai Kaoru, p.111.

of critics able to bring the necessary experience to their critical articles on shingeki.¹ The general level of criticism was low. Critics assumed they could make authoritative statements on the goodness or badness of the acting or production without giving full reasons why.

If Osanai and Hijikata were unable to give the detailed help that was needed, it might have been possible to give the actors confidence by making them feel part of a unified cultural venture. Leadership has always played an important role in Japanese cultural groups and the single-leader group has always been more successful than that under joint leadership. Hijikata seems to have intended originally that Tsukiji Shōgekijō should be primarily under his own leadership. In the event there were two leaders and this initial disadvantage needed to be counterbalanced in some way. A sustained identity of purpose between the two leaders might have provided a leadership to which the members of the group could respond.

The Keio meeting and the subsequent debates between Osanai and Hijikata on the one hand and the Engeki Shinchō partners on the other, together with the pioneering spirit of the new venture, more than overcame the difficulties inherent in the leadership during the first months. The comments of individual members in articles describing this period testify to this. But the continued absence of Osanai in Osaka and the general insufficiency of the leaders' response to the actors' problems soon dissipated this initial advantage.

This internal cause of stress was supplemented by the influence of the times in which Tsukiji Shōgekijō had begun its existence. Tsukiji Shōgekijō was based in the intellectual class and the early

1. Kawabata Yasunari in Tsukiji Shōgekijō Sakunen no Shigoto ni taisuru Hihyō, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, II. 1 (Jan., 1925), 21.

1920s saw this class in a transitional period as violent as any that had occurred since the beginning of the Meiji period. As in other periods the 'new men' were superseding those who had initiated the change and the latter were beginning to be rejected if they showed resistance to the pace at which their younger contemporaries were developing the new ideas. At this time in Japan the new ideas were those of socialism, and the practical realization of a socialist revolution in Russia had deeply impressed Japanese intellectuals. The new culture, in particular drama, was that of post-revolution Russia and post-war Germany.

It was exactly this type of drama that Hijikata wished to perform at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. He had studied drama in Germany in 1923 and had subsequently met Meyerhold in Russia. Expressionism and constructivism in drama excited him and he embodied his enthusiasm in the plays he selected and produced. During the first two years of Tsukiji Shōgekijō's existence the frequent eulogies of Hijikata's productions by such people as Hatta Motoo, Kaneko Yōbun and Akita Ujaku, all active in left-wing cultural societies of the time, show that he was at least abreast of progressive literary opinion.

Attempts have been made to show that the same was true of Osanai. Akiba demonstrates clearly Osanai's interest in expressionist drama. It was not enough, however, merely to be interested. Osanai never selected an expressionist play for production. His Western experience, in 1912, was in Czarist Russia with Stanislavski and he believed it was this type of drama that was needed to build shingeki.

Perhaps technically he was right, but if we confine consideration to the general cultural leadership of the two men, Osanai's insistence on being a full partner can only be regarded as having been divisive in result. He was condemned on two accounts by progressive literary men: the plays he directed were old-fashioned theatrically and he

could not see that new social forces were now shaping drama. It was said of Hijikata also that he did not understand the ideology behind expressionism, but this could still be forgiven in 1925 in view of his regular choice of expressionist plays.

In a less turbulent period of intellectual history, Hijikata, without Osanai, might have given Tsukiji Shōgekijō the firm leadership it needed. Osanai himself might have succeeded ten years earlier, if he had had Hijikata's money. Together, however, they could not provide unity and Osanai's stand against the shingeki establishment paled into insignificance as Marxist criticisms of Tsukiji productions began to appear. Tsukiji Shōgekijō worked its way towards the first production of a Japanese play, in June 1926, divided within and attacked from without. Its achievements were many, but if the leaders had been of one mind and if it had not been indissolubly linked with intellectual trends, they might have been greater.

CHAPTER 2

Early Left-wing Drama

I

Left-wing drama can be simply defined as drama with some connection with a political philosophy which would be generally regarded as left-wing. The latter would include any political philosophy which recommended a change in the structure of capitalist society towards equality of rights and opportunities in every aspect of social life, from gradualism to Communism and, at least in Japan's case, anarchism. Anarchism is an imprecise term and can include ideas which few would define as left-wing. Many parts of anarchism, however, are more clearly based on socialist thought, in particular syndicalism, which was very strong within Japanese anarchism. The close relationship between the anarchist movement and the socialist movement in Japan and the frequent interchange of personalities between the two movements would seem to justify the general inclusion of anarchism in the term 'left-wing' for the purposes of this thesis.

In Japan during the Taishō period there were two main spheres in which an opportunity was offered for the practical application of left wing ideas - the discussion group and the labour movement. There had always been severe repression of left-wing political parties and this was intensified after the High Treason Incident of 1911. It was only during the last year of the Taishō period, in the year following the passing of the Universal Manhood Suffrage Act, that organized political activity by left-wing groups was possible. Discussion groups abounded, however, both inside and outside the universities. The most famous of such university groups were the Shinjinkai¹ of Tokyo

1. New Men Society.

Imperial University (founded in 1918) and the Kensetsusha Dōmei¹ of Waseda (founded in 1919).

Drama was associated both with intellectuals active in discussion groups and with the labour movement. This drama was sporadic and there was little continuity. Both types, however, had some contact with the shingeki that has been described in the Introduction and Chapter 1. Some of the leaders of intellectual left-wing drama were later to become the leaders of the organized left-wing drama movement, and their work in the Taishō period is examined briefly here inasmuch as it provided the early experience on which they later built. If left-wing drama had not dominated shingeki history for a period of some four years, it is possible that their first attempts at performing modern drama might not have warranted any more attention than the productions of the many small shingeki groups existing during the second half of the Taishō period.

The same may be said of the 'workers' drama' associated with the labour movement. Early attempts by workers to portray the purpose of the labour movement to other workers by means of drama were bound to be lauded by later Marxist directors, actors, critics and theatre historians. Even this does not necessarily justify individual treatment of workers' drama. However, inasmuch as it gave inspiration to those concerned in the later

1. Establishment League.

drama, some description of it is necessary here.¹

The idea of 'people's arts' or, as it later became, 'worker literature' was paid particular attention during the Taishō period. The High Treason Incident of 1911, as a result of which eleven anarchists were executed after a secret trial for allegedly plotting against the Emperor's life, led to increased police surveillance of all left-wing political activity. The depression experienced by those concerned in the left-wing political movement is expressed in the term they used to designate these years - the 'winter season'. The impossibility of political action and the severe repression of industrial action caused the leaders of the various left-wing groups to consider other less direct methods of pursuing their aims.

Literature was the obvious choice. Political novels had been published

1. Material for both types of early left-wing drama is very limited. There appears to be almost nothing directly relevant in primary sources. Some brief mentions of one workers' group were found for me by a Japanese expert in labour history in a Kōbe workers' newspaper, but they reveal little of the kind of information that is most required here. Matsumoto Kappai has made a painstaking search for materials and is in the process of publishing a series of articles on this drama in the magazine Shingeki. Much of what he has collected, however, is more relevant to general biographical work on the participants, most of whom spent only a small proportion of their time on drama. In general I have avoided the few accounts of Taishō workers' drama written about ten years afterwards by people active in organized left-wing drama. I have also hesitated to use post-war accounts by obviously committed theatre historians. Ideologically Taishō workers' drama became very important to shingeki leaders in the late 1920s and in the postwar period. It is possible that this has led to some exaggeration of the scope and influence of this drama. At some point, however, one has to reach a compromise between rejection of all imperfect sources and abandonment of any description whatever. This chapter will be short, but in spite of its brevity unwilling reliance has had in a few instances to be placed on information which is not capable of verification.

in the 1880s and Japanese naturalist literature in the early 1900s had produced some excellent works analyzing social problems. The foundation was already laid for a literature of commitment and persuasion. A more clearly apparent reason for the early development of the 'people's arts theory'¹ was the literary inclinations and ability of a small group of anarchist intellectuals who soon established a position of theoretical and practical leadership in the 'people's arts' debate. Some of them had been in prison at the time of the High Treason Incident and so had escaped possible involvement in the fate of the alleged assassins. Several of them, for example Sakai Toshihiko and Arahata Kanson, had already published literary works before the Incident. This group was less shocked into inaction than other sections of the left-wing movement and began publishing a journal of political and literary discussion, named Kindai Shisō,² soon after the Incident. Its leader was Ōsugi Sakae.

Ōsugi had developed his anarchism through extensive reading of Bakunin and Kropotkin and during the early Taishō period he enriched his knowledge of anarchism by study of such practical friends of the people as Romain Rolland and the Swedish educationalist Ellen Key. Out of this came three influential articles published between January 1914 and October 1917.³ In these he builds up his anarchist theory of art that to be true art it must express its opposition to and hatred of the oppressive environment and that its beauty must be in this expression. From Rolland he takes the idea of art for the people and he concludes that the people must create their own art, or surrender their destiny as a newly arisen class. The 'people'⁴ in Ōsugi's thought are always

1. Minshū geijutsu-ron.

2. Modern Thought.

3. Collected in Ōdagiri Hideo et al. ed., Nihon Puroretaria Bungaku Taikei (San'ichi Shobō, 1955); Introductory Volume 333 - 44 and 1.293 - 304. Referred to below as Puroretaria Bungaku Taikei.

4. The term used for the 'people' is minshū, the last character for which means 'multitude' and is used in the later Marxist term taishū (the masses).

contrasted with the 'gentlemen', the proletariat with the bourgeoisie. It is important to Ōsugi, however, that the people should not surrender their destiny in this way. For the time being, therefore, it may be necessary for others to create an art relevant to their need.

There was a considerable output of worker literature in the latter half of the 1910s. Most of it was written by intellectuals, but some was produced by workers with little formal education. Lack of education, however, was mainly due to having poor parents, and those who were motivated by a strong desire were able to pursue literary interests or ambitions after their working day was finished.

One such example was Hirasawa Kaishichi, the most widely known exponent of 'workers' drama'. At the age of fourteen, after leaving higher elementary school, he became a trainee smith at the Ōmiya factory of the Japanese Railway Company.¹ Being dissatisfied with the knowledge he was acquiring by this method, he began taking a correspondence course at middle-school level. Later he formed a group of about twenty who took another correspondence course together and then became active contributors to various youth magazines. Hirasawa especially wrote frequent literary pieces, not motivated, it is said, by any desire to gain a place in the literary establishment, but simply because he could not help writing.

His employers moved him to Tokyo in 1908 and he remained there until

1. Unless otherwise stated, the details of Hirasawa's life which are given here are taken from the biographical article by Nichida Shō in Odagiri Hideo ed., Hirasawa Kaishichi-shū (Aoki Shoten, 1955), pp.176-204.

1911. By the time of his arrival in Tokyo he already had qualifications in iron founding. While there he developed a deep interest in drama and became a devoted pupil of Osanai Kaoru.¹ Hirasawa was next moved to Hamamatsu, where his metropolitan training in new techniques gave him a position of leadership over his fellow workers. He used his position to try to organize a 'workers' drama group', but failed because he only had around him workers who were familiar with traditional types of entertainment. This failure affected him very deeply and although he succeeded in forming a literary group which studied Gorki, Turgenev, Ibsen, and others, he left Hamamatsu soon after in 1914.

On his return he found employment at a spring factory. He spent his spare time in further pursuit of knowledge and in November 1914 he became a member of the only labour union federation then in existence.

This federation, called the Yūaikai² had been set up in 1911 and was led by Suzuki Bunji. Suzuki believed in the principle of labour-capital harmony and this was to characterize the labour movement throughout the 1910s. Hirasawa accepted this principle and seems to have been attracted by the opportunities for literary work which membership of the Yūaikai gave him. His own creative work, mainly short stories, began to appear regularly on the literary page of the organ of the federation, Rōdō Oyobi Sangyō.³ Until the end of the 1910s he steadily improved his position within the federation, achieving finally a position of some editorial importance.

In the meantime his mission to open the eyes of the Japanese industrial workers was becoming more and more clear to him. He was passionately angry at

1. The circumstances of Hirasawa's acceptance as a pupil of Osanai seem to be unknown. Nishida states that Hirasawa's attention was particularly drawn by Jiyū Gekijō, but in view of the high admission prices it is unlikely that he could have attended performances there regularly. It is possible that Nishida's statement simply implies that he was admitted to one or more Jiyū Gekijō performances as a pupil of Osanai's.

2. Friendly Society.

3. Labour and Industry.

the misery he saw around him every day. He saw people brutalized by their environment (as had Ōsugi Sakae) and wrote that during one walk through a slum area he saw not one human being. During this period, however, there is nothing to suggest he was developing a coherent political philosophy.

Back in Tokyo he continued his attempts to interest groups of fellow workers in literature and drama. In August 1915 he formed a workers' poetry association and considered performing workers' drama on the occasion of the next Yūaikai conference. This performance was to be for the entertainment of the conference members and this idea prompted Hirasawa to write a play, 'a social drama, for the use of peoples' drama groups'.

At this time Hirasawa appears already to have been developing the idea of a workers' drama group giving performances specifically connected with the labour movement. He is reported to have persuaded the first meeting of the Rōdōsha Mondai Kenkyū-kai¹ that drama was as important to the labour movement as speeches or pamphlets.²

About this time Hirasawa was finally successful in forming a 'people's drama group',³ but it is not clear whether this was the name of the group or simply a descriptive term for the actors on the occasion of a Yūaikai performance. There was no organization and membership fluctuated constantly. It seems that little was attempted apart from small scale sketches at Yūaikai meetings. It may be significant that the term 'people's drama group' was used at the time when discussion of the theory of 'people's arts' was taking place.

Meanwhile discussion over the possible use of drama in political activities was being carried out inside the Kobe branch of Yūaikai. In November, 1918, Kuru Hirozō, a Yūaikai organizer with an interest in drama

1. Society for the Study of Workers' Problems.

2. Rōdō Oyobi Sangyō, June, 1916, 2.

3. Minshū gekidan. Nishida Shō, Odagiri Hideo, op.cit., p.193.

(perhaps gained at Waseda where he had been a student), wrote to Hirasawa of his desire to see a performing arts section established, as there was nothing more powerful than art for moving men's hearts. The only difficulty was in selecting suitable play texts.¹ A committee was set up under the chairmanship of Kuru and it was hoped to anticipate Hirasawa (in Tokyo) in the formation of an organized, permanent, workers' drama group. These efforts were interrupted, however, by politically more pressing events in the aftermath of the Rice Riots.

Early in 1920, however, their hopes were realized. In a Kobe workers' newspaper of February an announcement appeared concerning a workers' drama group to be called Nihon Rōdō Gekidan.² Kuru was named as its general director.³ The announcement was followed two months later by a statement of the aims and rules of the new group in the same newspaper.⁴ In the preamble Nihon Rōdō Gekidan was reported to have put on trial performances in two or three places since its formation and to be rehearsing hard for its coming first public performance in a large Kobe theatre. In contrast to speech meetings and demonstrations, which had been used in the past as the means of spreading the union movement, the new group would appeal 'to the eye rather than to the ear', 'to the emotions rather than to the reason'. All the members would be workers. While their technique would be rudimentary, they had confidence in their ability to portray workers' psychology on the stage as well as any professionals. A list of members was also given, twenty-six in all, including six girls.⁵

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1. Quoted in Matsumoto Kappai, *Junan Shingeki-shi*, *Shingeki*, ccv (May, 1970), 88. This series of articles will be referred to below by the author's family name and the location of the article in the magazine *Shingeki*.
 2. Japan Workers' Drama Group. *Rōdōsha Shimbun*, xxi (15 Feb., 1920), 4.
 3. *Sō-kantoku*. *Kantoku* was the usual word for 'direction', 'production' at this time. It was replaced by *enshutsu* at the time of the start of Tsukiji Shōgekijō.
 4. *Ibid.*, xxiii (15 Ap., 1920), 2.
 5. *Ibid.*.

In the May issue of Rōdōsha Shimbun there was a surprisingly brief report of the first public performance. Only the titles of the plays were mentioned and the report ended with a single sentence describing the enthusiastic response of the audiences.¹ Murashima Motoyuki, an active union organiser and adviser-manager to the group, describes in his diary how the participation of the workers in the audience on seeing a part of their own lives on the stage was loud enough to drown the actors' words.²

Three plays were performed. They had all been written by members of the group, and in view of Kuru's complaint to Hirasawa of a lack of suitable plays for workers' drama two years earlier this was probably deliberate policy on the part of the group. The first play, reportedly the best, told of a worker who was about to make a spectacular invention but suffered from the interference of an engineer on the side of the company. Finally the invention is perfected through the help of Yūaikai. The second play was a comedy involving a competition between a worker and the son of a shareholder for the hand of the daughter of the factory manager. The third play was also a comedy and portrayed a worker, wasted by drink and gambling, who finds new life as a Yūaikai member.³

No subsequent mention of the group appeared in Rōdōsha Shimbun. It appears that the worker actors started thinking of themselves as real actors - shimpa actors - and they began touring as such, thus breaking their connection with the labour movement. They were soon performing popular shimpa plays such as the adaptation of Ozaki Kōyō's Konjiki Yasha.⁴ Both political and economic

1. Ibid., xxiv (17 May, 1920), 2.

2. Quoted in Matsumoto, Shingeki, ccv, 95.

3. Ibid., 95-9.

4. Matsumoto, Ibid., ccvii (July, 1970), 86.

reasons are suggested for this. It is clear from the plays that Nihon Rōdō Gekidan supported Yūaikai and the latter was convulsed with internal struggles for most of 1920. The first public performance had lost much money and it is possible that the only solution was to try to make up the deficiency by performing plays that would be commercially profitable. A third possibility is that the worker actors were influenced by the few members of their group who had had some previous experience in shimpa.¹

Whatever the reason, it is significant that the first organized workers' drama group ceased fulfilling its intended role because it became a drama group in the generally accepted meaning of the term at the time. There is so little evidence that any conclusion must be very tentative, but in the apparent incompatibility between new content and established theatrical conventions the experience of Nihon Rōdō Gekidan was in some respects similar to that of Bungei Kyōkai II and Jiyū Gekijō.

Hirasawa Keishichi was only a few months behind Kuru in the formation of a workers' drama group. In January 1921 a trial performance of his most recent play, Shitsugyō², had taken place in a small hall in the suburbs of Tokyo. Hirasawa had directed and played a leading part. His actors had been drawn from a travelling shimpa group led by Kawakami Ryūichirō.³ The evening had been accounted a great success and Hirasawa had been encouraged to form a permanent workers' drama group.⁴

In February Hirasawa published draft rules for the projected new group. In many respects these were very similar in emphasis to those of Nihon Rōdō Gekidan and were probably based on them. The name of the group was to be

1. Mentioned by Murashima Motoyuki and quoted ibid..

2. Unemployment.

3. Matsumoto, Ibid., ccix (Sept., 1970), 85. Nothing else is known of Kawakami.

4. Kawada Kijirō, Shin Soshiki, III.i (Jan., 1921), quoted ibid..

simply Rōdō Gekidan. Its connection with the theory of people's arts was made more explicit in that it was stated to 'exist for the people's arts revolution'.¹

Its first public performance was given on 26 February and further performances were given on the following two nights. Rōdō Gekidan's actors were a mixture of worker actors with those of Kawakami Ryūichirō's shimpa group, and in this too there was a similarity with Nihon Rōdō Gekidan. The plays performed were either written by Hirasawa himself or compiled by members of the group. In these and future performances Kawakami usually played a capitalist and Hirasawa, as in real life, the part of a leader of a workers' negotiating or strike committee. Performances were given in various local community halls in Tokyo and at the scenes of strikes. The group always concentrated on attracting audiences of workers and their families.

It was inevitable that Rōdō Gekidan should also attract the notice of left-wing intellectuals and people connected with shingeki. The debate over people's arts had ensured that there would be intellectual interest in any manifestation of them and Hirasawa himself had attracted attention through his frequent publication of short stories and plays in Rōdō Oyobi Sangyō and other journals. There was even less possibility of such dramatic activity going unnoticed after 1920 when the Nihon Shakaishugi Dōmei² was founded. This was an association mainly of left-wing intellectuals of widely varying political ideologies.³ From its inception this association showed a particular interest in left-wing arts of all kinds. Many established Japanese writers who under the influence of the times had embraced some form

1. Minshū geijutsu kakumei. Rōdō Gekidan Kiyaku (Sōan), quoted in Matsumoto, Shingeki, cxxii (Dec., 1970), 82.

2. Japan Socialist League.

3. G.M. Beckmann and G. Okubo, The Japan Communist Party 1922-1945 (Stanford U.P., 1969), pp.24-6. Referred to below as Beckmann and Okubo.

of socialism, became members of Nihon Shakaishugi Dōmei, and several worker writers also joined. Apart from this, Hirasawa had been a pupil of Osanai Kaoru and his continued association with his teacher ensured that his work in drama would be known to some parts of the shingeki world. In addition, Hirasawa received practical help and instruction from Murata Minoru, leader of an early Taishō shingeki group.¹

The list of intellectuals and shingeki people who gave Rōdō Gekidan their support is impressive.² The opening performance of this group's first production was attended by many of them and there are scattered references in the autobiographical writings of other intellectuals later connected with left-wing drama that testify to the deep impression made on them by a performance of this group.

The overwhelming impression experienced by them all was the rapport established between the actors and their audience. Akita Ujaku³ is quoted as having said that he could not remember what they performed but retained a lasting impression of the atmosphere generated in the hall.⁴ The audience was nearly all workers and their frequent cries of "Yes! Yes!" gradually turned the theatre into a 'seething crucible'. Akita admits to a feeling of superciliousness as he set out from home but says he returned overcome with emotion.

The effect on Hijikata Yoshi was no less intense. He wrote: 'That evening was to me like a bolt from the blue, I was so moved with admiration and wonder..... There was a lively and vigorous rapport between the stage and the auditorium, and waves of joy, sorrow and anger rolled to and fro. I experienced deeply the joy of having found what I had been looking for in drama for so long, what I had hoped to see in the theatre.'⁵

1. Born 1894. Pupil of Osanai Kaoru. Was associated with Aoyama Sugisaku in shingeki activity during early Taishō period. Later transferred his attention to film work.

2. Akiba, ii.398-9.

3. Born 1883. Associated in shingeki work with Shimamura Hōgetsu in post-Bungei Kyōkai II period. Became interested in socialism and in early 1920s was writing plays which combined elements of humanism and socialism while being essentially based in romanticism. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, i.23.

4. Quoted by Nishida in Odagiri Hideo, op.cit., pp.195-6.

5. Hijikata Yoshi, Nasu no Yobanashi (Kappa Shobō, 1947), p.295.

There had been a certain identity of interest between the stage and the audience in the case of Bungei Kyōkai II, Jiyū Gekijō and the many small groups that followed them, but this had mainly been an intellectual identity. Now some of those involved in the shingeki movement were observing a new identity of interest, that of emotion. In 1918 riots had broken out in many Japanese cities against the high price of rice and the ostentatious wealth of war profiteers. During the next few years many strikes occurred, most of them unplanned and unorganized. Hirasawa was expressing on the stage the actual frustrations of many Japanese workers and he was doing this with actors who had themselves felt these frustrations.

In this situation technique was relatively unimportant. Kawakami's group played in the shimpa style and Hirasawa's worker actors were undoubtedly influenced by this. Hijikata commented to a friend that the lighting and scenery were not worth seeing,¹ but there was life in it. Life was Hirasawa's aim and he achieved this mainly by the subject matter of the plays he performed. The style and plots of his own plays are very simple, and when read only impress one with a sense of naive force and directness. But in 1918 Hirasawa had written an article in Rōdō Oyobi Sangyō emphasizing the importance of creating a bond between actors and audience through subject matter.² The Russian people watched plays with the feeling: "We are seeing ourselves in our true shapes on the stage," but Japanese workers only had their fancies tickled by kabuki plays whose subject matter meant little to them. Hirasawa writes that Japanese workers apparently did not think of plays as a stimulus to thought about human life, and that the slow pace of development in the labour movement was due to the lack of suitable worker

1. Ibid.

2. Ōdagiri Hideo ed., op.cit., pp.169-71.

plays. Such plays and other 'people's arts' must be created to teach and lead workers so that they may better their condition.

This is similar to Ōsugi Sakae's conception of people's arts and is another indication of Hirasawa's awareness of the intellectual debates then in progress. Hirasawa, though of worker origin and little education, had combined an intense desire for knowledge with constant involvement in the problems of his class. He not only appears to have achieved considerable success in his ambitions for drama; he was also able to show to those intellectually interested in the potentiality of politically committed drama a new depth of response from the audiences that was outside their experience.

Pressure from the authorities on Rōdō Gekidan intensified during the second half of 1922 and only intermittent activity was possible. Hirasawa himself became a martyr in the frenzied massacre of suspected socialists and Koreans after the Great Earthquake of 1 September 1923. Both he and Ōsugi Sakae were murdered by police officers and with their deaths their ideas on the arts lost their influence and workers' drama ceased all activity in Japan for several years.

II

The other type of left-wing drama mentioned at the beginning of this chapter was that performed by intellectuals. It was this type of left-wing drama that showed the more resilience and it was able to re-establish itself quickly after the shock of the Earthquake. It also had more direct relevance to later organized left-wing drama, because it provided some of its leaders.

Perhaps the earliest examples of left-wing ideas being advocated from the stage was a performance of an opera called Tosukinā in Asakusa in 1919. What became known as 'Asakura opera' is full of romantic nostalgia for many of the older generation of shingeki actors today. It arose through the break-up of the opera section of the Imperial Theatre and flourished briefly but gloriously in the main amusement district of Tokyo. There were many renegades from bourgeois culture in Asakusa at this time and their participation in the visual entertainment of the district was often colourful. Anarchists were especially numerous.

One evening in 1919 some anarchists in the audience at a piano recital objected to the pianist wearing tails.¹ He complied and the next evening wore a simple kimono, entering and leaving the stage without bowing to the audience. The third night he came on in a workman's coat and was heckled by the predominantly bourgeois audience. Whereupon the pianist turned and swore at them in no uncertain terms.

The last item in the programme that evening was a short opera written and performed by a group of anarchist artists. The title of the opera was TO-SU-KI-NA-A, written in katakana. The censor, and possibly even the audience which had just been sworn at, missed the point of the title, which was similar to that of a famous Western opera. If the kana are read backward,

1. The following account is taken from Matsumoto, Shingeki-shi, pp.352-7.

the title reads A-NA-KI-SU-TO, the Japanese adaptation of the word 'anarchist'. Toskinā is the name of the hero, who holds a government licence for pickpocketing. He sings to the chorus, picks their pockets, reveals his haul and when they demand their property back, shows them his government licence.

One song in the opera has these words:

'Go to an island.
Go to an island.
An island is peaceful,
No quarrels at all,'

thus expressing the dream of all anarchists to be free of the concept of rule.

Toskinā was not very successful at drawing audiences and the group had a very short life. But as in the case of Rōdō Gekidan it provided experience for young intellectuals who were later to have important positions in the left-wing drama movement. One such was Maruyama Sadao, who was to become one of the most celebrated actors of left-wing drama.

During the next year (1920) Nihon Shakaishugi Dōmei was formed and provided a forum for left-wing intellectuals interested in the arts.¹ Within a year it had been banned by the authorities as subversive. Three months before it was forced out of existence (in May 1921), a magazine had appeared in Akita prefecture which was later to be acknowledged as the initiator of the organized left-wing literary movement in Japan.² This was Tanemaku Hito³ and it was founded on a dōjin basis by a group of literary intellectuals under the leadership of Komaki Ōmi, who had recently returned from a period of study in France where he had taken part in the Clarté movement of Henri Barbusse. This was an internationalist movement of intellectuals which gave enthusiastic support to the Third International (Comintern). Komaki decided the aims of

1. See above, p. 92.

2. G.T. Shea, Leftwing Literature in Japan (Hōsei U.P. 1964), p.72. Referred to below as Shea, Leftwing Literature.

3. The Sower.

Clarté should be furthered by Tanemaku Hito.¹ Apart from a break of seven months due to financial difficulties caused by government displeasure, the magazine continued in existence until the Great Earthquake, after which it was never republished. Only the first issue was published in Akita prefecture; after the seven month break, publication was resumed in Tokyo. The majority of articles were on general matters of interest to left-wing intellectuals, in particular the progress of the Soviet Union. Many important articles concerning the theory of a left-wing literature also appeared in its pages, and there were some drama criticisms written mainly by Sasaki Takamaru.

Sasaki was the son of a Buddhist priest and had elected at the age of eleven not to become a priest himself, as his father desired. Instead he took a job in a telegraph office where he began to spend most of his time reading literature, especially drama. He later moved to Tokyo where he worked for a publishing firm and became a pupil of Akita Ujaku, at that time an enthusiastic anarchist by ideology. In 1920, inspired by Akita's account of a playreading society in Kyoto, Sasaki and some friends formed one of their own. They named it Tsuchi no Kai² after one of Akita's works.³ They held regular playreadings of the plays published in the various monthly magazines; if these were exhausted, translated plays were used instead. The meetings were held above a confectioner's shop in the Shinjuku area of Tokyo, called Nakamura-ya. The manager of this shop, Sōma Kuromitsu, and his wife became known as patrons of young litterateurs, and many groups such as Tsuchi no Kai assembled above their shop. Sasaki continued to be active in organizing this society until he joined Tanemaku Hito. From this time he devoted more

1. Ibid..

2. Earth Society.

3. Sasaki Takamaru, Fūsetsu Shingeki-shi (Gendai-sha, 1959), p.35. Referred to below as Sasaki, Fūsetsu.

of his energy to dramatic activities directly connected with the new magazine.

In the March issue he published an article on Japanese drama which was the first of any substance to appear in the pages of Tanemaku Hito. It was a passionate plea for recognition of the playwright as an artist in his own right and a general condemnation of the subservient attitude of many contemporary Japanese playwrights. He had been moved to write this article by the postscript to a play published in Waseda Bungaku, in which the playwright had invited directors and actors to change the script if better effects could be achieved by doing so.¹ There is no socialism in the article, but it showed that the left-wing intellectuals interested in drama at this time were aware of what the shingeki movement had been trying to achieve.

A Tanemaku Hito 'literary arts lecture meeting' was planned for March 1922, and there was to be combined with it a performance of a play given by members of Tanemaku Hito. Sasaki was made responsible for the whole production. The play chosen was Danton by Romain Rolland. The major parts were to be played by dōjin of Tanemaku Hito. The only female part was given to a girl who had sometimes helped out in the Tsuchi no Kai playreadings. According to Sasaki the rehearsals were lively, with each of the actors performing in a highly individual way. Akita Ujaku appeared at rehearsals and made frequent criticisms.²

The play did not please the censor, however, and it was banned on the day it was to have been performed. The sensitive reaction of the police may indicate how concerned they already were about drama as a means whereby intellectuals could spread their new ideas. Not only was the whole programme

1. Sasaki Takamaru, Gikyoku no Sōzō-sei to Kachi, Tanemaku Hito, II. vi, 246-50.

2. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, pp. 53-5.

banned because of this one item, but an application to perform the other items, omitting Danton, was also refused.¹

Komaki Ōmi evidently did not consider this a very important part of Tanemaku Hito's activity, as he does not mention it in his autobiography.² But the presence of Sasaki, with his passion for drama, and his involvement of other Tanemaku Hito dōjin in the venture, at least ensured that drama was never excluded from discussions on the development of an organized left-wing literature. Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, who wrote several important theoretical articles on this subject, had a part in Danton.

Tanemaku Hito decided to hold another literary arts lecture meeting in August in support of an appeal on behalf of the Russian workers who were then experiencing a famine. Again Sasaki took responsibility for the performance of a play and this time there was no police interference. The play chosen was an inoffensive one act comedy by Mushakōji Saneatsu, the aristocratic leader of a humanist literary group.

This performance was referred to as a 'special appearance' of Hyōgen-za.³ The name had been taken by a group of Sasaki's friends who had been meeting at his house and had planned to shock society by performing unusual plays. The name seems clearly to refer to expressionist drama. According to Sasaki's own account the members of Hyōgen-za had ambitious plans, but spent so much of their time talking and drinking over them that no further practical activity was realized.⁴

Meanwhile Sasaki was visited by an old anarchist friend from Tsuchi no Kai, Satō Seiya, who told him that Sōma Kuromitsu of the Nakamura-ya had

1. Tanemaki-sha Dai-ikkai Bungei Kōen-kai Kinshi saru, Tanemaku Hito, II. viii (Ap., 1922), 337. (Editorial announcement).

2. This was confirmed by interview, July, 1966.

3. Tokubetsu shutsuen. Expression(ist) Theatre.

4. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.56.

bought a large mansion and that he wished to use its storehouse for some cultural purpose.¹ Sōma himself had in the meantime been acquiring an interest in drama through reading plays aloud to a blind Russian poet who was lodging with them.² Satō said that discussions had taken place with Tsuchi no Kai members and the result of these was that Sōma was to reconstruct the storehouse as a little theatre. It had been decided to form a new group and give performances of plays rather than confining their activities to play-readings. Satō had come to invite Sasaki to participate in this and Sasaki accepted enthusiastically.³

Thus was formed Senku-za,⁴ so called because the ardour and self-confidence of its members prompted them to consider themselves the pioneers of the shingeki movement.⁵ Through its members the group was linked closely not only with other shingeki groups but also with the incipient left-wing literature movement represented by Tanemaku Hito. Senku-za was on a much smaller scale than Tsukiji Shogekijō, which it preceded by over a year, but in view of the later development of shingeki, the close contact Senku-za had with the main intellectual currents of the day give it considerable importance in shingeki history.

The group had great ambitions. A duplicated notice was sent out in 1924 concerning the establishment of Senku-za Engeki Eiga Kenkyūjo.⁶ It invited applications from potential students and listed the courses that would be available and the lecturers. Akita Ujaku was its director and Osanai Kaoru one of the lecturers. There was nothing in the text of this notice to suggest any political colouring.⁷

1. Ibid., p.59.

2. Sōma Kuromitsu, Mokuī, quoted in Akiba, ii. 408-9.

3. Sasaki, op.cit., p.60.

4. Pioneer Theatre.

5. Ibid..

6. Senku-za Study Centre for Drama and the Film.

7. Senku-za Engeki Eiga Kenkyūjo Kiyaku, Odagiri Collection, XIV.

There are few critical assessments of Senku-za's performances. There seems to be no evidence to suggest that in acting or production techniques it contributed anything to the establishment of a new drama for Japan. It was a group composed of a small number of ideologically revolutionary intellectuals playing to other intellectuals. The plays it performed in 1923 and 1924 were not in themselves revolutionary. Sasaki himself confesses that the group had no conception of socialist drama at all. Already by the spring of 1924, however, it was regarded generally as having a strong left-wing colouring.¹ In May, 1925, it performed a play by Hasegawa Nyozeikan² entitled Ethyl Gasoline.³ It was a simple comedy describing the antagonistic relations that existed between capitalists and workers. Sasaki sees the choice of this play to have been decisive in the development of left-wing drama in Japan.⁴ Japanese intellectuals were now writing and performing plays which described society by using Marxist terminology.

The early left-wing literature movement (Tanemaku Hito and its post-Earthquake successor, Bungei Sensen⁵) was dominated by intellectuals. There had been some literary activity by workers with little formal education, but this had been spasmodic and meagre in quantity. There had also been some activity in drama by workers and it had made a deep impression on a few intellectuals concerned in shingeki. This workers' drama soon declined, however, and it was then left to a small number of literary intellectuals, fully participating in the ideological debates of their day (which by then included debates on the theory of Marxist literature), to experiment with left-wing drama. It appears that they preserved interest in this type of drama not by performing left-wing plays but generally by being known to be left-wing and progressive themselves. While direct historical connections

1. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, pp.87-8.

2. Born 1875. Novelist and journalist. Closely associated with intellectual socialist activities in Taishō and Shōwa periods. Gendai Nihon Bungaku Daijiten, pp.904-5.

3. In katakana.

4. Sasaki, op.cit., p.89.

5. Literary Arts Front.

between the two types of left-wing drama mentioned here and the later proletarian drama were few, the idea of shingeki being linked with left-wing thought was fully established among interested intellectuals by the end of 1925. They needed only the means to realize the potentiality of this new drama form.

CHAPTER 3

The Left-wing Theatre Movement, 1926-1928

The first half of the decade of the twenties saw two manifestations of shingeki, both of which were to provide leaders of the left-wing theatre movement as it later developed. Tsukiji Shōgekijō established itself as a permanent company, dedicated to the overthrow of old dramatic traditions and eagerly experimenting with all that was new in Western drama. Some of the European plays it produced were clearly associated with the socialist ideas then enjoying currency, and these plays caused great excitement among young radical and older radicalized Japanese intellectuals. On the other hand there were experiments in dramatic production by very small groups of committed socialists and anarchists, some workers and others with a university education. There was a certain, very limited interchange between these two types of shingeki. Other shingeki groups either came into existence during this period or continued an existence begun in the 1910s, but with the exception of Shingeki Kyōkai¹ and Kokoro-za,² to which reference will be made below, these groups contributed little to the development of shingeki, whether left-wing or not.

Early left-wing literature manifested itself in a similar way to drama. There was both worker literature and socialist intellectual literature. There were groups dedicated to the production of each of these forms, and they were small. Their work can be very generally characterized as descriptive literature, sometimes of socialist-type content. There was little attempt to use literature as a political weapon. Journals appeared in which these writers could publish their

1. New Drama Association.

2. Soul Theatre. See below p. 125

works. Tanemaku Hito and its successor Bungei Sensen were the most important. Others included Kaihō, Bungei Shijō and Sentō Bungei.

During the early 1920s there was little opportunity for political action of a left-wing nature. There had been some relaxation from the rigours of the 'Winter Season' following the High Treason Incident, but this had shown itself mainly in the proliferation of left-wing discussion societies in the universities. The Shinjinkai of the Imperial University was the most famous example. Initially the hysterical persecution of suspected socialists after the Great Kantō Earthquake of September 1923 dealt another severe blow to any hopes of a left-wing political movement. The unrest engendered by it, however, also enabled Inukai Tsuyoshi to persuade the Prime Minister to promise a universal manhood suffrage bill. Concessions were also made to the previously repressed labour union movement. There had been a significant shift in the government's attitude, and this brought about the conditions for limited political action on the part of the organized left wing.¹

The organized left wing at this time consisted of the labour movement, led by Nihon Rōdō Sōdōmei (usually abbreviated to Sōdōmei),² and a society of politically concerned intellectuals, called Seiji Kenkyūkai.³ On these two organizations would fall the responsibility of forming an opposition political party to fight the expected first general election under universal manhood suffrage.

Politically unity was desirable, but with the prospect of actual

1. G.O. Totten, The Social Democratic Movement in Prewar Japan (Yale U.P., Newhaven and London, 1966), pp.46-7.

2. Japan General Federation of Labour. The successor to Yūaikai.

3. Society for the Study of Politics.

political power to be won, antagonisms between holders of different socialist ideologies became more acrimonious. The Communists, now re-formed (into a 'bureau', not yet into a party) in accordance with the Shanghai Thesis of January 1925 redoubled their efforts to gain control of the traditionally moderate Sōdōmei. They failed in this, but succeeded in May 1925 in forming a new labour federation, Nihon Rōdō Kumiai Hyōgikai (usually abbreviated to Hyōgikai),¹ to which they attracted, by their own figures, nearly half of the Sōdōmei membership.² Hyōgikai immediately encouraged its members to be active within the Seiji Kenkyūkai.

By mid-1925, therefore, the left-wing political movement demonstrated two dominant characteristics. One was intense activity, aimed at real political ends. The other was a deep and bitter division between those of uncompromising Marxist persuasion and those who believed in revisionism of various kinds.

The left-wing literary movement, which at this time consisted of Bungei Sensen and the other smaller journals, could not but be affected by this. The Seiji Kenkyūkai was led by intellectuals, so was the illegal Communist bureau, and intellectual content in the leadership of Sōdōmei and Hyōgikai was high.³ The problems of organisation and action were discussed in every left-wing intellectual society and left-wing artists wished to play their part.

The main forum for debate on how artists and literary men could add their own to the general effort, was Bungei Sensen. The readers of this journal not only had the stimulus of the political conditions of 1925. In January of that year Bungei Sensen had published an

1. Japan Council of Labour Unions.

2. Totten, op.cit., p.53.

3. Ibid., p.174.

appeal by Soviet writers for national and international unification movements of all writers and artists dedicated to socialist ideals.¹ Tanemaku Hito had been much influenced by the Clarté movement in France and this internationalism had been carried over to Bungei Sensen. The Soviet writers' appeal aroused much interest and spurred on the dōjin of Bungei Sensen to plan a federation of left-wing literary and artistic societies.

Sasaki Takamaru, very active in Senku-sa throughout 1925, was an enthusiastic initiator of this movement towards unification. It was into his hands as an Esperantist that the original text of the appeal had come,² and it was he who first advocated that a league should be set up.³ Finally in the September issue of Bungei Sensen concrete proposals for the platform and principles of the league were published. It was to be called Nihon Puroretaria Bungei Remmei (usually abbreviated to Puroren, which will be used here).⁴ Its platform looked forward to the establishment of a culture of the proletarian class struggle and a fight in the cultural field against the governing classes and the upholders of their culture. It was suggested that the league should be divided into seven sections, of which drama was one. The activities to be carried out by these sections were '1) Proletcult,⁵ 2) friendly entertainment of the proletariat and

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1. Bankoku no Kakumei-teki Puroretariya Chosakka ni Geki-su, Bungei Sensen, II.i (Jan., 1925), 48.
 2. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.96.
 3. Yamada Seizaburō, 'Remmei ni Tsuite,' quoted in Puroretaria Bungaku Taikai, ii. 208.
 4. Japan Proletarian Literary Arts League.
 5. The acquisition by the working class of a proletarian/socialist culture, as advocated in the journal Proletarskaya Kultura, published in the U.S.S.R. between 1918 and 1920. H. Ermolaev, Soviet Literary Theories, University of California Publications in Modern Philology, lix (University of California Press, 1963). 10-11.

3) opposition to educational facilities associated with the governing classes'.¹ In these pronouncements the dōjin of Bungei Sensen clearly thought that the new league should confine itself to cultural matters. But by the December issue of Bungei Sensen (which would have appeared during the last days of November), a change in the list of activities had taken place. Two additions had been made, one of which was: 'Support for labour disputes on a cultural level'.² There seems to be no information on the pressures that were exerted to effect this addition, but it is significant in the light of the first dramatic activities under the auspices of Puroren early in 1926.³ Although historians of the proletarian literary movement have not thought the addition worthy of note, the police evidently considered it as giving a new character to the proposed league. The writer of a police report on the proletarian arts movement singled it out for special mention.⁴

The founding meeting of Puroren was held on 6 December 1925 and in spite of violent interruptions from anarchists an organization was created. It was decided that there should only be three sections, literature, art and drama. Sasaki Takamaru was elected Chairman of the league and he was also made responsible for the drama section. The core members of this came from Senku-za.⁵ The objective of the three sections was to make their respective arts useful to the labour movement. Drama was now given a specific political function at a

1. Nihon Puroretaria Bungei Remmei Kitei Sōan, Bungei Sensen, II.v (Sept., 1925), 16.

2. Nihon Puroretaria Bungei Remmei Kitei Shūsei Sōan, Bungei Sensen, II.viii (Dec., 1925), 60.

3. See below, p. 110.

4. Shimizu Teiryō, Puroretaria Geijutsu Undō ni tsuite, in Shihō-shō, Shihō Kenkyū Dai-nibu Dai-yonkai Kenkyū-in Hōkokusho-shū, Dai-nishu (1929), p.19. A detailed report by a research worker in the Ministry of Justice. Referred to below as Shimizu, Geijutsu Undō.

5. Fūsetsu, p.98.

time when there was more opportunity for left-wing political activity than there had been for over fifteen years.

The drama section formed themselves into an acting group and gave themselves the name of Toranku Gekijō.¹ The name had been suggested by a recent article of Osanai Kaoru, in which he had written of a group which would put all necessary equipment into a trunk and be free to perform where it liked.² Having formed itself, the group waited for invitations to come in.³

It was not long before the chance came to show that the drama section was actively fulfilling its mission. It was long enough for criticism of inactivity to have mounted, but when the chance came, the results were so successful that all criticism was muted.

On 6 January 1926 a large scale printing strike broke out in the Kyōdō Insatsu factories in the Koishikawa area of Tokyo. It was the first major strike led by Hyōgikai and it lasted for nearly two months. It is famous not only for its importance in labour history, but also because it became the subject of one of Japan's most famous proletarian novels, Taiyō no nai Machi.⁴ The author of this novel was a printing worker and one of the leaders of the strike. His name was Tokunaga Sunao and he was an acquaintance of Sasaki Takamaru.⁵

1. Trunk Theatre.

2. Sasaki Takamaru in Toita Kōji, Taidan, p.164.

3. Sasaki Takamaru in Taidan specifically corrects the account in his autobiography, which suggests that the name Toranku Gekijō was acquired as a result of the Kyōdō Insatsu performances (see below p.110). The name was probably used among the members and only later came to be generally known. The Musansha Shimbun in its report (see below, p.111) still refers to the group as the Drama Section.

4. Street without Sun.

5. Akiba, 11. 415.

After the strike had dragged on for more than a month, Tokunaga visited Sasaki and asked that a play or plays be performed to raise the flagging spirits of the strikers.¹ The request caused some consternation, as, in spite of the existence of the group and its awareness of its duties, nothing had been prepared and there was no time for rehearsals. According to Sasaki they did not even have a trunk. So packing their effects in furoshiki (squares of cloth used for wrapping and carrying) they went to a hall in the strike area and performed two short plays, one of which had been in the repertory of Senku-za. This was on 27 February and further performances were given the next day at another hall. Sasaki proudly announced the fact of this epoch-making occurrence in the pages of Bungei Sensen,² repudiating criticisms, in another progressive magazine, Kaihō, that Puroren had a splendid platform but no practical activity to show for it.³

The most significant account of the event appeared in the pages of Musansha Shimbun.⁴ This newspaper had first appeared on 20 September 1925 and was under the editorship of Sano Fumio, one of the Communist bureau. It was the recognized organ of the bureau and remained so until its demise in August 1929.⁵ The Kyōdō Insatsu strike was called by Hyōgikai, itself controlled by Communists or Communist sympathizers. It was clear that the steadily rallying Communist group was taking considerable interest in the incipient left-wing arts movement.

1. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.98.

2. That this event was regarded as significant can be seen from its frequent mention in histories of the Japanese labour union movement. For example, Ōkōchi Kazuo and Matsuo Hiroshi, Nihon Rōdō Kumiai Monogatari, Shōwa (Chikuma Shobō, 1965), p.51.

3. Bungei Sensen, III. iv (Ap., 1926), 68.

4. Proletarian Newspaper.

5. Beckmann and Okubo, pp.94-6.

Musansha Shimbun reported the event as follows:

'On 27 and 28 February last, Sasaki Takamaru, Imano Kenzō, Sagi Ikuko and others performed Ethyl Gasoline and Aru Hi no Ikkyū in the Dōsaka Shimmei Kaikan on behalf of the Kyōdo Insatsu strikers now in the throes of a desperate fight, and won great acclaim.

For props, they used stools to hand in the hall, tables made by piling up empty boxes, and braziers used for boiling water; for costumes they made do with coats which they borrowed from the factory girls in the audience. You could not see this sort of thing in the commercial theatres even if you wanted to. This was the spectacle we were presented with.

But the plays were received favourably and at each performance, as they progressed, they were accompanied by bursts of thunderous applause and shouts of "Tyranny! Tyranny!" at the sight of the stubborn attitude of the capitalists. The actors, encouraged by this, threw their hearts into their acting. Their spirits soared at the complete identity of stage and auditorium, and they contributed very successfully to keeping up the morale of those exhausted by the continuing struggle and to the strengthening of the organization. Further, we understand that the Drama Section has decided that in future, apart from of course being active at the time of strikes, it will maintain close links with the recreation sections of the unions and support the movement of the proletarian class'.¹

This performance by Toranku Gekijō not only served to bring together politicians and artists. Even brief accounts of these events mention the presence of another group. A young student from the Imperial University was sent to report on the strike and he too watched the performances. His name was Hisaita Eijirō and he took a great interest in what Toranku Gekijō was trying to achieve.² He had himself by this time already written several plays. Other Imperial University students were also present. Hatta Motoo was there, and mentions that he saw Nakano Shigeharu.⁴ Hayashi Fusao

1. Musansha Shimbun, xviii (6 Mar., 1926), 3.

2. Sasaki Takamaru in Toita, Taidan, p.164.

3. Hatta Motoo, Yonjūnen, p.34.

claims that he was there too.¹ Hisaita, Nakano and Hayashi were all members of the Shinjinkai and also of a smaller society within the Shinjinkai, called the Marukishizumu Geijutsu Kenkyūkai (usually abbreviated to Marugei).² This society had been formed in February 1926 by members of the Shinjinkai especially interested in the arts. The significance of the presence of some of its members at the Kyōdō Insatsu performance lies in the fact that this society was soon to provide the next generation of leaders for the left-wing cultural movement.

After the Kyōdō Insatsu strike drama was firmly established as one of the major types of left-wing art. The number of articles in Bungei Sensen concerning drama increased rapidly during the year. Many plays were also published in its pages. But after this heady start, there were no further performances by Toranku Gekijō for eight months.

No direct explanation for this lack of activity is given by Sasaki or Akiba, but 1926 was a time of constant discussion and debate among those concerned with the left-wing arts movement. In addition Sasaki and Hatta were busy with other things, Sasaki with earning some much needed money and Hatta with his doctoral thesis at the Imperial University.³

During the early autumn of 1926 an article on left-wing literary theory appeared which seemed to crystallize the various tendencies evident in the Kyōdō Insatsu performance. The article was written by Aono Suekichi, a leading member of Bungei Sensen and

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1. Hayashi Fusao, 'Taiyō no Nai Machi' no Sakusha, Sayoku Gekijō Pamfuretto, ii (Feb., 1930), 21.
 2. Society for the Study of Marxist Arts.
 3. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, pp. 105-6, and Hatta Motoo, Yonjūnen, p.35.

one of the Communist bureau. It was entitled *Shizen Seichō to Mokuteki Ishiki*¹ and it was published in the September issue of Bungei Sensen. It was written during the summer at a hot spring resort in Shinshū, where Aono had invited Sasaki to spend the summer with him.² Its content will be discussed in the next chapter; the authority which this article acquired ensured that future left-wing literature would be judged by how clearly the writer showed a consciousness of a political goal in his writing. The goal would of course be left-wing and there was now a stricter definition of the type of left-wing objective that was to be sought. Aono was an orthodox Marxist and expected Marxist uniformity from writers. Puroren had embraced a variety of different left-wing ideologies from its inception. Hatta Motoo was still an anarchist by inclination at this time, and the league also included men of very moderate left-wing thought, such as Kaneko Yōbun. Now this diversity was being called in question.

Although the order of events during September and October 1926 is not clearly documented, it appears that Sasaki was still at the hot-spring resort in the second half of September. He writes that he was receiving frequent letters from Senda Koreya urging him to return to left-wing drama and in particular to help with preparations for the next production of *Toranku Gekijō*, scheduled for the first week in September. Sasaki relates that before he left, he talked at length with Aono about left-wing drama. Aono agreed that *Toranku Gekijō* was doing fine work but thought there should be a permanent

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1. Natural Growth and Consciousness of an Objective. Bungei Sensen, III. ix (Sept., 1926), 3-5.
 2. Sasaki, op.cit., p.105.

left-wing drama group to compete with the bourgeois groups - Tsukiji Shōgekijō and Shingeki Kyōkai - on their own ground.¹

Sasaki returned to Tokyo and preparations were started in earnest for the next Toranku Gekijō production. This was to be part of an evening of entertainment to celebrate the first anniversary of the founding of Musansha Shimbun.

The circumstances of this production were quite different from those of the first. There was time for rehearsals, and the whole enterprise was much more organized. There was also a significant change in the composition of the group that was working on the production. It contained several members of Marugei, who had only been admiring bystanders before. It also contained two ex-members of Tsukiji Shōgekijō, Senda Koreya and Ono Miyakichi. They had left the Tsukiji group because they disagreed with its policy of, as they saw it, putting art above everything else. They themselves were primarily interested in a political drama, and had been attending Marugei meetings at the invitation of the society.² Thus the almost coincidental meeting of the political, intellectual and artistic left that had taken place at the Kyōdō Insatsu strike headquarters, had now developed into a permanent, purposeful union.

'Come and enjoy music, drama, solo singing, and a special proletarian presentation', invited the Musansha Shimbun.³ Drama was only one part of the programme, and Puroren had deployed all its artistic resources to make the event a success. Toranku Gekijō

1. Ibid., p.109.

2. Yamada Seizaburō, Puroretaria Bungaku Fūdo-ki (Aoki Shinsho, 1954), p.89.

3. Musansha Shimbun, xlviii (15 Sept., 1926), 3.

performed three plays, a short play about a strike by Hisaita Eijirō of Marugei, The Second Story Man by Upton Sinclair (whose novel Jungle seems, from the articles in Bungei Sensen, to have been exciting Aono's interest just at the time when he was making his major contribution to proletarian literary theory) and some short satirical sketches by Hasegawa Nyozeikan. The Musansha no Yūbe,¹ as it was called, was put on four times in all, and the Musansha Shimbun reported enthusiastic, deeply moved capacity audiences on each occasion. Financially the venture was a great success. ¥50, a considerable sum at that time and especially so considering the composition of the audiences, was collected as a contribution to the funds necessary to sustain a strike currently taking place in the Mitsubishi factories in Kobe.²

This production established Toranku Gekijō as a touring group and it gave frequent performances afterwards until June of 1927. The lists of directors and designers show a continuation of the trend towards active Marugei participation and leadership that had become well established by the end of the Musansha no Yūbe presentation. Sano Seki directs frequently and Murayama Tomoyoshi designs for more than half the productions. Both were Marugei members. Senda Koreya and Ono Miyakichi, ex-Tsukiji Shōgekijō actors and members of Marugei by invitation, are also prominent. Sasaki (not connected with Marugei) is still very active.

This was only to be expected after the developments of the last quarter of 1926. The future course of the organized left-wing literary movement was mainly decided during these three months and

1. Proletarians' Evening.

2. Musansha Shimbun, lii (16 Oct., 1926), 3.

the drama movement epitomized most of the larger struggles that were proceeding at the time.

Firstly, as Musansha no Yūbe came to an end, a new left-wing drama group came into being. Its name, suggested by Aono Suekichi, was Zen'ei-za.¹ It was formed initially on the basis of a dōjin organization, as in the case of Tsukiji Shōgekijō, and the members were, 'in addition to the members of Toranku Gekijō who formed the core, those of the Bungei Sensen dōjin who were connected with drama, those in Marugei who were connected with drama and people who had turned from expressionism and constructivism to Marxism.²

Two names, of active Senku-za and Toranku Gekijō members, did not appear. They were Imano Kenzō and Kaneko Yōbun. This is surprising in that the first venture of Zen'ei-za, a tour in Akita prefecture, was arranged by them and took place well before the publication of the aims of Zen'ei-za with the list of names appended. The tour performances took place on 26, 27 and 28 October, and plays from the repertory of Toranku Gekijō and two new plays by Imano and Kaneko were presented.³ Sasaki reported in the December issue of

1. Vanguard Theatre.

2. ¹Hatta Motoo, *Puroretaria Engeki no Rekishi*, in Kawatake Shigetoshi and Shimomura Masao ed., Gendai Engeki Kōza vi, Nihon no Engeki (Mikasa Shobō, 1959), 94-5.

²The full list of dōjin was: Aono Suekichi, Hayama Yoshiki, Hayashi Fusao, Hisaita Eijirō, Maedakō Kōichirō, Murayama Tomoyoshi, Nakajima Kizō, Nomura Akira, Ōkōchi Nobutake (Ogawa Shin'ichi), Ono Miyakichi, Sano Seki, Sasaki Takamaru, Satō Seiya, Seki Ranko, Senda Koreya, Tsuji Tsunehiko, Yamada Seizaburō and Yanase Masamune, Bungei Sensen, III. xii (Dec., 1926), 38-9.

3. Information concerning performances by left-wing groups is taken from the chronology in Shingeki no Yonjūnen, pp.206-37.

Bungei Sensen that the tour was successful.¹

In view of their dramatic experience the exclusion of Imano and Kaneko was surprising. In view of their political ideas, however, it was not. Both were to the right of the left-wing movement, adhering to revisionist principles of social democracy that were unacceptable to the Marxists of Marugei. Sasaki comments that in the meetings held to discuss the formation of Zen'ei-za enough power was wielded by the Marugei group to ensure the exclusion of Imano and Kaneko.² Several left-wing accounts of Zen'ei-za history ignore this tour. Apart from the political inappropriateness of the two individuals, the tour was to Akita, the birth-place of Tanemaku Hito, and it is probable that later Marxist writers have preferred to forget the connection of Zen'ei-za, a thoroughly Marxist group, with the earlier, ideologically mixed journal of left-wing literature.

The declaration of the Zen'ei-za dōjin on the nature of the group leaves no doubt that political tolerance was out of the question.

'Our Group, Zen'ei-za, is Born!

Zen'ei-za will press forward towards the creation of a healthy drama - a healthy drama can only be one which shows mankind the way to a shining future.

Zen'ei-za therefore rejects the world-view that is rushing towards an early collapse, and takes its stand on a new world-view which is developmental in character - our primary purpose in making this new departure must be to enable the drama of today to be turned into this correct path.

Zen'ei-za, in order to fulfil the above historical role, will strive for the establishment of a drama which has for its content the world-view of men who have the capacity for living vigorous lives.

Zen'ei-za will necessarily adopt the form of expression which is most suited to this content.

1. III. xii, 40.

2. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.117

Zen'ei-za thus in the content and the form of expression of its drama will try to open up territory untrodden by men before'.¹

Although the statement is full of circumlocutions, the Marxist basis is unmistakeable. The 'new world view which is developmental in character' is dialectical materialism; form is unequivocally subordinated to content; 'men who have the capacity for living vigorous lives' are the proletariat, etc.. Several previous issues of Bungei Sensen had been banned² and the censor had to be kept in mind.

The organization established for Zen'ei-za was similar to that of the original Tsukiji Shōgekijō in that administration was to be carried out by meetings of the dōjin. Officers were elected and Sasaki was made Standing Chairman.

In November the second general meeting of Puroren took place. It was attended in force by members of Marugei, flushed with their success in the formation of Zen'ei-za. Yamada Seizaburō, who although not a student had been invited to be a member soon after the society's formation, describes the almost conspiratorial feeling among the Marugei group within Puroren. They assumed the pose of being a Communist cell or fraction and were determined to change the organization of the league.³ They were greatly afraid of a violent intervention by anarchists, but the meeting ended without trouble of this kind. The Marugei group emerged with clear control of the league, having forced the social-democratic members to resign.

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1. Bungei Sensen, III. xii (Dec., 1926), 38.
 2. III. ii (Feb., 1926), III. vii (July, 1926) and III. xi (Nov., 1926).
 3. Yamada Seizaburō, Puroretaria Bungaku Fudo-ki, p.93. In March the Moscow theses had urged positive efforts towards the formation of fractions and cells in appropriate union and political organizations, quoted in Beckmann and Okubo, pp.294-5.

The name was changed to Nihon Puroretaria Geijutsu Renmei (usually abbreviated to Purogei);¹ the new league was to be made up of four specialist sections - literature, drama, art and music - and the officers of the league were to be chosen from each of these sections. Toranku Gekijō was designated as the specialist drama section of the new league. Purogei was the only co-ordinating organization for the left-wing arts movement and it was controlled by uncompromising Marxists. Those who during the first years of left-wing literature had held less than strict Marxist revolutionary ideas, were being progressively eliminated from the organization that was to unite the efforts of all left-wing artists. The highest value was placed on specialization, which was only attainable by those who would form the revolutionary vanguard.

At this point it is appropriate to begin using the term 'proletarian' in reference to the drama of Toranku Gekijō. The word is used very loosely by Japanese writers and is often hardly distinguishable from 'left-wing'. In general it has been thought useful here to use the term 'proletarian drama' only in reference to that left-wing drama which was officially part of the organized left-wing artistic effort, united ideologically. Where there is a distinction made in Japanese writing between 'proletarian' and 'left-wing', it is generally of this kind.

While under this definition Toranku Gekijō can be called 'proletarian' after the reorganization of Puroren, the case is more difficult with Zen'ei-za. The latter group remained under a dōjin system. The dōjin were all members of Purogei, but the majority of them were also dōjin of Bungei Sensen, which was in general anti-pathetic towards Purogei.² Bungei Sensen rejected an approach by

1. Japan Proletarian Arts League.

2. Sasaki Takamaru, Sayoku Gekijō Yuraiki, Yonjūnen, p.99

Purogei seeking to make it the official organ of the new league.¹ Although the most active members of Zen'ei-za were fully in accord with the aims of Purogei, the nominal independence conferred by the dōjin system prevents it from being called 'proletarian' in the above definition for the first eight months of its existence.

During November preparations were going forward for Zen'ei-za's first public production. It was decided by the dōjin that it should be a translation of Lunarcharsky's play Don Quixote Liberated and that it would be performed in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō during December. The production procedure laid down by the founder members of Zen'ei-za was that a production meeting should be held before the selection of a director. This meeting was to be composed of a wide cross-section of the group, actors, effects men, designers, directors, etc.. The meeting would discuss at length how the play should be directed, and the debate would be recorded verbatim. Following this debate, a director would be chosen from those present. He would then be bound by the policy for the production laid down by the meeting.²

A production meeting for Don Quixote Liberated was duly held and discussions about the play took place. Two problems engaged the attention of the meeting. The first was to identify the 'content' (a word by this time only used in the Marxist sense of the dialectical materialist reality) and the second was how this 'content' should be treated in the present age. Only after solving these two problems did the meeting consider that they would be able to achieve an 'accurate'³ (another word rapidly becoming Marxist jargon) understanding of the play. The essential message of the play was the

1. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, pp. 129-30.

2. Sasaki Takamaru, in Shingekidan Zadankai, Engeki Shinchō (2), II. i (Feb., 1927), 4.

3. Seikaku (naru)

dangers of humanitarianism in a revolutionary situation.¹ Sano Seki was selected to direct.

Don Quixote Liberated was performed on 6, 7 and 8 December 1926 at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Reports on the performance vary wildly, as might be expected considering the circumstances. The Zen'ei-za members and supporters were determined that the performances should prove that the group was proletarian and revolutionary, and they needed a high proportion of workers in the audience, participating loudly. This condition was fulfilled but there were immediate suggestions that the audience participation came from friends of Zen'ei-za. The group had made its appearance at the beginning of the bitterest dispute between left-wing intellectuals that has ever occurred in Japan, and it was open to attack from those who saw less than proletarian purity in its activities. Musansha Shimbun, on the other hand, speaking for the Japan Communist Party (reconstituted at the beginning of December), was ecstatic in its praise.

Whether Don Quixote Liberated was a success on any outsider's terms or not, the members of the group themselves drew inspiration from the experience and immediately began planning their next venture.

This was to be a drama study centre, the first in Japan to be devoted to non-traditional, non-commercial drama. In spite of its professed intentions, Tsukiji Shōgekijō had not succeeded in opening a study centre of its own. Zen'ei-za opened the Zen'ei-za Engeki Kenkyūjo² in January 1927 in a large house in Sendagaya, the high rent of which could only be raised by Sasaki selling his own house.³

1. Sano Seki, Enshutsu Kōki, Bungei Sensen, IV. i (Jan., 1927), 135.

2. Zen'ei-za Drama Study Centre.

3. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.122.

Hisaita explained in Bungei Sensen that the mission of the study centre lay in a revolution within the theatre world. To fulfil this mission it was no use simply putting on a few productions each year. Revolutionaries - theatre people of a new type, as he described them elsewhere - had to be trained.¹ Murayama Tomoyoshi develops this point in an article in Engeki Shinchō, which shows quite clearly vestiges of the futurism that his Marxism had not completely replaced. He says there that a drama school must never be an actors' school. What is needed for the drama of the future is not simply actors, but 'theatre people'.² After founding the Zen'ei-za Drama Study Centre, the leaders examined the programmes of other drama schools, for instance that of the Vieux Colombier. But, Murayama says, they found nothing useful; they wanted the Zen'ei-za centre to be 'actualistic'³ rather than 'formalistic',³ as these other schools were. In the future actors would not be the only things moving on the stage - there would be animals, machines, scenery, the stage itself, etc..⁴

The constitution of the centre stated its purpose to be the scientific study of drama theory and technique and the training of theatre people of the new age.⁵ Both Hisaita and Murayama give priority to the study of theory, and more than half of the list of subjects which follows the constitution is concerned with drama theory and history. Murayama states unequivocally that general

1. Bungei Sensen, IV.ii (Feb., 1927), 38.

2. Engeki tōjisha.

3. Jissai-teki; keishiki-teki.

4. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Haiyū Gakkō no Hanashi ...

Riron to Jissai to, Engeki Shinchō, II.ii (Feb., 1927), 60-62.

5. Bungei Sensen, IV.ii, 38-9.

drama theory and sociology are the most important items of the training of their new theatre people. They must be able to reflect 'accurate' theory.¹

Applications for admission as students were numerous and the centre started with a student body of thirty. It seems to have produced very few graduates who later became well-known as actors of proletarian drama. Most of them subsequently went into politics or the labour movement, a phenomenon which Sasaki attributes to the 'apparition of Fukumotoism'.²

Fukumoto Kazuo was a young Marxist intellectual who had established a commanding position among left-wing students, particularly at the Imperial University, during 1925. He had read very widely in the literature of Marxism and was a prolific writer himself. His theory was briefly that Japan had achieved a bourgeois democratic revolution by the Meiji Constitution of 1889, and with the rise of the proletariat in the years following the First World War the country was ready for a proletarian revolution. The proletariat would be led by the Communist Party in its historic mission. This party must be composed only of members whose ideological purity was beyond question - that is, those who agreed with his own theories. Theory was the essential requirement of a good party member and there should be an intensive drive to ensure that all impure elements were discarded.

Fukumoto's theories had excited young left-wing intellectuals at a time when Moscow was urging the Japan Communist Party to re-establish itself and when most of the earlier party leaders were still in prison. Fukumoto succeeded in having a new Party Congress assemble in December 1926, well before the release of these pioneers, and he and his supporters gained control of the new Japan Communist Party.³

1. Ibid.

2. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.122.

3. A full account of Fukumoto's theories and the process by which he came to power in the Communist movement is given in Beckmann and Okubo, pp.107-16.

The first two 1927 issues of Bungei Sensen showed clearly that Fukumotoism had also established itself in the left-wing arts movement. Tani Hajime (pen name of Ōta Keitarō), a former Marugei member and soon to marry a Toranku Gekijō actress,¹ published in the January issue what is generally considered to be the first Fukumotoist article on the arts movement. It is a straight application of Fukumoto's political ideas to artistic creation. Unless writers went through the process of the theoretical struggle then taking place, they would not be able to make the emotions of the proletariat their own emotions.² Following this article is a suggested reading list with Bukharin and Fukumoto prominent in the political section. The arts section included books by Bogdanov, Lunarcharsky and Trotsky.

In the same issue Tani criticized the production of Don Quixote Liberated because, although the Marxist implications of the play must have been familiar to the director (Sano Seki, a fellow Marugei member), he did not succeed in putting them across on the stage.³

While the theoretical cleansing of Zen'ei-za was proceeding, attacks on almost all other forms of shingeki were being mounted by Zen'ei-za members. Sano Seki in Musansha Shimbun,⁴ Senda Koreya in Bungei Sensen,⁵ and Nakano Shigeharu in the Imperial University Newspaper⁶ all attacked Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Mutual recriminations

1. Letter dated 16 Sept., 1966.

2. Tani Hajime, Musansha Bungei no Shitsu-teki Tenkan, Bungei Sensen, IV. i (Jan., 1927), 111-13.

3. Tani Hajime, Zen'ei-za Dai-ikkai Kōen o Mite, Bungei Sensen, IV. i (Jan., 1927), 133-4.

4. Musansha Shimbun, lxiii (1 Jan., 1927), 3.

5. IV. ii (Feb., 1927), 34-6.

6. Quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.49.

were bitter, and in its February issue Engeki Shinchō held a discussion which included representatives from Zen'ei-za, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, Kokoro-za and Shingeki Kyōkai.¹ In spite of Sekiguchi Jirō's attempt to urge a union of all shingeki groups, including his own Shingeki Kyōkai, he was attacked consistently by Sasaki Takamaru for Zen'ei-za and Murayama Tomoyoshi for Kokoro-za. Takada Tamotsu, representing Tsukiji Shōgekijō, was in the chair, and perhaps for this reason Tsukiji Shōgekijō was hardly mentioned. The most prominent feature of the debate was the self-assured utterances of the left-wing participants.

All four shingeki groups represented in the Engeki Shinchō discussion were active at the beginning of 1927 and they constituted the main manifestations of shingeki at the time.

Kokoro-za

Kokoro-za had been founded in September 1925 by a very varied group of young people interested in the theatre. It contained artists, poets, shingeki actors and kabuki actors. Murayama Tomoyoshi, who had returned from Europe the previous year, was one of the original members, as was Yoshida Kenkichi from Tsukiji Shōgekijō and a young kabuki actor who was soon the acknowledged leader of the group, Kawarasaki Chōjūrō. It was a group of friends who wished to study drama together. The first play they chose to study was Evreinov's Theatre of the Soul, and the name of the group was taken from this.²

The first production began on 26 September and continued for

1. Engeki Shinchō (2), II. i, 1-8.

2. Kawarasaki Chōjūrō, Aru Rekishi no Nagare, Shingeki no Yonjūnen, p.166.

three days. The plays given reflected the interests of the various dominant groups within Kokoro-za, and there was a clear clash between Iketani Shinsaburō, who wrote and directed a play based on Freudian psychology, and Murayama, who directed a Kaiser expressionist play with a Constructivist set. There was also a dance item, during which the Dadaist and futurist tendencies of Murayama and the literary group were given full play.

The same dichotomy was evident in the second production (January 1926). By this time there was much feeling against Iketani, not for his artistic views, but rather because of his dictatorial manner, and he was forced to leave the group. Shingeki Kyōkai gave further productions (May 1926; September 1926; May 1927) and the gap between the 'artistic' or 'French' faction and the 'political' or 'German/Soviet' faction was never closed.¹

By the beginning of 1927 Kokoro-za was divided into three sections, and it is this organization that Murayama describes in the Engeki Shinchō discussion. The first section performed socialist plays, the second, artistic plays and the third, new kabuki plays (as there had always been a majority of kabuki actors among the acting members). Murayama was in charge of the first section, and he boasts that he ran it as a dictator. He also says that the overall administration of the group was unified, and that he had supervision over it. On his sole decision rested the activity of all three sections.²

But Murayama's position was not totally secure. He was now deeply involved in proletarian drama, and his ideas on art and its

1. Ibid., pp.169-71.

2. Shingekidan Zadankai, Engeki Shinchō(2), II. ii (Feb., 1927), 4.

relation to politics were incompatible with those of the majority of Kokoro-za members. He was asked to leave the group after the fifth production (May 1927).¹

Shingeki Kyōkai.

Shingeki Kyōkai had been founded in 1919 by Hatanaka Ryōha.² Its first production was of Uncle Vanya and a play by Nagata Hideo, whose plays were often performed subsequently by the group. Tomoda Kyōsuke, later to become famous as a Tsukiji Shōgekijō actor, played a small part in Uncle Vanya. These plays were followed in 1920 by a successful production of Maeterlinck's Blue Bird, praised highly by Osanai Kaoru and Shimazaki Tōson.³ Then there was a break of three years until the next production in April 1923. The Great Earthquake occurred before any further production, but Hatanaka was remarkably active immediately after it, performances being given in December 1923, January, February and March 1924. Towards the end of 1924 Shingeki Kyōkai moved to a permanent home almost next door to the Tsukiji Shōgekijō and productions were mounted regularly. Audiences were poor, however, in 1925, and by the end of the year the group was in serious financial difficulties. These were resolved temporarily by the patronage of Kikuchi Hiroshi, whose connections in the business world enabled him to raise large sums of money. (The publishers of the resurrected Engeki Shinchō, Bungei Shunjū-sha, were also supported financially by him.) With this financial help Shingeki Kyōkai performed a variety of plays by both Western and Japanese playwrights in 1926. The group continued to operate at a considerable

1. Kawarasaki Chōjūrō, in Toita, Taidan, pp.179-80.

2. Born 1877. Shingeki actor. Made his début in one of Geijutsu-za's study drama productions in 1918. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, iv. 445.

3. The name of the group as it appeared in the programme for this production, was Minshū-za (People's Theatre).

loss, however, and in November 1926 Kikuchi linked Shingeki Kyōkai with Engeki Shinchō in an ambitious enterprise involving many of the playwrights excluded from Tsukiji Shōgekijō.¹ Much interest was generated by this in theatrical and artistic circles, and Shingeki Kyōkai faced 1927 with justified confidence.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō had performed its first Japanese play in March 1926. The circumstances surrounding the choice of play seem to have been unfortunate. One play, En no Gyōja by Tsubouchi Shōyō, had been under active consideration for some months, but before a final decision was made, the Bungei-bu circulated a questionnaire among audiences and supporters asking for their views. Tsubouchi was given scant support in the answers to the questionnaire. It was decided, however, that none of the plays suggested in the answers came up to the level of En no Gyōja, and the latter play was duly selected.³ Perhaps because of the unquestioned eminence of Tsubouchi, there was little outcry from the now twice slighted Japanese playwrights. The occasion of the first change in the policy of only performing Western plays might have been seen as an opportunity to ameliorate the tactlessness of Osanai's original statement about modern Japanese plays, but no attempt was made to do this.

Hijikata Yoshi was particularly active in the preparations for the production and concerned himself especially in the various contacts with Tsubouchi himself. He was anxious to bring together the two great pioneers of shingeki, Tsubouchi and Osanai.⁴ It was he who

1. Akiba, ii. 346-50.

2. En no Gyōja is a proper name including the title, gyōja, which means 'an ascetic.'

3. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.34.

4. Osaki and Ibaraki, Hijikata Yoshi, p.124.

first obtained Tsubouchi's permission and he who succeeded in persuading Tsubouchi to see one of the performances. Tsubouchi was not impressed. In his work he had been concerned to preserve Japanese dramatic tradition, and Osanai was aware of this. But the latter's advice to the actors in rehearsal had been 'Get away from kabuki; ignore tradition. Don't dance; move! Don't sing; speak!'¹ When pressed by Hijikata for an opinion, Tsubouchi grudgingly admitted that he liked the scenery but would say nothing more. Hijikata's attempt to bring him and Osanai together had failed.²

In general, however, En no Gyōja was a great success, and preparations went ahead for further productions of Japanese plays. The next play selected was Fujimori Seikichi's Gisei,³ based on Arishima Takeo's suicide. The police banned the production in its entirety - the first time they had accorded this treatment to Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

Censorship was to be one of the major problems facing Tsukiji Shōgekijō during the rest of its existence. The group was caught in a dilemma. If it did not respond to the pressure from intellectuals for a more forthright left-wing policy, it faced an eventual internal split. Senda Koreya, one of its most brilliant students, had resigned from the group in January because it was not progressive enough. Ono Miyakichi, another student, resigned in June. It was perhaps inevitable that the progressive group within Tsukiji Shōgekijō should increase. A society to study Marxism was secretly formed.⁴

1. Mizushina, Osanai Kaoru, p.138.

2. Ozaki and Ibaraki, op.cit., p.124.

3. Sacrifice.

4. Mizushina, Osanai Kaoru, p.147.

On the other hand, if concessions were made to this group and left-wing plays were selected regularly, there were likely to be progressively more difficult relations with the police. The banning of Gisei had probably been on moral rather than political grounds, but Fujimori was already known as an established writer who had turned to socialism and future productions of his plays were always subject to close police scrutiny.

There were eighteen new productions by Tsukiji Shōgekijō between En no Gyōja and the end of the year, and of these six were by Japanese playwrights. With the possible exception of Nakamura Kichizō, the playwrights represented were in no way left-wing. Two of the plays were by Mushakōji Saneatsu, the leader of the Shirakaba literary group. Nakamura himself, although known as a writer of plays of socialist content in the early Taishō period, was not taken seriously as a progressive by the young radical intellectuals of the end of the period.

The twelve foreign plays were again by a variety of playwrights. Shaw was prominent, as was Chehov, the former being directed by Hijikata, the latter by Osanai. The choice of foreign plays did not differ significantly in the second half of 1926 from that of the previous two years. The positions of Osanai and Hijikata had not changed on this matter.

Apart from En no Gyōja and the production of other Japanese plays, the event which commentators have singled out as significant in the history of Tsukiji Shōgekijō was the production of Martinet's La Nuit.¹ It is possible that exaggerated importance has been given to this production as being the first of a left-wing play. It was

1. For example, Sugai Yukio, in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.49.

believed that there was no translation in existence other than the Japanese and there had only been one previous production in the world.¹ The Bungei-bu of Tsukiji Shōgekijō were well aware that the play in translation would never be passed as it stood by the censor and considerable pruning took place before it was submitted. In spite of this strict conditions were placed on its performances: they had to be confined to the limit of the intended run and could only be given in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō.²

Touring was also given added importance by the group in 1926. Extended tours were undertaken during most of August, September and October.

Mizushina summarizes the policy of Tsukiji Shōgekijō for the future, as manifested in production meetings at the end of 1926. Firstly the group intended to produce as many Japanese plays as possible. Secondly they intended to follow 'La Nuit' with other pioneering foreign plays which were based on Marxism. Thirdly they would mount a production in a big, commercial theatre at least once per year, so as to help shingeki to be accepted among the general theatre-going public, and they would also go once to Asakusa, to bring shingeki to ordinary people. Fourthly, there were to be several tours each year.³

However laudable this programme was, the triumphant start of Zen'ei-za ensured that left-wing criticism of Tsukiji Shōgekijō would mount. Nakano Shigeharu wrote an article condemning the group in the Imperial University Newspaper.⁴ It concerned the production

1. Mizushina, Osanai Kaoru, p.155.

2. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.46.

3. Mizushina, op.cit., p.162.

4. Teikoku Daigaku Shimbun, 31 Jan., 1927, quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.49.

(in January 1927) of Gogol's Government Inspector. Nakano charged that the play had been directed as a 'costume play', and that its revolutionary significance had been missed. He added that other plays performed by Tsukiji Shōgekijō had similarly been misunderstood, mentioning The Lower Depths and La Nuit.

The attack was followed by one written by Senda Koreya in the February issue of Bungei Sensen. The article roundly condemned the commercialism of Tsukiji Shōgekijō, with particular reference to the New Year performances in the Imperial Theatre (with which the group was fulfilling the third of its four intentions for the future). Performances at the Imperial Theatre were obvious targets for attack. One of the plays performed, however, had been Kaiser's Side by Side, and Kaiser had been the playwright who had most excited progressive intellectuals during the first eighteen months of Tsukiji Shōgekijō's existence. It was a symptom of how fast intellectual fashion was changing that Senda dismissed Kaiser's work in the same article as merely slices of life picked from the (bourgeois) newspaper gossip pages.¹ In the eyes of progressive intellectuals the progressive and the conservative faces of Tsukiji Shōgekijō had now merged.

Meanwhile Toranku Gekijō and Zen'ei-za continued to further the aims of left-wing drama. In February, March, May and June of 1927 Toranku Gekijō performed no less than twenty plays mostly for specific political purposes. The February performances (three in all) and one of the May performances were sponsored by branches of

1. Senda Koreya, Tsukiji Shōgekijō no Shōgyōka, Bungei Sensen, IV. ii (Feb., 1927), 34-6.

the Rōdō Nōmin-tō,¹ and were intended to consolidate and increase support for the party.² In March the sponsor was the All Japan Council of the Movement to Petition a Dissolution of the Diet. In May another Musansha no Yūbe was given, and the Society for the Promotion of a Workers' Health Centre was also supported.³ The plays were short pieces and included some already performed in 1926. Eight new plays were performed, two by Hisaita Eijirō. Three plays were banned by the police.

Zen'ei-za's list of performances up to the end of June is not so impressive. Being a group specializing in full-scale productions, it was more vulnerable to the censor, and the experience of Tsukiji Shōgekijō had shown how difficult it was to substitute another full-length play at the last moment. A group such as Toranku Gekijō with a large repertory of short pieces was much better able to avoid the crippling financial loss that a last minute banning by the censor might impose. One of the two plays Zen'ei-za had planned to perform in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō in April was subject to a ban of this type. The play was Sinclair's Prince Hagen and its subject was a financial panic. This was the time of the Wall Street crash and the police evidently banned the play for this reason. The whole programme had to be abandoned.⁴

The second of the plays, by Maedakō Kōichirō, was performed

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1. Labour-Farmer Party. Formed March 1926 as a moderate left-wing party, but new membership rules in April admitted members of extreme left-wing organizations previously excluded. By December the Labour-Farmer Party was dominated by those who agreed with the aims and methods of Communism. Beckmann and Okubo, pp.99-104.
 2. Sasaki Takamaru, Nihon Puroretaria Engeki Hattatsu-shi, in Akita Ujaku and Eguchi Kan ed., Sōgō Puroretaria Geijutsu Kōza, ii (Naigaisha, 1931). 181-2. Referred to below as Sasaki, Puroretaria Geijutsu Kōza, ii.
 3. Ibid., 182-3.
 4. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.127.

in May as part of a programme given in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō as a send-off presentation for Senda Koreya. Senda had for some time wished to study drama in the West and he set off for Germany soon after the Tsukiji evening.

Meanwhile the political differences inside the cultural movement which had remained as a result of the Marugei group being unable to take over Bungei Sensen, began once more to show themselves in open struggle. At the June meeting of the Bungei Sensen dōjin a decision was taken that they would all resign their membership of Purogei. Almost simultaneously Purogei expelled them. Those involved immediately formed another league, Rōnō Geijutsuka Dōmei¹ (usually abbreviated to Rōgei), and they made Bungei Sensen its official organ. Thus what resulted from the struggle was two leagues, one politically Fukumotoist and one containing a wide spread of socialist thought from mild social democracy through to the Marxism of Murayama Tomoyoshi and Sano Seki.

There was then the question of what to do with the drama section of the former Purogei. This consisted of two parts: Toranku Gekijō and Zen'ei-za Drama Study Centre. Zen'ei-za itself, though very closely linked with Purogei, had always been nominally independent. The study centre students had almost all been convinced by their Marugei teachers, and all the Toranku Gekijō actors were Marugei members or study centre students. Toranku Gekijō became the exclusive theatre group of the new Fukumotoist Purogei and most of the study centre students supported and joined the latter. Toranku Gekijō was renamed Puroretaria Gekijō.²

Zen'ei-za, being an independent organization, did not need to affiliate with either Purogei or Rōgei. Its own dōjin, however,

1. Worker-Farmer Artists League.

2. Proletarian Theatre.

were involved in the split in their capacities as organizers of the general proletarian cultural movement. To resolve this problem a dōjin meeting was held on 11 June 1927. Discussion was heated and the two main positions taken up are summarized by Sasaki as follows: 'Seen from the point of view of its foundation and development, Zen'ei-za should naturally belong to Purogei', and 'Zen'ei-za is not under Purogei's organization and should decide its attitude from an independent standpoint'. The vote was against affiliation with Purogei, at which five Purogei supporters, including Sano Seki, Hisaita Eijirō and Ono Miyakichi, resigned. Whereupon the remaining dōjin dissolved the dōjin organization and affiliated Zen'ei-za with Rōgei.¹

The next performances of Zen'ei-za were scheduled to begin in Niigata three days later on 14 June. Because of the defection of the Purogei supporters, Zen'ei-za was faced with an acute shortage of actors. An offer from Puroretaria Gekijō to take over the performances was indignantly refused, and substitute actors were hurriedly recruited from Rōgei members. Purogei then attempted to have the performances called off by sending representatives to the sponsors to persuade them of the ideological unsuitability of Zen'ei-za. This failed and the tour went ahead.²

The tour was sponsored by the Society for Social Scientific Research of Niigata Medical University, and the proceeds were to be donated to Musansha Shimbun.³ Students of a society similar to Marugei were thus directly concerned in the Zen'ei-za tour, and they were anxious to discover for themselves the ideological position of

1. Sasaki, Yonjūnen, pp.102-3.

2. Ibid., pp.133-4.

3. Sasaki, Puroretaria Geijutsu Kōza, ii. 190.

Zen'ei-za's members. They therefore proposed that immediately after the first performance there should be a meeting at which Marxist theory would be thoroughly debated. The Zen'ei-za group were exhausted through having spent the whole of the previous night on the train, but the meeting was held notwithstanding. A very hostile report of this discussion, alleging deliberate avoidance of certain questions, appeared in the August issue of Puroretaria Geijutsu,¹ a monthly journal founded in July by Purogei to counter Bungei Sensen. Tani Hajime had been sent to Niigata to report on the proceedings.²

The next day Zen'ei-za moved to a small town near Niigata in an area well known for its farmers' union activities. The censor banned absolutely a projected play concerning farmers, and a short play by Sasaki, previously performed without trouble in Tokyo and the previous night at Niigata, was substituted for it. The chief of the local police station sat on stage during the performance. Sasaki's play had been cut by the censor, but the cut version had been passed for performance. The police chief, however, stopped the play after only a few minutes, and in answer to protests that the play had been cleared for performance, said that the censor had improperly given permission.³ This short, two-day tour was symptomatic of the considerable difficulties left-wing drama was to face during the rest of its history. Even in a place as far away from Tokyo as Niigata attacks of a theoretical nature and police interference had taken place.

Meanwhile another member of the group, who had stayed behind

1. Proletarian Arts.

2. Puroretaria Geijutsu, I. ii (Aug., 1927), 54.

3. Murayama Tomoyoshi, quoted in Sasaki, Fusetsu, pp.136-7.

in Tokyo, resubmitted Prince Hagen to the censor. This time the performance was sanctioned, subject to the by now normal cuts. Preparations went ahead in spite of the lack of actors. The deficiency was made good to some extent by the addition of two new members, Sugimoto Ryōkichi, later one of proletarian drama's most famous actors, and Fujita Mitsuo, who had just resigned as a student of the Zen'ei-za Drama Study Centre.¹ The play was performed in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō from 27 to 29 June, without causing much comment in the left-wing journals. There were two political aspects to the production which may be counted as significant. Sano Seki, the translator, was refused a free ticket; he had previously left Zen'ei-za and was now in Puroretaria Gekijō.² And the last night of the production was in support of Musansha Shimbun, still the unofficial newspaper of the Communist Party, which received one third of the net profits.³

There was much bitterness between Zen'ei-za and those who had formed Puroretaria Gekijō and this is usually explained in political terms. It is clear that the political differences were great, but it is also noticeable that much of the quarrelling centred on the person of Sasaki Takamaru. He had walked out of a discussion held by Bungei Sensen and published in its May issue. On his exit, Senda Koreya remarked "Sasaki just says what suits him all the time".⁴ Sasaki himself complains of being unnecessarily harshly treated by Murayama Tomoyoshi during the rehearsals of Prince Hagen (Murayama had directed it).⁵ In the July issue of Bungei Sensen Sasaki published a stinging

1. Sasaki, Puroretaria Geijutsu Kōza, ii. 190.

2. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, pp.139-40.

3. Rōnō Geijutska Remmei Jōhō, Bungei Sensen, IV.viii (Aug., 1927), 98.

4. Bungei Sensen, IV.v (May, 1927), 126.

5. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.139.

attack on Hisaita Eijirō. Senda, Murayama and Hisaita all differed strongly from Sasaki in their political views, and perhaps this explains the antipathy. Sasaki may also have simply acted badly in Prince Hagen. In books and articles describing this period, however, the impression is given that this antipathy may have been personal, at least in part. There could have been many reasons for this, and politics and personality are not always clearly separable in Japan. Sasaki seems to have had an abrasive personality. He had earlier described his own emotions with words such as 'explosive' when he was writing about drama he did not like and elsewhere he appears almost to pride himself in having provoked a quarrel with Akita Ujaku by refusing to admit him free to a performance of Hyōgen-za. In 1927 he seems to have caused a disproportionate amount of hostility in his opponents.¹

In spite of the bitterness that existed between the two largest proletarian literature federations, Purogei and Rōgei, they were able to act together against the increasingly oppressive censorship system, when in July 1927 the League for the Promotion of a Reform of the Censorship System was founded.² Thirty-eight cultural groups joined this League, including Tsukiji Shōgekijō, which was formally associating itself with an anti-establishment organization for the first time.³ It was perhaps indicative of the exceptionally bad feeling that had been created between the two proletarian drama groups that the drama section (i.e. Puroretaria Gekijō) did not find itself able to offer any words of sympathy to Zen'ei-za in its report on the Niigata tour.⁴

1. For example, Tanemaku Hito, IV. xvii (March, 1923), 219 and Fūsetsu, 88.

2. Ken'etsu Seido Kaisei Kisei Dōmei.

3. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.55.

4. Puroretaria Geijutsu, I.ii (Aug., 1927), 54.

Within one month of the founding of the Censorship Reform League, Puroretaria Gekijō was to undergo worse treatment from the censor than any other group had experienced.

The first production of Puroretaria Gekijō was planned for August 1927, some time after the Purogei/Rōgei split. The delay was partly due to the way in which the drama section of Purogei had split. While Zen'ei-za contained a large number of experienced actors and technicians, most support for Puroretaria Gekijō had come from the inexperienced students of the Zen'ei-za Drama Study Centre.¹ Various formal meetings were held during June, but the most important of them were only attended by about fifteen people.²

The first venture of Puroretaria Gekijō was to be a grand tour of Hokkaidō with four one-act plays. Apart from one written by Hisaita Eijirō all had been performed previously in Tokyo and no difficulties with the Hokkaidō police were anticipated.

In the event, when the group arrived in Hokkaidō, they were informed that a ban had been placed on all their performances throughout the island. The group, about twenty in all, was left without even their fares home.³ They had hoped to earn enough on the tour to pay for their lodgings and their return to Tokyo. A statement deploring the incident was issued by Purogei and published in Puroretaria Geijutsu. There was a significant reference in this statement to the wholehearted way in which Tsukiji Shōgekijō, then itself on tour in Hokkaidō, had joined the protest movement.⁴ In the same issue of Puroretaria Geijutsu the Hakodate branch of the

1. Hisaita Eijirō, Dorama no Shūhen o Yonjūnen, Shingeki, cviii (June, 1962), 34.

2. Puroretaria Geijutsu, I. ii (Aug., 1927), 54.

3. Ibid..

4. Hokkaidō-chō no Bōatsu ni tsuite, Puroretaria Geijutsu, I. iii (Sept., 1927), 2-3.

Rōdō Nōmin-tō pledged its efforts in the struggle against such censorship.¹ The plight of Puroretaria Gekijō was commented on nationally in the newspapers and Puroretaria Geijutsu followed up the protests in its September issue by sympathetic quotations from a wide variety of newspapers.² Donations of money from many sources seemed to indicate widespread sympathy.³ The Censorship Reform League was also active in protesting against the harsh treatment of Puroretaria Gekijō. A protest meeting was organized which was attended by five members of Zen'ei-za, including Sasaki, Murayama, and Nakano, as guest speakers. Murayama was arrested.

Puroretaria Gekijō, having thus briefly caused a national protest against police powers of censorship, left Hokkaidō to return home. In Aomori the authorities allowed them to perform the plays that had been banned in Hokkaidō. The police intervened, however, during the course of the third play and the evening ended in a free-for-all.⁵ The group proceeded to Sendai, where the police publicized the fact that they were not banning the plays and then obstructed the performance as much as they could.⁶ The group finally returned to Tokyo, exhausted after their eventful tour.

Zen'ei-za was at the time in the middle of intensive rehearsals for a Kansai tour. Its activities during August were impressive. A two day tour to Matsumoto took place on the 5th and 6th. On the 8th a general meeting of the drama section of Rōgei had been successfully

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1. Jōen Kinshi ni taishi Waga-tō no Taido o Seimei-su, ibid., 66.
 2. Hakodate Sensen Hōkoku, ibid., I.iv (Oct., 1927), 62-5.
 3. A list of contributors is given in ibid., 76-7.
 4. Rōnō Geijutsu Remmei Jōhō, Bungei Sensen, IV.x (Oct., 1927), 175.
 5. Aomori Susumu (clearly a pseudonym), Aomori Tsūshin, Puroretaria Geijutsu, I.iv., 68-70.
 6. Miyajiro Osamu, Kandai naru Sendai, ibid., 70-72.

held. From the 9th to the 22nd a course on drama was given, with twenty students participating.¹

The first performance of the Kansai tour opened in Osaka on 10 September. Five one-act plays were to be given, the first two written by Murayama. After the first play the police banned the rest of the performance, and Sasaki and twenty-eight others were arrested.²

There had been a sudden intensification of police activity against the left-wing drama groups. It is suggested that this was the result of deliberate policy on the part of the new Tanaka cabinet.³ The first general election under universal manhood suffrage was due in February of the next year, and increasingly severe restrictions were imposed on left-wing political parties and groups during the second half of 1927.

Pressure on the left did not only come from inside Japan. The Comintern was also interested in the developments within the left-wing political movement.

As we have seen, Fukumotoism had dominated the left-wing movement from late 1926. During 1927, when the left-wing parties were girding themselves for the general election to come, Fukumotoism in effect controlled the two most powerful parties, the legal Rōdō Nōmin-tō and the illegal Japan Communist Party. In theoretical matters the only serious challenge to Fukumoto's position came from Yamakawa Hitoshi and his followers, and they had little political power.

The result of Fukumoto's theories had already been fragmentation of any possible unified left-wing effort and in the proletarian

1. Ibid..

2. Ibid..

3. Hisaita Eijirō, *Dorama no Shūhen o Yonjūnen, Shingeki*, cviii (June, 1962), 34.

cultural movement a split had taken place. Indeed 'split before unity' formed a part of Fukumoto's ideas. However pure the theory was, the practical revolutionary effect was disastrous. Bukharin was informed through the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo and a Special Committee of the Comintern was convened to discuss "the Japan problem".¹ In July, the 1927 Thesis was issued and it severely criticized both the Fukumotoist and the Yamakawaist positions. In that Yamakawa was politically weak, the Comintern criticism of him was mainly important in theoretical terms. But the denunciation of Fukumoto was a great shock to the extreme left-wing political movement as a whole.

It was some time before the full details of the Thesis appeared in print, as the most influential left-wing journals, Musansha Shimbun and, in cultural matters, Puroretaria Geijutsu, were in Fukumotoist hands. Bungei Sensen, however, was in a very suitable theoretical position to divulge this information, having survived a split fomented by Fukumotoists and only containing a small minority of Yamakawaists. The September issue of Bungei Sensen carried the first digest of the 1927 Thesis.

Ironically this directly contributed to a further split. Yamakawa sent a vituperative attack on Fukumotoism to Bungei Sensen and asked for it to be published. The non-Yamakawaist, non-Fukumotoist majority on the editorial board decided against publishing it. The Yamakawaist minority protested vehemently and the resulting deadlock was only resolved by the majority resigning from both Bungei Sensen and Rōgei. This happened in November 1927.²

Those who resigned created a new organization for proletarian

1. Robert A. Scalapino, The Japanese Communist Movement, 1920-1966, (California U.P., 1967), p.29.

2. Yamada Seizaburō, Puroretaria Bungaku-shi (Riron-sha, 1954), ii.140-45.

culture, Zen'ei Geijutsu-ka Dōmei (usually abbreviated to Zengei).¹ This meant that there were now three organizations, each trying to control the development of proletarian culture, including drama. Politically at least, however, they could be divided into two camps rather than three. Purogei accepted the 1927 Thesis and relinquished Fukumotoism; it had always been strongly opposed to Yamakawaism. Zengei was composed of former members of Puroren who had opposed Fukumotoism, and they had now formally broken with Yamakawaism. In its statement on the split, Purogei expressed its support for the new league.²

The split occurred on 10 November 1927. This was two days before the opening night of Puroretaria Gekijō's planned November presentation at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō and towards the end of rehearsals for Zen'ei-za's next production. The effect of the Rōgei split was much greater on the latter. Practically all the drama section of Rōgei, that is Zen'ei-za, left the organization. They were all involved in the rehearsals then taking place, which were of an ambitious production of a new play by Murayama Tomoyoshi, Robin Hood. Murayama himself, who was directing, was also one of those who left.

It was decided to go ahead with the production. Only one actress had stayed with Rōgei and it was therefore not unreasonably assumed by the others that Zen'ei-za could be deemed to have left Rōgei in toto. However, two of the leading members of Rōgei called on Sasaki and protested at the continued use of the name Zen'ei-za. Sasaki consulted the members of Zen'ei-za, and they decided to let Rōgei keep the name Zen'ei-za and to appear themselves under the name of Zen'ei Gekijō.³

1. Vanguard Artists' League.

2. Rōno Geijutsuka Remmei no Bunretsun ni kanshite Warera no Taido o Seimei suru, Puroretaria Geijutsu, I. vi (Dec., 1927), 46-7.

3. Vanguard Theatre. Sasaki, Fusetsu, p.156.

Murayama's Robin Hood was a Marxist reworking of the familiar story and was a considerable success. It ran from 18 to 21 November. It provided Purogei with two opportunities to emphasize its friendly feelings towards the new league and in particular its drama section. Passions were running deep and there was a suggestion (Sasaki hints that it might have been put about by Purogei itself) that Rōgei might use violent means to stop the performances. Puroretaria Gekijō members therefore attended the performances as guards to prevent any such trouble. In addition Puroretaria Gekijō proposed a joint discussion meeting after the run had finished. This was held, with representatives of Rōdō Nōmin-tō, Musansha Shimbun and the Communist dominated Hyōgikai present as observers.¹

Hopes of unity and tentative moves towards it were not confined to the drama sections of the two anti-Yamakawaist cultural leagues. 1927 had been a year of constant splitting and consequent weakening of the left-wing movement in general, and this and the imminence of the election were strong motives for unification. In the first issue of Zen'ei,² the organ of Zengei, a leading article by Kurahara Korehito urged unification of the cultural movement.³ It was this article that was to establish Kurahara's position as a leading theorist within the movement.

The journals of Purogei and Zengei carried several articles concerning drama in the early months of 1928. Nakano Shigeharu contributed an article on drama to the January issue of Puroretoria Geijutsu. It was strongly tinged with his previous Fukumotoist thought, but its very appearance indicated that drama was now being more highly regarded within the proletarian cultural movement. In

1. Ibid., pp.157-8.

2. Vanguard.

3. Kurahara Korehito, Musan Kaikyū Geijutsu Undō no Shin-dankai, Zen'ei, I.1 (Jan., 1928), pp.17-25.

the article Nakano states that drama is the art form that expresses most directly all the aspects of human life.¹ Prominent articles on Soviet theatre and on individual performances by left-wing groups in Japan also appeared, and it seemed as though the initial impetus created by Toranku Gekijō in early 1926 had now been restarted.

Zen'ei Gekijō began its 1928 activities with a double bill in Osaka. The two plays performed were by Romain Rolland and Fujimori Seikichi. After this there were a number of small scale joint performances by Zen'ei Gekijō and Puroretaria Gekijō. There was little full scale activity during February, because many of the members of the groups, especially the leaders, were away campaigning for the Rōdō Nōmin-tō in the election. In early March Zen'ei Gekijō went on an ambitious tour in the Kansai region with four plays, three of them written, directed and designed by Murayama Tomoyoshi.

Puroretaria Gekijō and Zen'ei Gekijō were undoubtedly drawing closer together during this period. They even co-operated in the use of the Drama Study Centre, exclusively used by Puroretaria Gekijō since the Puroren split. But there was still antagonism beneath the surface. Murayama has attributed this to ideological differences (with Zen'ei Gekijō putting more emphasis on the participation of the artists themselves in left-wing cultural groups)² and this may be another case in which clashes of personality were expressed in political terms. At the end of February 1928 the beginnings of unity in left-wing drama were present, but the recent period of violent dissension could not be forgotten so quickly.

Rōgei had been left with the name Zen'ei-za and one actress. After the split there were no performances by a group called Zen'ei-za.

1. Nakano Shigeharu, Engeki ni tsuite, Puroretaria Geijutsu, II. i (Jan., 1928), 12.

2. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Murayama Tomoyoshi no Shuki, quoted in Akiba, ii. 663.

Finally, however, in April 1928, a drama group was organized under the auspices of Rōgei, and a touring policy was established. The group was called Bunsen Gekijō (Bunsen was the usual abbreviation of Bungei Sensen) and it existed for several years.¹

Tsukiji Shōgekijō amply fulfilled in 1927 its four promises made at the end of 1926.² Twelve new productions of plays by Japanese playwrights were mounted. Left-wing plays, by both foreign and Japanese playwrights, were prominent. The group, in fact, performed twice, not once, in a large commercial theatre, the Imperial Theatre no less; and twice in Asakusa. And the most ambitious tours ever attempted by the group took place in this year. The active participation of Tsukiji Shōgekijō in the Censorship Reform League was also something which showed great self-confidence.

1927 was Tsukiji Shōgekijō's most active year. Its membership increased, and so many applicants constantly came forward aspiring to membership of the group that regular auditions had to be instituted. The first announcement of these appeared in the house magazine in February.³ In May it found itself able to give simultaneous performances of three plays, one in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō and two on tour. Two plays toured in August and again in November and December. During June and July the actors were giving full-scale performances in the evenings and putting on small-scale, experimental, performances (of different plays) during the afternoons. During what was left of the days they were also energetically performing in one of Japan's first talking films.

There was, however, another side to the apparent success that this activity indicated. Much was made of the April excursion to

1. Ibid., p.660.

2. See above p. 131.

3. Tsukiji Shōgekijō, IV.ii (Feb., 1927), 37.

Asakusa, one of Tokyo's main entertainment districts, but it seems that the ordinary people who frequented Asakusa did not take advantage of the shingeki that was offered to them. The majority of those in the Asakusa audiences were regular patrons of Tsukiji Shōgekijō who had travelled to Asakusa to see the group.¹ In addition one of the three plays performed simultaneously in May was a failure. A rather high-spirited Osaka audience did not take kindly to the subtleties of Mazaud's comedy.²

The articles in Tsukiji Shōgekijō reveal the continuing pressure on the group of the left-wing movement. In the January issue Kitamura Kihachi wrote an article in which he tried at length to justify Tsukiji Shōgekijō's only partial progressivism on commercial grounds (there would not be enough left-wing plays to fill the Tsukiji repertory). The article contains many sops to left-wing readers and critics of the group. For example, 'The more significant a drama movement is to be, the more unsatisfactory it is for it simply to perform plays'.³ Shiomi Yō in the April issue writes a chatty article whose content perhaps betrays more than it seems. He relates how he was asked the same question by a friend three times over a period of months. The question was why he acted. The first time he answered: "For the sake of art". The second time he had no answer and the third time he simply said: "I do not know".⁴ In 1927 it was becoming very difficult for anyone aspiring to a shingeki career to say that it was for the sake of art that he or she wished to act. The appeal of Zen'ei-za and Puroretaria Gekijō to the younger members of Tsukiji Shōgekijō was strong. It is said that during October and November a

1. Mizushima, Osana Kaoru, pp.173-4.

2. Ibid., p.175.

3. Kitamura Kihachi, Daiyon-me no Haru ni, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, IV.i (Jan., 1927), 5.

4. Shiomi Yō, Aru Tomo no Hanashi, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, IV.iv (April, 1927), 10-12.

second clandestine study society was formed by a dissatisfied group within Tsukiji Shōgekijō who established links with Zen'ei-za.¹

Pressure did not only come from the left. The financial problems of the group continued and even intensified in 1927. The August issue of the house magazine contained a shock report which revealed that Tsukiji Shōgekijō's average audiences in the period since the start of its activities had been smaller than had been generally believed by the company. Out of 63 productions only fourteen had achieved average audiences of over 50% capacity, and more than half of the remainder attracted less than 200 people (the theatre held 497).² The theatre was running at a continuous monthly loss of between ¥1500 and ¥2500, made good by Hijikata out of his own money. The landlord of the site on which Tsukiji Shōgekijō stood was demanding a higher rent and he was insistent enough to begin legal proceedings towards the end of the year.³

The artistic difference Hijikata had with Osanai and the financial anxiety finally proved too much for him, and in a committee meeting in the green room of the Imperial Theatre, on 28 October 1927, Hijikata announced his wish to resign as a member of the committee. He demanded that by the end of the year a plan for solving the financial difficulties should be presented. If he agreed with it, he would continue to give money; if he did not, he would formally resign.⁴

Osanai, together with Akita Ujaku and the famous translator of Russian literature, Yonekawa Masao, had been invited to the Soviet

1. Ozaki and Ibaraki, Hijikata Yoshi, p.124.

2. Chihaya Masahiro, Sannenkan o Kaerimite, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, IV.viii (Aug., 1927), 32-5.

3. Ozaki and Ibaraki, op.cit., pp.123-5.

4. Kubo Sakae, Osanai Kaoru (Kadokawa Shinsho, 1955), p.165.

Union for the celebrations of the 10th Anniversary of the revolution. He should have been there by the time of this meeting - the others had left before. These problems within Tsukiji Shōgekijō had detained him and he left Japan, an unhappy man, a few days after the meeting. He knew he would return to find the group rent by internal dissension.

Such was Tsukiji Shōgekijō's disarray at the end of 1927 that it seemed the brightest future was waiting for left-wing shingeki. Shingeki Kyōkai was still active, but after the failure of the May 1927 production, it lost the patronage of Engeki Shinchō. Thereafter each successive production depended on whether money could be raised. Engeki Shinchō itself ceased publication in August because of financial difficulties. Kokoro-za, now under the control of the artistic faction after Murayama's resignation, had only performed once more during the year.

The left-wing groups, both Zen'ei Gekijō and Puroretaria Gekijō, had suffered heavily at the hands of the censor. In early 1928 it became even more difficult for them to carry on what they regarded as their normal activities. In spite of these unfavourable circumstances, the future held promise. The violent ideological quarrels were over, the election was a potent unifying factor and suitable plays were being written in increasing numbers. In the first two months of 1928 left-wing actors had good reason to hope that, provided a workable accommodation could be made with the censor or his power be curbed in some way, their art might mature into the new drama to which they were dedicating themselves.

CHAPTER 4

Plays and Playwrights, 1926-1928

The Introduction and the first three chapters of this thesis have been mainly concerned with giving an account of the personalities and groups involved in the development of shingeki. The emphasis has been on theatre history rather than drama criticism. The reasons for this have been several. Hundreds of shingeki plays were written during the Meiji and Taishō periods, but because there were few opportunities for them to be performed by shingeki actors or to be instrumental in creating a widely-recognized new cultural genre, they tended to remain literary experiments. When a shingeki group was formed which exercised enough authority in literary and intellectual circles to establish shingeki firmly, Japanese plays were specifically excluded from its repertory. Although a few plays were written for the early anarchist and socialist groups, there was little continuity between the groups themselves, and the left-wing theatre people of succeeding years were more affected by their existence and activities than by the original plays they inspired.

The preceding paragraph is based on the assumption that plays, to merit criticism, have to establish themselves in the culture in which they appear. With only a few exceptions, Japanese shingeki plays of the Taishō period did not do this. In the West there have been several examples of playwrights who were not accepted or even performed in their time and who became famous later. Their plays, even the earlier unperformed ones, are deemed worthy of the attention of literary and dramatic historians. In Japan, however, there have been almost no examples of revivals of Taishō plays in the post-war period by the established shingeki groups and no shingeki playwright of the Taishō era has been re-discovered.

However, plays written by several shingeki playwrights during the first years of the Shōwa period have been revived and discussion of their work has appeared in books that are primarily theatre histories. The reasons for the revivals and for this discussion may not have been entirely dramatic; it is possible to imagine other reasons, involving political ideology, nostalgia, reverence, etc.. But the fact that certain plays from this period have been revived by the major post-war shingeki groups has ensured that they are regarded as landmarks in shingeki history.

This chapter and Chapter 6 will be concerned with plays which were written by Japanese playwrights and performed by the major shingeki groups between 1926 and 1930. Major shingeki groups are those which drew most attention from contemporary Japanese interested in modern literature and culture and from subsequent theatre historians. Not all of the plays considered will have been written by left-wing playwrights. From 1926, however, almost all shingeki performances must have been the result of work by at least some, and in most cases many, theatre artists of convinced left-wing political ideas.

Hardly any modern Japanese plays have been translated into English, and no proletarian drama plays have been translated into any language except Russian. For this reason it seems necessary to preface comments on each of the plays considered here with a short résumé of the plot. There is added justification for this in the case of the proletarian plays, as the content of such plays in general and its mode of treatment according to Marxist theory were regarded with great importance by the playwrights, critics and audiences. These résumés will be as short as is consistent with the subsequent critical assessment.

Criticism of the plays will be mainly historical. After the description of the plot and subject matter, contemporary and later

critical comments of Japanese writers will be mentioned. In the case of the left-wing plays the political ideology of the play will then be discussed, as it was by this that playwrights were primarily judged by those who provided theoretical guidance to the proletarian literary movement within which the playwrights themselves actively wished to become accepted. Comments on technical aspects of the play will follow.

The object of this criticism will be to assess the development of each playwright ideologically within the proletarian literary movement and technically within the context of shingeki. In most cases these two aspects are related to each other, and the only non-historical, evaluative statements that will be made will be on the apparent success or failure of this relation. Independent critical assessment of Japanese shingeki plays, using the dramatic criteria familiar in the West, presents considerable problems and has been kept to a minimum in these chapters. It is possible for a book on Western drama to base its criticisms of widely differing playwrights on certain common assumptions about the emotional reactions of both actors and audience to different situations in the plays. It is, however, clear from the experience of the first two years of Tsukiji Shōgekijō that the same assumptions cannot be made about Japanese modern drama of the time. The emotional effect of the plays on the audiences of the time could probably only be assessed (apart from descriptions of audience reaction, which tended to be very general) on the basis of an anthropological and psychological study of the Japanese, and this is beyond the scope of this thesis. The problem is illustrated by the first play considered here. Political effect is more easily assessed, provided that the play is performed in 'political' circumstances, for example, to audiences of workers or farmers

engaged in disputes. Here a certain common interest can be assumed. In general, however, statements about plays have been confined to historical, technical or ideological aspects, and evaluations have been avoided as requiring a separate study.

The list of playwrights who had plays performed by the major shingeki groups between 1926 and 1928 is very varied. It included writers who had built up reputations as literary figures during the Taishō period. Some had always been more interested in drama, others were primarily novelists. Some were regarded as progressive during this time, and others conservative; of the conservatives, some remained so, and others turned to the left-wing literary movement. The list also included young writers, whose first creative efforts were directed towards revolutionary ends.

The main link that the shingeki of these years had with earlier Taishō literature was through Osanai Kaoru, Mushakōji Saneatsu and Nakamura Kichizō. In spite of his reputation as a playwright of social drama, Nakamura only had one play produced in this period, Oshio Heihachirō, by Tsukiji Shōgekijō in November 1926. He was by now over-shadowed as a playwright by Mushakōji Saneatsu, who saw five of his plays on the stage during this two-year period.

Four new plays by Mushakōji were performed by Tsukiji Shōgekijō, and one of them, Aiyoku,¹ caused a sensation. Mushakōji also had one play, a short, unexciting comedy, performed by Toranku Gekijō. Aiyoku was the second Japanese play to be performed by Tsukiji Shōgekijō, but its influence was far greater than the first, Tsubouchi's En no Gyōja, the production of which had failed to effect a reconciliation between the two generations of shingeki as represented by Tsubouchi and Osanai.

1. Passion.

Masamune Hakucho referred to Aiyoku as 'literature of world standard'¹ and without exception critical response to the play and the production was enthusiastic.

The opening scene of Aiyoku² takes place in the studio of a hunchback artist, Eiji, and through the conversation he has with a friend, Onodera, we learn that Eiji has lost someone very dear. His elder brother, Shin'ichi, a successful actor on whom Eiji has to depend financially, enters and asks where Eiji's wife, Chiyoko, is. Eiji is suspicious of the relationship between her and Shin'ichi. He is jealous and at various points during the rest of the scene expresses the wish to murder either Shin'ichi or Chiyoko or both. In the next scene Eiji shows himself to be obsessively concerned with the idea of murder. Both Eiji and Chiyoko have loveable and hateful sides to their characters, and Eiji would like to be able to murder the hateful parts. The last scene in the first act shows a quite different situation, a happy and contented Eiji, his work going well and a relaxed Chiyoko. They joke together at length and the act ends with Eiji joking about murdering Chiyoko. The second act takes place in Onodera's house, to which Shin'ichi brings a letter from Chiyoko describing her fear for her life (Eiji has taken to sharpening a short sword in the middle of the night). Shin'ichi leaves, and Eiji comes.

1. Quoted in Yamamoto Jirō, Kaisetsu in Itō Sei et al. ed., Gendai Nihon Gikyoku Senshū (Hakusui-sha, 1955-6), iii. 456. Referred to below as Gendai Nihon Gikyoku Senshū.
Masamune Hakucho. Born 1879. Novelist. Graduated from literature department of Waseda, where he had been pupil of Shimamura Hōgetsu. Became known as writer of naturalist novels. From 1924 began to publish plays. Gendai Nihon Bungaku Daijiten, pp.1066-1071.

2. The text used is Gendai Nihon Gikyoku Senshū, iii. 85-134.

He describes how he startled Shin'ichi in his room by saying a Chinese trunk he had recently bought contained the body of Chiyoko. He explains his new dilemma. During the past few days he has conceived an inordinate passion for Chiyoko and he is terrified she may try to run away again, as she had once before (when it had not worried him unduly). One solution might be to kill either her or Shin'ichi, but he could not bear to be without either of them. Act III has three short scenes. In the first Eiji is guarding Chiyoko night and day, and an attempt by her to escape is foiled unwittingly by Onodera; in the second, Eiji, inspired by an exhibition of Chinese paintings, decides on a painting trip, alone, to the mountains; in the third, set in the evening, Shin'ichi agrees to take Chiyoko away the next morning, Eiji is listening outside, enters as Shin'ichi goes, and then strangles Chiyoko. The act ends with him madly trying to revive her by artificial respiration. In Act IV, after a scene in which Eiji (sitting on the Chinese trunk) deludes Shin'ichi into accepting that he has not murdered Chiyoko, Eiji is haunted to eventual collapse by the ghost of Chiyoko. Onodera and Shin'ichi enter and find her corpse, which is carried out by Shin'ichi vowing he will try to save his brother. Eiji comes round, Onodera promises he will not cast him off, and the play ends as Eiji says 'Thank you'.

The critics had little but praise for the play. Masumune Hakucho thought it the best of Mushakōji's plays. Another critic spoke of 'elaborate artistic workmanship in the dialogue' and Kikuchi Hiroshi felt how much Mushakōji had progressed as a playwright.¹

1. Ibid., 456.

Masamune also commented on how using only simple words the playwright had succeeded in reaching the pith of reality. Technically the play was generally considered very good and it appears that in performance the technical qualities of the play were enhanced by the imaginative scenery and lighting.¹

Most attention was paid to the way in which the passion was treated. Both Sekiguchi Jirō² and later Yamamoto Jirō³ refer approvingly to the frankness and vividness with which the subject was treated. And both Masamune and Yamamoto comment on how it differed from Mushakōji's previous plays. They had been characterized by a simple, artless brightness; this play is dark; Hirotsu Kazuo remarked on its great intensity and depth, and on how the various ideas of Mushakōji which had been scattered in his previous plays had all been crystallized in Aiyoku.⁴

The ideas which Mushakōji is said to have put forward in his plays were those for which he and the literary group he founded have since become famous. The group was called the Shirakaba-ha,⁵ from the name of the magazine to which its members contributed, first published in 1910. The group was mainly aristocratic, the exception being Arishima Takeo, who was from a samurai family. Although the group was ideologically and in personality quite diverse, it maintained its cohesion through a few core ideas which were typically aristocratic.

They believed man was good and capable of great spiritual

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1. Hikaru Nobuyuki, La Composition, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, III. viii (Sept., 1926), 53-5.
 2. Engeki Shinchō (Aug. 1926), quoted in Yamamoto Yasue Shiryō-hen, p.39.
 3. Gendai Nihon Gikyoku Senshū, iii. 455.
 4. Ibid., 456.
 5. White Birch Group.

improvement. This was essentially a process within the individual, who ignored the existence of those round him. The means of spiritual fulfilment was 'sensitivity and feeling', which have been shown to be deeply Japanese concepts.¹ Aestheticism was to be cultivated and art was man's highest activity. It was not by a man's acts but by his motives that he should be judged.

These ideas are certainly present in Aiyoku. Eiji is motivated by his ambition for his art, which he is determined will 'become something'.² He is prepared to ignore others for the sake of this art. In several places Eiji specifically formulates Shirakaba ideas. 'One's own freedom comes from oneself - I mean within the small compass allowed to one. I intend to make myself into a first rate human being'. (I.i.) 'I am a human being who has his own work, and I therefore do not worry about other things'. (I.ii.)

It is hard, however, to agree with Hirotsu Kazuo that this play represents a crystallization of ideas only sporadically put forward before by Mushakōji. The capacity of man to work out his own salvation is a constant theme of Ningen Banzai (1922)³ and an individual's tenacity in striving to reach his goal of self-betterment would seem to be more consistently depicted in Sono Imōto (1915).⁴

But the crystallization which Hirotsu saw only emphasizes the problems involved in a critical assessment of a modern Japanese play. Mushakoji suggested two titles for the play. He could not decide between them and left it to the publishers (Kaizō-sha) to select the more appropriate.⁵ The two titles were Aiyoku and Shiyaku, Passion

1. Arima Tatsuo, The Failure of Freedom (Harvard U.P., 1969), pp. 113-5.

2. Mono ni naru. This phrase occurs frequently in the play.

3. Hurrah for Man.

4. His (Younger) Sister.

5. Gendai Nihon Gikyoku Senshū, iii. 455.

and Persistence. A Westerner would perhaps not have suggested either title. Eiji's passion for Chiyoko is not obvious in any Western sense and it might even not be clear to a Westerner that the murder was a crime de coeur. Given the totally evil character of Eiji, the motives for the crime could have been much more complex. Similarly it would be difficult for a Westerner to see much tenacity of purpose in Eiji. He would be much more impressed by that of Hiroji in Sono Imoto.

Technically he would probably also prefer the earlier play. Both start with an Ibsenesque scene, where an existing situation is revealed in a controlled and dramatic way. But Sono Imoto is much more compact in its plot and more considered in the development of the emotions it shows.

Both plays would be criticized for long static passages, where the characters hold discussions on matters involving their lives and where there is no obvious scope for action.

Japanese audiences, however, would be conditioned to this. There are frequent static scenes in kabuki, where two or more characters sit facing each other immobile, for long periods. Kabuki dialogue is delivered slowly, moreover, and it is full of honorifics. Time is not an important factor for the kabuki audience. Similarly an audience conditioned to kabuki would not consider the looseness of the construction of Aiyoku something to be criticized.

Technically the conventions of kabuki would have caused a Japanese audience to accept aspects of Aiyoku which might be criticized adversely by a Western critic. But more important, the whole emphasis of the play would have been differently seen by such a Japanese audience. Eiji is a villain, an evil character and in his

utterances (about murdering his brother and his wife) he is so completely beyond grace that to a Westerner neither his passion nor his tenacity could possibly excuse him. Historically, however, the Japanese have not been concerned with the great moral issues of good and evil which have exercised Western philosophers and writers. Eiji is not morally depraved, or calculatingly evil (as Richard III, also a hunchback). Eiji, as many kabuki villains, is outside the pale of normal society (he reviles his elder brother, and he is a hunchback) and henceforth there are no shades of evil, or if there are, they do not matter. Any new enormity is accepted without question.

Aiyoku presents in an acute form, technically and psychologically, the critical problems that have been mentioned several times above. A Westerner would find pathos in Chiyoko and probably consider the play rather unsatisfactorily to revolve around her. To the Japanese playwright, critics and audiences, Eiji is the central character, whereas a Westerner would find it difficult to accept him.

Aiyoku was one of the only two Japanese plays to cause a sensation at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō between the first presentation of a play written in Japan, in June 1926, until the beginning of 1928. It shows clearly the cultural differences that complicate a critical assessment based on literary criteria and it embodies the differences in theatrical convention that hinder a statement to the effect that it is good or great drama. Aiyoku can also be seen as a play which brings onto the stage the ideology of its playwright.

All these characteristics can be seen in the work of the second playwright who had the satisfaction of seeing a play of his achieve fame in this period - Fujimori Seikichi. Mushakōji had made no concessions to the fashionable socialism of the mid-twenties; Fujimori

espoused it himself and became the only established Taishō writer to be accepted by and successful among the ascendant proletarians of the early Shōwa period. Indeed between 1928 and 1934 he held some of the highest official positions within the proletarian literary and cultural movement.

Born to a wealthy merchant family in Nagano in 1892, Fujimori's formative years were spent in a house which encouraged visits from artistic and literary people. When he was three, his mother was driven to suicide by his father's dissipation and her mother-in-law's tyranny. Fujimori was so brilliant at school that he was able to enter the First Higher School without taking the entrance examination. He was more interested in literature and philosophy than the German law his father ordered him to study. He entered the German Literature Department of the Imperial University, and while still there, wrote his first novel. This was in 1916 and he was immediately recognized as a promising writer. His literary career then began to follow what was by now a standard course for young writers - a seat on the controlling committee of a distinguished university journal and being featured in a leading literary magazine as a new writer to watch. He was deflected, however, from what might have been fame as a writer of sensitive psychological novels by an interest in socialism brought about by Ōsugi Sakae's journal Kindai Shisō. He was one of the writers who joined the Socialist League in 1920, and he subsequently began to take an active interest in the labour movement. In 1924 he attracted (unwillingly) much journalistic attention by taking various labouring jobs - in a soap factory, spinning mill, etc.. He

wrote up his experiences into a collection of essays entitled Ōkami e!¹ Fujimori's next literary work was his first play.²

His first work, Nami,³ published at his own expense in 1916, has been taken to embody the seeds of all his later development as a creative writer, in particular his interest in socialism. It is an account of a trip which a young student, Eiji, took to the island of Ōshima immediately after graduating from high school. It tells of his relations there with an inn girl, with whom he falls in love, and other members of the inn staff. He is an idealist who, laden with inner cares, goes to the island to find a new life and new values. His idealism clashes with the simple, natural force of the island's life. The idealism of the novel links Fujimori with many other writers of the period, including Shirakaba-ha. He was one of a group of sensitive writers at the Imperial University interested in the same problems as Shirakaba-ha but different from the latter in social background. The depiction of the life of the island is said to look forward to Fujimori's later concern with social problems.⁴ It does not have the pseudo-scientific coldness of the Naturalists; it does have a sensitive awareness of common life and an appreciation of its simple power.

The character of Eiji remained basically unchanged between the first edition of this novel in 1914 and the second in 1920, the year when Fujimori joined the Socialist League. Fujimori admits that Nami

1. To the Wolves. This title was in reference to Jack London's The Call of the Wild, which was being much read and discussed at the time.

2. This biographical material is taken from Gendai Nihon Bungaku Daijiten, pp.970-73.

3. Waves. Later republished in 1920 with the new title Wakaki Hi no Nayami (Cares of Youth), and some textual alterations.

4. Gendai Nihon Bungaku Daijiten, p.972.

was an account of a trip that he took,¹ and there seems no doubt that the novel related his experiences. If Eiji is Fujimori, one can see why his idealism should have persisted well into his socialist period. He can be seen as the kind of person who might be attracted to socialism out of a compassionate interest in unfortunate fellows. This would partly explain why obvious references to socialist thought are few in works published after he joined the Socialist League. It is suggested that although he had embraced socialism as an ideology, he spent the first few years of the 1920s reflecting on how his socialism should appear in his literary works.²

Ōkami e may have been intended to provide the answer to this problem. Fujimori was perhaps more affected than most other progressive writers of the time by an article published in 1922 by his closest friend Arishima Takeo. The title was Sengen Hitotsu³ and in it Arishima had stated that intellectuals were outside the working class and could not contribute anything to it. Fujimori wanted to succeed where Arishima had failed and he developed the idea that the true artist was one who understood the proletarian spirit. It is possible that it was this idea which prompted him to live a worker's life rather than an involvement in the left-wing political or labour movement.⁴ The absence of any substantial articles by him in either Tanemaku Hito or Bungei Sensen would corroborate this. Temperamentally Fujimori may have inclined towards a type of humanitarian socialism, but his

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1. Fujimori Sekichi, Jisaku no Omoide to Kiroku, in Gendai Nihon Bungaku Zenshū (Kaizō-sha, 1926-31), xlvii. 497.
 2. Kimura Takeshi, Fujimori Seikichi no Hito to Sakuhin, in Gendai Nihon Bungaku Zenshū (Chikuma Shobō, 1957), lxxvii. 405.
 3. A Declaration.
 4. Kunioka Akikazu, Fujimori Seikichi - Rōdō Taiken no Imi, Nihon Bungaku, XVIII. 1 (Jan., 1969), 56-68.

overriding concern was with his own status as an artist.¹

The title of the ^{first} play was Haritsuke Mozaemon² and it was completed in March 1926. It was performed in that year by Inoue Masao's³ shimpa company. Only twelve lines were cut by the censor.⁴ A projected performance two years later, after Fujimori had achieved fame as a left-wing playwright, was banned in its entirety.⁵

The play is set in the Tokugawa period, at the end of the 17th century. The opening scene is the village in which Mozaemon, a farmer, lives - part of the domain of a lord who is exploiting the farmers by not compensating them for corvée labour. A child, the foster child of Mozaemon and his wife, is brutally killed on stage by the lord. The second act is a meeting of representatives from various villages in the area, who decide that the only way to obtain redress for their grievances is an uprising. Mozaemon stops them, and offers instead to present a petition directly to the lord (an offence entailing severe punishment). Act III, Scene 1, shows the attempt, in fact prevented, to present the appeal, and the arrest of Mozaemon who is finally released on a plea of insanity. Scene 2 is set in the palace of an Imperial Prince into which Mozaemon has succeeded in infiltrating a document listing the farmers' grievances. The Prince passes the matter on to the shogun. In the fourth act the shogun's court tries and sentences the lord concerned. But Mozaemon has broken

1. Ibid.

2. Mozaemon Crucified.

3. Born 1881. Became a shimpa actor in spite of the opposition of his family. Tiring of shimpa, he acted in a shingeki production in 1910, but it was a failure and he returned to shimpa. Appeared in several productions of new shimpa plays in 1919 and 1920 in which his characterization was highly acclaimed. Engeki Hyakka Daijiten, i. 198-9.

4. Suzuki Zentarō, Haritsuke Mozaemon no Enshutsu ni tsuite, in Haritsuke Mozaemon (Shinchō-sha, 1926), p.127. This is the text used in the summary which follows. Referred to below as Haritsuke Mozaemon (1926).

5. See below, p. 206.

the social code and the last act opens with his friends standing around the place of execution waiting for him and his wife to be led on by their guards. As they are crucified, the farmers begin to riot, but Mozaemon stops them, saying he is content that his task was accomplished. The final death stabs are given, and immediately the shogun's pardon is brought. The farmers begin to riot again, but are this time stopped by a farmer who says it is an insult to Mozaemon's death. The play ends as they all swear to honour Mozaemon's memory and not let his sacrifice be in vain.

Fujimori describes how the idea for the play came from a conversation he had had with someone who was studying the history of farmers' movements. He had burned with indignation when told of the oppressive behaviour of the local lord concerned. While he was writing the first act, the memory of a strike by workers that had happened sometime previously was constantly in his mind.¹

The play was performed at the Shōchiku-za, one of the several large theatres in Tokyo which specialized in shimpa and other types of commercial entertainment. The director was Suzuki Zentarō, one of the former leaders of Kenkyū-za, a group which in the mid-Taishō period had hovered between shingeki and the commercial theatre. His remarks on the production of Haritsuke Mozaemon are short, but revealing. He first went with his stage designer to the area in which the play was set, including the actual locations of various incidents such as the execution. His immediate reaction was to eschew the conventional realism-in-detail of shimpa and to consider that his production should communicate the essential spirit of the play. His designer agreed and submitted appropriate designs. As rehearsals progressed, however,

1. Jisaku no Omoide to Kiroku, p.498.

Suzuki felt that he would have to return to exactly the type of realism he had originally rejected. He gives no detailed reasons for this, only that without 'unity' the production could not go on.¹

In spite of its subject matter and the feelings that prompted Fujimori to write it, Haritsuke Mozaemon is closer to shimpa and kabuki in its technical aspects than either of the two Mushakōji plays which have been discussed here. It treats a succession of historical events in full: even the oppressive corvée system, while not actually depicted, is described in the farmers' meeting in great detail. The action takes place over eight years. Climaxes are artificially created in the shimpa style: for instance, at the same farmers' meeting Mozaemon is silent for an unnaturally long time before intervening with his own plan, around which from the beginning the audience know the play will revolve. The hanamichi is specifically mentioned in the stage directions. The familiar presence of natural phenomena is also marked: an owl hoots in the woods as the farmers end their meeting; Mozaemon is crucified with the evening sun shining on his face and the sound of rippling water from a nearby stream; as the farmers pledge their resolution at the end of the play, the moon rises and the stream is heard again.

Haritsuke Mozaemon is referred to by historians of the left-wing literary movement as the first proletarian play. In the political beliefs of its playwright, in the motives with which it was written, and in its subject matter, it can be seen to have an important place in the development of left-wing drama. But the audiences to which it played might not have perceived the intended differences between Mozaemon and other popular heroes of shimpa, such as Shimizu

1. Haritsuke Mozaemon no Enshutsu in tsuite, pp.125-6.

Jirochō. And in its technical aspects Haritsuke Mozaemon was much more suited to the Shōchiku-za than to the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, already by this time the home of progressive drama in Japan.

Although Haritsuke Mozaemon was Fujimori's maiden work as a playwright, another play had simultaneously been accepted for publication by a different magazine. It was also at this time, the spring and early summer of 1926, that he was making his first contribution to the theory of proletarian literature in an article which appeared in parts in a symposia series, Shakai Mondai Kōza,¹ published by Shinchō-sha (who were also the publishers of Haritsuke Mozaemon).

The play was Gisei² and it concerned the last months of the life of Arishima Takeo, who had been a close friend of Fujimori. It traced the process by which Arishima (called in the play Ishikawa) came to decide to hand over his lands to his tenants, his doubts on doing so, and his love affair with a married woman reporter which could only lead to a double suicide.

Just as Haritsuke Mozaemon had been immediately put on the stage by Inoue Masao's company, so Gisei was quickly taken up by Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Unlike the former play, however, Gisei suffered extensively at the hands of the censor. The issue of Kaizō in which it was to have been published was banned and the Tsukiji production was also forbidden after rehearsals were well under way.³ In editions of the text published as late as 1930 two complete acts of this five act play were omitted.

Fujimori himself protested against the ban, the reasons for which were given as depiction of living people and threat to public peace. The idea for the play had come to him during his period of

1. Symposia on Social Problems.

2. Sacrifice.

3. Fujimori Seikichi Nempu, in Gendai Nihon Bungaku Zenshū (Shikuma Shobō, 1953-), lxxvii.422.

manual labour the year before and he comments on how such labour fostered a dramatic impulse in him. He admits himself to be well satisfied that his first two plays have caused such a sensation and have served to show the reactionary world of letters that proletarian literature is now recovering after the collapse at the time of the Earthquake.¹

Before the ban on the Tsukiji production was announced, Osanai Kaoru had written an appreciation of it for a book published in July 1926, which contained a severely censored version together with Haritsuke Mozaemon. Osanai himself comments on how conventional Haritsuke Mozaemon was in technique, though he acknowledges the didactic nature of the subject matter. He was 'unusually surprised at (Fujimori's) mastery of traditional Japanese playwriting technique'. But Gisei was something different; here he was surprised at Fujimori's mastery of the methods of modern Western drama. Gisei was a play which was not coldly Naturalistic, but warmly human; a play about the agonies of the newly awakened bourgeois intelligentsia.²

It would be difficult to agree with Osanai that Fujimori is in Gisei displaying mastery of Western playwriting technique. It is true that the characterization is very detailed. In particular the audience would have been given an insight into a tortured intellectual's mind in a sustained dramatic form that was rare at the time. But the echoes of shimpa and even in places kabuki are still too strong to be ignored. The handkerchief recognition in Act II and the transition to the rooftop scene in Act V are just two examples of how Fujimori was clearly writing with a commercial theatre in mind.

One can certainly agree with Osanai that Gisei concerns the

1. Jisaku no Omoide to Kiroku, p.498.

2. Osanai Kaoru, 'Gisei' ni tsuite, in Haritsuke Mozaemon (1926), pp.301-3.

agonies of the bourgeois intelligentsia. All the main ideas for which Arishima Takeo became famous are expounded on stage - the impossibility of intellectuals becoming proletarians, the hopelessness of a new idealism in the cruel present, etc.. The discussion of ideas important to intellectual playwrights and intellectual audiences has been one of the factors inhibiting the growth of a modern Japanese drama which would be recognized internationally. It is important to realize that such discussions on stage are deeply dramatic and involving to a certain section of Japanese society. In many plays, however, one suspects that the static nature of such discussions has simply substituted for the conventional static passages of kabuki or shimpa, which are supposed to be in a different dramatic tradition. The strength of Gisei seems to be in the way in which Fujimori has given most of the discussion passages some natural movement of their own. While this does not entitle him to be considered as a master of Western dramatic technique, he moved closer to it than many of his contemporaries.

The Marxist critic Yamada Seizaburō found fault with both Haritsuke Mozaemon and Gisei. He considered Hakushu shinai Otoko¹ Fujimori's first proletarian work.² This was published much later, in June 1927, and another play had been written in the interval. This tiny, two page, work contains a flash of sympathy between two people at a May Day speech meeting that could only have come from Fujimori's experience of a worker's life. Although Gisei is said by Fujimori to have been nurtured during that period and Haritsuke Mozaemon to have been born from his indignation, neither is as convincing a social protest as Hakushu shinai Otoko. The scale of

1. The Man who did not Clap.

2. Yamada, Puroretaria Bungaku-shi, ii. 63.

full length left-wing drama was too big for Fujimori at this time.

It seems he was not yet ready for theoretical work either. Histories of the proletarian literary movement fail to mention the long article entitled Musan Kaikyū Bungei-ron,¹ which he published in Shakai Mondai Kōza.²

This article discusses literature and art from two points of view, in its essential character and as a phenomenon. The essential character of literature and art is less affected by the economic base than any other of the components of the superstructure. It is thus like sex, part of man's innate creative instinct. Therefore the arts must be accorded more freedom than other parts of the social superstructure. As a phenomenon, however, the arts are the most quickly influenced of all by the economic base. The writer and the artist perceive changes in the underlying relations of society at least partly intuitively, that is, quicker than, for example, the sociologist who relies on the slower processes of reason. The article then proceeds to discuss the various theories about proletarian literature already existing.

It is difficult to grant this article any independent merit. With liberal quotations from Lunacharsky and Trotsky (whose Literature and Revolution he both criticizes and uses to support his case), Fujimori seems to be trying to give theoretical approval to his own position as a writer in the proletarian literary movement. The writer must be free; his literature is the most important element of the superstructure; proletarian literature is not literature which only describes the lives of workers; proletarian literature does not need to be written by working class writers - the fundamental requirement

1. Theory of Proletarian Class Literature and Arts.

2. Shakai Mondai Kōza, ii, iii and iv (Shinchō-sha, Mar., Ap. and May, 1926).

is a proletarian spirit, which many intellectuals have; proletarian literature is not only propaganda, nor is its style confined to Expressionism; Trotsky had said that by definition proletarian literature could not exist, but he was wrong because he relied too much on political arguments; of course proletarian literature is a possibility. Fujimori and his literature satisfy all these conditions, which are by no means entirely incorporated into his argument.

The total lack of contemporary or historical interest in Musan Kaikyū no Bungei-ron is significant. Articles of this length were not common in 1926 and some of the ideas were those which later appeared in theoretical works which became famous. The fact that most of this article was derivative need not have affected its reputation. Unification of the movement had been achieved under Puroren and the time was ripe for leadership in the theory of left-wing literature. Fujimori, however, was well-known as a writer. He had not published any theoretical material previously and he had never become a member of Bungei Sensen. He was not an activist within the movement and it seems likely that he may have been ignored for this reason.

Bungei Sensen did not mention Fujimori's articles. Its most regular contributor of articles on proletarian literary theory was at this time Senda Koreya of the Marugei group. Much interest was shown by the magazine in Upton Sinclair and the July issue contained two articles about him and a translation of The Second Story Man.

The Second Story Man was to become the most frequently performed left-wing play over the next six years. This short play, involving a confrontation between a company lawyer, a worker whose life he has ruined, and his wife, who turns against him, seems to have been mild enough not to offend the censor and progressive enough to be

acceptable to proletarian groups. Politically it fell far short of the authoritative theoretical statements of the few months after it first appeared in translation, but it illustrates the compromise that had to be accepted if left-wing drama was to be performed at all.

It was during the summer and early autumn of 1926, when practical left-wing theatre activity was almost non-existent, that the theatrical and theoretical basis for left-wing drama was established. Foreign playwrights such as Upton Sinclair, Wittfogel, Lunarcharsky and Ivanov were translated, and it was to them as active theatre people that Japanese left-wing playwrights looked for dramatic inspiration; other masters had also to be followed, however, and they were in only a very few cases practical men of the theatre. These were the theorists of the proletarian cultural movement, now with an organization on which the left-wing playwrights had to depend if they wished to see their plays performed in any circumstances that would seem satisfactory. In addition, the censor, to some extent predictable, was always in the background.

Sasaki lists the foreign playwrights and plays which exerted a great influence on those interested in left-wing drama in 1926.¹ The playwrights were the four mentioned above. A collection of their plays had appeared in a publication entitled Shakai Bungei Sōsho,² which appeared in May 1926, and further translations appeared in Bungei Sensen and other magazines throughout the year. It has been mentioned that The Second Story Man was performed frequently. So was Prince Hagen, published in Shakai Bungei Sōsho. Lunacharsky's

1. Sasaki Fūsetsu, p.113.

2. A Library of Social Literature.

Don Quixote Liberated, also part of this collection, later achieved its own place in shingeki history.¹ The same can be said for Ivanov's Armoured Train 14-69. The play by Wittfogel in this collection was never performed, but others, appearing in other publications, were often in the repertory of the left-wing groups.

Of these Prince Hagen and Don Quixote Liberated can be said to have occupied the most important place in the history of left-wing drama during the years 1926 and 1927. Both were full-length plays which were actually performed, and the infrequency of performances of plays of this length gave them a symbolic quality which enhanced their reputation: Don Quixote Liberated was in addition the first left-wing play performed by a left-wing group in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, and the first production of that group. Prince Hagen was also performed (in June 1927, after being banned in April) in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

The evident popularity of these two plays is interesting from a political point of view. Neither could have remotely satisfied Aono Suekichi or the more radical Marugei members who were soon to lead the proletarian drama movement. Don Quixote Liberated was a long (89 double-column pages in the 1930 edition of the translation) play by the Soviet Commissar for Education between 1917 and 1921, A.V. Lunacharsky. The revolutionary origins of the play could not be disputed. Lunacharsky himself, however, was a theatrical traditionalist and constantly under attack from the left wing in Soviet theatre at the time. He was opposed to Meyerhold's experiments and was active in preserving the established Moscow theatres (such as the Maly) from the cultural iconoclasm of young, hot-blooded, Soviet

1. See above, p. 210.

theatre people.¹ This opposition appears not to have been known in Japan, or else it was conveniently ignored. Don Quixote Liberated was similar to other plays by Lunacharsky, being set in a historical period and in giving new meaning to old themes. Don Quixote is portrayed as an idealist whose idealism comes to nothing, indeed is harmful in revolutionary situations. A Japanese intellectual might have been able to find a revolutionary ideology in it, but it could not have had much political significance for anyone else.² The same might be said for the adaptation of Sinclair's novel Prince Hagen (first published twenty years earlier, in 1903). The cold-blooded way in which the king of the Nibelungs perceives the essential workings of capitalist society, becomes master of them and is then cheated by death, is a subtle exposé rather than a revolutionary call. No doubt the play thrilled intellectuals familiar with Wagner, but it could have had no wider appeal.

During the first half of 1926 the most celebrated full-length plays referred to as left-wing required a cultured intellect to appreciate them. (In the case of Haritsuke Mozaemon this would mean the ability to disassociate oneself from a traditional environment.) Only in such circumstances would the political content and teaching be apparent. The significance of this is more striking if these plays are compared with the most famous left-wing novels and short stories of the preceding year. The works of Hayama Yoshiki during this time

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1. For a full description of Lunacharsky's connection with Soviet theatre, see S.M. Bruce, The Commissariat of Education under Lunacharsky (1917-1921), D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1969), pp.189-212, et passim.
 2. An interesting insight into how an intellectual of the time might have approached this play is given by the underlinings of the owner of one copy of the 1930 edition. These underlinings are restricted to those lines of dialogue that could be defined as ideological.

burnt with indignation at social injustice, as did those of Kuroshima Denji. Their message was direct and forceful. The worst that could happen to these works, however, was a ban on publication; with only short-term harmful financial effect on the publisher. Much more was involved when a production of a play was banned and the two most noticeable characteristics of these plays may be attributable simply to the presence of the censor. Overt political teaching would be banned, and therefore the political content was restrained. Censors were not educated people, and blinding a censor with intellectual circumlocutions has always been a classic way of avoiding harm.

As literature these works would have received scant notice if they had been published after September 1926. For it was in that month that the proletarian literary movement was given an authoritative push towards compulsory Marxism by the publication in Bungei Sensen of an essay by Aono Suekichi entitled Shizen Seichō to Mokuteki Ishiki-ron.¹ The contents of this essay may be summarized as follows: the rise of proletarian literature is the result of the need for expression which accompanies the natural growth of the proletarian class; but the appearance of proletarian literature has not been simultaneous with the appearance of a proletarian literary movement; proletarian literature shows a 'natural growth'; the reason why a proletarian literary movement occurs is because the element of 'consciousness of an objective' has been added; this is a reflection of the deepening class maturity of the proletarian class; there must be a movement to lead the literature of natural growth to consciousness of an objective; otherwise class art will not come about; the necessity and significance of such a movement is in proletarian artists who are

1. See above, p. 113.

conscious of an objective, leading the proletarian artists whose art is the result of natural growth; there is no such movement at present; it must come about, for if it does not, there will be nothing but theoretical confusion and individual satisfaction; we must grasp the significance of the proletarian literary movement as a movement.¹

This essay was based on two consecutive chapters in Lenin's What is to be Done? (written in 1902), which had been published in Japan in translation during 1924. In these two chapters Lenin was concerned with the necessity of a unified theory among the Russian Social Democrats and the part to be played by those who would guide the spontaneity of the masses. Apart from Aono's essay, later Japanese socialist theory can also be traced to this part of What is to be Done?. Aono was very interested in this work and is said to have been working (with Sasaki Takamaru, who knew Russian) on a complete translation of it.² He was also working at the time on farmer literature, and this is specified in Mokuteki Ishiki-ron (the conventional abbreviated title of the essay) as an example of the literature of natural growth. Aono was worried about the 'medieval ideology and generalized³ praise of the fields' that appeared in this song.⁴

The essay is short and unusually clear. It is not necessary here to examine its relation to its source or to place it exactly in a Marxist theoretical context. Its implications are unquestioned. In Taishō Japan, as in Russia in the last decades of the nineteenth

1. Bungei Sensen, III. ix (Sept., 1926), 3-5.

2. Hirano Ken, Kaisetsu, Nihon Puroretaria Bungaku Taikēi, ii. 411, although this is not mentioned specifically by Sasaki in Fusetsu.

3. Gainen-teki, an adjective which, when used by a Marxist, denoted impreciseness of thought.

4. Ibid., 412.

century, there had been a number of instances of spontaneous revolt by workers. These were symptoms of the natural growth of the workers as a class. This natural growth had also happened in literature and drama. This was admirable, but it was not enough. On its own, such spontaneous revolt would never gather enough strength to effect a revolution. Its practitioners, and the thousands of other potential practitioners, had to be aware of the objective at which they were aiming. Those who were aware of the objective (the vanguard) must lead those who were not. A movement was necessary to give organization to these efforts.

Aono's ideas would appear to be more relevant to drama than to the novel. The very aspects of former literature which worried him had been present in the worker drama of the Taishō period. An inability to disassociate from old theatrical conventions had caused the demise of one of the worker groups. And this quality had also shown itself persistent in the very playwrights, such as Fujimori Seikichi, who might have been the vanguard of a left-wing drama movement.

Aono's essay is said to have been a turning point in the history of the left-wing arts in Japan. There had to be a movement, led by a vanguard, dedicated to socialist revolution. Considering the political background of the time, which has been briefly discussed above, it was not surprising that such an essay appeared. Nor is it surprising that it was immediately accepted as authoritative. It had an impeccable source, it was all-embracing, and in a time of great theoretical confusion it was concise and clear.

Two plays appeared in Bungei Sensen about the same time as

Aono's essay. Both may be considered to have been written by playwrights aware of Aono's ideas. The first, Sasaki Takamaru's Jigoku no Shimpan,¹ appeared in the previous issue (August, 1926), but Sasaki and Aono had been spending the summer together. The second, Hisaita Eijirō's Giseisha,² appeared in the subsequent issue (October). Jigoku no Shimpan was performed four times during the next eighteen months, and Giseisha has a symbolic significance in having been part of the Musansha no Yūbe programme.

Jigoku no Shimpan is set, as its title suggests, in hell.³ The play begins with a chilling sound of shrieking from behind the curtain, which the stage directions require to be continued until the audience is obviously affected. The main scene of the play itself is a courtroom, where an old man is convicted of drunkenness in his lifetime (the only consolation for him as he was unemployed), obstructing officials in the performance of their duties (only on May Days and when kicked into the gutter) and beating a 'gentleman' (when he had been beaten all his life by capitalists). The judge is confounded by his objections, but says that he too is used, by the Great Ruler of Hell. The play ends in commotion as the Observer, who has been watching Earth through a telescope, cries out that workers are seizing the gates of Hell and throwing gentlemen in. The old man leaps onto the judge's bench and sings the Internationale, encouraging the audience to join in.

It is clear that this play is significantly different from Haritsuke Mozaemon as a work inspired by a left-wing ideology.

1. Trial in Hell.

2. The Victim.

3. The text used is Bungei Sensen, III.viii, 4-14.

Haritsuke Mozaemon treated a historical incident, whereas Jigoku no Shimpan is set in an imaginary and contemporary situation. For the former an analogy with the present day has to be made by the audience for the author's ideas on contemporary society to be made clear. The whole setting of the play makes it possible for it to be watched without any such analogy being made. This is not so with Jigoku no Shimpan. The setting is new (although it owes something to Mushakōji Saneatsu's earlier play, Ningen Banzai) and unfamiliar, thus requiring more attention from the audience. It does not fit into any conventional category. The play is unquestionably linked to the present day in that the trial is of someone who has just died. The playwright's socialist ideas are put across in the discussion between the old man and the judge. In technique also the two plays differ considerably. As we have seen, Fujimori's play is firmly based in shimpa tradition; Sasaki, on the other hand, uses techniques of audience involvement that he probably learnt while watching plays at Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

Such a comparison reveals the change in attitude towards their work by left-wing playwrights during 1926. The difference was not so much in the thinking of the playwrights as in the explicitness with which their ideas were expressed to the audience. The device of the discussion between the old man and the judge in Jigoku no Shimpan was a crude one, but it reflected the priority given to instruction by the playwright at the expense of the theatrical respectability that one sees in Haritsuke Mozaemon. This is a major shift in emphasis, that can readily be understood in the light of the theoretical positions being taken up in the proletarian literary movement.

It was not enough, however, and this was shown clearly in the criticism of Jigoku no Shimpan which appeared in the September issue of Bungei Sensen. Five people took part in a discussion of the play and none of them expressed approval. The discussion was dominated by Sano Seki, a Marugei member, who divided his criticism into three parts. He did not like the content of the play because it lacked vitality and was too remote from real life. He criticized the medium of expression: the dialogue was interesting because it was light and unconventional, but it had a tendency to 'run off the rails'. Above all he damned it politically: it was 'unwarlike', and therefore unsuitable for the Japanese proletariat, then already in the process of passing through the Imperialist stage in its journey through the dialectic of history; proletarian comedies had their place, but from Jigoku no Shimpan one had the impression that Sasaki was just amusing himself; Sano hesitated to say something so discourteous, but Sasaki was petit bourgeois.¹

From the vocabulary Sano uses, it is clear that all his criticism was based on political criteria. His remarks in the content section are based on Sasaki's false gainen,² and the rails which the dialogue leaves would seem to be those of political consistency. The other participants agree with Sano. One of them is Senda Koreya, who was soon to quarrel publicly with Sasaki in the pages of Bungei Sensen.³ But possible issues of personality between Sasaki and his critics would only slightly reduce the significance of the type of criticism made here. Sasaki was suspect on political grounds. However hard

1. Jigoku no Shimpan Gōhyōkai, Bungei Sensen, III.ix (Sept., 1926), 41.

2. See above, p.175.

3. See above, p.137.

he may have laboured on behalf of left-wing drama, his theory was not thought to be pure. (Had he not spent the early part of his stay with Aono translating Fanny Hill?)¹ Yamada Seizaburō, also in this critical discussion, commented that as a play appealing to the proletariat for action, it had some unhealthy parts. It would be a few months before Tsukiji Shōgekijō productions were subjected as a matter of course to a purely political criticism, but for those directly involved in left-wing drama the time to prove oneself politically had already come and one had to prove oneself politically and dramatically at the same time.

For some this was not difficult at the time. Just as enthusiasm and novelty had compensated for immaturity of acting technique in the early Tsukiji Shōgekijō productions, so at this stage of proletarian drama enthusiasm could disguise crudities in technique. In both cases there was at least one condition which it was imperative to fulfil. In the case of Tsukiji Shōgekijō these were novelty and Westernism. Critics would enthuse over productions of Kaiser even if the acting was abominable. In the case of proletarian drama during the second half of 1926, the condition was purity of political theory.

Hisaita Eijirō's Giseisha is a representative play of this period. It was written while Hisaita was living as an Imperial University student in the Shinjinkai dormitory near the Hongo campus. His education up to this time had been varied. In his youth he had shown such a passion for model engines and was so good at physics and maths that he became a pupil at the Sendai Prefectural Commercial School. It seems, however, that he preferred inventing new machines in his head to the humdrum everyday skills he was expected to acquire at the School. Under the influence of the cultural activities of the

1. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.106.

local mission school he found an interest in the arts which became so strong that he entered the literature department of Waseda University. In 1918 he abandoned Waseda, disillusioned at the lecture system and the effects of the power struggle between the present and the former President. He returned to Sendai to become a pupil in the mission school, where at least there was close contact with the staff and he could read to his heart's content at peace in the library. Here he produced his first piece of creative literature, a play. From the mission school he moved on in 1919 to the German literature department of the Second Higher School and then finally to the Imperial University.

He became a member of the Shinjinkai and lived in its dormitory. Life was hard here, and study sessions were held every evening (this was in addition to his normal university work). Lenin and Fukumoto Kazuo¹ were the prescribed authors and the dormitory had its own tutors to guide the students' progress through the prescribed texts. Hisaita, Sano Seki and another student spent long hours of the night reading Fukumoto's The Structure of Society and the Process of its Change to each other and trying to memorize it. It was in these surroundings that Giseisha was written.²

The play is in two scenes, the first set in a summer resort inn where the president of a large slate manufacturing company is staying with his mistress, the second in the home of a worker killed in the slate plant by faulty machinery.³ The president and his mistress are spending money prodigally and into their apparently peaceful haven comes a company accountant proud of having bought off the dead worker's family with ¥100. The President informs him that

1. See above, p. 123.

2. Biographical material is taken from Hisaita's autobiography *Dorama no Shūhen o Yonjūnen*, published serially in Shingeki from Feb., 1962.

3. The text used is Bungei Sensen, III.x (Oct., 1926), 5-17.

he has in the meantime had to give another ¥200 because the paltry ¥100 was returned. A telephone call comes from the company to say that the workers have organized a meeting. In the dead worker's home the prostrate parents are disturbed by the excited entry of the young widow, who announces that the workers are thinking of forming a union, encouraged by a union leader from another factory. The widow goes out and a conflict develops between the father, who is in favour of leaving the young to do things their way and the mother who wishes the original offer of compensation had been accepted. The corpse is brought in and the mother becomes hysterical. The widow, however, leaps onto a table, eyes shining, and declares that she is not sad, because a union has been formed, something her dead husband had worked for. She makes a long speech explaining how workers all over Japan, then all over the world will unite. She will spend the night discussing the union organization with the others and only then will she start thinking about her husband's funeral. All go out in an exuberant mood, leaving one of their number who quietly explains unionism to the old parents. The mother still does not understand; the father ends the play by saying he will give half the compensation money to the union; he has understood about unity.

Politically the play could not be faulted. The corruption of the bourgeoisie, the broken spirit of the old generation with just a spark to redeem it, help from the vanguard, formation of a union, solidarity with other unions, the possibility of world-wide co-operation, the triumph of socialism over human feelings and traditional conventions, and at the very end the re-educating of the old. That all these themes are in the play is perhaps not surprising in view of the constant scrutiny of Senda and Sano while Hisaita was writing it.

By this time, however, political consideration of a play could

not be based merely on the presence of political themes. The structure of the play had to be such as to make the objective clear; the audience of potential revolutionaries had to be made conscious of the objective. Jigoku no Shimpan had contained some of the themes, but it was not seriously structured to bring the audience to a pitch of revolutionary fervour. Giseisha has a clear structure which can be seen to be deliberately thought out so as to produce this result. The audience might have laughed at the President enjoying himself with his mistress, until it was clear they were involved in trying to cheat the bereaved family of a worker killed in the factory. Gradually the situation develops politically as it was believed by Fukumotoists that it should, with the lead being taken from outside until finally a union is formed. Throughout, however, the emotional interest is maintained by the sub-plot of the aged parents and their reactions to the developments. There was much for an audience of workers to identify with, and Musansha Shimbun referred to the stillness and silence in which the play was watched.¹

The subsequent critical discussion in the pages of Bungei Sensen had no political criticisms to make, even though it included people such as Imano Kenzō, well to the right of Hisaita. Imano confined his criticism to the fact that the characters were somewhat stereotyped. This is obviously true dramatically, but it would hardly have been possible to write a play of this kind without stereotyping the characters. They represent classes in the historical process. Yamada Seizaburō thought on reading the play that the wife was too heroic, but revised this opinion on seeing the performance.²

1. Musansha Shimbun, 1, 3.

2. Zengō no Sakuhin kara, Bungei Sensen, III.xi (Nov., 1926), 89.

All testify to the success of the play in performance, and the report of Musansha Shimbun on the opening night has been quoted in the last chapter. It seems clear that given the artistic and political objectives of the playwright in writing Giseisha, it was a brilliant success. Although the structure appears mechanical, it must be remembered that any structure of this kind represented a considerable advance in left-wing playwriting. Hisaita seems temperamentally to have been an artist with a natural sense of structure. He himself attributes this to his early passion for inventing engines and mechanical devices.¹ Whatever was its origin, this quality gave him unparalleled success at the beginning of the proletarian drama period and it was later to assure him a more lasting place in shingeki history during the socialist realism period of the mid-1930s.

With Giseisha Japanese proletarian drama reached political maturity at a stroke. The play did not have the human warmth of Martin du Gard's Miner, published in the same issue of Bungei Sensen² and also frequently performed during 1927, nor the complexity of Wittfogel's Mother.³ But ideologically and, by extension, artistically, it answered the requirements of the most recent proletarian literature theory. It was a landmark in the history of Japanese left-wing literature, although because it was a play it has not received the attention it should have from historians of the proletarian cultural movement.

Giseisha was a short play. The difficulties involved in achieving a similar standard with a long play were considerable. The standard had been laid down, however, in Mokuteki Ishiki-ron and all playwrights who wished to be thought of as belonging to the

1. Shingeki, civ (Feb., 1962), 12.

2. Bungei Sensen, III. x, 80-95.

3. Bungei Sensen, III. ix,

proletarian camp had to comply with it.

Few attempted to do so. Only Fujimori Seikichi and Murayama Tomoyoshi, of the playwrights who might have expected to be performed by left-wing groups, published full length plays during 1927 and early 1928. Fujimori was building on his experience in writing long plays that had been acceptable to both commercial and progressive theatres. Murayama only wrote a long play after he had experimented with short plays that were intended to be acceptable to the left-wing theatre.

The next play that Fujimori Seikichi wrote after Haritsuke Mozaemon was Nani ga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka.¹ It was published in the magazine Kaizō in the January 1927 issue, and performed soon after, in April, by Tsukiji Shōgekijō. It was a wild success and the title became a household expression.

The theme of the play is simple.² The audience is shown a young girl, Sumiko, who because of her poverty is forced into a succession of degrading situations, in which she is maltreated by typical representatives of the class that Marxists were defining as the bourgeoisie. They include her uncle, the owners of a small commercial theatre, work-house authorities, the family of a member of a local assembly, a biwa instructor and the directors of a Christian home for girls. At the home Sumiko is required to make a confession of her wicked past before the whole congregation (of bourgeois ladies and gentlemen) in chapel on Sunday. She refuses to be publicly humiliated and denounces the home as based on lies. In the last scene she has set fire to it, and when she is arrested and taken out, there appears in the sky reddened by the flames an electric sign which reads 'What Made Her Do It?'

Left-wing critics of Kanojo (the title under which it had to be performed to satisfy the censor) were enthusiastic. Yamada

1. What Made Her Do It?

2. The text used is Fujimori Seikichi Zenshū (Kaizō-sha, 1932),
1. 457-82.

Seizaburō in Bungei Sensen refers to it as a 'social drama' and a 'popular drama',¹ in a new sense. The passion of the author infuses the whole play, which has a remarkable structure. He speaks of the author's piercing criticism of society and his exposure of its contradictions and ugliness. Fujimori has magnificently overcome the problem of expressing the relation existing between Sumiko and the society she lives in.² Takada Tamotsu in Engeki Shinchō says that Kanojo has much more consciousness of an objective in it than Fujimori's previous plays, and it must be said to conform with the current thinking of Bungei Sensen. It is more proletarian than anything he had written previously. Fujimori is not depicting things for the sake of it; other playwrights might have concentrated on character drawing, but Fujimori's characters are the playwright's puppets made to be the mouthpieces of the two classes in society, the bourgeois and the proletarian.³ An anonymous critic in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō house magazine refers to Kanojo as 'Japanese proletarian drama with an originality created in Japan'.⁴

The latter critic suggests that technically there were some faults. Sumiko's plight is too heavily painted; there seems not a glimmer of hope that she may find any release; some small let-up might have increased the tragic effect. Takada, on the other hand, mentions that there are many traces of shimpa, a criticism categorically repudiated by the Tsukiji Shōgekijō correspondent.

It is interesting that Kanojo appears to have been approved ideologically. It falls far short of Giseisha. Although it describes

1. Shakai-geki; minshū-geki.

2. Yamada Seizaburō, 'Nani ga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka,' Bungei Sensen, IV. vii (July, 1927), 89.

3. Takada Tamotsu, Ichigatsu no Gikyoku-hyō, Engeki Shinchō(2)II.11 (Feb., 1927) 77-8.

4. Kankyaku-seki yori, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, IV. vi (June, 1927), 34.

what poverty meant in contemporary Japanese society, its heroine is hardly revolutionary. She is portrayed as utterly helpless throughout the play and her act of arson at the end is an act, almost a spontaneous, 'natural growth' act, of hatred which is undirected and meaningless in a revolutionary context.

Several reasons can be suggested for the acceptability of Kanojo as a proletarian play. Fujimori was a writer of considerable reputation who had caused a sensation by his period of working in unskilled jobs. He had associated himself with both Tanemaku Hito and Bungei Sensen, but without a formal commitment to either. At the beginning of 1927, however, he was pressed to become a Bungei Sensen dōjin and he accepted. He had previously considered it better for both himself and Bungei Sensen if he was a friendly outsider, but he had now recognized that times had changed.¹ Fujimori was a considerable asset to the proletarian literary movement, and it is possible that some allowance was made for ideological immaturity in the play. The more likely explanation, however, is that allowance was made because the play was full length. It was clearly more in accord with current socialist thought than either of its predecessors.

The technical criticisms would seem to be apt. The atmosphere is still that of shimpa and the contrived situations cannot all be ascribed to the playwright's social passion. But the passion is there and it seems to be this rather than the shimpa-like structure that gives the play its undoubted unity.

Murayama Tomoyoshi had more plays performed by left-wing groups during 1927 and the first quarter of 1928 than any other playwright. Before this period he had written few plays that were ever performed and he had many spectacular successes after it. These fifteen months

1. Fujimori Seikichi, Boku to Bungei Sensen, Bungei Sensen IV. iii (Mar., 1927), 109.

represented the period when his ability as a playwright was developing into maturity.

Murayama's life had been very varied. He was born in Tokyo in 1901. From an early age he had a liking for pictures and he was exhibiting his own work by his fifth year in middle school. In 1918 he entered the First Higher School and acquired an interest in literature. In 1921 he entered the philosophy department of the Imperial University. At the end of this year he interrupted his studies to go to Europe, where he was so overwhelmed with Western art that he decided that painting was to be his life. His first contact with shingeki came as a result of being commissioned to design for the Tsukiji Shōgekijō production of From Morn to Midnight. From that time he became one of the new theatre people, being active as a playwright, actor, designer and director.

In his autobiography Murayama has traced the development of his thought from an interest in pre-Socratic philosophy, especially Heraclitus' theory of conflict, through the anti-idealistic stream of Greek philosophy, to the levelling of all after death that he found in Dante. Murayama had rejected Christianity, but he felt an irresistible attraction towards the anti-material, spiritual and emotional side of the Renaissance. The English empiricist philosophers did not interest him, but he was gradually drawn to materialist philosophy as offering a world view which he had not found in Christianity. Finding no satisfaction in Kant or the Neo-Kantians, he turned to Buddhism and Hindu philosophy.¹ He went to Germany to study art in 1922, but he found himself going to the theatre almost every night. He claimed in a letter written later to Hijikata Yoshi that he had provided

1. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Engekiteki Jijoden (Tōhō Shuppan-sha, 1970), pp.352-61.

stage designs for a theatrical friend of Georg Kaiser.

Returning to Japan in 1924 he helped found a Dadaist artistic group, which was named MAVO. Murayama was very active as an artist in 1924 and 1925, but he also devoted much of his time to his newly acquired interest in the theatre. In 1924 his theatrical connections were mainly with Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Like other intellectuals he was excited by Sea Battle, his 'spirit being bowled over'.¹ He later designed for From Morn to Midnight and the latter experience convinced him that the theatre had become for him something from which he would never be able to escape.²

His main Western inspiration came from Kandinsky, whom he admired both as an artist and as a theorist of the theatre. Murayama's first published book was a series of translations of articles by Western writers, entitled The Art of the Present and the Art of the Future. One of these articles was on Kandinsky's drama theory and Murayama wrote an introduction to it. A translation of a Kandinsky play was also included.³

In 1925 Murayama went to Senku-za's third production, but was very disappointed at the quality of the performance. He was meanwhile experimenting with the dance, as being an art form which united his artistic and theatrical interests. A small group within MAVO, which called itself Sanka and which had already mounted spectacular Dadaist exhibitions, took over Tsukiji Shōgekijō for one night in May 1925 and put on a programme of experimental dance and drama. One of the short dramatic pieces was an inaudible conversation between two motionless male characters, repeated over and over again. Murayama performed, designed and directed for this programme, which was a great

1. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Engekiteki Jijoden 41, Teatoro, cccxxiv (May, 1970), 74-82.

2. Ibid., cccxxvi (July, 1970), 68-71.

3. Ibid., cccxxiv, 79.

success. The Tsukiji Shōgekijō packed in fifty people over its official capacity for the evening, more than had ever come to a performance of a play in repertory.¹

Murayama became something of a celebrity in these months after his return. He lived a Bohemian artist's life which shocked Japanese society and delighted the publishers of gossip magazines. He wore his hair long - so long that jokes suggesting reversal of sexes were made about his wedding picture. He married a girl from a respectable family after passionate love-scenes in his studio. The MAVO dancers danced naked apart from brief underpants. Led by Murayama they took part frequently in what would today be called happenings.

In September Murayama joined Kawarasaki Chōjūrō and Iketani Shinsaburō in Kokoro-za. Here there was a personality clash between Murayama and Iketani. Murayama was above all an individualist and a leader; Iketani was trying to become accepted as a member of the literary establishment through the kind offices of his old school seniors Kikuchi Kan and Kume Masao. Iketani proposed to perform delicate psychological French dramas; Murayama was inspired with the experimentation of German theatre. Murayama says that at this time he still did not understand the difference between anarchism and Communism, but he was gradually becoming clear about the difference between those who believed in art for art's sake and those who were moving in the direction of socialist arts.² Murayama had been among the former in both his art and his drama. He himself knew nothing of socialist theory at the time, but his experience at Tsukiji Shōgekijō had meant that in drama the art of his own 'art for art's sake' was linked with Japanese progressive thought.

1. Ibid., cccxxx (Oct, 1970), 109-17.

2. Ibid., cccxxxii (Dec., 1970), 122.

In addition one of his closest friends in MAVO, Yanase Masayume, contributed cartoons to the first number of Musansha Shimbun in September 1925. Murayama says that he saw copies of the paper, but was just not interested.¹ Yanase was subsequently active in the founding of Puroren. Urged by Yanase, Murayama was present and was made a member of the Arts Section.

After the Kyōdō Insatsu performances Murayama became fully involved in left-wing drama. He also began to write plays and had completed no less than twelve by the end of 1927. This was an astonishing number considering that he had published his first piece of creative writing, a short story in the magazine Bungei Jidai, only in June, 1926. During 1926 and 1927 he was also writing many articles on art and the cinema.

Murayama himself expressed dissatisfaction with his early 1926 plays in the preface to his first collection of plays, published in June, 1927.² He was at the time still experimenting with drama as an art form and the artistic possibilities suggested by Kandinsky's unitary theory of the various theatrical forms were still stronger than the political discipline Murayama himself was beginning to accept as necessary. Sasaki Takamaru, in his review of this collection of plays, detects a definite change in the ideology of the late 1926 and the 1927 plays and a move in the direction of an 'objective'. His socialism is still 'generalized', but Sasaki expects great things of him in the future.³ Sasaki would appear to have based this judgment on the whole corpus of Murayama's plays, which included a large number of Dadaist experiments not appearing in the book under review. He

1. Ibid., cccxxx (Oct., 1970), 116.

2. Sukāto o Haita Nero (Genshi-sha, 1927), p.1.

3. Sasaki Takamaru, 'Sukāto o Haita Nero', Bungei Sensen, IV. viii (Aug., 1927), 62-3.

singles out one play, written in August 1926, as marking a turning point, whereas in this volume there is only a single play written before it.

However unacceptable this latter play may have been politically in the summer of 1927, it was probably the first Expressionist play in Japan at the time it was written (January, 1926). The title was Koji no Shochi.¹ The subject - unwanted children - was a familiar one in shingeki. One of the most famous plays of the Taishō period, Yamamoto Yūzō's Eiji-goroshi,² had treated this problem. The subject of the play was therefore a social problem that was already familiar on the stage. The treatment was entirely Expressionist and owed much to Georg Kaiser in its use of compressed, staccato dialogue, sudden changes of plot direction and in many other aspects. The ending, an unconnected conversation about trivialities, seems weak, but is consistent with Expressionist technique.

Sasaki refers to a 'piercing self-criticism' in Murayama's next play, Ani o Basseyo,³ written in August 1926, which was the one he considered marked a turning point in Murayama's development as a playwright. Apart from the fact that there is explicit reference to revolutionary activities (as contrasted with simply exposing a social problem, as in Koji no Shochi), there is little to distinguish Ani o Basseyo, as a play, from its predecessor. The technique is still fundamentally Expressionist, although Sasaki may have seen a trend towards realism in the abandonment of staccato dialogue for long speeches. Murayama himself considers it to be 'quite realistic' in comparison with his previous plays, but admits the influence of

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1. The Treatment of Orphans. The text used is in the collection entitled Sukāto o Haita Nero (Genshi-sha, 1927), pp.114-44. Referred to below as Sukāto (Genshi-sha).
 2. Child Murder.
 3. Punish my Brother. Sukāto (Genshi-sha), pp.145-88.

Expressionism.¹ The characters, which are based on his own family, are more fully drawn, but the mode of expression is quite different from that in the plays of Fujimori Seikichi and Hisaita Eijirō who had been less influenced by Tsukiji Shōgekijō than by other factors. There are still strong traces of Murayama's former artistic interests, in particular Futurism, not quite as strong as in Koji no Shochi, which included a recitation of a long Futurist poem, but immediately recognizable. Ani o Basseyo represents a tentative step towards proletarian drama, but it was never performed by a left-wing group.

By early 1927, however, both Toranku Gekijō and Zen'ei-za were looking forward to regular activity and the demand for suitable plays was very great. By this time Murayama was fully committed to the cause of socialism and the proletarian cultural movement. He had been closely associated with the Marugei group during 1926, and they were looking to him to provide the drama movement with the plays that would enable it to develop quickly.

None of Murayama's late 1926 plays met the political conditions laid down by Mokuteki Ishiki-ron, and in political terms they cannot be compared with Jigoku no Shimpan, Giseisha or Nani ga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka. Indeed the next play he wrote after Ani o Basseyo had even less political content than its predecessor. Its title was Isamashiki Shufu² and it was performed by Zen'ei Gekijō in March 1928. It concerns the efforts of a Berlin landlady just after the First World War to obtain money from a Japanese lodger. She first encourages her daughter, aged twelve, to try to seduce him, and is enraged to discover that his affections lie elsewhere, with a Jewish girl who

1. Engeki-teki Jijōden 50, Teatoro, cccxxvii (May, 1971), 129.
 2. The Bold Housewife. Sukēto (Genshi-sha), pp.189-216.

lodges in the same block. The landlady then tries to convince the devoted wife of another lodger, who is consumptive and desperately poor, that she should seduce Yoshida for her husband's sake. The play ends with a scene in which the landlady has contrived to have the wife up a ladder held by Yoshida who cannot avert his gaze from her legs.

The play has a number of features which are common to Murayama's later work. It is set in Germany, it touches on the position of the Jews in Germany, and a Negro workman appears. It describes Germany as Murayama saw it and shows him to be very sensitive to the problems both inherent in German life and caused by the war. In political terms, however, it has no message. It might just be argued that a son of capitalist, stable Japan was about to be justifiably exploited by people unjustly impoverished by the war. Because of the post-war inflation, Germany was very attractive to foreign students with stable currencies. Without this inflation the Tsukiji Shōgekijō would not have been built. This explanation for the play might be borne out by the title. It seems much more likely, however, that the play is autobiographical and that the title is sarcastic.

If there is no increase in political content, there is a great change in technique. Expressionism has been abandoned in the dialogue, although there are still traces in the setting and the suggested stage movements. Murayama has clearly tried to shake off the charges of dilettantism that were levelled at him and to write in a staid, less experimental style. What seems to be significant is that he has not chosen a more overtly political subject. He has taken a subject close to his own experience abroad and simply tried to describe it in a straightforward way on the stage. The form he has chosen is comedy,

but it is far from the comedy of Jigoku no Shimpan in potential political effect.

Odoriko ni natta Shoki no Tsuma,¹ written in February 1927, is simply a sequel. The characters are the same, the problems the same; only the wife has changed, or been changed by circumstances. In the play she is sold by her husband as a strip dancer to a local theatre. The play was also performed by Zen'ei Gekijō in March 1928, as part of the same tour's programme. That plays like these, lacking obvious political content, were performed at all by a left-wing group in 1928 is indicative of the strictness of censorship at that time. The group concerned had to be content that they were at least performing a play written by a playwright known to be associated closely with the development of left-wing theatre. This was as far as it was possible to go.

Also on the same programme, but banned by the censor, was to be a revival of a play by Murayama entitled Sukāto o Haita Nero.² This had been Murayama's next play, written in March 1927, and performed by Zen'ei-za in August. It was the first of four plays, all short, written in 1927 and all performed by Zen'ei-za. Sukāto o Haita Nero is a study of a tyrant, Catherine II of Russia. She falls in love with a young, handsome officer, and when he returns from the front as an unofficial emissary on behalf of the suffering soldiers, she is only interested in having a love affair with him. He is then thrown into prison as a deserter, and she plays a cruel trick on him by pretending she will intervene in his execution at the last moment. She does not, and he dies. The last scene of the play shows exhausted Russian and Turkish soldiers dying in the snow together, having killed

1. The Clerk's Wife who became a Dancing Girl. Sukāto (Genshi-sha), pp.217-46.

2. Nero Wearing a Skirt. Sukāto (Genshi-sha), pp.247-90.

their officers.

The political content of this play is much greater than that of its predecessors. The stock figures of the Marxist dialectical process appear: the feudal dictator, the bloated aristocracy (in this case the superior officers of the Russian Imperial Army), the bourgeois hero, and the common soldiers, caught up in an Imperialist war, who fraternize after breaking their chains. The main target for attack in the play was Catherine II, and this was consistent with general anti-Yamakawaist theory in Japan that absolutist and autocratic forces had still to be done away with, before a proletarian revolution could be attempted. Aono had not identified himself with any analysis of the political situation in Japan, confining himself to advocating that there should be a goal in mind. Murayama can only be placed in general terms as anti-Yamakawaist at this time as, by his own admission, he had not yet studied Marxism enough to be sure of himself.

Though the political content of Sukāto o Haita Nero is considerable, the force with which it is presented seems to fall far short of Giseisha. As in the latter play, there is undisguised political teaching in some parts of the dialogue, but it is not integrated with the play as part of its total structure. Catherine is shown as cruel, and at the end her officers are killed by the common soldiers, but there is no suggestion that this endangers her position. Giseisha had actually shown workers how to unite; Sukāto o Haita Nero barely suggests to conscripted soldiers that mutiny is feasible.

The play was originally written for puppets, and this probably explains why there was a partial return to Expressionism. The play opens with three songs by three skirts - of Catherine's past, present,

and future. Thereafter the dialogue is mainly realistic.

Shinsuishiki,¹ written in April 1927, is similar. It is also about a dictator, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and as Catherine had told everyone they were her slaves, so he continually emphasizes his absolute power. He is shown to be obsessed by steamships, as a sign of modern state power. He is also sure that the great capitalists of his country must be fostered. He makes a long speech to a group of them, urging capital-labour harmony and religion to defeat socialism. He decides to take a party of capitalists to the launching ceremony of a huge warship, and the play ends with the Kaiser's growing distrust of the capitalists erupting into a terrified outburst.

The same comments about political content may be made about Shinsuishiki as about Sukato o Haita Nero. Murayama seems to be more concerned with describing a historical stage clearly than with urging a solution to it. Again the technique is mainly realistic with some strong suggestions that Murayama's experience watching plays in Germany was still influencing him.

Yappari Dorei Da!² (June, 1927) deals with the same fundamental political problem, but from a different point of view. The hero is Nepok, a Negro from Senegal, transported to Marseilles by the Imperialist French government to fight in the war against the Germans. One day behind the front, while he is on guard duty, he is noticed by an officer's wife who arranges for him to be made her husband's batman. She subsequently tries to seduce him, but they are discovered by the officer. The next scene is after the war and shows Nepok on a train to Berlin with money given him by the French government to go and have

1. Launching Ceremony. Sukato (Genshi-sha), pp.1-34.

2. Still Slaves After All! Murayama Tomoyoshi, Saisho no Yōroppa no Hata, Gikyoku-shū (Sekai no Ugoki-sha, 1930), pp.97-122.
Referred to below as Gikyoku-shū (1930).

a good time with the German girls. He marries one and on the birth of their first baby, a son, he exclaims that he is at last free after Negroes have been persecuted for 500 years. Then the beginning of an article in a special edition of the newspaper is read aloud by a news-boy outside: the sending of Negroes to German cities after the end of the war was a deliberate policy of the French government to weaken the purity of the German race. Nepok cries out that he is still a slave after all.

Whereas in the two previous plays Murayama was primarily ridiculing the heads of Imperialist states, he now turns his attention to a classic example of an oppressed class and concentrates on him. The ignorant Nepok throughout the play mouths the illusions that his masters have taught him to believe. In the end he is defeated for not having rebelled against them. The message is clear, but scarcely of any compelling interest to an audience ideally composed of Japanese workers.

Yappari Dorei Da! consists of a quick succession of short scenes where again the treatment is mainly realistic compared with the 1926 plays. Frequent scene changes had for some time been common in Japanese commercial theatre, and in Japan at this time they were not inconsistent with the circumstances of performance that might have been expected for plays of this type. One scene contains what is in effect a flashback. This was a new element in Murayama's dramaturgy and reflects his increasing interest in the film. He was later to publish many articles and books on the proletarian film, inspired by the accounts of Soviet films which appeared in the left-wing magazines. What could be interpreted in Yappari Dorei Da! as an Expressionist disregard for time sequence seems more likely from its propinquity to

the main action in time, place and subject to be borrowed from the film.

Kaiserin to Haisha,¹ written in July, 1927, continues the studies of the powerful begun in Sukato o Haida Nero and Shinsuishiki. The Kaiserin is portrayed as a fussy harridan who is afraid of the slightest amount of pain particularly when receiving dental treatment. Her husband, Kaiser Wilhelm II, is a ruler who thinks he is endearing himself to his people by sending autographed picture postcards of himself as gifts to charities. The Kaiserin consults an American dentist, Miller, who then has to follow her across Germany when circumstances at the end of the war force the Kaiser and his family to move from Berlin. There is a brief announcement of the Russian Revolution while the dentist is on his journey. The Kaiserin, before the dental treatment which Miller has come to give her, makes a mutilated American businessman go through some circus tricks using the artificial limbs he has invented, which are so needed in Germany now as a result of the massive war casualties, and the play ends with her demanding chloroform from the dentist.

Neither in political content nor in technique does this play mark any great development over the previous three plays. The announcement of the Russian Revolution is unconnected with the plot. Apart from the distortions for comic effect, the dialogue is uniformly realistic. Murayama appears to be trying to consolidate his development as a playwright up to that time.

None of these last four plays was on the scale of any of Fujimori Seikichi's plays. They were not performed alone, always in conjunction with other plays. They are distinguished within

1. The Kaiserin and the Dentist. Gikyoku-shū (1930), pp.61-98

Murayama's work up till 1927 by a consistency of political outlook, which testifies to the thoroughness with which Murayama accepted Marxism once he had decided to do so. In the plays, however, this ideology is expressed in a very elementary way and it is not allowed to dictate the structure of the plays. None of them has the carefully contrived development of Giseisha (or even of Nani ga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka), where the political ideas of the playwright are taught in almost a programmed way. In addition, the plays are all set in a foreign world that meant little to the audiences for which they were intended.¹ The assumption that Murayama makes in these plays is that the audiences will be sufficiently enlightened politically to react to the Marxist implications of Senegalese being exploited by the French or the Kaiser courting and being apprehensive of the German capitalists. The pages of Musansha Shimbun show that the leaders of the extreme left-wing movement in Japan also assumed that their worker readers would be interested to a considerable degree in the progress of socialist movements elsewhere in the world. But the attitude of Musansha Shimbun was generally different from that of Murayama. In the newspaper detailed explanations of how such events were relevant to Japan were given; the treatment of these events was regarded as part of the process of educating the Japanese working class. Murayama does not teach; he assumes knowledge, and this would seem to be the result of coming into the left-wing movement, and especially the theatrical side of it, from an individualist artistic milieu.

This is also reflected in the way he gradually abandons the techniques of experimental, in particular Expressionist, drama. Kandinsky may have been an early inspiration, but Murayama evidently found that the premises on which his early dance pieces were based

1. Sugimoto Ryōkichi, Sayoku Gekijō Dai-ikkai Kōen o Oete, Senki, I. 1 (June, 1928), 74. (This is in a criticism of a production of April, 1928).

were not compatible with drama which had a Marxist content. A new solution to this problem was tried in the next play, and it is this one that appears to mark a significant development in Murayama's playwriting.

The play was Robin Hood, performed in November 1927 as the first production of Zen'ei Gekijō just after the Rōgei split.¹ It was a long play, containing six acts and forty scenes. It was performed in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

The forty scenes are mainly short and the plot progression from the departure of Robin's father to fight King John through to Robin's death at the hands of King Richard's forces is swift. The legend of Robin Hood is easily reworked in a Marxist way and Murayama has been very thorough. The main events in the legend are included in the play. Where the event itself is susceptible of a Marxist interpretation, it is presented in this way. One example is the market-place scene where Robin Hood undersells the merchant butchers. Where an event does not lend itself easily to such a treatment, political passages are artificially inserted into the dialogue, as in the discussion with Alan a'Dale. Thus Murayama was able to list the political issues with which the play deals as follows: 1) How the church and despotism go hand in hand; 2) how the church dehumanizes individuals; 3) the presence of crude, animal instincts in traditional family relationships; 4) the danger of rising commercialism; 5) the collusion of commerce and authority; 6) love (this was understandably a serious political issue to Japanese Marxists of the time); 7) racial prejudice and 8) police spies.² Robin Hood deals indeed with all these issues, but in the two distinct ways mentioned above. In this respect the

1. Gikyoku-shū(1930), pp.205-92.

2. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Zen'ei Gekijō Dai-ikkai Kōen Jiko Hihan, Zen'ei, I. 1. (Jan., 1928), 44.

political content is not very different from that of the short plays. But Robin Hood's overall structure is, at least in the playwright's intention, much more in accord with the still-prevailing demands of Mokuteki Ishiki-ron. Murayama explains how he has altered the story and constructed the play to show how the original small band of Merry Men was formed by a process of natural growth (they each had individual grievances and came together haphazardly), and how with the admixture of other young men (in the play they are called the Youth Section) and frequent political discussion, the larger company of Merry Men became conscious of their duty to become the revolutionary vanguard of the oppressed farmers and poor townspeople of the district.¹ Much of this is explicit in the text of the dialogue itself. In political terms, therefore, Robin Hood represents a clear development from Murayama's earlier plays. It also marks a stage in the development of Japanese left-wing drama in general. No other playwright had achieved this level of political content in a long play.

The question remains, however, as to how far Robin Hood can be called a play. The enormous amount of action, the large number of short scenes and the use of titles to explain shifts in place and time suggest a film scenario, and Murayama himself refers to the 'film-like interest' he is trying to create.² Murayama had evidently decided that the answer to the problem of how to present something as schematic as the dialectical historical process lay in the film. Several of the most famous Soviet films had been shown or were known about in Japan. In particular an article about Pudovkin's Mother had appeared in the September issue of Bungei Sensen. It was significant that Murayama came to this conclusion in Robin Hood.

1. Ibid...

2. Ibid...

He had been deeply involved in several artistic movements with varying techniques. It is difficult to assess whether he chose the film as a medium for his new political beliefs just because it was new or because it was most appropriate. The list of his artistic attachments suggests he was prone to accept novelty as something desirable. But he was also deeply committed politically by the end of 1927 and it seems probable that he genuinely believed there was more promise of success in propagating his beliefs in a modified use of film technique. It is only unfortunate that the turbulent political struggles of this period among the left-wing factions appear to have left little space in the relevant magazines for artists to discuss the particular problems they were facing in their individual works.

Thus the years 1926 and 1927 saw the emergence of four left-wing playwrights, each different from the others. Sasaki was an active organizer and actor, but not a serious playwright. Hisaita had come up through Marugei and wrote plays that adhered strictly to the required political standards. Fujimori was an established writer who found it difficult to disassociate himself from established theatre. Murayama was a Japanese Renaissance man, restlessly experimenting with everything new and prodigiously productive of plays. Only Fujimori and Murayama increased their fame in the next three years; Hisaita was not to become famous until the mid-1930s. In this early period of proletarian drama it was perhaps inevitable that the playwrights should seek their own individual solutions to the problems posed by the requirement that drama should be a means of political instruction. The beginnings of an organization where ideas and experiences could be brought together had been created, but because of its internal dissensions it was not yet able to exercise control. It was only in the second half of 1928 that consolidation was to take place.

CHAPTER 5

The Left-wing Theatre Movement, 1928-1930

The years between 1928 and 1934 are variously referred to by Japanese commentators both in print and in conversation as the 'Sayoku Gekijō period' or 'the period of proletarian drama'. These six years mark the virtual monopoly of Japanese left-wing drama over all other forms of shingeki. The term 'Sayoku Gekijō period' is used because the central drama group, which was in the forefront of all policy changes and from which many of the leaders of the movement came, was called Sayoku Gekijō.¹ The period is said to have begun in 1928, because it was in March of this year that Sayoku Gekijō was formed both as the first attempt to unify the left-wing drama movement and as one part of a larger unification of other left-wing cultural movements. The period is said to have ended in the early part of 1934, as it was then that the proletarian cultural movement finally succumbed to intensive police pressure. In that year Sayoku Gekijō, Left-wing Theatre, was forced to change its name to Chūō Gekijō, Centre Theatre.

As has been seen, the theoretical differences within the Communist Party had had wide repercussions in the proletarian cultural movement in 1927 and these had extended to the as yet scattered left-wing drama groups. The uncertainty caused by these events was seen to be dangerous to the cultural movement as a whole, and attempts were started at the beginning of 1928 to achieve some sort of amalgamation of cultural groups, where basic agreement was possible. Kurahara Korehito, the leading theorist of the proletarian cultural movement, emphasized in an article in January 1928 that the two main proletarian cultural organizations, Nihon Proletaria Geijutsu Renmei and Zen'ei Geijutsu-ka Renmei were basically in agreement that one of the major

1. Left-wing Theatre.

tasks of the proletarian arts movement was the introduction of proletarian arts among the people.¹ A conference was held by the two organizations on 10 January 1928, when this agreement was expressed publicly and a merger was decided on. In the same month the drama groups attached to the two leagues, Puroretaria Gekijō (Nihon Puroretaria Geijutsu Renmei) and Zen'ei Gekijō (Zen'ei Geijutsuka Renmei) shared the use of the drama study centre.² Puroretaria Gekijō had already in November of the previous year shown its desire to establish friendly relations with Zen'ei Gekijō by providing protection against possible violence during the latter's first production.

The political events of the first few months of 1928 are frequently cited as having encouraged this incipient move towards co-operation.³ The first General Election under universal manhood suffrage was held on 20 February and members of the various parts of the proletarian cultural movement were active in supporting candidates of the Rōdō-Nōmin-tō, the most left-wing of the four competing proletarian parties. Fujimori Seikichi was a candidate for the party in Nagano Prefecture.⁴ The illegal Japan Communist Party worked through the Rōdō-Nōmin-tō, and its own candidates stood for this party while distributing their own, Communist, election leaflets.⁵ The Rōdō-Nōmin-tō was the only party in which Communist influence was strong, and it gained nearly 200,000 votes, more than any of the other three left-wing parties. This result, together with an increasing flood of Communist written propaganda, which the police could not contain, caused the Tanaka government to consider concerted action against the revolutionary movement. This was taken in what became known as the March 15th Incident, when mass arrests of suspected socialists and Communists were begun.

1. Kurahara Korehito, *Musan Kaikyū Geijutsu Undō no Shin-dankai*, Zen'ei, I. 1 (Jan., 1928), 17-24.

2. See above p. 122.

3. For example, Sasaki, *Geijutsu Kōza*, ii.197.

4. Shimizu, *Geijutsu Undō*, p. 198.

5. Beckmann and Okubo, p.150.

Before the March 15th Incident it appears there was still some antagonism between the two proletarian arts leagues, arising from differences of view in ideological and artistic matters and also from personal animosity. Murayama Tomoyoshi refers to these differences but states that.....'because unification was a pressing necessity, they tentatively combined, leaving the existing contradictions as they were.'¹ On 13 March 1928 an amalgamation of proletarian cultural groups, called Nihon Sayoku Bungeika Sōrengō,² was formed, only to collapse with the beginning of the mass arrests on the 15th.³

However, the shock of these arrests appears to have finally caused differences to be buried and a strong league of cultural bodies was formed on 25 March.⁴ This was Zen Nihon Musansha Geijutsu Renmei,⁵ which will be referred to here by its official abbreviation, NAPF (from its Esperanto title - Nippona Artista Proleta Federacio). It was agreed that the two former leagues should cease publication of their respective organs and a NAPF organ, Senki,⁶ was published in May of 1928.⁷ But there was a less easy transition on the part of the two drama groups belonging to the leagues. The necessity of combining was not disputed, but neither group wished to renounce its name. Rehearsals for the first production of the new, combined group were under way before a name for the new group was adopted, and then the name chosen had to be recognized as 'provisional'.⁸ This was Sayoku Gekijō, and in the event this name was not changed for seven years.

The plays chosen for the first production and already in rehearsal were Fujimori Seikichi's Haritsuke Mozaemon and Kajii Wataru's Arashi.⁹ The Tsukiji Shōgekijō was booked for 21-24 April. The scripts had been submitted to the police for censoring and Haritsuke Mozaemon was returned so heavily cut that there was hardly anything remaining of the main character.¹⁰ It was

1. Murayama Tomoyoshi no Shuki, quoted in Akiba, ii.663.

2. Japan Confederation of Left-wing Literary Artists.

3. Shea, Leftwing Literature, p.200.

4. Ibid.

5. All Japan Proletarian Arts League.

6. Battle Flag.

7. Ibid.

8. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.170.

9. See below, p.241.

10. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.171.

quite impossible to perform and a meeting of the group decided to abandon the production altogether. (It was suggested at the time that this had been precisely the intention of the censor in cutting the longer play more heavily than Arashi. The political content of Arashi was much higher than that of Haritsuke Mozaemon and might have been expected to attract stricter treatment from the censor.¹) The group was upbraided, however, by Nakano Shigharu, who said they must perform something to avoid disappointing the masses who were expecting so much.² As a result three plays from the old repertoires of Puroretaria Gekijō and Zen'ei Gekijō were performed, two by former members of Zen'ei Gekijō and one by former members of Puroretaria Gekijō, and the first venture of Sayoku Gekijō took on more the aspect of a drama competition between two rival groups than an auspicious first production of a group that was to lead the proletarian drama movement.

The action of the censor in this instance was an indication of the severity with which Sayoku Gekijō was to be treated throughout its existence. Haritsuke Mozaemon had been performed by Inoue Masao's group in 1926 and on that occasion minimal cuts had been made by the censor. The reason given by the censor to Sayoku Gekijō was that times had changed since Inoue's production.³ It was evident that the proletarian drama movement itself, in that drama productions were very susceptible to police pressure, would need a co-ordinating organization, which would unify the movement.

For the remainder of 1928 Sayoku Gekijō gave unambitious performances of short plays, many of which had previously been in the repertory of its two constituent groups. In all nine plays were performed between its formation and the end of the year, these being divided into six programmes. Six of the nine plays were by Japanese playwrights. Lack of money and continual

1. Sugimoto Ryōkichi, Sayoku Gekijō Dai-ikkai Kōen o Oete, Senki, I.i (June, 1928), 73.

2. Sasaki, op.cit., p.172.

3. Sugimoto Ryōkichi, ibid..

harrassing by the police inevitably affected the scale of the productions of this group.

In organizational terms Sayoku Gekijō was the drama section of the Tokyo branch of NAPP, which thus had responsibility over all proletarian art forms in the Tokyo area. Determined activities by the police against regional branches of the federation such as this were bound to affect all the art forms under their care. The organized political left, to which NAPP looked itself for guidance and to which it gave support, was further weakened by police action in April, 1928 (banning of Nihon Rōdō-Nōmin-tō, Nihon Rōdō Kumiai Hyōgikai and Musan Seinen Dōmei, and arrests of members), and this in turn had its own effect on NAPP. Sayoku Gekijō, however, was still able to mount three productions overtly in support of the left-wing political movement. The September production was in support of the projected Shin Rōdō-Nōmin-tō (successor to the Nihon Rōdō-Nōmin-tō). The October production was in commemoration of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution¹ and in December there was a production in aid of Musansha Shimbun.²

The circumstances of Sayoku Gekijō's existence in 1928 caused one development in its activities that was to have considerable importance later. This was an enforced emphasis on touring. Toranku Gekijō had established the idea of small touring groups, and there had been reports in the June and July issues of Senki concerning excursions by small groups of actors to the scenes of strikes.³ Sayoku Gekijō itself went on tour several times in 1928, but the scale of the performances was bigger than those given at short notice to strikers. Sayoku Gekijō toured as the largest and most influential group

1. Sasaki, op.cit., 201.

2. Musansha Shimbun, ~~clxxxiii~~ (5 Dec., 1928), 4. Both Sasaki and Akiba (the latter probably following the former) give the month as September, but the newspaper itself would hardly be wrong. There is also uncertainty about the dating of the Shin Rōdō-Nōmin-tō production. Sasaki gives it as December, but refers to a 'preparatory meeting'. In fact, the inaugural meeting of the party had taken place in November. Beckmann and Okubo, p.187.

3. Nishizawa Ryūji, Idō Gekijō, Senki I.i (June, 1928), 78-81 and I.ii (July, 1928), 81-3.

associated with NAPF. Thus the activities of this one group were divided into full-scale productions at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō (April and October) and small-scale productions on tour in the environs of Tokyo.

While Sayoku Gekijō was taking its first hesitating steps as the largest and potentially most powerful proletarian drama group, Tsukiji Shōgekijō was itself going through another period of crisis. In terms of productions Tsukiji Shōgekijō achieved several acclaimed successes in 1928, but the source of the acclamation - established drama critics - was not likely to impress those within the group who had rejected their values.

During the early months of 1928 the tendency to question the artistic assumptions on which Tsukiji Shōgekijō was based was strengthened by the apparent progress of the proletarian drama movement, in particular the start of Sayoku Gekijō. The latter had given its first performance in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō in April 1928.

The demands for change in the organization of the Tsukiji group continued from the high pitch they had reached during Osanai's absence in the Soviet Union. A meeting of the whole group had started on 4 January to try to settle the various problems and finally on the 11th after almost daily discussions it was able to put forward four resolutions on general policy. These were: '1) Tsukiji Shōgekijō is a drama group; 2) Tsukiji Shōgekijō is based on a new view of the world; 3) Tsukiji Shōgekijō recognises the social role of drama and taking its stand on a new world view will appeal to society through its dramatic activity; 4) this activity will be prescribed by the actual condition of society and the real circumstances of the theatre'.¹ It appears that the meeting obtained some concessions from the opponents of political involvement. However, the first resolution reaffirmed the funda-

1. Quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.57.

mental artistic nature of Tsukiji Shōgekijō, and there is no direct reference to proletarian drama in the second and third. In addition the fourth resolution refers clearly to the financial limitations on the activities of the group.

Tsukiji Shōgekijō had been subject to financial difficulties from the beginning, but Hijikata had always been able to solve the successive crises with his own money. He had already made it clear in 1927 that he could not continue for long to bear this considerable burden. The theatre's quarrel with its landlord over the land rent had developed into a lawsuit in the early part of 1928 and such was the unpleasantness of the situation that Hijikata had announced his desire to resign as a member of the theatre Committee. Osanai had been confined to bed since his return to Japan, his health broken by the severity of the Russian winter. At this point, however, he left his bed and was taken by car to the theatre, where he appeared at a general meeting.¹ As a result an Organization Committee was elected by the meeting to consider the future course of the group. The new committee included both Osanai and Hijikata, some other of the original members of the group and a few of the young progressives. There were fifteen members in all.² This committee was to consider the role of Tsukiji Shōgekijō in the light of the four resolutions and report its views to a later general meeting.

In June 1928 it was decided that the theatre would have to move. This decision was due to the apparent impossibility of winning any concessions from the landlord, and plans were drawn up for a new theatre, to be built on an adjoining site. It was noticed by the progressives in the group that at a time when there was a strong trend towards bringing art to the people, the

1. Ibid..

2. Hijikata Yoshi, Tomoda Kyōsuke, Aoyama Sugisaku, Mizushima Haruki, Kubo Sakae, Shiomi Yō, Kitamura Kihachi, Osanai Kaoru, Yoshida Kenkichi, Higashiyama Chieko, Matsuda Kumetaro, Minami Kenshin, Komiya Jōji, Hijikata Umeko, and Yashiro Yasushi.

plans for the new Tsukiji Shōgekijō laid major emphasis on the physical comfort of the audience, for which they would probably have to pay. In technical arrangements the new theatre differed little from the original building.¹

Meanwhile regular performances of both translated and original plays continued. 1928 was a year of anniversaries and commemorations: Osanai's return from Russia, the centenary of Ibsen's birth, the centenary of Gorki's birth, the completion of the new theatre building and the end of Tsubouchi's heroic labours to translate the whole Shakespearean corpus.

The high point of the year's performances was the Ibsen festival. Three plays were performed - A Doll's House, Ghosts and Peer Gynt. Hiji-kata's production of Ghosts was a new one, placing emphasis on Mrs. Alving and the *fin de siècle* characters who surrounded her, and it won considerable acclaim. The subsequent performance of Peer Gynt at the Imperial Theatre was so successful financially that Tsukiji Shōgekijō was asked to perform there again the next month (April).² Again this was further proof to the progressive group that Tsukiji Shōgekijō was reneging on its responsibilities to the people. The Imperial Theatre and the Mitsukoshi department store had been the main symbols of bourgeois standards in the Taishō period, and this reputation was not diminished now.

The new Tsukiji Shōgekijō was already under construction and by September it was possible for a further series of general meetings to be held there. It was at these meetings that the members of the new Organization Committee put forward their views for discussion. Each individual member made a brief statement and although there was considerable overlapping, it was clear that the views expressed represented three distinct groups within the theatre. It is important to recognize the existence of three groups, as some

1. There is a diagram in Mizushina, Osanai Kaoru, p.234.

2. Ibid., p.229.

later accounts, over-influenced by the subsequent history of Tsukiji Shōgekijō, have suggested there were only two.¹ It is not possible to estimate the relative numbers of the groups, and although the Organization Committee was elected by a general meeting, the preponderance of respected leaders probably indicates that its composition did not reflect that of the theatre company as a whole.

The views of those who wished Tsukiji Shōgekijō to participate in the proletarian cultural movement were represented in a rather extreme form by Yashiro Yasushi. His statement was long and contained not a single reference to drama or Tsukiji Shōgekijō. It began with an analysis of world capitalism, then gave an account of the way in which the proletarian classes had come to be exploited and oppressed, and ended by affirming that proletarian art was the only true art. At the other end of the scale Aoyama Sugisaku stated simply that he wanted an 'academic' (as opposed to a 'political') theatre and Tomoda Kyōsuke, similarly briefly, declared: 'Tsukiji Shōgekijō is purely a drama group. It must never be a politically orientated group'.²

However, the most numerous group of the committee members took a stand between these two poles. They have sometimes been identified with the proletarian group because of their later activities, but there is no doubt from their statements that they were trying to effect a compromise between the advocates of political drama and those of 'academic' drama. Both Kubo Sakae (now having taken over the editorship of the house magazine³) and Misushina Haruki issued long statements advocating a social realignment of Tsukiji Shōgekijō but reaffirming its basic artistic principles. Hijikata's statement was brief and to the point. He too emphasized that Tsukiji Shōgekijō should not confine itself narrowly to audiences of 'petit-bourgeois'

1. Interview with Yamamoto Yasue, November, 1969.

2. The statements are quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, pp.59-60.

3. Sugai Yukio, Kaisetsu, in Kubo Sakae Zenshū (San'ichi Shobō, 1962), v.617.

intellectuals, but should try to attract audiences that were more widely based. In addition, Tsukiji Shōgekijō existed for the study of the drama of the past and the creation of a new drama for 'the masses'.¹

Osanai himself was less compromising. 'I would divide theatre into two. One is political theatre and the other is artistic theatre. I want Tsukiji Shōgekijō to be an academic theatre. We have still to grasp the fundamentals of drama. To do this we must preserve academic and artistic freedom.'

After discussion about these statements the meeting decided to give to Osanai and Hijikata the responsibility for producing concrete proposals for a new organization. Thus Hijikata was placed in a similar situation as he had been several times before- the necessity of making an important decision with Osanai on a subject about which their views differed considerably. The result was that, as in the past, he deferred to Osanai. In September this two-man committee announced that Tsukiji Shōgekijō was to be an academic theatre. Within it there were to be established two sections, financially quite separate. One was a 'theatre section',² concerned with administration, personnel, lighting, scenery, etc., the other a 'drama-(group) section'³ concerned with plays and their production. The former was to be headed by Hijikata, who was to have sole responsibility for the financial obligations incurred by the section. The latter was headed by Osanai, and the financial responsibilities were to be shared by all members. It is not clear how the membership was to be divided, but it would seem that this was generally by function. Hijikata at least was a member of both sections. The income of the whole theatre enterprise was to be divided equally between the two sections.⁴

1. Taishū. This word had become Marxist jargon as 'the masses' had in England and the United States.

2. Gekijō-bu.

3. Gekidan-bu.

4. This account is taken from the statement issued in Tsukiji Shōgekijō, VI. iv (Ap., 1929), 2. No public statement was made at the time of the re-organization.

The purpose of this reorganization was stated to be to allow directors of plays more freedom and to lighten the financial responsibilities of Hijikata. It could also be seen as a sop to demands for greater participation. Although Hijikata continued directing, it would seem that his influence over artistic decisions was loosened. He was obviously under great strain at the time. Apart from considering resignation over the financial difficulties, he himself was ill enough to be spitting blood frequently during these months.¹

The next production - the first in the new theatre building - was to be Osanai's adaptation of The Battles of Coxinga, a play written by Chikamatsu Monzaemon in 1715 for the puppet theatre. This was to be followed in November and December by three original Japanese plays. One of these, Odera Gakkō², was by Kubota Mantarō, a determined and outspoken opponent of politically orientated drama. Although Osanai's new programme for the group's future and his immediate choice of these three plays may have been consistent with his own beliefs, they could not but make the divisions within the group deeper.

However, Osanai was not to live to experience the upheavals that were to come. On 25 December 1928 he collapsed at a theatrical party, and died soon afterwards. He was forty-eight years old at his death, and every major figure in Japanese artistic and literary circles paid tribute to him. His achievements had been great, but the times had overtaken him and even had he lived longer, it would only have been in bitterness and despair.

Sayoku Gekijō and Tsukiji Shōgekijō dominated shingeki in 1928. Although the mass arrests of March had produced a temporary unity in the endemically divided left-wing movement, Sayoku Gekijō was not allowed a

1. Ibaraki and Ozaki, Hijikata Yoshi, p.125.

2. See below, p.243.

complete monopoly of left-wing drama.

Sayoku Gekijō had announced itself as representing the extreme left by the support it gave to the Shin-Rōdō-Nōmin-tō and Musansha Shimbun. In 1928 the centre party Nihon Rōnō-tō¹ (often abbreviated to Nichirō-tō) acquired an arts federation and drama group of its own. These were both founded by a former anarchist who had been associated in Tanemaku Hito.² He placed his younger associate, Hatta Motoo, in charge of the drama section of his new arts federation. Hatta, although formerly also an anarchist, was himself adopting socialism at this time, but he had no intention of joining a party as right-wing socialist as Nichirō-tō.³ Neither the party itself nor its affiliated unions showed any interest in or gave any help to the drama group which formed the drama section. The founder himself took a sudden trip to Europe the day after the group's only full-scale production (in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, June, 1928), leaving considerable debts to be paid by the other members. Hatta had strong links with Sayoku Gekijō and had not intended this group to be subject to Nichirō-tō for long. Sayoku Gekijō provided much needed assistance for the Tsukiji Shōgekijō one-night stand. An attempt was made by Hatta soon afterwards to make the group independent and more left-wing, but he seems to have received little support from his fellow members and the group went out of existence.⁴

Although Kokoro-za⁵ could not be called a left-wing group at the beginning of 1928, the group itself, and indeed the whole kabuki world, was soon to be thrown into consternation by the gradual commitment of Kawarasaki Chōjūrō to left-wing thought. Kawarasaki had supported Funahashi Seiichi within Kokoro-za against the insistence on left-wing drama by Murayama Tomoyoshi and the latter had been forced to leave the group. It appears from his

1. Japan Worker-Farmer Party.

2. Muramatsu Masatoshi.

3. Hatta Motoo, Waga Engeki-teki Shōden, Yonjūnen, p.41.

4. Ibid., p.42.

5. See above, p.125.

autobiographical article in Shingeki no Yonjūnen that although he was excited by Osanai's trip to the Soviet Union and eager to go himself, this interest was not at that time (late 1927) based on socialist thought. He asked Osanai to try to arrange for a kabuki company to visit the Soviet Union and this Osanai was able to do. A group led by Sadanji and including Kawarasaki left for Moscow in July 1928,¹ returning finally to Japan in November. Kawarasaki admits that he did not understand the Soviet Union, but confesses to coming back a convinced admirer of it.² The first production of Kokoro-za after his return was an adaptation of Ehrenburg's novel Trust D.E., and Murayama Tomoyoshi, after a year's break with the group, was invited to direct. Murayama came back into the group, and Funahashi left together with those who thought as he did. By mid-1929 Kokoro-za had become a shingeki group closely associated with the proletarian drama movement.

Proletarian drama was nationally organized for the first time as a result of a reorganization of NAPF in December 1928. There had previously been specialist sections within NAPF - Literature, Drama, Art, Cinema and Music - but the federation itself had been organized by regions. Thus, as we have seen, Sayoku Gekijō formed the Drama Section of the Tokyo branch of NAPF. In December of 1928 it was decided that each of the sections should have an independent, national organization, and that NAPF should become an organ of unification and liaison.³ The full name of NAPF was changed,⁴ but the abbreviation was retained in its original form. For drama there would be a national league, and Sayoku Gekijō would be one of its constituent groups. The aim of the reorganization was to give more independence to the various genres of proletarian culture and to encourage competition in revolutionary effectiveness.

1. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.288.

2. Kawarasaki Chōjūrō, Aru Rekishi no Nagare, Yonjūnen, p.177

3. Shea, Leftwing Literature, pp.201-2.

4. To Zen-Nihon Musansha Geijutsu Dantai Kyōgikai (All Japan Council of Proletarian Art groups).

Moves were immediately started to set up the new national leagues. In the case of drama some preparatory work had already been done by Sasaki Takamaru and Sano Seki, who had been touring Japan visiting various provincial left-wing groups.¹ They were well prepared for the decision to reorganize NAPF (to which they themselves had also contributed considerably) and on 4 February 1929 the Nihon Puroretaria Gekijō Dōmei² held its founding meeting. Its officially adopted abbreviation was PROT from the Esperanto Proletarea Teatoro. There is some lack of euphony in the word PROT, but it will be used here for convenience.

The general platform of PROT was enunciated under three headings:

- 1) Our League will overcome all bourgeois drama; it will organize the production of proletarian drama and unify any announcements made concerning it; 2) Our League will fight for the liberation of the proletarian classes through all such drama activities; 3) Our League will fight for the abolition of all political pressure brought to bear on drama.³

Apart from Sayoku Gekijō seven provincial groups affiliated with PROT. There was to be held once per year a meeting of representatives of all these groups and this was PROT's highest voting organ. In effect the organization was controlled from Tokyo by its Central Executive Committee, six of whose seven members belonged to Sayoku Gekijō.⁴ Sasaki Takamaru was elected Chairman of the Committee and Sano Seki the Secretary General of the League. Individual membership of the League was also permitted, and at its inception there were about 130 individual members, about 100 of whom lived in Tokyo.

1. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.179.

2. Japan Proletarian Theatre League.

3. Hirade Hiizu, Puroretaria Bunka Undō ni tsuite no Kenkyū, Shihō Kenkyū, Hōkoku-sho, XXVIII, ix (Shihō-shō Chōsa-bu, 1940), 174. This survey of the proletarian cultural movement, compiled by a public procurator, was reproduced, with a separate introduction by Sofue Shōji, in 1965 (Kashiwa Shobō). Sofue comments on the thoroughness and accuracy of the police researchers. Referred to below as Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō.

4. Ibid.

Drama was also well represented on another new league, Puroritaria Sakka Dōmei,¹ of which Fujimori Seikichi was elected Chairman at the first meeting on 10 February 1929.²

The fuller statement of PROT's policy was wide-ranging and indicative of the revolutionary zeal of its organizers. Defence of the Soviet Union was one of its first articles. Its proposals for drama were more realistic. Drama activity was to be divided into two categories, full-scale static productions and small-scale touring productions. Above all the purpose of the drama for which PROT had responsibility was to let as many of the working and farming class as possible see plays which would educate them to a realization of their true circumstances.

Almost immediately a theatrical event occurred which is regarded as having marked a great advance in drama of the second category. On 5 March 1929 Yamamoto Senji, the only Lower House member for the now banned Rōdō-Nōmin-tō, was murdered by a right-wing nationalist. It was planned to hold two funeral processions simultaneously in Tokyo and Kyoto. In Kyoto members of two left-wing drama groups spent the night before the funeral writing and rehearsing a play to be performed to the mourners after the funeral. The play itself was a re-enactment of the murder and implied strongly that the government of Tanaka Giichi had been involved.³ In spite of the frequent claims made for the importance of this performance in the history of left-wing drama, it was over a year before the principle of dramatizing a topical event, ^{was endorsed} with the official recognition of PROT.

Drama of the first category meant primarily the full-scale productions of Sayoku Gekijō. There were five of these in 1929, two in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō (January and June). During October there was a tour to Osaka and

1. Proletarian Writers' League.
 2. Shea, Leftwing Literature, p.212.
 3. Akiba, ii. 671-2.

Kyoto.

The January production was an adaptation of Danton's Death by Alexei Tolstoy, directed jointly by Murayama Tomoyoshi and Sano Seki. Murayama took responsibility for the scenes involving few characters, whereas Sano took charge of the crowd scenes. The play drew record audiences (according to Murayama totalling 2,254 in four days¹) and Sasaki describes the fever of discussion on revolutionary theory that swept through them during the intervals and after the performance.² Perhaps more important from Sayoku Gekijō's point of view was that the group seems to have achieved by this production the unity that it had lacked in 1928.³ The commitment of the group to the ideals of PROT was formalized by designating one of the performances (26 January) as being in celebration of the founding of the organization.

Sayoku Gekijō, in spite of harrassment by the police, had during the first five months of 1929 achieved a high degree of unity as a group and had succeeded in mounting the first May Day production. In June it was to cap both these achievements with a theatrical event which is still remembered vividly today by those who watched it. This was the production of Murayama Tomoyoshi's Eōryokudanki⁴ in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

Murayama had based his new play on material provided by a left-wing China specialist Fujieda Takeo.⁵ It concerned a strike on the Peking-Hankow Railway in 1923, which ended by the strikers being forced into submission

1. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Hitotsu no Ashiato, Yonjūnen, p.131.

2. Sasaki, Geijutsu Koza, ii. 183.

3. Ibid., 182.

4. Record of a Gang of Thugs. To the Japanese left the word bōryokudan would have meant specifically a gang hired to break a strike by violent means.

5. Sugai Yukio, Engeki no Dentō to Gendai (Mirai-sha, 1969), p.415.

after a bloody battle with an armed gang of thugs. It is said to have taught its enthusiastic audiences the necessity for 'fervour, self-sacrificing spirit, strict sense of responsibility and constant self-criticism' if revolution was to be achieved.¹

Bōryokudanki played to packed houses and is commonly regarded as marking the high point of full-scale productions of proletarian drama. It also made Sayoku Gekijō's position as the leading proletarian drama group unchallengeable.² This was in spite of the fact that it was cut severely by the censor and was finally played under a different title - Zensen.³

Thus after its rather inauspicious start in 1928 Sayoku Gekijō went from strength to strength in the first half of 1929. By contrast the only other major shingeki group, Tsukiji Shōgekijō went through such internal upheavals in the first months after Osanai Kaoru's death that it finally split up in March.

It is impossible to trace the process of this split with any certainty. Even the contemporary and near-contemporary sources (newspapers, articles written by members, the magazine Tsukiji Shōgekijō) contain mutual contradictions of a fundamental nature. These have either been compounded by post-war writers on Tsukiji Shōgekijō or the split itself has been virtually ignored. Hijikata devotes less than half a page to it in his autobiographical article in Shingeki no Yonjūnen, and Ozaki and Ibaraki in their biography of him are content to quote Mizushina Haruki and Yamamoto Yasue.

Kubo Sakae considered that the confused reports put out by the press aggravated the already delicate situation within the group. The reorganization just prior to Osanai's death had not been made known publicly. Kubo

1. Ibid.

2. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.186.

3. Front Line.

states that this was at Osanai's urging, the matter being an internal one.¹ There must have been strong personal reasons for Osanai doing this. The reorganization had been precipitated by the financial circumstances of Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Osanai had always tended to be free in spending money on productions and the reorganization would have had the effect of making him answerable to a large number of members rather than just to Hijikata, his former pupil. Whatever may have been Osanai's reasons for urging secrecy, the act itself was short-sighted. A bare statement of the mechanics of the reorganization was bound to be open to the interpretation that power was being taken away from Hijikata. In the event Osanai's death greatly increased speculation about a power struggle within the group.

On 26 February 1929 an article described as one-sided by Sugai Yukio,² appeared in the Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimpō.³ It began by quoting the cases of Senda Koreya, Yokota Hitoshi and Ono Miyakichi, who had all left the group earlier, as being victims of the emotional conflict between Osanai and Hijikata. It then alleged that since Osanai's death Hijikata had been trying to establish his own absolute rule, supported by a small group of Tsukiji members. One of the latter group had been victimized by a new jichikai,⁴ set up by his opponents. If Hijikata failed in his coup, he would deliberately split Tsukiji Shōgekijō and form a new group with his supporters. It was said that he was secretly plotting with theatre people closely connected with proletarian drama and that two other members of Sayoku Gekijō had been active in encouraging a split.

Although the article is sensational in its language, the contents were at least plausible and even prophetic in the light of subsequent events.

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1. Tsukiji Shōgekijō no Bunretsu ni kanshite, Kubo Sakae Zenshū, v.203-5.
 2. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.65.
 3. Tokyo Daily News.
 4. 'Self-governing association'.

There are several comments on Hijikata's ill-considered pronouncements concerning the inevitability of a split, even from writers not hostile to him.¹ Having paid for Tsukiji Shōgekijō from the beginning and been accepted as one of its two main leaders, the subordinate of the two, he might well have expected to assume Osanai's position. Concerning the jichikai, it is admitted in Tsukiji Shōgekijō that such a body was formed and that the timing of its formation was not entirely fortunate.² It further admits that one actor had been removed by this body - Shimada Keiichi - although it justifies this action by saying he was a troublemaker. Indeed he had written an article in the New Year issue of the magazine criticizing the 'laboratory' spirit of Tsukiji Shōgekijō and advocating that all Tsukiji members should view the group and its position in society from a political point of view.³ Even if Shimada was not a troublemaker he was clearly not of the group which was opposing Hijikata. As for other items in the Nichinichi Shimpō article, Hijikata did subsequently set up his own group and although there was no explicit statement of this at the time, those concerned in the proletarian drama movement must have been at the minimum hoping to use Tsukiji Shōgekijō's considerable influence for their own purposes.

The sequence of events seems to have been as follows. As a result of intensive ginger group activities by the jichikai (which was composed of seven young actors) a general meeting of all the theatre personnel was held on 9 March 1929. It accepted the proposals put forward by the jichikai for reorganizing the gekidan-bu. The reorganized gekidan-bu did not include Hijikata and his resignation on the grounds of ill health was accepted. He retained control of the gekijō-bu and, as happened almost immediately, he could be invited to direct for the gekidan-bu on a temporary basis.

1. For example, Kitamura Kihachi in Asahi Shimbun, quoted in Yamamoto Yasuo, Shiryō-hen, p.68.

2. Seimeisho, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, VI. iv (Ap., 1929), 2.

3. Ibid., VI. i (Jan., 1929), 2.

The play in production was The Lower Depths and it completed its run on 24 March. After the performance Tomoda Kyōsuke and his wife Tamura Akiko, both convinced supporters of a purely artistic role for Tsukiji Shōgekijō and hence opposed to some of Hijikata's ideas, handed statements of resignation to Aoyama Sugisaku, now the head of the gekidan-bu. Tomoda's reason was that he no longer considered Tsukiji Shōgekijō had an organization conducive to the production of plays.¹

Early the next morning six other actors also handed in a joint statement of resignation.² Their main reasons were the treatment accorded to Hijikata and the impracticability of the new organization. Although about thirty people were left, there was no doubt that a serious split had occurred.

Subsequent events and later commentaries have given the impression that there were basically two groups within Tsukiji Shōgekijō, one 'artistic' and one 'political'. As can be seen from the statements made at the re-organization in August 1928,³ there were certainly uncompromising 'artists' and also uncompromising 'politicians'. But there were in addition many who fell in between. As Susukida Kenji says, to left-wing progressives Hijikata was very much a gradualist.⁴ Yamamoto Yasue feels deeply that the tragedy of the split was the apparent polarization and the inability of Tsukiji Shōgekijō to continue with this numerically very strong middle group as its core.⁵ Her comment in her autobiography is that given the predominant intellectual circumstances of the time and the financial difficulties involved, it was perhaps inevitable that a company of strong individualists like Tsukiji Shōgekijō should break apart.⁶ Osanai Kaoru is often referred to in

1. Quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.68.

2. They were: Maruyama Sadao, Yamamoto Yasue, Susukida Kenji, Itō Kōichi, Takahashi Tomoko and Hosokawa Chikako.

3. See above, p.212.

4. Susukida Kenji, Anten, Waga Engeki Jiden (Tōhō Shoin, 1960), p.94.

5. Interview, 14 Jan., 1970.

6. Aruite Kita Michi, in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.419.

articles of 1929 as a 'pillar'. It was undoubtedly the collapse of this pillar that precipitated the break-up of Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

The group that remained after the various resignations continued to exist as Tsukiji Shōgekijō. It was also referred to by the name of Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō¹ in order to distinguish it from the original organization. Hijikata and the six resignees formed a new group called Shin Tsukiji Gekidan² and they issued a statement on 5 April 1929. The statement began by saying that a group embracing a diversity of ideologies could not be unified and consistent in its activities, and it pledged the most strenuous efforts to make the theatre a significant and happy meeting place for the newly-arisen masses. There was a clear implication that Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō was reactionary, although the left-wing group remained almost intact inside it.

On 15 April 1929 PROT issued a statement on the split. It categorically denied any previous machinations to provoke the split, but expressed great interest in the future course the two groups would take. It noted that both groups appeared to be progressive in intention and it hoped that both groups would fight for the liberation of the proletariat.³ All possible assistance would be given by PROT to both groups in this resolve.

Whatever may have been PROT's position before the split, once it had taken place, active steps began to be taken to strengthen PROT influence within the two resulting groups.⁴ The urgency of establishing control over these two groups was underscored by the police drive of 16 April, which led to the arrests of many PROT members.

PROT's links with Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō were already strong, as

1. Group Tsukiji Little Theatre.

2. New Tsukiji Group.

3. Tsukiji Shōgekijō Bunretsu ni kan-shite Seimei suru, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, VI. v (May, 1929), 15.

4. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.188.

the band of left-wingers within the group was if anything stronger now that some of the 'pseudo-left-wingers' had resigned. They could not quite exercise control over the group, but the selection of Murayama Tomoyoshi to be guest director of the first post-split production shows that their influence could be decisive. Even more indicative of this was the printing of an article by Kurahara Korehito, now the chief theoretician of the proletarian literary movement, in the magazine Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

The article was entitled Towards Proletarian Drama. In it Kurahara noted that there were now five important shingeki groups (this was including Shingeki Kyōkai, which went out of existence almost as Kurahara was writing the article), of which one, Sayoku Gekijō, was left-wing, with the others tending to follow the same path with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The assumption of the article was that unity was desirable. It was not possible in the existing conditions for the groups to be linked to a political party; it would serve no purpose for them all to merge into Sayoku Gekijō; what was needed was some sort of league of shingeki groups.¹

PROT worked hard to achieve this league and advisers from PROT or Sayoku Gekijō were associated with each of Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō's productions over the next few months.

PROT's influence within Shin Tsukiji Gekidan was established in a more spectacular way. The group decided that for its July production it would perform an adaptation of the by now famous proletarian novel Kani Kōsen² by Kobayashi Takiji. A letter was written to both Kobayashi and to Kurahara Korehito (a member of the Central Executive Committees of both NAPF and the Sakka Dōmei³) to request permission to perform this adaptation. The reply granted permission on condition that the performances were in the nature of

1. Puroretaria Engeki ②, Tsukiji Shōgekijō, VI. vii (July, 1929), 6.

2. The Crab Cannery Boat.

3. Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō, p.9 and p.103.

'joint struggles', that is, involving members of Sayoku Gekijō. It has been suggested that this condition was not made generally known within the group.¹ Rehearsals went ahead. Meanwhile, according to Sasaki, PROT itself wrote to Kobayashi (who lived in Hokkaidō) to enquire whether permission had been granted and in the reply was informed of the condition. No approach had been made to Sayoku Gekijō by Shin Tsukiji Gekidan and the first night, at the Imperial Theatre, was about to take place.² After hurried consultations it was decided to send Sasaki Takamaru, Sano Seki, Ono Miyakichi and Sugimoto Ryōkichi to the Imperial Theatre to bargain with Shin Tsukiji Gekidan. They arrived after the curtain had gone up and interrupted the performance. The curtain was hastily lowered and negotiations were conducted for fifty minutes while the audience became more and more impatient. PROT's demands were that PROT members should be admitted to Shin Tsukiji Gekidan and they were finally accepted. Yamamoto Yasue's feeling at the outcome was that what had become only inevitable had happened.³ Two members of PROT, of whom one was Sasaki Takamaru, immediately joined the Literary Section of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan.⁴

The fourth of the five important shingeki groups mentioned by Kurahara in *Towards Proletarian Drama*, was Kokoro-za and it was not difficult for PROT to strengthen its influence over this group in 1929. The links were already existing in the presence of Murayama Tomoyoshi. The group continued to perform Soviet plays that Kawarasaki Chōjurō had seen in Moscow. Trust D.E. (adapted from Ehrenberg's novel by Meyerhold) was performed in April at the Hongō-za to enthusiastic and large audiences. The Hongō-za was a large

1. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.82.

2. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.190.

3. Ashiato, quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.83.

4. The other was Minegiri Tarō.

kabuki theatre run by Shōchiku and although the latter was gratified by the increasing financial success of left-wing drama, the police were evidently much distressed by calls of "Three Cheers for the Communist Party" from the audience. The next production of Kokoro-za, a recent play by Ivanov, was banned by the police on the day before the opening night and Murayama's Bōryokudanki was substituted. This last-minute change to a play with a larger cast necessitated outside help and this was provided by Sayoku Gekijō. Several members of the original Sayoku Gekijō cast, including Sano Seki, took part in the Kokoro-za production. The police action over this production gave Sayoku Gekijō much the same opportunity to establish a decisive influence over the group as had Kobayashi's letter in the case of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan.¹

The fifth group that Kurahara had mentioned was Shingeki Kyōkai. His bracketing of this group with the other five would seem to have been the result of wishful thinking. Even if Shingeki Kyōkai had been showing the same signs of a left-wing tendency as the other groups (and there seems little evidence to suggest this), its influence in the shingeki world and the scale of its activities would not have made it worthwhile for PROT to expend much effort on gaining control of it. In the event Shingeki Kyōkai went out of existence between the time when Kurahara wrote his article and its publication in Tsukiji Shōgekijō.

Notwithstanding the failure of Shingeki Kyōkai, the league of shingeki groups which Kurahara had advocated, came into being in October 1929. Its title was Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai,² and its constituent groups were Sayoku Gekijō, Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō, Shin Tsukiji Gekidan and Kokoro-za. Its founding statement declared that in the present social conditions there were only two ways open to drama: to become the tool of reaction, or to serve the

1. Akiba, ii.737.

2. Council of Newly Arisen Drama Groups.

interests of the newly arisen masses. The Council would take the latter. It rejected the idea that all four groups were identical. There was much diversity, but because under present conditions they had common interests, they could not be allowed to go their own separate ways without any mutual contact.¹

The purpose of the organization was to co-ordinate repertory policy - plays were to be selected for production in consultation with the other groups, to press for revision of the censorship system and to take up the problem of attracting the right audiences.² The regulations of the Council were few in number and in their avoidance of Marxist terminology (except for the words "newly arisen") contrasted strongly with those of PROT. They give the impression that the Council was an interim arrangement and that PROT was waiting for an opportunity to establish more direct control over the four groups. The left-wing group within Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō was not able to impose its will on the whole group and it is unlikely that it would have joined the Council, if the latter had had more definite political colouring.

The first result of the co-ordination achieved by the formation of the Council was that within a month Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan found themselves competing against each other with the same play. The play was All Quiet on the Western Front; Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō were performing it in the Hongō-za and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan in the Imperial Theatre at the same time. Sayoku Gekijō divided its entire resources and supported both.³

One commentator says merely that the simultaneous performances were unintentional.⁴ There is very little other comment on how this curious episode came about. If the intention was to weaken Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō,

1. Quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.85.

2. Ibid.

3. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.192.

4. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.85.

it would seem to have failed because both productions were financially very successful. If it was a mistake, PROT was swift to realize the possible advantages of the situation. At a time when there was increasing concern in Japan over the independent activity of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, two big theatres in the centre of Tokyo were playing an anti-war drama to packed houses.

Thus two main developments can be seen in shingeki in 1929. On the one hand Sayoku Gekijō, dedicated through PROT to the success of proletarian drama, established itself firmly as one of the main shingeki groups and began exerting its influence over the others. On the other hand Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō, Shin Tsukiji Gekidan and Kokoro-za, especially during the second half of the year, performed plays of varying degrees of political significance to large audiences in the biggest theatres in Tokyo. Sayoku Gekijō had succeeded in attracting large numbers of workers into the theatre. Discount tickets for workers had been introduced at the beginning of the year. For Danton's Death in January it was estimated that out of a daily average of 540 people, 150 were workers. By Bōryokudanki in June they comprised over 50% and from then on a majority of all audiences are reported to have been workers.¹ On the other hand the other three groups were not only performing to their usual student and progressive literary audiences, they were also acting before some of the theatregoers who regularly attended performances at the big, luxury theatres. Probably left-wing drama was seen by a wider cross-section of the Tokyo population in 1929 than ever before.

The expansive and confident mood of left-wing drama, which had succeeded in affecting the activities of all shingeki groups in 1929, continued and increased in the early part of 1930. Both Sayoku Gekijō and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, often with each other's assistance, mounted ambitious productions that drew large audiences and aroused much critical attention.

1. Akiba, ii.670 and 677.

In February, at the Tsukiji Gekijō, Sayoku Gekijō produced an adaptation of a novel by Tokunaga Sunao¹ entitled Taiyō no nai Machi.² The novel had been published in June 1929 and had become famous immediately. It is now regarded as one of the classics of the proletarian novel. Its subject is the great printing strike of 1926 (which itself assisted the birth of practical left-wing drama³), and it satisfied the theoretical demands of the leaders of the proletarian literary movement. It was as obvious a choice for dramatic adaptation as Kani Kōsen had been a few months earlier. The adaptation was done in four acts and twelve scenes by Fujita Mitsuo, and the play was directed by Murayama Tomoyoshi. As the large cast could not be filled by Sayoku Gekijō members alone, several actors and actresses from Shin Tsukiji Gekidan took part, thus further strengthening the ties between the two groups. The play was apparently a great success. Such were the crowds queuing up every night to see it, that Tokunaga himself was refused admittance the first time he went to the theatre. He has recalled later that his protestations as the author of the original novel were of no avail.⁴

This was Sayoku Gekijō's only production in the first three months of 1930. Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, however, was more active. Three new productions were performed, and three others were banned by the censors.

The police were very active in obstructing performances by both groups in the first months of 1930 and their attacks culminated in a mass arrest of many left-wing men of culture in May. Shin Tsukiji Gekidan planned its first new production of 1930 to be a play entitled Hōki⁵ by Fujimori Seikichi. As in the case of Haritsuke Mozaemon, the subject was peasant grievances and in this instance a peasant revolt of the Tokugawa period. This did not please

1. Or Naoshi.

2. Street Without Sun.

3. See above, p. 110.

4. In a zadankai quoted in Murayama Tomoyoshi, Hitotsu no Ashiato, Yonjūnen, p. 142.

5. Uprising.

the censor, who deleted over two thirds of the text.¹ The remaining one third was performed at the Hongō-za, notwithstanding the fact that the plot had been rendered incomprehensible. A revival of Gorki's Mother was performed as well, to fill in the time. Shin Tsukiji Gekidan suffered its worst audiences ever, and this has been attributed partly to an erroneous press report that the play had been banned completely during the course of one performance.²

This police pressure continued and the next production that was planned - an adaptation of Ivanov's novel Armoured Wagon No.14-69 - was unconditionally forbidden by the censors. The substitute plays suggested were so heavily cut as to be rendered completely unfit for performance. Eventually Shin Tsukiji Gekidan succeeded in bringing a play before an audience with an adaptation of Kokusanya Kassen,³ combined with an innocuous play by Murayama Tomoyoshi. This was in March of 1930.

Thus in the first quarter of 1930 Sayoku Gekijō and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan were closely associated, formally through Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai, but more concretely through the energies of men such as Sasaki Takamaru and Murayama Tomoyoshi. In 1929 Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō had also appeared to be developing in a similar way to these other two groups, and Murayama had worked with them on several occasions. The old tensions within the group - between the real left-wingers who had not followed Hijikata, and those who had originally supported Osanai and Aoyama against political theatre - had continued and worsened towards the end of the year. The quarrels within the group, especially at General Meetings which were frequently called, were distasteful to Aoyama, who by nature was a man who avoided such confrontations. He would say nothing at meetings, simply looking on unhappily.⁴ It seems clear that he was unable to provide any firm leadership for the group

1. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.89.

2. Ibid..

3. The Battles of Coxinga.

4. Higashiyama Chieko, Gekidan Shin-Tōkyō to Sono Go, in Aoyama Sugisaku Tsuitō Kinen Kankō-kai ed., Aoyama Sugisaku, p.130.

which supported his ideas. Tomoda Kyōsuke and his wife Tamura Akiko, who had left Tsukiji Shōgekijō separately at the time of the split, had joined Shōchiku, the big film and entertainment company universally condemned by all proponents of left-wing drama. Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō itself soon developed links with Shōchiku, and members were invited to appear in films. Shōchiku owned the Hongō-za in which the group had performed several plays. There had been rumours that Shiomi Yō was about to join Shōchiku, as had Tomoda and Tamura, and this led others in the group to consider seriously the advantages, artistic (from their point of view) and certainly financial, of following a similar course. Although Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō had joined Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai, it was obvious that by the end of the year the left-wing group had still not been able to exert any control. Soon after the performance of All Quiet on the Western Front, Murayama and Yamaneuchi Tadashi had severed their connections with Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō as informal advisers from Sayoku Gekijō.

In 1930, however, the group continued to mount productions on a grand scale at the Hongō-za. In January and February they performed two Soviet plays, Shelyev's Journey's End and Tretyakov's Gas Mask. It was by now beginning to seem less paradoxical that this group should perform such plays. But there was a considerable difference between performing plays acceptable to the proletarian drama movement as led by PROT and being willing to conform to its demands. PROT was dominated by Sayoku Gekijō and links with the latter group had been severed. In spite of police pressure the proletarian drama movement was gaining strength and a continuation of the policy of Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō could only lead to a formal break with it. This was finally to come in May, 1930.¹

1. See below, p. 271

Kawarasaki Chōjurō's group, Kokoro-za, went out of existence in January of this year. Although it had achieved some spectacular successes during its five years of existence, it had performed only eleven times and since Kawarasaki's return from the Soviet Union the number of kabuki actors totally committed to the group was small. However, the disappearance of Kokoro-za as a group did not signify the end of left-wing drama by kabuki actors. The Kokoro-za members merely merged with another, larger group of a similar kind, that had just been formed. This was Taishū-za¹. It had been formed by young kabuki actors who had been the first to suffer from a general slump in the entertainments industry in 1929. (This was just part of the influence of the world depression on the Japanese economy.) Within the hierarchical structure of kabuki, the younger actors were the most vulnerable and they were forced to accept salary cuts and in some cases redundancy. They formed a society to protect themselves, the Yūshi-kai² and soon after broke away from commercial kabuki altogether by founding Taishū-za. They were mainly left-wing in political ideology and Kawarasaki Chōjurō has suggested they were not without contact with the illegal Japan Communist Party.³ They established close connections with the proletarian drama movement from the beginning. Ono Miyakichi became an adviser to them and through him Sasaki Takamaru was asked to write plays suitable for the group to produce.⁴

The first production of Taishū-za had its opening night on 27 January 1930. It must have been a long evening, as apart from a new chambara⁵ play written specially by Sasaki Takamaru, an adaptation of Upton Sinclair's Spy in forty-five scenes was also performed. The critics specifically compared the performance with commercial kabuki, and the audience must have found the plays to have many congenial aspects. In this way the role of Kokoro-za in bringing

1. Masses Theatre.

2. Actors Fellowship Society.

3. Toita, Taidan, p.185.

4. Sasaki Fusetsu, p.194.

5. Swordfight.

plays of left-wing content to kabuki audiences was established and furthered by Taishū-za in the early months of 1930. Taishū-za became a member of Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai in February and thus formerly part of the organized left-wing theatre movement.

From the beginning of 1929, with the maturing of Sayoku Gekijō and the developments within Tsukiji Shōgekijō, there had been constant efforts on the part of PROT to bring all shingeki under its control. It achieved this largely with the formation in October of Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai. The drama movement over which it had established this control consisted in the most part of performances of full length, or combined programmes of short, plays in theatres or halls before audiences. Inevitably these performances had taken place exclusively in the towns. The tradition of touring with programmes of short plays, which had started with Toranku Gekijō, had not been discontinued, but the generally acknowledged success of left-wing drama was based on productions such as Bōryokudanki. This last play had been performed in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Subsequent successes - for examples, the two productions of All Quiet on the Western Front - had been played in the Hongo-za and the Imperial Theatre.

Left-wing theatre in 1930 was very different from what it had been four years earlier. It had proved itself capable of drawing large audiences and this had increased its value as a political weapon of persuasion. It had also shown its ability to attract the very class in society which it was dedicated to enlighten and organize through its performances. These successes increased the interest of the police in all left-wing theatre activities, but they also encouraged PROT in the hope that the final achievement of the aim of proletarian drama was not far in the future.

CHAPTER 6.

Plays and Playwrights 1928-1930.

In Chapter 4 it was possible to combine a consideration of the plays by playwrights with a general chronological progression. Murayama Tomoyoshi's period of left-wing creative output followed the high points of Fujimori's and Hisaita's careers as left-wing playwrights during the period being considered. During these two years many Western plays were performed and often re-performed several times. The Second Story Man was an example of this.

Between the beginning of 1928 and the spring of 1930 the situation was different. The 1927 Japanese left-wing plays themselves were frequently repeated, and comparatively few new plays were written and performed. Tsukiji Shōgekijō in 1928 performed seven new plays by Japanese playwrights, but only two were by dramatists who could be called left-wing, and only one of these two dramatists belonged to the central or mainstream left-wing arts movement, as organized under NAPF. Sayoku Gekijō only performed three new Japanese plays in 1928, and only three from the beginning of 1929 to the spring of 1930. Shin Tsukiji Gekidan performed ten new Japanese plays during this time, all but one by playwrights of left-wing views. Six of these were by playwrights at the centre of the proletarian drama movement, but of these six five were performed between September, 1929, and March, 1930, when the influence of Sayoku Gekijō and PROT was strong. This compares with twenty four new left-wing plays (eighteen by mainstream playwrights) performed by the new left-wing groups and Tsukiji Shōgekijō, at a time when the former were divided and weak and the latter had not identified itself with the proletarian arts movement.

Thus apart from the last six months of the period under review here, the writing and performance of plays by playwrights centrally involved in the

left-wing drama movement was not at all at the level of the previous two years. In addition no playwright dominated a part of this period with his plays as had Murayama Tomoyoshi, and to some extent Hisaita Eijirō, during the previous one. 1928 and 1929 were much more years of individual peaks in left-wing drama, and for this reason the treatment of the plays during these years will be chronological rather than by playwright.

Fujimori Seikichi had two plays performed in the first months of 1928, one by Zen'ei Gekijō in January and the other by Tsukiji Shōgekijō in February. The former was revived by Tsukiji Shōgekijō in September, 1929, at the Imperial Theatre. They had both been completed in December, 1927, and were Fujimori's first plays since Haritsuke Mozaemon. In the meantime Fujimori had associated himself formally with Bungei Sensen (February, 1927).

Gizō Kabuken,¹ the first of the two, is a comedy set in 1927 Japan concerning corruption and speculation in stock transactions. The main character, a fat money-lender named Kurosawa, finds that stock certificates he has acquired as security and is about to sell illegally, are forged. He and his broker go to the company concerned, where the forgery is confirmed. Kurosawa decides to try and sell anyway, but is prevented by someone attempting to present more forged certificates. The police are called. Kurosawa's broker tries to persuade a lawyer to attach the money Kurosawa gave for the certificates but fails because of his patron's reputation. Finally Kurosawa hires a gang to rob the police suspect as he is released from custody (because of lack of evidence against him), but is foiled again because the suspect's equally strong friends appear as well. Finally the stage hands chase the actors off the stage to put an end to such a bad play.

Gizō Kabuken is a curious play. That Fujimori himself was not entirely confident about it can be seen in the very obvious attempt to provoke

1. The Forged Stock Certificate. The text used is Fujimori Seikichi, Sōrenki (Shun'yō-do, 1928), pp. 89-140.

laughter by having the stage-hands ('dressed in anything as long as it is properly proletarian'¹) frequently criticize the play. The political defects, when the play is compared with those of Murayama and even with Naniga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka, are glaring, and Zen'ei Gekijō was well aware of this when the play was selected as its second production (after Robin Hood). The selection was made on the basis of it being a play in a new form by Fujimori and being a short comedy that was suitable as a curtain raiser. Criticisms were raised on the grounds that it did not have the (political) significance of the plays the group had performed previously.² Attempts were therefore made to reinforce what political content there was by means of the production itself. The stage hands were to criticize not only the play itself but also the subject matter. The unfortunate police suspect was to be portrayed as a tool of the bourgeoisie, and the two gangs were to be shown to be in collusion.³ Perhaps the greatest indictment of its political significance lies in the fact that not a single line was cut by the censor.

Fujimori's next play, Sōrenki,⁴ written in December, 1927, and performed in February, 1928, was similarly unsatisfactory from a political point of view. It was based on a Chinese legend about a young student who falls in love with a beautiful, upper-class girl. The student discovers she is from the world of the dead and chooses death himself so that he can be with her. They subsequently appear on earth together and are tried for subverting the social order, where the upper classes do not mix with the lower. The workers in the court cheer on the student, while the upper-class ladies present revile him. He refuses to promise not to appear with his

1. Ibid., p.90.

2. Fujita Mitsuo, Dai Ni-kai Kōen Jiko Hihan, Zen'ei, I.iii (March, 1928), 56-7.

3. Ibid..

4. A Record of Mutual Love. The text used is Fujimori Seikichi, Sōrenki (Shun'yō-dō, 1928), pp.1-88.

lover again, and they are both dragged off to hell.

Left-wing critics, such as Yoshida Yoshimasa, were incensed by the fact that Sōrenki was directed by Aoyama Sugisaku, already known as one of the main figures in the artistic group within Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Yoshida did not have a good word to say about the direction in his review of the production.¹ Again the fact that Aoyama agreed to direct it is a testimony to its political innocuousness.

It is difficult to compare these two plays in anything but their political content. Gizō Kabuken was Fujimori's first attempt at comedy and one cannot expect more than caricature and contrived situations. Sōrenki was similar to Haritsuke Mozaemon in its attempt to draw a political moral from a historical or legendary event. However, there was political content inherent in the subject matter of the latter, whereas in the case of Sōrenki it was artificially added in. The 'youth section' of the Merry Men in Robin Hood was a similar artificiality, but the politics it was expressing was of a much more advanced type and it had a definite place in the overall political structure of the whole play. Fujimori had attempted to be experimental in Nani ga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka with the skywriting at the end and he had succeeded because of the shimpa-type realistic quality of the rest of the play. In both Gizō Kabuken and Sōrenki he had abandoned realism for thoroughgoing experimentation that seems to have taken precedence over the expression of his political beliefs. In doing this he could hardly have expected to satisfy the proletarian literary movement in which he was himself already a leading figure.

Both Fujimori's plays were performed by Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Sayoku Gekijō's first bill in March, 1928, contained two revivals of Murayama plays, Shinsuishiki and Yappari Dorei Da, and a new play by Kaji Wataru which was later published in the April issue of Purorotaria Geijutsu.

1. Zen'ei, I.iv (Ap., 1928), 64-5.

Kaji was a member of Marugei and one of its most committed Fukumotoists. During the early months of 1927 he had taken part in a bitter ideological debate with Hayashi Fusao, also a Marugei member but never a Fukumotoist. During this debate Kaji revealed himself as believing uncompromisingly that the political content of a work of art should be given overriding consideration. At one stage of the debate he wrote: '.....art only has secondary significance as something assisting in political exposure which is the key for organizing the masses.....'¹ He and Nakano Shigeharu were the recognized leaders of the Fukumotoists at this time.

Kaji wrote prolifically during the second half of 1927, both theoretical articles on proletarian literature and his own creative works. He published a play in Puroretaria Geijutsu in December 1927 and followed this with the play performed by Sayoku Gekijō.

The first play was entitled simply 1927.² It was set in contemporary Japan. It concerns a family which is gradually ruined by the attacks on it by the forces inimical to the petit bourgeois and working classes. The father of the family works in a local government office and therefore belongs to the former class. The second son of the family takes part in political activities and the father throws him out after a complaint from the dean of his university. (A colleague of the father is attacked by a gang for distributing women's liberation leaflets.) The daughter is expelled from her mission school because she has been seen associating with her brother. The landlord throws the whole family out of their home. The eldest son is killed in Manchuria. The father is driven to drink and the mother dies. But the daughter has found new life; the old things have been swept away, she knows that she is living in a revolutionary age and that violent changes must come.

1. Shea, Leftwing Literature, p.146.

2. The text used is Puroretaria Geijutsu, I.iv, 75-100.

The play is a neat catalogue of all that can happen to an ordinary family in a capitalist state. It contains deliberate incitements arbitrarily inserted into the text. There is a scene unconnected with the plot (although intimately connected with the political theme) showing a queue outside a bank that is not being opened that day. A crowd gathers and someone says that if anything started now, it would be like the Rice Riots of 1918. This is only one of several examples. There are other places where direct political instruction is inserted into the dialogue. The tenancy laws are discussed in the first scene. The play as a whole would strangely appear to be directed towards a petit bourgeois audience rather than one of workers. There is also strong suggestion that students play a highly important part in revolutionary activities and this is in line with Kaji's political beliefs.

This is clearly a play which is very different from those of Kaji's fellow Fukumotoist, Hisaita Eijirō. Hisaita had carefully incorporated his political ideas into the structure of his plays. Kaji does not do this in 1927. Although there is a progression of tragic events for this family, the final transformation of the situation into revolutionary hope takes place only in the last few seconds. Kaji seems to have been carried away not only by his political beliefs but also by the personal feelings that had been aroused by them. He uses the play as a platform on which to attack and ridicule his enemies. He does this in the crudest way by simply using ideographs for names of characters which are homonymous with those in the names of his enemies. This was common in Japan, but in a play in performance even the slightest satirical disguise is lost. In 1927 Hayashi Fusao is attacked in this way. There is also a similar attack on Tomoda Kyōsuke of Tsukiji Shōgekijō, who is portrayed as a dandy anxious to make an

artistic play out of the miserable circumstances of the family. With 1927 the proletarian play as a crude instrument of political indoctrination came into being.

1927 was followed by Arashi,¹ which concerned a strike already three months old at the beginning of the play. Again it is a play which warns of all the dangers of a strike: the weakening effect of seeing one's children steal food from shops because they are starving, the treachery of labour unions not led by the Communist Party, the bribing of strike-breakers, etc.. The politics is the same, except that less emphasis is placed on student participation. In this play, however, Kaji has paid more attention to structure. Scenes showing dispirited strikers are alternated with scenes or passages which show that not all hope is lost. The final revolutionary climax is reached after a build-up which spreads over three scenes.

There is just as much didacticism on political subjects in this play as in its predecessor, especially in its obvious attempt to show union members that their unions should not be afraid of Communism. The exaggerations and caricatures are the same. It appears, however, that Kaji had seen the need to make a play performance something more than a speech meeting and had at least begun to modify his ideas on the necessity to subordinate art to politics. There is no contemporary comparison of Arashi with Martin du Gard's Miner which was on a similar subject and being regularly performed by proletarian groups during 1927 and 1928. Almost all the same problems are treated in the latter play, but it does not give the impression of a political pamphlet, as does Arashi. There is a clear attempt at characterization which is entirely lacking in Kaji's play. The comparison is only made here to illustrate the extent to which the art and technique of play-writing were disregarded by Kaji. This was, however, consistent with his ideas on the arts, for which he was able to offer in print abundant theoretical justification. Given the circumstances of the growth of the

1. Storm. The text used is Puroretaria Geijutsu, II.iv (April, 1928), 109-34.

proletarian cultural movement, it was inevitable that a playwright like Kaji should appear in the Japanese proletarian drama movement.

At about the same time that Arashi was being performed at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, a theoretical article was published which immediately took over the authoritative position of Shizen Seichō to Mokuteki Ishiki-ron. The article was by Kurahara Korehito and it was published in the first issue of the official organ of NAPF, Senki.¹ It is quoted in all books on the proletarian literary movement and there are many testimonies to its influence. Its title was Puroretaria Rearizumu e no Michi.² In this article Kurahara defines 'realism' as objective and in doing so he contrasts it with idealism. Realism has appeared at various times as a result of class struggles. Bourgeois realism and Naturalism are both based in an expression of the individual. They are two types of 'modern realism'. The third is proletarian realism. The first two types of realism have a limitation in that it is not possible to consider the individual separately from his environment. A proletarian realist must look at the problems of the individual from a social point of view. And this social point of view must be based on the premise that the class struggle is the unquestioned historical determinant. The proletarian writer must look at the world and describe it with the eyes of the proletarian vanguard. This is the only way to become a proletarian realist. Having adopted this standpoint, the writer will naturally wish to describe the class struggle of the proletariat, ignoring other, unnecessary, subjects. 'We must discover in reality the things which are worthy of our subjectivity, the class subjectivity of the proletariat.' This is the only path to proletarian realism.³

There are strong undertones of Fukumotoism in this article and this

1. Battle Flag.

2. The Path to Proletarian Realism.

3. Senki, I.1 (May, 1928), 11-20. (The article is dated 8 April, just two weeks after the founding of NAPF. The magazine would have been on sale during the last ten days of April.)

was to characterize much of Kurahara's subsequent writing.¹ The message is clear. There was to be no compromise over the political position of the writer. In the Japan of April, 1928, this excluded all those whose standpoint differed from that of the illegal Japan Communist Party. The adoption of this ideology would then solve the major literary problems the writer might face.

Before any other new left-wing plays of any major importance could be performed, Tsukiji Shōgekijō put on a play which is recognized as one of the best shingeki plays ever written. The playwright was Kubota Mantarō and the title Odera Gakkō.² In the Taishō period Kubota had been associated with the Romanticist magazine Subaru and the Shirakaba group at Keio University, of which he was a graduate. He later joined Engeki Shinchō, and he was one of the playwrights who protested about having been rejected by Tsukiji Shōgekijō at its inception.

He was already publishing plays in Subaru in 1910 during his student days. He also wrote novels and poetry and had already acquired a considerable reputation as a writer by the early 1920s. He published Odera Gakkō in 1927 and it was recommended to Tsukiji Shōgekijō by Osanai Kaoru. It was decided to perform it, against the opposition of the left-wing members of the group, and Aoyama Sugisaku directed.³

The play concerns the owner of a small private school that is about to be swept away by the advance of material progress. Odera (the owner) is similar to Hanzō of Tōson's Yoske Mae (published in 1929) in his inability to realize the necessity of changing as the world around him changes. He maintains rigidly traditional standards in the school curricula and in personal relationships within the school. When the school is threatened, he attempts to save it by appealing to individuals on the basis of such personal relation-

1. In fairness to Kurahara it must be stated that this was also the tendency of the most powerful group of Soviet writers (the Onlitguardists). Herman Ermolaev, Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934 (University of California Press, 1963), pp.55-72.

2. Odera School.

3. Mizushima, Osanai Kaoru, pp.242-3.

ships, especially on and giri. He fails because to those he approaches, other considerations are more important. Odera's failure is complete but he is oblivious of it.

Odera Gakkō is an adaptation of a novel Kubota had published in 1923, and he was forced to defend this. He did so in the Yomiuri Shimbun by claiming that there was a qualitative difference between the usual adaptations of famous novels and an adaptation that one did oneself of one's own novel.¹ The play bears no traces of being an adaptation, apart from the subject matter. It has none of the faults of the many adaptations that were and still are performed constantly in Japan. On the contrary it embodies the meticulous attention to the technical aspects of playwriting - the sound quality of the words, the stage directions and the use of the pause - for which Kubota has since become famous.² In addition, in its sustained atmosphere and characterization it was a model play, and it might have had a lasting influence on shingeki if it had appeared two years earlier. By the end of 1928, however, a play such as Odera Gakkō could only be derided by the left-wing drama movement, already almost monopolizing the development of shingeki at this time.

It was not only playwrights like Kubota who were unacceptable. One of the plays on the programme of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan's first production (in May, 1929) was by Kaneko Yōbun, an early pioneer in the left-wing literary movement. We have seen, however, how he was removed from the movement because his social-democratic ideas had fallen behind the ideological advances of the new leaders. The performance of his play was either condemned or ignored by critics associated with NAPF.

Neither this play, entitled Tobu Uta³, nor Mendori⁴, performed earlier

1. Quoted in Kubota Mantarō, Shibai Shugyō (Mita Bungaku Shuppan-bu, 1943), pp.245-50.

2. Ōgi Naotarō, Kaisetsu, Gendai Nihon Gikyoku Senshū, vi.403.

3. Flying Songs.

4. The Hen.

by Zen'ei-za was very outspoken politically. Mendori was a satire on traditional relationships in a village community, and Tobu Uta criticized the Meiji Restoration for not having resulted in any great benefits to the people as a whole. Both plays were performed by shimpa groups. The overall slow pace of both, and in the case of Tobu Uta, a three act play, the breaks in the continuity of the overall pace, suggest performance by actors trained in commercial theatre technique. Tobu Uta caused particular difficulties to the Shin Tsukiji actors.¹

Just over a month after the last performance of Tobu Uta in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō a theatrical event was to happen in the same theatre that finally confirmed the indisputable hegemony of proletarian drama, organized in PROT, over the whole shingeki movement. This was the production by Sayoku Gekijō of a new play by Murayama Tomoyoshi entitled Bōryokudanki.²

Bōryokudanki (or Zensen, as it was retitled for this production) was set in China in 1923.³ The subject is a strike which took place on the Peking Hankow Railway. The play opens, however, with a yakuza scene that must have been familiar to the audience from much commercial drama. Pō-san is preparing some recruits to his oyabun, Chu's, gang, for the initiation ceremony. He explains some yakuza language to them, and a demonstration of this language takes place when Pō-san and To-po, who has entered, satisfy each other that they are both members of the same gang by secret words and expressions. This scene is followed by one in which the new recruits are harangued by Chu and an outsider, Fen, who says that although China must unite against the foreign aggressors, it is more important for them, with the

1. Ozaki Hirotsugu and Ibaraki Ken, Hijikata Yoshi, p.133.

2. Ibid., p.139. The importance of Bōryokudanki in shingeki history is universally recognized by historians of the movement.

3. The text used is Senki, II.vii (July, 1929), 101-50.

co-operation of capitalists and the police, to smash the union which is about to be formed by the railway workers. The plot thickens in the final scene of the first act as Chu is summoned to meet local army and police chiefs so that the three of them can draw up a joint plan for preventing the founding meeting of the union. In Act II we see the union organizers in a delegates' meeting on the eve of the founding meeting, which in the meantime has been banned by the police. Speeches are made with interjections from the floor, and a resolution is passed to hold the founding meeting notwithstanding threats from the police. The second and last scene of Act II takes place in the same room, after the founding meeting. The gang is vandalizing the room and leaves as the delegates return. The building is surrounded by police and in a state of siege the union delegates decide on a strike and set up the necessary organization. At the beginning of Act III the strike has started and the scene is the hovel of one of the delegates. Two passengers who have had to leave the last train are brought in to rest. Three representatives of the railway management (two of them members of Chu's gang) also come to 'encourage' the strikers, and it appears that one of the passengers - a young woman - has previously been wronged by one of the gang members. At the end of the scene a summons comes to a meeting of strikers to consider a plot by the police. A striker is hidden from pursuing police in the next scene; the bribery of townsmen by the police is described; a delegate is brought in by the police, exhausted by torture, and is about to call off ^{the} strike, when the policemen handle his wife roughly, causing him to rally his strength. A train approaches - the sound of a moving train is a terrible blow to the striking railway workers, and this would not have been lost on the audience. The train is filled with soldiers. Act IV begins with a long scene showing the gangsters falling out among themselves; and the play's last scene takes place on the station as the strikers and the military police confront each other. Someone announces

that the striker earlier tortured has been killed behind the police station by the yakuza. The strikers surge forward and the soldiers shoot. Darkness. A voice cries out that their strike has failed in the face of violence, but succeeded in that the basis for a national union has been created. "Destroy the militarists! Destroy Imperialism! A workers' and peasants' government for ever!"

The success of the play in terms of the audiences it attracted has been described in the previous chapter. Critical comment from the proletarian literary movement itself was very limited. Senki, the official organ of NAPP, had already changed from being primarily concerned with literature. During 1929 it became much more a general left-wing journal with the majority of its articles on political, economic and social subjects. It still published original literary works. Critical comment, however, was minimal, and in spite of Bōryokudanki's success no assessment of it appeared in its pages. Puroretaria Geijutsu and Zen'ei had ceased publication on the formation of NAPP. PROT did not yet have its own organ.

Kubo Sakae, of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, was already by 1929 becoming noticed for his criticism of performances of Western, especially German, plays. He had also written both novels and plays himself and was soon to write the most famous socialist-realist play of the mid-1930s, Kazambaichi. He contributed a criticism of Bōryokudanki to the theatre magazine Gekijōgai (August, 1929).

Kubo begins by saying there can be no doubt that Bōryokudanki is Murayama's best work and accordingly one of the most prominent works of proletarian literature. He then praises the play on three counts. Firstly the subject, a recent historical actuality, is a most suitable one for proletarian drama, and to have perceived this is the first thing to praise

the author for. The violent oppression by the military cliques of the working class and the activities of their henchmen - the professional gangs - are exactly the things that the Japanese working class is fighting against, and can therefore be expected to call forth a ready response. Kubo then specifies characters in the play who can be identified with the main enemies of the working class in Japan - the Metropolitan Chief of Police, etc.. Secondly Murayama is irrevocably eliminating all traces of his Dadaist past and is creating a dramaturgy with which he can appeal to people with a comparatively low level of (political) consciousness while not compromising on the thoroughness of his treatment of proletarian subjects. Thirdly Kubo comments on the balance between the individual and the group in the play: the various characters representing the two main groups (the gang and the workers) are not too individualistic; nor on the other hand are they too submerged in the groups themselves. Kubo also has reservations about the play. He would have preferred more of the points at which there is direct conflict between the gang and the workers to be shown on the stage, rather than referred to indirectly. He makes this criticism from the point of view of 'exposure tactics' and agitational effect. He also feels that the whirlwind organization of the railway workers should have been depicted on stage, instead of it being inferred from the delegates' meeting the first time the workers appear on stage. The young worker who is killed does not appear until the third act, and it is poor not to show his previous connection with the union. Further, two historical facts are central to the theme - that the workers' blood was not shed in vain and that the foundation for a national union was laid. This is the conclusion that the audience want to hear. It was unsatisfactory for these facts simply to be part of the last speech of the play uttered in darkness; they should have been an organic part of the play.¹

1. Kubo Sakae, 'Zensen' o Miru, Kubo Sakae Zenshū, v. 237-40.

Kurahara Korehito, the author of *Puroretaria Rearizumu e no Michi*, had only praise for the work. In an often quoted contemporary criticism in the journal Nihon Bungaku he described Bōryokudanki as the best proletarian play yet written. Murayama had gradually eliminated the intellectual quality of many of his plays and he was in the process of mastering really revolutionary content and an artistic form to express it which was of the masses.¹ If Murayama were to write three or four more such plays, he could become a proletarian dramatist of world standing.²

From the leading theorist of proletarian literature at the time this was praise indeed, and it undoubtedly encouraged the lack of adverse criticism among subsequent critics. Kubo, however, was writing not only as a promising theorist but also as a practical man of the theatre, having been associated with Tsukiji Shōgekijō for three years. He was also writing as a proletarian author himself.

Apart from the tragic ending of the strike in defeat (as Sugai notes³), the politics of the play are irreproachable, if less detailed than in Arashi. The subject matter marks a break with Murayama's previous plays. It still shows his reluctance to base a play entirely in his own imagination; but he has chosen the only type of non-fiction subject that would be suitable for a proletarian play in 1929. Kubo realizes this and praises it. A subject taken directly from a recent event in Japanese history was liable to be heavily cut by the censor. Bōryokudanki escaped this, while presenting a situation that had an obvious counterpart in contemporary Japan.

Kubo makes another point which has considerable significance in the development of proletarian literary theory as applied to drama. He mentions the balance between the individual and the group. If Murayama really succeeded in creating this, and a reading of the play would suggest that he did, Bōryokudanki deserves a place in any list of proletarian literary

1. Taishū-teki.

2. Quoted in Sugai Yukio, Engeki no Dentō to Gendai, p.416. Sugai himself has nothing but praise for Bōryokudanki.

3. Ibid.

masterpieces. Almost simultaneously with Bōryokudanki there was published in Senki a novel that was to become acknowledged as the greatest proletarian novel. This was Kobayashi Takiji's Kani Kōsen, and in writing it Kobayashi had striven to create a novel based on groups rather than individual characters. He had done this at least partly in reaction to his previous work, March 15, 1927, which had consisted entirely of individual portraits of left-wing people in gaol. The idea of substituting groups for individual characters appears to have been Kobayashi's own, and it perhaps marks the point where a writer had gone ahead, at least technically, of contemporary theory. If the structure of a literary work was to be a microcosm of the revolutionary process, it was logical for the characters to be portrayed in groups that were themselves microcosms of the conflicting classes in society.

Kurahara, however, considered at the time that Kobayashi had gone too far. The problem for the proletarian writer was one of establishing the individual within the group. Kani Kōsen could have been a greater work if Kobayashi had 'described the character and psychology of the individuals as representatives of various classes.'¹ From this point of view one should perhaps consider Bōryokudanki greater than Kani Kōsen as a work of proletarian literature. But whether this is so or not, it is significant that, almost certainly independently, two writers of proletarian literature, both very conscious of the necessity of pushing forward their own development as proletarian writers, had worked out this new method of embodying required political content into their works.

Kubo Sakae's other comments are interesting in that they look forward to the development of proletarian literary theory after the collapse of the organized movement in 1934. They are all basically critical of a play which

1. Quoted in Shea, Leftwing Literature, p.322.

does not make everything explicit on stage. Total explicitness was the hallmark of the later literature of socialist realism, of which Kubo was one of the most famous practitioners.

Miyoshi Jūrō's Kizu-darake O-Aki¹ (performed by Shin Tsukiji Gekidan in November, 1929, on tour, and January, 1930, in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō) did not attempt the same level of political content and form as Bōryokudanki. It was only Miyoshi's second play and although it proved him a considerable playwright, as a proletarian play Kizu-darake O-Aki was bound to be overshadowed by Murayama's acknowledged masterpiece. It concerns a young girl, O-Aki, forced into prostitution to help her younger brother, whose eyesight has been irreparably ruined by close work in a factory. She is also having to do the work of a friend, Sawako, who has contracted venereal disease. Their misfortunes under a harsh Madame are complicated further by an importunate customer and O-Aki's relationship with Sakai, a key figure in a seamen's strike that is taking place. In the end Sakai draws strength from O-Aki's character and goes to his union headquarters confident of victory.

Sugai Yukio comments that Miyoshi is correct in his understanding that prostitution arises from the contradictions of capitalist society, and that our interest is naturally turned towards the author's treatment of the various problems that prostitution causes. We are disappointed because Miyoshi is primarily concerned with his heroine as a human being.² The director attempted to supply the political deficiency by portraying O-Aki as a true Marxist, avoiding anarchism, Nihilism and decadence, and believing in final victory through a consciousness acquired as a result of a correct appraisal of her experiences.³

Kizu-darake O-Aki is a play peopled by human beings, as Bōryokudanki is not. Miyoshi has taken great care with all the character portrayals in

1. Scarred O-Aki. The text used is Senki, I.v (Sept., 1928), 37-44.

2. Sugai Yukio, Engeki no Dentō to Gendai, p.417.

3. Quoted in ibid..

his play, and the relationships between the characters are convincingly real because of the admixture of traditional features. This is particularly so in the case of O-Aki's relationship with Sawako. Kizu-darake O-Aki is marked more by the playwright's sensitivity to humanity than by his political consciousness.

The last original play to be considered in this chapter is again by Fujimori Seikichi. The title is Hōki¹ and the subject is similar to that of Haritsuke Mozaemon. The farmers of an area near Lake Biwa rise against an oppressive lord who is about to carry out yet another survey of his lands with a view to justifying increased taxation. His local forces are no match for the large numbers of farmers and he has to flee for his life. Caught, he is only spared by the intervention of the farmers' representatives, who obtain from him a written and sealed guarantee that there will never again be any surveys. But it is only a trick, and the shogunal government itself issues orders for stern punishment of the offenders. Hundreds of farmers are arrested and tortured. Two trials of the representatives are shown, one local and one in the shogun's capital. The representatives are steadfast to the end, preferring death to false confession under torture, but there is no justice for them.

Very few people saw the play as performed by Shin Tsukiji Gekidan in February, 1930. The published text itself was heavily cut by the censor, and when the script for performance was submitted to the censor, it was reduced to one third of its original length. Newspapers referred to Hōki, erroneously, as having been banned, and as a result audiences were very poor.² Little interest was shown by left-wing reviewers either in the published play or its performance.

Kubo Sakae, however, writing in February 1931, discerned in it an

1. Uprising. The text used is Fujimori Seikichi, Hōki (Nihon Hyōron-sha, 1930), pp.1-175.

2. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.89.

an important political advance on Haritsuke Mozaemon. In an article on historical drama he examines the implications of Kurahara's proletarian realism for playwrights who choose historical subjects. Given that one is a playwright trying to write according to the rules of proletarian realism, one should not take an historical subject that needs to be distorted for it to have an obvious relevance to the present day, but one should select a subject that has this quality in itself. Although it is not explicitly stated by Kubo, the idea of relevance to the present day seems to be linked with a concept of universality, for he then compares Haritsuke Mozaemon and Hōki in these terms. Both describe 'spontaneous' farmers' revolts, but the former concerns the abnormal oppressiveness of one local lord. An appeal to the highest authority finally, but too late, rectifies the injustice committed. Hōki, by contrast, while it begins with a revolt against local oppression, makes it clear at the beginning of Act IV that the farmers are oppressed, as a normal state of affairs, by the feudal system as a whole, headed by the shogun. Thus Kubo finds that Hōki has much more to teach its audiences (Japan officially still being defined as a feudal country) than Haritsuke Mozaemon, and he prefers it.¹

The political differences between the two plays are so obvious that they clearly represent a continuing attempt by Fujimori to improve on the political shortcomings of his previous plays. Apart from the treatment of the subject matter in a way which dictated the structure of the last act of the play, there are frequent direct references in the text to the bakufu and the system it represents, as the real enemies of the farmers (and there were many more in the passages forbidden by the censor). Hōki as a whole is much more a political exercise than any of Fujimori's previous plays. The

1. Rakishigeki no Mondai, Zenshū, v. 373-9.

artificial arrangement of the farmers' meeting for dramatic effect in Haritsuke Mosaemon was noted in Chapter 4. In Hōki all meetings are properly disciplined and models of political discussion. Instead of fabricating a climax by keeping the hero silent, in Hōki a consensus is arrived at after ideas have been produced dialectically. In every respect Fujimori has tried to write a play which would be acceptable to a proletarian literary movement that regarded Proletarian Realism as its guiding theory.

In technique, however, the play is still firmly based in Japanese commercial drama. The cast numbered over 500 and the total strength of Sayoku Gekijō and Kokoro-za had to be mustered for the production.¹ The crowd scenes could only have been staged in a commercial theatre, especially as some of them involved a crowd outside a building and action happening simultaneously inside the building. Communications between those outside and those inside are very reminiscent of shimpa, in their obvious unreality within a general environment of meticulous reality required in the stage directions.

While all the left-wing plays discussed here were originally written in play form, adaptations of left-wing novels were also important to the proletarian drama movement. Three were performed in the period under review and of these one was counted an even greater success than Bōryokudanki. This was the adaptation of Tokunaga Sunao's novel Taiyō no Nai Machi and the Sayoku Gekijō production of February 1930 was the high point of the proletarian drama movement up to the Second General Meeting of PROT.

The adaptation of Tokunaga's novel was done by Fujita Mitsuo.² It differs in many respects from the novel. It is open to the criticism of

1. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.89.

2. It is usually referred to as a joint adaptation by Fujita and Ono Miyakichi. As Fujita explains in the programme, however, Ono fell ill just at the time when it had to be written and the work was almost entirely done by Fujita. Fujita Mitsuo, 'Taiyō no Nai Machi' no Kyakushoku ni tsuite, Sayoku Gekijō Pamfuretto, 11, 12.

episodicism, as are all such adaptations, and Fujita admits in his programme note that this is a weakness.¹ Taiyō no Nai Machi is itself a loosely woven novel. However, the various incidents are linked by the strong central theme of the strike which gives the whole novel a dramatic interest. Although the adaptation uses the actual dialogue of the novel in many places, it does not seem to achieve the novel's unity.

There is considerable caricature in the treatment of the characters and although this is again likely to occur in such adaptations, there is less justification for it here. Fujita's play is not a compressed version of the whole novel. It concentrates on a full portrayal of a number of the novel's incidents, and it is not necessary to suggest character types by the economical method of caricature. Ōkawa's affirmation of his unchanging attitude towards his striking workers after one of them has attacked him, is not in the novel and is unnecessary in the context of the play.² In addition there are aspects of the play which suggest shimpa technique. In Act II, scene 3, Miyaike (one of the heroes) appears on the bridge outside the home of his mistress (also a striker). He hesitates over entering and the stage directions suggest this should be made obvious by movements alternatively towards and away from the house. While he is thus hesitating, some water is thrown out of the front door and his feet are splashed. None of this is in the novel, whereas it is the type of incident that finds a ready response in shimpa audiences.

More interesting is the general principle behind the adaptation itself. In his programme note Fujita writes:

'My plan before commencing this adaptation was to keep away from the

1. Ibid.

2. The text used is PROT Iinkai ed., Puroretaria Gikyoku Sōsho (Shin'ei-sha, 1930), 11.181-262.

original as much as possible and by incorporating episodes not in the novel which actually happened at the time in the strike, to give a more real¹ life to the popular character² of the novel. For this purpose I planned to visit one by one those Kyōdō Insatsu strikers who were in Tokyo at the present time.³ Later he reminds members of the audience that one of these strikers may be sitting next to them and he claims that the characters in the play have about them an entirely new reality⁴ beyond that in any other play up to that time.⁵

Fujita states that he did not have time to pay the visits he intended, but we are told that Kyōdō Insatsu strikers attended rehearsals and made comments on the play.⁶ In this way Fujita, while utilizing whole dialogue passages of the novel, attempted to change it into an accurate representation of what actually happened in the strike. In doing this he seems to have confused realism in the sense of photographic reproduction and the realism that had been accepted as the guiding principle of proletarian literature. In the play the strike collapses with the factory fire frame-up and the arrest of almost all the (left-wing) strike leaders. In the closing seconds titles are flashed up:

' A strike organization with no-one left.....

But..... then.....

From Kyūshū, from Shikoku, from Hokkaidō....

5,000 supporters and ¥30,000.....

To the Street without Sun.....

To the Street without Sun..... '

The novel ends with the meeting at which the now numerically stronger right-

1. Genjitsu ni.

2. Taishū-sei, literally 'mass character.' A term used at this time to indicate the quality of appealing to the masses because it depicted them 'correctly', that is, according to the prevailing Marxist theory.

3. Taiyō no Nai Machi no Kyakushoku ni tsuite, ibid., 12.

4. Genjitsu, as above.

5. Ibid., 13.

6. Yamamoto Yasue, Sugao, quoted in Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.198.

wing group is successful in passing a resolution effectively calling off the strike. The younger members and some of the women object and after a scuffle carry off the strike flag. Even if we suppose that Fujita's ending represents a more accurate description of what actually happened, Tokunaga's is more in line with the demands of proletarian realism. The fight will continue, carried on by the young, left-wing vanguard, identified with Hyōgikai which had led the strike. In the play the strike is utterly shattered and the titles are only a weak device, similar but even less effective than the voice from the darkness at the end of Bōryokudanki, to suggest that good came of it. The last scene of the novel has its own dramatic qualities in the clash between the young radicals whose spirit is still not broken and those who have given in to the enemy.¹

The Taiyō no Nai Machi adaptation posed the dilemma of proletarian drama. It did not have the technical qualities which gave Bōryokudanki its reputation; it would seem to be less politically sound than either the former play or the novel from which it was adapted; in spite of the considerable debate over proletarian literary theory that had been continuing now for over two years, it seemed, at least in intention, to embody a confusion between the realism of that theory and the reportage realism of such early left-wing works as Hosoi Wakizo's Jokō Aishi; there were also passages which suggest the popular techniques of the shimpa commercial theatre. On the other hand, it was the most successful proletarian play up to that time. Many people were turned away every night of its performance and it attracted large numbers of workers who had never been to see proletarian theatre before. Murayama, who directed, refers to the proportion of the total audience occupied by workers as over 80%.² Accounts of the performance describe the enthusiastic reception the play received from these

1. It is remotely possible that there was a political explanation for the change of ending. Tokunaga's ending could conceivably have been accused of Fukumotoism (indeed the novel was ecstatically praised by Nakano Shigeharu) and Fujita himself had been in Zengei.

2. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Hitotsu no Ashiato, Yonjūnen, p.144.

audiences, who were clearly involved in the action on the stage. Politically it appears to have been very successful, to the extent that it encouraged political discussion among the workers in the audiences. Some of them would assemble in groups at individual homes after the performances and discuss until dawn the political implications of the play for Japanese society in 1930.¹ Everyone praised the Taiyō no Nai Machi production as an epochal event in proletarian theatre history. It was perhaps an indication that in the theatre at least success depended on many factors, some quite outside the recommendations and principles of the contemporary proletarian literary movement.

All the plays considered so far in this chapter have been long enough to be staged alone, or at least as half of a full evening's entertainment. Left wing playwrights during these years had mainly been concerned with the problems of writing substantial plays according to certain political requirements or at least with a certain political consciousness. Performances of long plays, however, suffered considerably because of the system of censorship and could involve the groups producing them in heavy financial losses. As we have seen, one answer to this problem was shorter plays with a minimum of scenery that toured to areas where it was judged most profitable for them politically to be. Sayoku Gekijō carried out this kind of dramatic activity extensively, thus preserving the original tradition of Toranku Gekijō. Many of the short plays with which it toured, had originally been in the repertory of Toranku Gekijō.

Short plays, however, still depended mainly on complete performance for their political effect. The slogans and slogan-like items of dialogue in Kaji Wataru's plays no doubt produced their own effect, but they were themselves set within the context of the play and were also the lines most likely to be censored. There were a few attempts to overcome this disadvantage by means of comic sketches which were essentially a series of short passages linked loosely by a general theme. The most notable of these in the period under review was Murayama Tomoyoshi's adaptation of a 16th century satire by Hans Sachs. This was performed by Sayoku Gekijō in January 1930 after productions of the original play in translation during the previous

1. Interview with Imai Kiichi, printing worker, 14 Aug., 1966.

year. The title in Japanese was Baka no Ryōchi.¹ Most of the action is taken up with a stomach operation being performed by a proletarian doctor. Various baka are pulled out of the patient's stomach (some only after a considerable struggle). One that has apparently been affecting the patient for a long time does not read Musansha Shimbun or do picket duty or manage to stay awake when reading union notices. This baka and the others which are found subsequently are destroyed immediately, and the patient becomes a new man.

Baka no Ryōchi represents a transitional stage in the development of short drama forms in Japan and only a few similar plays were written afterwards. It did not have a tight structure, but there was some thematic unity. It was a complete play. By contrast in Europe at this time other experiments with small-scale drama were being conducted. In Germany and Russia, under the influence of artistic movements which were breaking down the barriers between individual genres, those who were concerned in political theatre had evolved drama forms that primarily consisted of a loose unity of separate pieces spanning the whole range of the performing arts. One of the terms generally used to describe this drama was 'Living Newspaper'.

The Japanese left-wing drama movement had first been introduced to the Living Newspaper² in the series of articles on Soviet drama by Shukov in the magazine Puroretaria Geijutsu in 1927 and early 1928.³ Shukov had described how the form had had several years development in the Soviet Union. It was essentially a collage of short items - ranging from dramatic sketches, through songs and speeches (by actors) to the reading of telegrams of fraternal greeting. The content was usually topical.

In the second issue of NAPF's new official organ, Senki, a long article appeared by Senda Koreya entitled Doitsu no Rōdōsha Engeki ni Kan-

1. Treatment for Fools.

2. In Japanese it was translated as Ikita Shimbun.

3. Especially, II.ii (Feb., 1928).

suru Oboekaki.¹ It began with translations of selected passages about workers' drama from articles which gave instructions about propaganda activities (propaganda, that is, on behalf of the German Communist Party - in the text the Japanese ideograph for Party is only represented by a cross, but the German Partei appears several times, apparently safe from the censor). It had taken a few years for plays to be accepted as a means of propaganda in Germany; now it must be realized that plays as such were not necessary, and were even undesirable if the group concerned was not capable technically of performing them. Shorter entertainment forms were more suitable, especially the sprechchor, choral speaking with actions. Above all the composition of a programme consisting of such short items must be suitable to the occasion. A Living Newspaper was excellent when a topical entertainment was required.

The translations are followed by Senda's own comments, which are mainly concerned with emphasizing the pre-eminently important role of the factory cell in propaganda work. He then recounts his impressions on watching this type of dramatic entertainment, and it is clear that the sprechchor has fired his imagination. He is deeply impressed by its dramatic effect and describes several examples. In one of these (for which he provides a diagram) the holder of a Red Flag becomes weaker and weaker as diagonal lines of workers behind him chant about capitalist exploitation; he falls to the ground; all shout 'Rise!' and the chanting builds up to a crescendo. Senda is excited by the potentiality of the sprechchor as a new drama form and he recommends it strongly to the proletarian drama movement in Japan.

In the October 1928 issue of Senki there appeared the first article by a Japanese concerning Living Newspaper. It contained a brief description of

1. Notes on German Workers' Drama. Senki, I.ii (July, 1928), 148-74.

the form, quoting from the Shukov articles, and urging the development of Japanese Living Newspaper as soon as possible. The author included translations of two German Living Newspaper sketches, taken from a left-wing magazine Das Proletarische Kind. The first showed foreign capitalists fishing in a Chinese river, a Chinese bourgeois being friendly with them, Chinese peasants wearing posters with slogans painted on them, the pushing aside of the capitalists and the bourgeois, and finally a revolutionary song sung by the peasants. The second simply consisted of imaginary radio broadcasts from various countries of the world (spoken by actors through megaphones on a stage with a paper radio receiver and loudspeaker, wires and actor technician), ending with a message from Moscow and the Internationale.¹

This article was followed by an account of Soviet revolutionary theatre, written by Sugimoto Ryōkichi. It concerned the workers' Drama Clubs, formed in factories and work places, and the theatrical activity of the Red Guards. In the article emphasis was placed on new forms of drama, especially forms like Living Newspaper, which were taken to the workers' and farmers' communities.² The same issue of Senki carried a second article by Senda, devoted entirely to the work of Erwin Piscator.³

The December issue of Senki contained a section entitled Ikita Shimbun.⁴ It consisted of two short stories, little connected with the Living Newspaper of the Soviet Union or Germany. It is possible that the two stories were meant simply to provide subject matter for dramatization into a Living Newspaper, but only the second one would have been at all suitable. No mention is made of the various elements of a Living Newspaper as described by Shukov and as embodied in the German Living Newspapers that had appeared in trans-

1. Gondahara Matsuzō, 'Ikita Shimbun' no Jitsurei, Senki, I.v (Oct., 1928), 120-25.

2. Sugimoto Ryōkichi, Rōnō Roshia no Kurabu Engeki, Sono Hoka, Senki, I.v 126-32.

3. Ibid., pp.156-71.

4. Senki, I.vii, 96-109.

lation. There is no indication why the term Ikita Shimbun should have been used to designate this section of the journal, but the prominence it was given on the contents page suggests that even if it was not understood, it was already felt to have an important place in the Japanese revolutionary vocabulary.

An Ikita Shimbun section was also included in the January 1929 issue of Senki. It spread over twenty-three pages and was even more prominent in the contents pages, as it contained six separate titles. The February issue had a similar section. Again there was no indication that the material was intended for theatrical use. An editorial note at the end of the January issue, however, makes it clear that there had been a misunderstanding. The note appeals for short narratives of real episodes from the Japanese revolutionary struggle for this 'documentary' section.¹ The section was continued in succeeding issues of Senki, but by June, 1929, the mistake had been discovered, and the section was retitled 'Reporter'.

No further mention was made of Living Newspaper or other similar drama forms in the pages of Senki before the Second General Meeting of PROT. Many reasons can be suggested for this. In general, however, articles concerning drama were limited during the second half of 1929. As we have seen, 1929 was the heyday of the long proletarian work - Taiyō no Nai Machi, Kani Kōsen, and Bōryokudanki were all written during this year and all published in Senki. At the same time Senki was in the process of changing from being an arts magazine into fulfilling a more directly political role. The combination of successful creative works with urgent political tasks in an increasingly hostile environment may well have discouraged the editors from articles on new, experimental forms. This seems to be confirmed by the only substantial section on drama to appear in Senki during the second half of 1929. This was

1. Henshu Kōki, Senki, II.i, 212.

a reprint of a part of the Sayoku Gekijō programme for Bōryokudanki. The greater part of it consisted of an article by Ono Miyakichi urging factory workers and farmers to use drama themselves for agitational and propaganda purposes. Basic techniques of staging are explained, but it is only suggested that plays as such be performed. Experimentation with new forms is not encouraged.¹

Thus although discussion of types of drama other than the long play was being initiated within the movement, the years 1928-1930 derive their reputation as the 'golden age' of Japanese proletarian drama from the fact that on a number of occasions theatres were filled by audiences wishing to see a long play by a proletarian playwright. As had happened in the case of the novel, a work had been written which seemed to mark the point where the theorists of proletarian literature could feel that they had not been hoping and urging in vain. At the same time, however, it was becoming clear that the social conditions of Japan were going to restrict this form of artistic activity increasingly. In spite of the successes of Bōryokudanki and Taiyō no Nai Machi, the future for the proletarian drama movement looked less bright in February, 1930, than it had at the beginning of 1928.

1. Ono Miyakichi, Shirōto Shibai no Yarikata, Kōjō Nōson no Shokun ni, Senki, II.ix (Sept., 1929), 108-26.

CHAPTER 7.

Proletarian Drama, 1930 and 1931.

PROT held its Second National General Meeting¹ in April, 1930, in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. A verbatim report of the proceedings appeared about a month later in the first issue of a new magazine Puroretaria Engeki,² dated June, 1930. It appears to have been a stormy meeting. In the report the speeches are punctuated by interjections of "Stop!" in brackets, indicating where the presiding police officer had used his authority. There are also abrupt changes of speaker that may indicate, or be intended to indicate, more serious police activity. The constant interruptions by the police also meant that the real business of the meeting, after the fraternal greetings, was dealt with rather briefly, as a performance was about to begin in the theatre.

The meeting opened with the election of officers. Sano Seki proposed that Sasaki Takamaru should be re-elected Chairman and Sasaki that Sano should be re-elected Secretary General. Both proposals were approved by acclaim. Murayama Tomoyoshi was elected Vice-Chairman.

Messages of greeting from friendly organizations - other leagues within NAPF, other drama groups, unions, etc. - were then read out. Kobayashi Takiji's address (on behalf of the proletarian literary movement in Hokkaidō) concentrated on the necessity of counteracting the evil forces of social democracy.

Sano began his report on the Central Executive Committee's decisions for 1930 and 1931 by expressing warm approval of Kobayashi Takiji's address. During the past year a 'correct' attitude of opposing the forces of social democracy by means of drama had not been shown. In its political stance PROT had denounced social democracy, but in its drama it had not been so positive.

1. The word National will be omitted in subsequent references to these meetings.

2. Proletarian Drama.

To remedy this must be PROT's basic policy, in the subject matter of the plays performed, in technique (living workers must be drawn 'in actuality'¹ by the playwright - even the acclaimed adaptation of Taiyō no Nai Machi had failed in this), and in form. The technique of the actors of Sayoku Gekijō was far superior to that in the provinces, but the lack of a magazine devoted solely to drama prevented this experience being transmitted to provincial groups. PROT must use its organization effectively. The performance in Kyoto on the occasion of Yamamoto Senji's (the name is censored) assassination had demonstrated a new drama form, not yet taken up even in Tokyo, which must be learnt nationally. Drama must be brought to workers and farmers by distributing tickets to factories and villages and by spreading an organization of 'drama leagues'² (audience associations). Everything must be done to encourage workers and farmers to form their own drama groups.

Sano then proceeded to a harsh criticism of PROT itself. There must be no more of this nonsense about being so busy with plays that organizational duties were neglected. Nor must they be so preoccupied with the practical experience of mounting productions that they neglect theory, as they had done. There were many theoretical problems to be solved. Their drama activity was only one part of the whole political struggle of the people. And they had a great educational duty. 'We must never forget that the year 1930 is given to us in order to demonstrate concretely that which is not simply something appearing in our plays, but something which governs our whole activity - that in everything we do we are led by the (Party).'³

There was little time left for discussion and the new slogans were announced at the very end of the meeting. There was no formal announcement

1. Genjitsu-teki ni.

2. In katakana. See below, p. 279.

3. Engeki Undō to 1930-nen, Nihon Puroritaria Gekijō Dōmei Dainikai Zenkoku Taikai Gijiroku, Puroritaria Engeki, I. i (June, 1930), pp.121-40.

of the new platform for 1930, but references to it suggest that it was displayed on banners in the theatre. The text translated below is in the form in which the platform frequently appeared during 1930 in publications relating to proletarian drama.

The new platform was 'Our League will struggle by means of dramatic activities for the international liberation of the workers and farmers.'

The slogans:

1. Drama to the factories and villages.
2. Playgoers' organizations headed by workers and farmers.
3. Formation of workers' and farmers' drama groups in work-places.

In spite of the continual disarray of the Second General Meeting it is possible to observe two obvious differences between the policies and attitudes of April, 1930, and those of a year before. One of these differences is political, in the frequent use of the word 'international', and the other concerns the theatrical activities of the League in the clear preference given to drama, either by professionals or amateurs, in the villages and factories.

The references to internationalism in the meeting acquire significance when compared with similar references in other contemporary articles. The Central Council of NAPF had issued in March a document entitled 'Policy Statement of NAPF for 1930'. It began with an optimistic assessment of the prospects for proletarian culture, noting a trend to the left in petit bourgeois art. Drama, represented by Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai, was singled out as a striking example of this. There were two dangers to be faced: that of capitalism and commercialism taking advantage of a left boom and of the

radicalized masses being diverted into mere reformism. 1929 saw two great advances, in the technique of writing proletarian literature (witness Bōryokudanki), and in the popularization¹ of the arts. But the arts movement was several steps behind the actual development of the class struggle, in which the vague words 'proletarian' (in katakana) and 'property-less' (musankaikyū-teki - elsewhere translated 'proletarian') had been replaced by a clear distinction between 'social-democratic' and 'Communist'. The arts movement had not yet reached the stage of being a 'Bolshevik' movement. Its task now was to close this gap. Improvements in technique were not enough to ensure Bolshevik art. The subjects chosen for all literary and artistic works must be political. The false left must be fought against. NAPF's own internal organization should be strengthened. NAPF's central duty was the Bolshevization of the arts movement and the winning over of the broad masses of the people.² An article advocating the same things by Kurahara Korehito (writing under the pseudonym of Satō Kōichi) appeared in the April issue of Senki. Under its title 'The New Tasks of NAPF Artists' was the subtitle 'Towards the Establishment of Communist Art,' and the article began with a quotation from Lenin: 'Literature (the arts) must belong to the Party'. During the course of the article Kurahara says: 'First of all our (NAPF) artists (must) make into the subjects of their own artistic activity the subjects which the Japanese proletariat and its Party are confronting at the present time.' The sentence has the equivalent of heavy underlining in the text.³

1. Taishū-ka.

2. Nappu Chūō Kyōgikai, 1930-nendo in okeru Nappu no Hōshin-sho, Nappu, I.i (September, 1930), 4-11. (Dated March, 1930). NAPF's official organ was entitled Nappu. The name itself is the conventional Japanese transliteration of NAPF. Nappu will be used here to distinguish the magazine from the organization.

3. Satō Kōichi, Nappu Geijutsuka no Atarashii Nimmu, Senki, III.vi (April, 1930), 36-42.

Much of Kurahara's article is taken up with an attack on Bungei Sennen, condemned as social democratic as opposed to Communist. There had been considerable antagonism between the Bungei Sennen group and NAPF since the latter's founding and this probably contributed to Kurahara's strong criticism. However, such 'exposure' of the forces of social democracy had become official Comintern policy by 1930 and was specifically urged on the illegal Japan Communist Party in a Resolution of January 1930.¹ It is clear from the similarity of the analysis of Japan's social situation on the one hand in contemporary Comintern documents and on the other in the NAPF statement and Kurahara's article that the proletarian cultural movement was by the spring of 1930 exclusively committed to development as a Communist organization, within an international revolutionary movement at the head of which was the Comintern. The strongest symptom of this was the slogan 'Bolshevization of the arts movement.'

On the basis of this evidence from other parts of the proletarian cultural movement, PROT was committing itself wholeheartedly to this political stance at its Second General Meeting. The frequent references to the leadership of something that can be written with a single Japanese character - Party - and the frequent use of the word 'international' make it clear that PROT was determined to follow this line in the most adverse circumstances. The word Bolshevization was not used in the proceedings as reported, but Hisaita Eijirō wrote an article in the second issue of Puroretaria Engeki which stated in the first sentence that Bolshevization was the central theme of the meeting.²

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1. Extracts from a Resolution of the West European Bureau of the ECCI on the Japanese Communist Party, in Jane Degras ed., The Communist International 1919-43, Documents (1965), pp.95-7.
 2. Hisaita Eijirō, Engeki Undo no Borunshebiki-ka, Puroretaria Engeki, I. ii (July, 1930), 2.

One later police report stated that in general at this time the Japan Communist Party had no definite policy towards the proletarian cultural movement. It even considered that if workers became involved in the literature or drama movement, this might result in them being distracted from the political struggle. The Party simply used such organizations according to its convenience at any one time.¹ A police report of the end of 1929 concludes that although there was enthusiastic support for the Party within NAPF and Senki, there were no Party members. It mentions the Kokusai Bunka Kenkyūjo² (later Purorataria Kagaku Kenkyūjo³) as an organ of BOKC, a Soviet association for liaison with foreign artistic and literary groups. Among the members of Purorataria Kagaku Kenkyūjo those connected with PROT and left-wing drama are prominent: Akita Ujaku, Murayama Tomoyoshi, Kurahara Korehito, Sasaki Takamaru, Sugimoto Ryōkichi, Sano Seki, Ono Miyakichi and Takada Tamotsu.⁴ Although there seems to be no evidence of Party membership among PROT members at the time of the Second General Meeting, the leaders appear to have been in close contact with international Communist organizations and to have been anxious to push forward the aims of the Japan Communist Party through drama.

The new PROT policy was put into effect immediately. The specialist touring section which had only recently been established within Sayoku Gekijō was made officially independent and given the name of Purorataria Engei-dan.⁵ Its membership was small, with three permanent acting members and one or two other Sayoku Gekijō members deputed to exercise some responsibility for it. The official inauguration date was 26 April,⁶ and Purorataria Engei-dan was

1. Shihō-shō, Purorataria Bunka Undō, p.457.

2. Centre for the Study of International Culture.

3. Centre for the Study of Proletarian Science.

4. Shimizu, Geijustu Undō, pp.199-204.

5. Proletarian Performing Arts Group.

6. Shihō-shō, Purorataria Bunka Undō, p.181.

officially recognized as an affiliated group by a meeting of the PROT Standing Central Executive Committee in May.¹

One of the three full members was an actress, Sawamura Sadako, who had only recently entered Shin Tsukiji Gekidan. In her autobiography she relates how Hijikata told her she must join the new group and that he would not cast her for any further Shin Tsukiji Gekidan productions. It was an honour, he urged. Sawamura had been specially picked out by PROT for this important revolutionary task. Her ambition, however, had been to become an actress, in the sense of developing an art in plays on the stage. Now she was in Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, she had the opportunity to fulfil that ambition. Why should she become primarily a left-wing political revolutionary? Hijikata told her she had been selected because she was serious minded and strong in body. She pleaded with him, but it was PROT's order and this could not be ignored. Perhaps the whole existence of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan was at stake. Sawamura finally accepted, reluctantly.²

Puroretaria Engei-dan's brief was simple. It was to go to factories and villages at PROT's orders. There it was to loosen the feelings of the spectators by performing plays, singing songs, etc.. After this the members were to sit down with the audience and have a heart to heart talk, thus gradually awakening their class consciousness.³ As an actress it seems that Sawamura was most worried by the strictly political part of the group's activities. She was sympathetic to the proletarian movement and this had partly contributed to her desire to join Shin Tsukiji Gekidan. Primarily, however, she wanted to be an actress, and it was clear to her that activity as a member of Puroretaria Engei-dan was not simply an opportunity to learn a new form of acting or theatre technique.

1. Puroretaria Engei-dan no Tanjō, in Nihon Puroretaria Gekijō Dōmei Hōkoku, Puroretaria Engeki, I. iii (Aug., 1931), 52.
2. Sawamura Sadako, Kai no Uta, Ikite kita Michi, (Kōdansha, 1969), pp.109-13.
3. Ibid., p.113. Some performances at factories would have been as in Plate 1.

Another direct result of the PROT Second General Meeting was a series of attacks by the left-wing drama movement on Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō. PROT policy was now to call for a final break with all groups that did not subscribe without qualification to PROT's political position. The left-wing group within Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō, although successful in forcing frequent discussion of the matter, was never able to exercise decisive control. The two members who had been seconded from Sayoku Gekijō, (one of whom had been Murayama Tomoyoshi) had left. Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō, through its policy of performing in Shōchiku theatres and the association which several of its past and present actors had with Shōchiku, was already highly embarrassing to Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai. On 18 May 1936 the Council issued a declaration expelling Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō from the organization and citing its connections with Shōchiku as the main reason for the Council's dissatisfaction. At about the same time as the meeting of the Council which decided this (immediately after according to the postscript to the declaration), a document was received from Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō which stated that it was withdrawing from the Council. Also on 18 May the three leading members of the left-wing group issued a declaration to the effect that they were leaving Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō. On 19 May PROT issued an appeal to all left-wing groups to support the Council and to help smash Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō.¹ Subsequently the first issue of a new magazine, Puroretoria Engeki, published two articles bitterly attacking Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō. The first, by Sano Seki, bracketed a leading member, Kitamura Kihachi, with Maedakō Kōichirō and Aono Suekichi, as a social democratic pest that must be exterminated. The second was by Sugimoto

1. The declarations of Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai, the three-man resignation-group and PROT are all quoted in full in Puroretaria Engeki, I. 1, 77-9.

Ryōkichi and it described the reactionary, opportunist character of the group.¹ Almost at once the group went out of existence. The numbers had been progressively reduced by several incidents involving resignations and it was no longer viable as a theatre company.

In his address to the PROT Second General Meeting Sano had emphasized the lack of communication between the headquarters of the proletarian drama movement in Tokyo and the drama groups in the provinces. At the time of the meeting there were five provincial drama groups affiliated to PROT. They were in Osaka, Kyoto, Shizuoka, Kōchi and Kanazawa, and another was planned for Kōbe. Membership ranged from fifteen to thirty.

Hisaita Eiijirō in February, 1930, had judged the social circumstances and the existence of a tradition dating back to Rōdō Gekidan to be favourable for a flourishing proletarian drama movement in the Kansai area, but he had also listed some formidable difficulties. The police were anxious to prevent the growth of any such movement under the influence of its more developed counterpart in Tokyo and made special efforts to hinder all its activities. There were few halls suitable for shingeki performances, and acting standards were very low. Most of the actors had full-time jobs of one kind or another.²

The Osaka group had the name Senki-za,³ and the first production had been mounted in 1928. It had suffered heavily in the March 15th Incident, but had been revived afterwards. There had subsequently been frequent small scale performances at the scenes of strikes and at workers' meeting places. Kyoto, by virtue of being a university city, had had shingeki groups before the formation of PROT. The most active one, Seifuku Gekijō,⁴ had taken its first step as a left-wing group on the occasion of Yamamoto Senji's funeral.

1. Puroretaria Engeki, I. i (June, 1930), 68-74.

2. Hisaita Eiijirō, Kansai Chihō no Puroretaria Engeki Undō, Gekijō Bunka, (April, 1930), 113-5. (Dated 20 Feb., 1930).

3. Battle Flag Theatre.

4. Blue Uniform Theatre.

The three plays selected for a programme planned for May, 1929, had all been banned, although all three had previously been allowed in Tokyo. Subsequently emphasis had been placed on small-scale touring drama. Seifuku Gekijō had become a PROT affiliate during the following winter. Shizuoka Zen'ei-za had come into existence in 1927 and from the first had concentrated on moving around with programmes composed of short items. It had also suffered heavily in the arrests of March and April, 1928, and it had been temporarily disbanded. It was in the process of being re-formed at the time of the 1930 PROT meeting. The Kōchi Gaitō-za¹ had given its first performance after deciding to become a left-wing group in November, 1929, and the Kanazawa Zen'ei Gekijō had performed several long plays in its three years of existence since 1927. In Kobe a group had recently been formed specially to give a New Year's performance of a play by Sasaki Takamaru. Hisaita had concluded his survey of provincial left-wing drama groups by saying that although Kansai proletarian drama was in its infancy, it was proceeding on the right lines and must be nourished from Tokyo.

One way of doing this had been suggested at the PROT meeting. This was by the publication of a magazine devoted wholly to drama. Puroretaria Engeki appeared in June (although it was immediately banned), and continued in existence for five issues. The June issue had been concerned primarily with denunciations of Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō, and in this it had been fulfilling its task as a mouthpiece of PROT. In the July issue PROT outlined its attitude towards the new magazine. A magazine for information and control was absolutely necessary at a time when Bolshevization of the drama movement had become the first task. Puroretaria Engeki was not seeking a readership of workers and farmers; it was intended for all those whose interest was in

1. Street Theatre.

bringing drama to the workers and farmers. Its content would be divided into six categories: firstly the discussion of proletarian drama theory, especially the application of Bolshevization; secondly the publication of plays, long and short, which answered to the Bolshevization slogan; the third category was omitted from the text as published in Puroretaria Engeki, perhaps because it was overtly political and hence likely to cause the banning of the whole issue; fourthly there were to be reports from the various affiliated groups; fifthly, international and national drama news, and sixthly, a section on drama research.¹

Although it was auspicious that the drama movement should have been able to achieve the production of its own journal, the months following the intended publication date of the first number (mid-May, 1930) saw renewed and vigorous police drives designed to hinder PROT in all its activities. In particular, in the same month there were widespread arrests of those associated in the general proletarian cultural movement. The three leading members of Sayoku Gekijō - Murayama Tomoyoshi, Sano Seki and Sugimoto Ryōkichi - were arrested and not released until the end of the year. Puroretaria Engeki suffered especially from the absence of these three, as they would all have been important contributors. The uninspiring list of new plays published in its pages reflects the scale of the loss that resulted from Murayama's enforced silence

Both the main Tokyo PROT groups, Sayoku Gekijō and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, were active in mounting productions between April 1930 and the end of the year. Sayoku Gekijō put on four full length plays and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan seven. The majority of these productions was either of translated plays (almost exclusively Soviet Russian) or of adaptations of Japanese proletarian novels. Very few new full length plays were written by proletarian playwrights during this period.

1. Purotto Kikanshi-bu, Kikanshi ni Kanshite, Puroretaria Engeki, I. ii, 26-9.

The second year of PROT's existence had started with a demonstration of drama's role in the left-wing political movement at the 1930 May Day parade. For this occasion PROT had planned an ambitious programme of entertainment items. Apart from a long play performed jointly by Sayoku Gekijō and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, there was a proletarian shinnai¹ by Okamoto Bun'ya based on All Quiet on the Western Front, choral singing and proletarian rakugo.² The censoring of the choral singing was harsh, neither the Marseillaise nor the Internationale being allowed. The proletarian shinnai, however, was accounted a great success and hailed in the first issue of Puroretaria Engeki as a breakthrough.³ It appears that the familiar sound of shinnai chanting was welcomed by the workers in the audience, who had responded enthusiastically to the new subject matter. This was followed up by an article in the July number of Puroretaria Engeki advocating the use of kami-shibai⁴ as a potentially rewarding form of proletarian drama. Examples were given of how proletarian subjects could be depicted in kami-shibai.⁵

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1. A type of narrative chanting to samisen accompaniment which developed in Edo during the second half of the 18th century. The name is taken from Okada Shinnai, who achieved great popularity during this period. There have been various schools of shinnai-bushi since that time. Okamoto Bun'ya revived the Okamoto school in 1923 and became known for performing stories with novel subject matter. Kawatake Shigetoshi ed., Geinō Jiten (Tōkyō-dō, 1955), pp.373-4.
 2. Humorous story telling by a single performer. Professional rakugo performers first appeared in yose programmes towards the end of the 18th century. Ibid., pp.666-7.
 3. Matsunaga Hiroshi, Mittei to Sayoku-ha Shinnai, Puroretaria Engeki, I. i, 106-9.
 4. The telling of a story or the enactment of a play by means of pictures painted on sheets of paper. There were several methods of replacing one sheet by the next and parts of a picture (the head or arms of a character) could be made to appear to move. Geinō Jiten, pp.173-4.
 5. Kawakita Saburō, Kami-shibai ni Tsuite, Puroretaria Engeki, I. ii, 32-4.

Also in the July number of Puroretaria Engeki there appeared the text of a one act play by Shima Kimiyasu, a young actor and playwright who had recently joined Sayoku Gekijō. The play, entitled Purotoko,¹ had already been performed several times by Puroretaria Engei-dan, and it was now being published together with an article on how to stage it, in order to encourage worker groups to perform it at the time of a strike or whenever they thought appropriate. The play is a comedy about a barber who sets up shop outside factories where there are strikes. He has three customers, an unemployed worker who is potentially a strike-breaker, one of the strikers, and a spy. The barber is on the strikers' side and regards it as his work to further their cause. In short scenes with considerable banter he disposes of each of his customers according to his merits. The spy loses his beard in the barber's shop at the end of the play.²

Politically, the play presents in a few minutes some of the essentials that every striker needed to know. The three customers represent the three forces in any strike to which the organizers have to pay special attention. The play could be performed by three people, even by two with some cover-up for quick changes. Properties were minimal and could be made in a few minutes with cardboard.

The emphasis of the play is on familiarity. The barber fulfils much the same social function in Japan as elsewhere and would have been immediately acceptable to an audience of workers. At the end the barber sings a parody of a traditional type popular song. It is suggested in the article on production that the part of the barber should, if possible, be played by someone familiar with kabuki.³ Thus when small scale drama was given serious attention for the first time in an authoritative publication, much importance was placed on the exploitation of traditional entertainment forms.

1. Proletarian Barber.

2. Puroretaria Engeki, I. ii, 40-50.

3. Nakamura Eiji, Purotoko Jōen no Tebiki, Puroretaria Engeki, I. ii, 50.

The August issue of the magazine reprinted Senda Koreya's earlier Senki article on German workers' drama, and contained other articles on technical aspects of performance of small scale drama. Both this and the November issues contained examples of sprechchor. The later one, by Niijima Shigeru, was entitled Sutoraiki Kekkō¹ and depicted messengers calling at various workers' houses to announce a twenty-four hour strike the next day. The messengers themselves, and finally all the strikers, are pictured heroically, undaunted by wind or rain.² The piece is very simple, with an obviously symmetrical structure. The author was unknown, not having previously published any plays, but his sprechchor has echoes of the most acclaimed proletarian poetry of the time, and, though slight, takes its place in the development of this genre in Japan.

In spite of the number of articles on small scale drama in Puroretaria Engeki no firm solutions to the various problems it posed were offered and none of the articles would have enjoyed much authority within the movement. Puroretaria Engeki's interest was an attempt to give practical effect in hard times to the recommendations of the PROT meeting. With the demise of the magazine in November (every issue having been banned), any opportunity there might have been to develop the discussion at length was cut off.

Meanwhile 'Bolshevization' had become openly used as the chief slogan of the movement. As has been mentioned above, the word was not used in the discussion at the Second PROT Meeting, but the tenor of what was said there and other comments at the time suggest that a strict Communist line was to be required of all participants in the proletarian cultural movement. The Japanese word for Communist could not be used and was always indicated by two crosses. Occasionally a Japanese phonetic equivalent of the Western word appears in the literature, but even this appears to have been dangerous.

1. Strike Action.

2. Puroretaria Engeki, I. v, 67-9.

It would seem that 'Bolshevization' was hit upon as a sufficiently remote circumlocution (with appropriate international connotations) to deceive the censor. Soon after the PROT meeting a series of articles concerning the Bolshevization of the various art forms appeared in the first issue of a new magazine. This was Puroretaria Bungaku,¹ the official organ of the Nihon Puroretaria Sakka Dōmei,² already the most powerful and influential of the leagues in the reorganized NAPF, in that it contained the leading personalities of the whole movement. The article on drama was written by Murayama Tomoyoshi. It consisted of a neat survey of Western drama in Marxist terms and a eulogy of his own Bōryokudanki. Proletarian drama was defined as a drama where the developmental movement of society in its entirety was observed correctly through the eyes of the fighting proletariat.³ There was nothing very new in this and much the same thing, with slightly more international emphasis, was written by Hisaita Eijirō in the July issue of Puroretaria Engeki. Bolshevization finally achieved official published status within the drama movement in the 'Fundamental Thesis' published by the PROT Standing Executive Committee in the August issue of the same magazine. The full title was 'Bolshevization of the Drama Movement! Fundamental Thesis concerning our Present Problems.'⁴ This thesis appears in whole or in part in almost all works which mention the proletarian drama movement and it is generally regarded as marking the turning point in the movement's history. It was, however, only an amplification and clarification of what had been advocated at the PROT April meeting and as the main significance of this has been discussed above, it is not necessary to repeat it here.

1. Proletarian Literature.

2. Japan Proletarian Writers' League. The Japanese name is usually abbreviated to Sakka Dōmei, which will be used here.

3. Engeki to Puroretaria Rearizumu, Puroretaria Bungaku, I. i (June, 1930), 74.

4. Puroretaria Engeki, I. iv, 2-16.

The second section, however, contained some specific recommendations on organization that may mark a significant hardening of policy. In his address to the PROT Second General Meeting Sano had referred to ticket distribution and the establishment of 'drama leagues' in factories.¹ The drama leagues were audience associations supporting one of the PROT groups and inevitably Sayoku Gekijō had more than any other group. Both in the Fundamental Thesis and in the third issue of Sayoku Gekijō great emphasis is placed on the necessity for these to be headed by workers either leading or centrally active in radical unionism in the various factories.² Workers' discount tickets were also to be distributed through the 'proletarian organizations' according to a deliberate plan. The main grass-roots organization for drama that PROT was trying to build up was in this way to be directly used for immediate political ends.

The second section also contained a clear injunction to everyone concerned in the proletarian drama movement. This was the first time that PROT had officially spelt out the personal commitment it required of members of its affiliated groups and the passage is a useful summary of the ideas and technical terms that were currently enjoying a period of complete acceptance.

'Concerning the artistic attitude of theatre people.

We in the theatre must be proletarian realists above all, in the same way as Communist artists in other forms. Proletarian realism is the very basis of our artistic attitude as proletarian theatre people. Proletarian realism demands of us above all that we should look at this world "with the eyes of Communists" and describe it "in an objective and realistic"³ way." This means, of course, that we must see "reality" itself through drama and after examining closely whether this reality has been incorporated into the "play" in an objective form in accordance with the needs of the struggle of the proletariat, we must give it the realistic stage expression which is most appropriate to it, taking into account the subject matter.'⁴

1. See above, p. 265.

2. Ibid., p.12 and Sayoku Gekijō, iii (Oct., 1930), 29-32.

3. Genjitsu-teki.

4. Ibid., 6-7.

As if in response to this the first play to be performed subsequently to its publication appeared on the surface to fulfil these conditions. The play was Go! Stop!¹ in a production by Shin Tsukiji Gekidan at the Ichimura-za. Go! Stop! was an adaptation of a novel by Kishi Yamaji which had attracted some critical attention in 1929. The adaptation was by Fujita Mitsuo, whose previous adaptation, of Taiyō no Nai Machi, was discussed in the preceding chapter.

As in the case of Taiyō no Nai Machi Fujita attempted to be more 'realistic.' The novel describes a strike at the Tokyo Glass Company against the background of the General Election of February, 1928, and the March 15th arrests of those suspected of left-wing activities. The play tries to 'describe through this ready-made incident (the strike) the activities of the vanguard from 1927 until May Day, 1928.'² The novel had been criticized when it appeared for having individual heroes and letting chance predominate over necessity,³ and one of the objects of the adaptation was to eliminate these faults. Kishi himself had admitted them and speaks approvingly of the intention to improve on his work.⁴ Sayoku Gekijō members were also involved in the production and it was planned to hold meetings to discuss how most effectively the faults of the novel could be made good in the play. In the end, because of lack of time, no meetings were held, and the adaptation of Go! Stop! was as rushed as that of Taiyō no Nai Machi.⁵

1. In katakana.

2. Fujita Mitsuo, Kyakushokujo no Ketten in tsuite, Shin Tsukiji, II. ii, quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.94. The text used is Puroretaria Engeki, I. iv (Sept., 1930), 72-94.

3. Chance (the intervention of forces beyond the control of the characters) was considered the hallmark of a bourgeois novel or play. In a Marxist novel or play plot development was governed by the necessity of the historical dialectic.

4. Gō Sutoppu no Jōen ni Kan-shite, Nappu, I. ii (Oct., 1930), 93-7.

5. Ibid., 96.

There were two consequences of this. Kishi felt it necessary to suggest rules of conduct and co-operation when PROT wished to adapt novels written by members of the Sakka Dōmei. He appears to have been seriously worried that the situation might become out of control.¹

The second effect can be seen in the adaptation itself. It was generally criticized - for example by Kishi himself, by an anonymous critic in the magazine Puroretaria Jidai, and by various contributors to the subsequent issue of Shin Tsukiji. It seemed to be accepted that Fujita would have changed the original considerably, omitting anything not directly relevant to the class struggle. The Puroretaria Jidai critic comments: 'How like Fujita.'² As in the case of Taiyō no Nai Machi Fujita omitted much that might seem to a Westerner to have dramatic interest and possibilities. This is not a criticism, in that it was more important to Fujita to be accepted by the proletarian cultural movement and to have included, for example, the schoolteacher, Sampei, would have been to invite condemnation. Kishi, however, criticizes Fujita for not leaving enough out. The rather dashing figure of Toba, too heroic an individual for a 1929 proletarian novel, is incorporated without change into the play. Kishi regrets that in the play Toba is a 'shimpa-like' hero.³ This may be simply a term of abuse in the context, but again as in Taiyō no Nai Machi the influence of shimpa can be seen in this adaptation. An example of this is the bustling crowd scene (not in the novel) with which the play commences, which, though short, has little relevance to the political theme and would suggest the type of play that was normally performed in a large commercial theatre. Go! Stop! was performed

1. Ibid., 96-7.

2. Gō Sutoppu o Miru, Puroretaria Jidai, II. x (Oct., 1930), quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.94.

3. Gō Sutoppu no Jōen ni Kan-shite, ibid., 94.

at precisely such a theatre, the Ichimura-za, and this may be cited in Fujita's defence in this case. Taiyō no Nai Machi, however, had been performed in Tsukiji Shōgekijō, and it had also had these theatrical elements. It would seem that Fujita could only compensate for a denial of all the bourgeois human elements in the original works by adding to them elements drawn from the modern commercial theatre.

The play was criticized also on political grounds. The report on PROT's 1930 activities which appeared in Nappu after the Third General Meeting cites Go! Stop! (together with Fujita's next adaptation) as being directly responsible for dissatisfaction among the more left-wing members of Sayoku Gekijō.¹ In spite of this criticism it is possible to detect the efforts Fujita was making to apply the concept of Bolshevization. It is perhaps precisely because of his limitations as a proletarian playwright, which were noted also in the case of Taiyō no Nai Machi, that these aspects are so noticeable. There are obvious references to the fact that Sawada is working on behalf of the left-wing labour federation Hyōgikai and ultimately the Japan Communist Party. The principle of the (Communist) fraction is explained clearly in the first scene, and there is later a textbook organization of a new union in Act I, scene 3. In terms of structure there has been a rather incomplete and mechanical attempt to apply the three group (capitalists, gangs, and strikers) structure of Bōryokudanki, although this must have been a difficult problem in that the novel is firmly based in individuals. In Act IV, scene 2, Toba warns Sawada that in spite of apparent victory, the strike has really been a pawn in a political game and a great catastrophe for

1. Nappu Kaku-dōmei Nenji Zenkoku Taikai Hōkoku, Nihon Puroretaria Gekijō Dōmei Daisankai Taikai Hōkoku Hōshin-sho, Nappu, II. viii (Aug., 1931), 202-3. Referred to below as Purotto Hōkoku.

the proletarian movement is coming (the March 15th Incident). Sawada's mistake has been to regard Adachi, the company president as the sole enemy; the real enemies are those behind him. The last scene is a May Day rally where the (moderate) Sōdōmei representative is shouted down and a future is envisaged when 100,000 workers will be united under Hyōgikai.

The last scene was more positive than the flashed-up titles with which Taiyō no Nai Machi had ended, but it was of course banned and the play, as performed, ended in the arrest of Sawada and the ultimate defeat of the strike - and three flashed-up titles. An adaptation such as Go! Stop! perhaps illustrates more clearly than an original play the seriousness with which the current theoretical requirements were taken.

Hisaita Eijirō was one of those on the left-wing of PROT who were dissatisfied with Fujita's work as a playwright. Kobayashi Takiji's Fuzai Jinushi¹ was the next novel to be adapted by Fujita and it was performed by Sayoku Gekijō in the first half of October. Soon after the last night of Fuzai Jinushi and evidently in part provoked by it, there appeared an article on the organization of the drama movement written by Hisaita Eijirō. It was published in the November issue of Nappu and its appearance in this journal must have given it some authority.²

Hisaita pointed out that Bolshevization of the drama movement was meaningless as a slogan unless there was an organization to carry it out. He apparently did not consider the existing PROT organization sufficient, nor did he think that enough attention was being paid to Bolshevization in PROT's most eye-catching activities, the full-scale productions: Fuzai Jinushi was given by Hisaita as an example of the latter weakness. Partly

1. Absentee Landlord.

2. Hisaita Eijirō, Engeki Undō to Soshiki Mondai, Nappu, I. iii, 26-34.

this was caused by the censor, whose activities were having an increasingly serious effect. But full-scale productions could not be abandoned, as they fulfilled three important functions. They 'mobilized the masses organizationally', which appears to mean that audiences of workers, by being assembled together for one purpose, were made conscious of the concept of organization. Full-scale productions were also useful for enabling the 'revolutionary proletariat', that is, the Party workers, to enlarge their own organizations in workplaces. Finally, they had always been vehicles for propaganda and persuasion.

The Party was of course in charge of the whole drama movement, as had been laid down by Kurahara when he had recommended Lenin's dictum: 'The arts must belong to the Party.'¹ In the case of workers' drama groups in factories drama was under the control of the Party organization in the factory concerned. The principle of the 'hegemony of the proletariat' was therefore already being applied here. In the case of full-scale and touring productions, revolutionary workers should be on repertory committees and attend rehearsals.

The last four pages of Hisaita's article, which may have dealt in detail with these organizational problems, are missing from the magazine, in which there are elsewhere other peculiarities of pagination. It appears, however, from the early paragraphs of the last section and from other references in the article that Hisaita's main proposals were for regionally organized societies for the appreciation of drama, all strictly under the control of the existing political (i.e. Communist) organization.

Hisaita's article reflected the continuing commitment of the PROT leadership to a Communist ideological line. The aims of Communism had already been supported by NAPF and PROT for a considerable period of time

1. See above, p. 267.

and this had been given official form by Kurahara's article 'The New Tasks of NAPF Artists'. More tangible support for the Japanese Party itself had been given in the form of fund raising activities by Kurahara (for Sakka Dōmei) and Murayama (for PROT) from the time of the successful police action of April, 1929, which cut the Japan Communist Party (J.C.P.) off from its Comintern money.¹ Neither Kurahara nor Murayama were able to continue this help in the second half of 1930. Kurahara was in Moscow for the 5th Profintern Congress from July and did not return to Japan until March, 1931.² Murayama (who had not yet joined the Party) had been arrested at the end of May, 1930, and was not released until the end of the year.

One result of the May arrests had been a developing tension between the PROT leadership and the members of the Puroretaria Engai-dan. This is expressed in terms of right and left tendencies, but these words seem to have even more of a relative significance here than at other points in the history of the movement. PROT continued to espouse a Communist line throughout 1930. The distinction between right and left in this instance seems to have been that Puroretaria Engai-dan was moving towards acceptance of direct Party control of the drama movement. In October Ikue Kenji, a member of the Engai-dan, is said to have received orders from a certain J.C.P. member and to have taken on the responsibility for establishing Party control of PROT.³ Ikue and Shinjō Shin'ichirō, Chairman of the Literary Section of Sayoku Gekijō, formed an anti-leadership group, which held meetings to discuss PROT problems two or three times per month.⁴

A change in PROT leadership was the main task of the group and Sasaki Takamaru appears to have been its first victim. An apparently successful production of his for Sayoku Gekijō in December was unexpectedly subject to

1. Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō, p.441.

2. Ibid., p.463.

3. Ibid., p.473.

4. Ibid.

bitter attacks in the subsequent criticism meeting. Not long afterwards in January, 1931, a special General Meeting of all Sayoku Gekijō members was held, at which Sasaki was charged with conduct unbecoming a leader of the proletarian drama movement and publicly disgraced. He was dismissed from the offices he held, namely as a member of NAPF Central Council and as chairman of PROT Central Executive Committee, and he was not to be sent as adviser to any other theatre groups. He was henceforth only to be an ordinary member of Sayoku Gekijō.¹

Sasaki claims that he was later told by a leading member of NAPF that orders for a public exposure had gone out from the Party.² There is no other account of this incident apart from Sasaki's and he himself does not reveal the names of those who attacked him. The later PROT report on 1930, however, mentions that the disciplining of 'a comrade who was in a position of leadership' was one definite manifestation of the 'theoretical victory over the two tendencies' (right and left) in the movement.³ Although Sasaki's political position in 1930 is not documented, he was anyway an obvious target for other reasons. Murayama was one of Ikue's group and the antipathy between him and Sasaki has been mentioned above. In addition some of Sasaki's non-dramatic activities, such as his translation of Fanny Hill, had already provoked criticism from his more serious colleagues in the proletarian drama movement.

Ikue became a member of the J.C.P. early in 1931.⁴ Simultaneously he

1. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, pp.212-7.

2. Ibid., p.213.

3. Purotto Hōkoku, Nappu, II. viii, 203.

4. The exact date is not clear. Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō, p.475, gives it as January; Keiho-kyoku, Naimu-shō, Shōwa Rokunenjū ni okeru Shakai Undō no Jōkyō (1932), p.498, refers to March. The latter document is referred to below as Shakai Undō no Jōkyō (1932).

became an authority within the proletarian drama movement. Puroretaria Engeki had been forced to stop publication in October and PROT then had to rely on space in the NAPF organ, Nappu, for publicizing its activities.¹ Ikue was the most frequent contributor on drama in Nappu during the first half of 1930.

Ikue asserted his authority confidently in the first article, in which he disposed of right and left tendencies in PROT. Against the left he upheld the usefulness of kōen as opposed to going over completely to touring activity. Against the right he pronounced that kōen still had a valid political raison d'être. For the Party he stated unequivocally that proletarian drama was aimed specifically at workers of low political consciousness who at present were organized in social democratic unions. Social democracy/ social fascism was the main enemy.² The second article, in February, concerned Puroretaria Engei-dan, of which Ikue had been a member for some time. Its tone was less uncompromising and flexibility of performance according to the audience was advised. This was clearly the result of Ikue's own experience with the group. The political line was the same, however, and most attention was to be paid to workers in large factories who were under the influence of social democratic forces.³ Not much importance was placed in playing to workers in small, feudally organized work-shops, as might have been expected considering the general Communist

1. It is possible that this too might have been an early indication of a move to exert centralized control over the drama movement. The change from a full magazine devoted to drama to a few pages in the journal of the central organization is commented on approvingly in the PROT report on its 1930 activities. Purotto Hōkoku, Nappu, II. viii, 204.

2. Ikue Kenji, Kōen-teki Katsudō ni tsuite no Sai-hihan, Nappu, II. i (Jan., 1931), 54-62.

3. Puroretaria Engei-dan no Katsudō, ibid., II. ii, 31-40.

line at the time in Japan. The third article, in March, reaffirmed the position taken by PROT in its Bolshevization thesis concerning drama groups formed by workers and farmers.¹

Thus in three articles in three successive issues of the official organ of the proletarian cultural movement Ikue had discussed the three main areas of PROT activity. The articles are consistent in their political position, defining the forces of social democracy as the main targets for attack. They also have two other common features in stating in each case that PROT 1930 policies were not properly understood and in the frequent use of the word 'correct'.² The use of the Japanese word for 'correct' is common in left-wing writing and implies a sanction of authority that dispenses with the need for further explanation. Ikue was clearly confident that he had the backing of that authority. Ikue could well have felt some satisfaction with the drama movement during the first quarter of 1931 in spite of his criticisms of PROT. Sayoku Gekijō had successes both with full-length and with short plays. Shin Tsukiji Gekidan mounted four new productions of full-length plays and toured with two of them. In addition to this continuance of established theatrical activity, new developments were taking place.

In January there was established the Nihon Proletaria Gikyoku Kenkyūkai.³ Its members came from Sayoku Gekijō, Shin Tsukiji Gekidan and Sakka Dōmei and included the leading left-wing playwrights of the time. The objects of the society were to 'study the various factors involved in a play

1. Rōdōsha Nōmin-geki no Mondai, ibid., II. iii, 60-70.

2. Tadashii.

3. Japan Society for the Study of Proletarian Plays.

which are demanded by the proletariat, to exchange and improve jointly the various aspects of technique which individual playwrights have mastered and to make the production of plays more organized.'¹ It was admitted in the PROT report of August that there was still a dearth of good proletarian plays. It even went as far as to say that nothing had been written in 1930 which came up to the standard of Bōryokudanki and Baka no Ryōchi of 1929.² The society was very active from the beginning. Between 16 January and the end of February there were six meetings in all and a wide range of subjects was discussed. Plays were written, analyzed, criticized, approved of and in one case recommended to Sayoku Gekijō. Nihon Puroretaria Gikyoku Kenkyūkai brought together creative writers of two separate parts of the proletarian cultural movement and one organization (Shin Tsukiji Gekidan) that did not yet formally belong to it.

The participation of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan members in the Gikyoku Kenkyūkai was symptomatic of the close relations that existed between it and Sayoku Gekijō, the leading PROT group. Shin Tsukiji had sent a representative to the PROT Second General Meeting in April, 1930, and in his speech he had pledged 'comradely co-operation.... in the Japanese proletarian drama movement's developmental process'.³ In June, 1930, Sayoku Gekijō had provided directing and acting assistance to Shin Tsukiji's production of Tretyakov's Roar, China!⁴ There was massive help for the August production of Go! Stop! and members of Sayoku Gekijō were usually involved in some way in subsequent productions.

1. Quoted in Akiba, ii. 684.

2. Purotto Hōkoku, Nappu, II. viii, 204.

3. Engeki Undō to 1930-nen, Nihon Puroretaria Gekijō Dōmei Dainikai Zenkoku Taikai Gijiroku, Puroretaria Engeki, I. i (June, 1930), 123.

4. Ozaki and Ibaraki, Hijikata Yoshi, p.162.

In these circumstances it seemed anomalous to many Shin Tsukiji members that their group should remain outside the PROT organisation. It is not clear whether any direct methods were used to encourage an application for affiliation, as had happened in the case of Shinkō Gekidan Kyōgikai. The general pressures were obviously strong, however, and in March an Extraordinary General Meeting of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan resolved to make the application to PROT.¹ It was accepted and referred to the Third General Meeting for confirmation.

As an earnest of its intentions Shin Tsukiji Gekidan co-operated with Sayoku Gekijō in the opening of Proletaria Engeki Kenkyūjo² in April, 1931.³ The aim of the Study Centre, as stated in its advertisement for students, was the 'training of revolutionary theatre people',⁴ and this terminology was strikingly similar to that used in the case of the earlier Zen'ei Engeki Kenkyūjo.⁵ Another similarity lay in the emphasis given to training in the theory of proletarian drama. Five lecture hours were given over to History of the Proletarian Drama Movement, eight hours to Theory of the Proletarian Drama Movement and five to History of Drama through the Sociology of Art.⁶ By contrast Theory of Acting was only allotted three hours, and it was training in acting for which the students had enrolled. Tōno Eijirō, one of the first generation of students, remarks that there was general discontent at this state of affairs, even though most of the other students were much more politically aware than he was.⁷ Tōno implies that enrolment was high.

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1. This is according to the Shin Tsukiji Declaration on affiliating at the PROT Third General Meeting, May, 1931, quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, p.97. The date is given in Sugai's commentary, ibid., p. 96.
 2. Study Centre for Proletarian Drama.
 3. Ibid..
 4. Quoted in Tōno Eijirō, Watakushi no Haiyū Shūgyō, (Mirai-sha, 1964), p.84. Referred to below as Tono, Haiyū Shūgyō.
 5. See above, p. 122
 6. Ibid., p.85.
 7. Ibid., pp.85-6.

Over one hundred applicants took the entrance examination and of these fifty-nine passed. The total student body at the start, including those holding supplementary places (of which Tōno was one), was seventy-two.¹ Tōno admits to not being sure about the numbers, but a total of about one hundred applicants for training in a type of drama that would probably involve arrest and harassment by the police and being beaten up by right-wing gangs says much for the appeal of the proletarian theatre at the time.²

The PROT Third General Meeting was held in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō on 17 May, 1931. No verbatim report was published, as had happened for the previous meeting. No journal was exclusively concerned with proletarian drama at the time and all PROT approved articles on this subject were published in Nappu. In July, 1931, Nappu began publishing a series of reports from the individual affiliated leagues which were based on their 1931 General Meetings. The PROT report appeared in August. It is impossible to tell how accurately it reflects the discussion of the meeting. There are hints of a power struggle centred on Ikue Kenji which the police reports had observed and Ikue's own articles had suggested.

The report is divided into two parts. The first reviews PROT activities over the past year and the second states its policy for the coming year. It is clear that the police arrests of May, 1930, had dealt a considerable blow to the movement. A lack of activity in all spheres of PROT's work apart from full-scale productions was noted and criticized. An attempt to remedy the serious effect on the provincial groups had been made by summoning their

1. Ibid., p.84.

2. Apart from the regular skirmishes with strike breakers that small touring groups experienced, even full-scale productions were sometimes subject to interference by right-wing gangs. The most famous example of this was on the Shin Tsukiji tour of Kyūshū in June, 1931, when Yamamoto Yasue was injured. Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, pp.97-8.

representatives to a meeting in Tokyo in August. The report states that even this did not result in adequate self-criticism on the part of PROT.

The general depression within PROT during the months after the May arrests is defined in the report as a right-wing tendency. The left-wing tendency of the time of Go! Stop! and Fuzai Jinushi was said to have provoked a debate over theory which culminated in the satisfactory victory over both. (It was just at this time that Ikue's articles began appearing in Nappu.) The first few months of 1931 had seen a notable improvement in all forms of activity.

The policy statement for the future began with an analysis of the role of the arts movement in the present stage of the revolutionary struggle, with particular reference to the conclusions (as yet only known in general terms) of the 1930 Profintern Congress, which had been attended by Kurahara Korehito. As regards the general role of drama, resolutions of the recently formed International Union of Revolutionary Theatre¹ were quoted which placed most emphasis on the initiative of workers themselves in the drama movement and which unequivocally stated that the best and most effective form of drama was the short agit-prop (agitation and propaganda) type.² In addition it was noted that the implications of the Profintern Congress were that drama should be the responsibility of the revolutionary (the word is censored and could be 'fighting'; in either case the meaning is Communist led) labour unions.

The immediate tasks for PROT were therefore as follows: 'A) Make obvious the initiative of the working classes in the drama movement.' This should be done by encouraging workers to form their own drama groups, by

1. Usually referred to in Japan as I.A.T.B. from the initials of its German name. The abbreviation M.O.R.T. (from the Russian name) is also used. The organization will be referred to here as I.A.T.B..
 2. 1931-nendo ni okeru Dōmei Katsudō no Ippanteki Hōshin, Nappu, II. viii, 206-9.

taking workers into the existing specialist groups (e.g. Sayoku Gekijō) and by including the views of workers in any published materials on the drama movement. 'B) Enlarge the PROT organisation in the major cities and farming communities.' Organisationally too much reliance had been placed up to the present on radical intellectuals. Now a grass roots organization should be formed starting from such existing units as workers' entertainment clubs. Emphasis was to be placed on agit-prop drama forms, in accordance with the I.A.T.B. resolution. 'D) Promote a mass struggle against bourgeois, social-democratic drama. E) Establishment of --- (Communist) drama. F) Full use of the (PROT) organization, and other miscellaneous items. G) Establishment of international cooperation.' PROT must swiftly affiliate with the I.A.T.B., and through it give assistance to the proletarian drama movements in China, Korea and Taiwan.¹

These tasks, as defined in the report, were essentially a reaffirmation of those implied in the slogans adopted at the Second PROT General Meeting. This was in accordance with what Ikue had been writing in his Nappu articles. The policies of the 1930 meeting had been correct, but they had been imperfectly understood and applied. The arrests of a few leading members had had a disproportionate effect on the whole organization, which should already have had grass roots support capable of absorbing such a setback. This was now urged more strongly. The internationalism of the 1930 platform had been political and had now been changed into something more definite. In March Kubo Sakae had published in Nappu the first of a series of articles on the history and role of the I.A.T.B.. It had been formed in

1. Ibid., 209-13.

1929 and had its headquarters in Moscow. A number of European left-wing drama federations had affiliated with it, and this was now being urged for PROT also. The implications were far reaching, as there would now be a source of authority for detailed aspects of drama, rather than simply for ideological guidance, as before. The recommendation of the I.A.T.B. was for short drama forms, "agit-prop" drama. The ideological authority still existed and the Fifth Profintern Congress, held in Moscow the previous year, was mentioned. The Profintern was concerned internationally with labour unions, including educational activities. It appears from the PROT report that the detailed recommendations of the Congress were not yet known in Japan. There was much interest in it in NAPF, as Kurahara Korehito had attended. He had returned in March, and his theoretical statement was awaited.

At the end of the PROT meeting an emergency motion approving Shin Tsukiji Gekidan's affiliation was put and passed unanimously. Shin Tsukiji immediately issued a statement. It acknowledged the help the group had received from Sayoku Gekijō and the leadership and advice which PROT had provided. In view of its hopes for development in the future it was a 'contradiction'¹ for Shin Tsukiji to remain outside the PROT organization. Affiliation was not being sought for the sake of Shin Tsukiji Gekidan alone. It was also intended to play a directly useful part in the enlarging and strengthening of PROT.²

To celebrate the event Shin Tsukiji Gekidan performed a new play in the Ichimura-za from 29 May until 7 June. It had been specially written by Murayama Tomoyoshi and was entitled Tōyō Sharyō Kōjō.³ It was the second

1. Mujun - the word was already acquiring currency in Marxist writing. Any thought or behaviour that did not perfectly follow contemporary Marxist authority was said to be contradictory. Mujun has developed into a general word for expressing criticism.
2. Quoted in Yamamoto Yasue, Shiryō-hen, pp.96-7.
3. Oriental Rolling Stock Factory.

new Murayama play to be performed during May, the first having been Shōri no Kiroku,¹ performed by Sayoku Gekijō from the first to the fourteenth as a special May Day production.

Murayama had been released at the end of December after more than seven months in prison. He immediately resumed his playwriting career with astonishing vigour. By May he had published a collection of three plays (including Shōri no Kiroku), one novel, three short stories and a lengthy essay on the theory of drama. In addition he had in January published a translation of Erwin Piscator's Das Politische Theater.

Murayama had seen Piscator's work while he had been in Germany and at that time he had been full of admiration for the revolutionary theatre that was being developed. Much had changed since then and Murayama was able to write in the translator's preface to this book: 'It is no good looking at this book with any other object in mind - such as, for example, hoping to be instructed in an authoritative theory of the proletarian drama movement. Proletarian drama, in the Soviet Union, in Germany, and even in Japan (marked for emphasis in the Japanese) has already far outstripped Piscator.'²

It is evident from the two plays performed in May what Murayama meant by this. Both are highly detailed lessons in revolutionary strategy. Shōri no Kiroku, written specially for May Day, 1931, shows how a May Day should be taken as an opportunity to broaden individual strikes already taking place into a general strike that will lead to revolution.³ It is set in Shanghai in 1930 (thus providing the chance to involve international capitalism). Tōyō Sharyō Kōjō describes how an existing union organization which pretends to be revolutionary but which is really in league with the company and sus-

1. Record of Victory.

2. Piscator, Sayoku Gekijō (Chūō Kōron-sha, 1931), iv.

3. The text used is Murayama Tomoyoshi, Shōri no Kiroku (Naigai-sha, 1931), pp.1-100.

tained by a gang can be hoisted with its own petard.¹ It is set in Japan in 1929, but, as Murayama explains in the preface, the left-wing labour federation Zenkyō is referred to, although it did not exist at the time.

The detail with which revolutionary techniques are described in both plays leaves no doubt about Murayama's primary purpose. The plays are records of what ought to have been happening in Japan in May, 1931. Shōri no Kiroku has no less than three meetings of union organizers where anyone who deviates from correct procedure has his mistake explained to him. One scene in the later play depicts a local (Party) organizer showing potential left-wing leaders how to produce a news sheet that will help swell their organization. This play is especially relevant to contemporary Japan in that it shows the struggle of the left continuing in spite of police arrests of the leaders.

In pursuing his aim Murayama freely used techniques drawn from the commercial theatre. Some stock figures of Japanese melodrama appear - the good-hearted prostitute, gamblers, the weeping, remorseful wicked brother; the stage revolves as a character enters a house; the contents of a letter change according to the character to whom it is currently being read aloud. Everything in the plays was to be made as familiar to the audiences as possible, even if this should involve pandering to their tastes. If one can speak of vulgarization in connection with the Japanese proletarian drama movement - and the high sounding purity of contemporary articles on drama theory suggests that one can - these plays would seem to reveal such a tendency.

The repeated emphasis on smaller scale drama forms at the 1931 PROT General Meeting seems to have finally encouraged Sayoku Gekijō to give serious

1. The text used is Murayama Tomoyoshi, Tōyō Sharyō Kōjō (Ōrai-sha, 1931), pp.19-137.

attention to the problem, as it had not done during the preceding year. In January, 1931, it had experimented with a series of short pieces which it had taken to various halls in Tokyo after performance at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. The programme had included Baka no Ryōchi¹, a new play by Shinjō Shin'ichirō which involved the miming of the main Marxist types by two of the characters, and a play for children by Miyoshi Jūrō. The main characteristic of the performances had been their comedy, thus continuing the unformulated trend in the study and practice of small scale drama in 1930 towards providing an entertainment environment in which workers could feel comfortable. The political content had been intended to educate the audiences in the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and in this was similar to the major proletarian plays, if less detailed. The only differences were in length and the use of comedy.

In March, however, Sayoku Gekijō included in an otherwise grand scale production at the Ichimura-za a very short piece which was directly topical in content, and this was followed in May by another on the same subject after the performance of Shōri no Kiroku in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. The event referred to in both these pieces was the imminent collapse of the magazine Senki. As a result of a successful take-over policy on the part of the Japan Communist Party Senki had become independent of NAPF in September, 1930, and had taken on a more directly political role.² As such it was increasingly subject to police interference and it was already in serious financial difficulties by the beginning of 1931. A fund raising campaign was launched which was supported by all the NAPF leagues. PROF's contribution (apart from written appeals) was through the two pieces which Sayoku Gekijō performed.

1. See above, p.259.

2. Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō, pp.455-6.

The first, entitled Horidashimono¹ had been written jointly by members of the group's Literary Section and was referred to as a 'poster play'. The idea was taken from a Russian cartoon which had appeared in Japan, with the caption 'Red Turnip'.² A collection of bourgeois citizens, landlords and their lackeys struggle to pull some treasure out of the earth. When finally they succeed, workers and farmers rise up out of the hole holding up placards ('posters') with the words: 'Read it! Save it! Senki!' The second piece had been written by Fujita Mitsuo and was entitled Dōzō.³ In it the audience is introduced to the president of a textile firm, who has outwardly been a model, paternalistic boss towards his workers while continuing to pay an enormous dividend year after year. To commemorate these handsome profits he has had a bronze statue made of himself, using ¥3,000 of the firm's money for the purpose. He invites all his workers to the unveiling ceremony. The moment for the unveiling comes, the covering is pulled aside, and there stuck impudently on the face of the statue is a poster with the words: 'Read it! Save it! Senki!'⁴

The technique of these pieces was not new. It had been used nearly ten years earlier in a play by the now discredited Kaneko Yōbun. The play was Sentakuya to Shijin⁵ and its climax had been the hoisting of a lineful of workers' dirty washing above a wall on the other side of which a millionaire was celebrating his sixtieth birthday. The insertion of such pieces into programmes of long plays that had been regarded as a quite separate form of theatre activity was a significant break from past practice.

1. Treasure Trove.

2. Sugimoto Ryokichi, Kogata-shiki Engeki no Hatten, Purotto, I. ii (Feb., 1932), 57.

3. (Bronze) Statue.

4. This summary is taken from the programme of Shōri no Kiroku, Sayoku Gekijō, May, 1931, Matsumoto Kappai Collection, XV. xii.

5. The Laundryman and the Poet.

The actions and the posters themselves were the most important aspects of these pieces and it was difficult to censor them. The scripts appear to have been deliberately innocuous, but even if the piece was banned in its entirety, as had happened in the case of one of the items of the January programme, another could be written within a few hours.

After the practical experience of these presentations and as a result of the urging of Murayama Tomoyoshi within the Nihon Puroretaria Gikyoku Kenkyūkai Sayoku Gekijō planned a more ambitious programme of short, topical items. It was performed with a new play by Miyoshi Jūrō in July and was given the title Living Newspaper. There were eight items altogether, written by members of the Literary Section. Two were banned by the censor.¹

In the programme for the September tour of the same Living Newspaper to Kansai Sayoku Gekijō announced that the items had been prepared to supply answers to the questions: 'Why is there such a slump (at the present time)? How can our lives be improved?' Sayoku Gekijō had kicked aside revues based on the eroticism, grotesquerie and nonsense of the age; here now was their 'red revue'.² One of the items was entitled Puro Supōtsu,³ and was a satire on school military training and militarism in general. It showed Dr. Milita's rhythm (in Japanese - rizumu = Miritarizumu) exercises.⁴ Santō Gōdō⁵ concerns three public bath-houses in a row, which are about to go bankrupt through having to compete for customers; eventually the scheming manager of one persuades the others to merge the three into one large enterprise.⁶ This was a satire on the contemporary activities of the three legal left-wing parties,

1. Akiba, iii. 708.

2. Sayoku Gekijō programme for the Kyoto performance of Shōri no Kiroku and Ikita Shimbun, Odagiri Hideo Collection, LV.

3. Proletarian Sports.

4. Sasaki, Fūsetsu, p.232.

5. The Three Bath-houses Co-operate. The word tō written with a different character means '(political) party'.

6. Ibid.

who had just amalgamated to form the Zenkoku Taishū-tō. The 'Hoover Boom'¹ was more international in its political significance. The scene is a Japanese-style long tenement house with the name Europe, occupied at one end by Russia. Germany, another tenant, is suffering from a red urine disease which worsens whenever he hears the dynamoes and tractors of Russia's Five Year Plan. France and Britain are worried and send for Dr. Hoover, who comes riding on a boom/air-ship, which bursts on his return journey.² Torukushibu Tetsudō no Kensetsu concerned the construction of a railway in the Soviet Kirgizskaya Republic.³

Kubo Sakae was not fully satisfied with the results. In an article on the Sayoku Gekijō performances of Living Newspaper he extols the qualities of the form and describes its success in Europe. The first Japanese version, however, through shortage of time, missed several important topical problems that were obvious Living Newspaper subjects. Apart from this, Puro Supōtsu was weak in that it did not portray clearly to the audience the difference in spirit between 'bourgeois sports', which were intended to be a safety valve designed to repress any feelings of protest on the part of young workers and farmers, and 'proletarian sports' which would train the workers for the revolutionary struggle. Satire should not consist of merely a series of vulgar jokes and puns. Japan did not have the tradition of satirical comedy that existed in Germany and must develop it. In this respect Santō Gōdō was superior, but it too had faults in that it reminded one of rakugo.⁴

The use of traditional entertainment techniques has been prominent in

1. Fūbā Keiki. The word keiki when supplemented by the word kyū means an 'air-ship'.

2. Akiba, ii.709.

3. See Plate 3.

4. Sayoku Gekijō no Ikita Shimibun, Kubo Sakae Zenshū, v. 445-9.

all the Japanese experiments with short drama forms since the May Day performances of 1930. It appears that audiences had appreciated the familiar sound and gestures, and Kubo in the same article refers to the audience splitting their sides with laughter. Laughter alone, however, was not enough. Kubo implies that the rigorous demands of proletarian realism should be applied to short drama forms as to long plays. The welcome accorded to the Sayoku Gekijō Living Newspaper proved 'to what extent this brief, direct theatre style was a fundamental form of proletarian drama and what a keen agit-prop effect it could achieve.'¹ Being proletarian drama, however, it would be under the close political scrutiny of the theorists of the movement.

Thus two years after the recommending of this form in Senki articles concerning the left-wing drama of Germany and the Soviet Union, the major Japanese proletarian group had finally taken it up. Interest in and performance of small scale drama had been sporadic during these two intervening years, but from this July production a major part of the energy of the movement was applied to this type of drama.

The performances of Living Newspaper coincided with the trials of suspected Communists which had begun on 25 June. Although the trial of so many (more than 250) defendants symbolized the blow that the authorities had been able to deal the J.C.P., the defendants used the court sessions for propaganda purposes and this resulted in the Party receiving more publicity than it had ever had before.² 1931 was therefore not the period of cautious restriction of Party activity that it might have seemed.

According to police reports the Party was continuing its policy of gradual takeover within the proletarian cultural movement. Kurahara had

1. Ibid., 447.

2. Beckmann and Okubo, pp.215-21.

returned from the Profintern Congress in March, 1931, and from the beginning of May regular contact started between him and the new leader of the Party, Kazama Jōkichi. Kurahara was attached to the Agit-Prop Section of the Central Committee and made one of those responsible for the Party's affairs in NAPF. (He took over full responsibility for this in June.) In mid-May a meeting took place of the NAPF Party group and it was decided to try to recruit leading members of the federation. Ikue, also one of this group, was to recruit Miyamoto Kenji of Sakka Dōmei and Kurahara to recruit Murayama Tomoyoshi of PROT.¹ The recruitment was successful and subsequently several other leading members of the cultural movement became members of the J. C. P.. The police considered Murayama a key figure and this can be taken as testimony to his influence at the time. Kurahara had come back from the Soviet Union with plans for a reorganization of NAPF. These were resisted by leading members of Sakka Dōmei and Murayama was deputed to put Kurahara's (and the Party's) case. He did so with some success, as Kurahara's proposals were published in Nappu in June, thus beginning the open discussion that led to the reorganization in November.²

Inside PROT the leading Party activists were Ikue, Shinjō Shin'ichirō and, from May, Murayama Tomoyoshi, the new Chairman. Ikue and Shinjō then persuaded Sugimoto Ryōkichi, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Sayoku Gekijō and a member of the PROT Committee, to join the Party. Ikue, Murayama and Sugimoto became the J. C. P. fraction inside PROT.³ Meanwhile on his own initiative Sugimoto worked at forming a Communist Youth League⁴ fraction

1. Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō, pp.458-9.

2. Ibid., p.464.

3. Shakai Undō no Jōkyō (1932), p.499.

4. Kyosan Seinen Domei.

in each of the drama groups affiliated to PROT.¹

The J.C.P. fraction inside PROT appears to have done its work thoroughly. Fraction meetings were held frequently and plans were laid for the following meetings of the PROT Central Committee (held at least once per month).² In this way the fraction was able to initiate discussion on the subjects that concerned the Party most. It is not known in any detail what the subjects were, but it appears from articles by Ikue in Nappu in July and August that a central problem was the development and composition of workers' drama groups. From references to the fact that over certain important issues connected with the problem discussion was still continuing, it is clear that there was some resistance in PROT to the policies of the Party group. The fraction was persistent, however, and steadily increased the number of Party members within the Theatre League.

In this way within a period of eighteen months PROT developed from being an organization pro-Communist in ideology to being one where the direct political influence of the J.C.P. was strong. Its activities in promoting drama had been vigorous in spite of continuing police harassment. The plays themselves had become more obviously vehicles of Party political propaganda; this was seen in the content and structure of the long plays and also in the rather sporadic development of shorter pieces. In addition groups under the influence of PROT had come to dominate shingeki. Proletarian drama had frequently been played in large commercial theatres. There had at the same time been a boom in 'tendency films', and in 1930 a film version of Nani ga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka had become the biggest ever success of the Japanese silent cinema.³ In the political conditions of 1931 control of PROT would be a prize indeed for the Japan Communist Party.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. J.L. Anderson and D. Richie, The Japanese Film, p.68.

CHAPTER 8.

Proletarian Drama, 1931-1934

Kurahara Korehito's article on the reorganization of NAPF according to the Profintern recommendations appeared under a pseudonym in the June issue of Nappu. The Profintern 'thesis', as it was called, was entitled The Role and Mission of Proletarian Cultural Organizations and it made two main recommendations. Firstly proletarian cultural movements must be broadly based in the population of the country concerned and their purpose should primarily be to recruit new members for Communist led labour unions. The foundation of all cultural activity should be the independent initiative of the workers. Secondly it advocated decentralization in countries where the national Communist party was illegal. Large numbers of small, separate, independent 'circles', groups and societies were to be formed.¹ Kurahara repeated these main recommendations in his Nappu article. He criticized the proletarian cultural movement in Japan for only requiring ideological commitment. This was simply a political 'direction'; it did not extend to the essential matter of organization. The basis of all cultural activities should be transferred to workplaces, especially factories and farming communities. A new proletarian cultural league, unifying all cultural activities, should be established and should have cultural 'circles'² as its basic units of organization.³

There were several references to drama, one of which emphasized how widely based the membership of drama circles, or 'groups'⁴ as Kurahara calls them at this stage, should be. They should include a whole range from active supporters of Sayoku Gekijō, enthusiastic amateur actors and varied 'entertainers' to workers who had a liking for kabuki and shimpa.⁵ From these circles it was to be hoped that workers' amateur drama groups would grow.⁶

1. Shea, Leftwing Literature, pp.207-8.

2. In katakana.

3. Furukawa Sōichirō, Puroretaria Geijutsu Undō no Soshiki Mondai, Kōjō Nōson o Kiso to shite sono Sai-soshiki no Hitsuyō, Nappu, II. vi, 30-40.

4. In katakana.

5. Ibid., 36.

6. Ibid., 37.

Kurahara's article was followed in the July issue of Nappu by one written by Ikue Kenji specifically on the subject of the drama movement. It has a certain general interest in that Ikue appears to criticize Kurahara in several places. If the police were right, the two were working for the same object in the cultural movement and were already in contact with each other. A closer examination of Ikue's criticisms, however, shows them generally to exaggerate Kurahara's own references to the shortcomings of PROT. There is also an element of limited justification, to some extent self-justification, of the policies and achievements of PROT up to that time. The events of 1932 showed how successfully the police had infiltrated the Japan Communist Party¹ and it seems probable that their reports on the Party in 1931 were accurate. The explanation for the apparent disagreement between Kurahara and Ikue may rather lie in the need to maintain at least the semblance of a debate about the proposed new cultural league.

Ikue's July article is otherwise a straightforward application of the Profintern/Kurahara thesis to PROT. He mentions that some hesitation in applying certain slogans had been experienced because the political position of PROT had taken some time to establish correctly. PROT also intended to organize workers who liked kabuki. Much debate would be necessary to solve the problem of the role PROT and the new circles would play in the new cultural league.²

He followed this article with one in the next issue of Nappu, in which he put forward specific recommendations for the reorganization of PROT. It would be a mistake for the workplace organizations to be in the form of the

1. Beckmann and Ukubo, p.226.

2. Ikue Kenji, *Engeki Undō ni okeru Soshiki Mondai*, Nappu, II. vii, 50-56.

present drama leagues, and Ikue quotes with approval the definition of the new drama circles as it appeared in Kurahara's article. They would not be under the direct control of PROT, but supporters of proletarian drama would exert their influence strongly within them to convert them into PROT supporting groups. However, circles would not be formally a part of the PROT organization, as this would dilute the latter's revolutionary character. The PROT organization must consist of drama groups (i.e. like Sayoku Gekijō) and individuals who had a positive interest¹ in revolutionary drama. These individuals would form regional or local committees.²

On 20 September, 1931, where was published the first issue of a new PROT organ, Engeki Shimbun.³ The appearance of the newspaper itself was an indication that Ikue's proposals for a reorganization of PROT had already been approved. All articles on proletarian drama published previously in 1931 had appeared in Nappu and had necessarily been specialist in tone. Engeki Shimbun was intended to be non-specialist, aimed at members of the new drama circles. The work of providing specialist advice and information was to be given to a new monthly magazine Purotto,⁴ which was first published on New Year's Day, 1932.⁵

Engeki Shimbun had to create its own readership, in that the circle organization did not yet formally exist. Again it is indicative of Ikue's

1. Sekkyoku-sei. A word used increasingly by Marxists from about 1930 to indicate a quality which would cause active political work on behalf of the extreme left-wing movement.
2. Ikue Kenji, Engeki Gurūpu no Mondai o Chūshin ni, Futatabi Soshiki Mondai ni tsuite, Nappu, II. viii, 29-35.
3. Drama Newspaper.
4. As in the case of Nappu, the Japanese form will be used to distinguish the magazine from PROT, the league.
5. It is not known how these were financed, as the outlay must have been considerable and the proletarian cultural movement as a whole was very short of money. However, there was some compensation for the chronic lack of funds in the fanatical devotion of its activists. Sawamura Sadako relates how the money from the sale of the not inconsiderable property inherited at about this time by her new husband, the leader of Puroretaria Engai-dan, seemed to have been spent very quickly. She supposes that it was used to further some political object. Kai no Uta, pp.130-31.

(and Murayama's) influence that the paper called for the immediate formation of circles, as suggested in the Nappu articles. The second issue carried the headline: 'PROT National General Meeting Soon!!' and announced that a General Meeting would be held in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō on 11 October in order to anticipate the official formation of the new cultural league. The proposals for discussion by the General Meeting had already been formulated by the PROT Secretariat and they concerned 1) a new organizational policy for PROT, 2) dialectical materialism in drama, 3) formation of a cultural league, and 4) international co-operation. It was going to be the most epoch-making General Meeting since the founding of PROT.¹

No verbatim report of the General Meeting was published in Purotto, but it is clear from references in articles by Murayama and Ikue that the reorganization went through as planned. One police summary of the proceedings was as follows:

'This General Meeting was held in order to establish a new policy for the movement in accordance with NAPF's change of direction (the formation of KOPF²).

1) Election of new officers.

2) Change of name. The existing 'Theatre League' (of the full title) was changed to 'Drama League'; the system by which theatres (that is, groups) were affiliated as units was abolished and individual membership was approved;³ PROT was made into a "league of those who would positively advance the proletarian drama movement in Japan".

3) Promotion of an organization of drama circles.

4) Affiliation with the Cultural League.⁴

5) PROT slogans: a) Arm the proletarian drama movement with dialectical materialism! b) Drama circles in every factory, school and college, and company! c) Three cheers for the growth of workers' and farmers' independent drama. d) Destroy the fascist and social-fascist drama movements. e) Recover the freedom of the drama movement by the pressure of the people. f) Japan Proletarian Cultural League forever. g) Three cheers for the development of revolutionary, popular drama movements belonging to the peoples of the East. h) International Workers' Drama League forever.⁵

1. Purotto Zenkoku Taikai Semaru!!, Engeki Shimibun, ii, 1.

2. See below, p. 308.

3. This is an over-simplification. Groups such as Sayoku Gekijō were still referred to as PROT groups. Administratively, however, they were no longer influential as groups and all PROT decisions were to be taken by committees to which elections were to be made at regionally organized meetings of individual PROT members. See below, p. 308.

4. See below, p. 308.

5. Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō, pp. 177-8.

This summary needs little elaboration. The change from Bolshevism to dialectical materialism was only a change of terminology. The circle organization was confirmed. The new Cultural League was to be joined. International co-operation was reaffirmed. PROT had been set on a new course.

NAPF dissolved itself formally on 12 November 1931 and Nihon Puroretaria Bunka Remmei¹ (usually abbreviated to KOPF, which will be used here) was formed on 27 November.²

According to the reports of Engeki Shimbun reorganization was put into effect at once. The fourth issue reported that a preparatory committee for a Tokyo branch of PROT³ had been set up. Individual members of PROT would join locality⁴ committees from which representatives would be sent to the regional⁵ branch committee. The founding meeting of the Tokyo regional branch would be held at the end of November.⁶

The sixth issue reported on other regional branches in the process of formation.⁷ However optimistic these reports were, some attempts at reorganization were evidently taking place at the end of 1931.

The reorganization provided an opportunity for a display of unity on the part of the two major PROT groups, Sayoku Gekijō and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan. In a special production commemorating the imminent formation of KOPF they jointly performed a full length play by a Soviet playwright and a second edition of Living Newspaper in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō.⁸

The Soviet play was Kirshon's City of the Winds, a panoramic play

1. Japan Proletarian Cultural League.

2. Shea, Leftwing Literature, p.205.

3. Shibu.

4. Chiku.

5. Chihō.

6. Purotto Chihō Shibu Sōritsu Taikai Semaru, Engeki Shimbun, iv (15 Nov., 1931), 1.

7. Purotto Kaku-chihō Shibu Zokuzoku Kessei suru, ibid., vi (15 Dec., 1931), 2.

8. 28 October to 11 November, 1931.

about the successful revolutionary struggle by the people of Baku against the Mensheviks and the British Imperialists, which revolved around the murder of twenty-six Commissars in the famous (in the U.S.S.R.) Twenty-six Commissars Incident. The play was a natural choice both because of the successful Shin Tsukiji adaptation of Pudovkin's film Storm over Asia, on a similar subject, in the previous March and in view of the praise accorded it by the 16th Plenum of the Soviet Communist Party.

Perhaps because of its impeccable pedigree City of the Winds was used by Ikue Kenji in the first issue of Purotto as a basis for an exposition of what drama should be after the reorganization. His article, written jointly with Akimoto Shigeo who had not been a leading PROT theorist before, sets out clearly what the dialectical materialist creative method meant in drama.¹ In theoretical terms the ideas put forward in this article are not essentially different from proletarian realism and Bolshevization. The playwright must have 'the world view of the proletariat and with it form general concepts of events and incidents in various periods and of the individual human beings associated with them. These human beings are at the centre of the action of the play and the world around them is made to advance along its developmental course....'² Ikue is not only concerned with the playwright; he emphasizes that everyone connected with a production must have a 'correct world view.' A dialectical materialist play will fail if the director and the actors are lacking in this. Although there was no great advance in the theory in this article, the requirement that everyone concerned should have the viewpoint of the 'fighting vanguard' (the Communist Party) was stated unequivocally for the first time.

1. Ikue Kenji and Akimoto Shigeo, Kaze no Machi no Hihan, Purotto, I. i (Jan., 1932), 58-70.

2. Ibid., 69.

The rest of this programme in celebration of the founding of KOPF consisted of a second edition of Living Newspaper. It was planned that this should contain four items, but two were banned by the police. The remaining two items were short revue pieces, one written by Murayama Tomoyoshi and the other by Kubo Sakae. The former was entitled Bunka Remmei Kessei Banzai!¹ A large white cloth with a single door-shaped hole cut out of it is held across the stage. It has 'White Cultural Movement' ('white' meaning capitalist or bourgeois, from White Terror) written on it in big letters. The cloth is pulled to and fro to reveal various characters standing behind. As the hole comes opposite each of them they step forward through it and speak their lines. They all complain that bourgeois culture (in the widest sense) affects them adversely in some way. A middle school student says he can only read what he is told to; if he orders Nappu, the police come to find out why. A young proletarian housewife complains about the official attitude towards birth control. The second part of the sketch shows a company president urging one of his factory managers to provide sports facilities to keep the workers occupied. Finally, with the stage in darkness, each of the characters of the first part is picked out in turn by a spotlight and he or she shouts a relevant slogan. They all link arms and chant 'KOPF forever!' Kubo's piece was called Fuassho Ningyō² and had less variety and action.³ A doll seller is hawking his wares, describing each type of doll as he shows it. There is a red Soviet doll made of steel that is particularly strong. But the doll he is especially concerned to sell is the Fascist doll, first marketed in Italy. It is made of celluloid and can be stepped on, although, of course, it is not as strong as a steel doll. He stamps on a Fascist doll too hard; it breaks and his potential customers begin to drift away. The

1. Three Cheers for the Formation of the Cultural League! Ibid., 90-94.

2. Fascist Dolls.

3. Purotto, I.1, 94-9.

sketch ends as the doll seller is desperately reducing his price in order to sell some of his Fascist dolls.

The first issue of Purotto contained an article by Asaumi Yukio on how to produce these Living Newspaper items effectively. The recommendations were quite detailed, but the general emphasis was on the need for clarity in the delivery of the lines and for the actions to be based on a familiar model. The doll seller was to be modelled on the street hawkers that could be seen every day in Tokyo.¹

The need for clarity was constantly reiterated in writing on Living Newspaper. Soon after the performances of the second edition Murayama Tomoyoshi began a series of articles in Engeki Shimbun on the writing and staging of this new drama form. In the first he states that the objective of performances should be that the items are easily understood, leave a deep impression and appeal directly to the audience.² In the second he lists suitable subjects for Living Newspaper items and then says that the task of the actors is to put them across simply, interestingly and clearly.³

In the New Year issue of Engeki Shimbun a different term appeared for this type of drama. On the front page a four-picture cartoon had the caption 'Red Megaphone'.⁴ The pictures themselves and the explanation underneath left no doubt that this was a suggested item for what had been called Living Newspaper up to that time.⁵ On page four there was an advertisement headed Red Megaphone and listing eighteen items that would be performed by Sayoku Gekijō in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. An article on the same page had the title: '"Fight to the end in 1932," cries the Red Megaphone.' It explains that with

1. Asaumi Yukio, Enshutsu Tebiki, ibid., 85-9.

2. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Ikita Shimbun no Kakikata, Engeki Shimbun, v (1 Dec., 1931), 3.

3. Ibid., vi (15 Dec., 1931), 3.

4. The word Megaphone is written in katakana.

5. Ibid., vii (1 Jan., 1932), 1.

the Red Megaphone the Living Newspaper of 1931 has been brought to maturity.

The development of Living Newspaper into Red Megaphone seems to have been almost entirely the work of Murayama Tomoyoshi. He compiled, directed and designed for the Sayoku Gekijō production and he nearly monopolized the writing on this form in the pages of Engeki Shimbun.

The Red Megaphone originally consisted of eighteen items, but six of these were banned by the censor. The final list consisted of four playlets, three sprechthors, two recitations of poems, one cartoon¹, one dialogue² and one short puppet play. The whole programme was divided into nine sections (it had been eleven before the censoring). The programme began with a sprechthor entitled Kinga Shinnen³, which asked whether the New Year meant anything to workers apart from a continuation of their sufferings and answered the question by promising that their time was coming, and this was followed by the singing of the Internationale with dance accompaniment. The first section ended here, and the second contained only one item, a dialogue entitled Toshi ga Kawatte mo⁴ by Murayama himself. The theme was that everyone must carry on their own struggle in Japan. The third section was the largest, containing five items. The theme in this section was the famine in Tōhoku. The first two items, both recitations of poems, showed that the farmer's life was wretched even when there was no famine. The third was a short play which taught that the famine that had occurred was not only result of natural disasters; it was partly due to the contradictions of

1. Manga kakeai. It is not explained exactly what this is, but from cartoons appearing in Engeki Shimbun it seems that the characters uttered short speeches and took up poses so as to form a cartoon-like tableau.

2. Kakeai.

3. Happy New Year. See Plate 4.

4. Though the Year may Change.

capitalism, against which the farmers must organize. The fourth item, a sprechchor entitled Nōmin o Sukue¹, showed a middle school student, a Salvation Army member and a social democrat mouthing sympathy for the afflicted farmers but really being more interested in their own problems, and finally three workers who make an obviously sincere appeal for money and support to alleviate the famine. The last item in this section, a puppet play, had the title 'Don't just talk! Act.' The fourth section was intended for children and only consisted of one item, a short play demanding free school meals. The fifth section, also with only one item, was a sprechchor and glove puppet play combined, in which the workers thrust aside the puppeteer capitalist's puppet henchmen and form a union. There was an intermission after this section. The second half of the programme started with an item emphasizing solidarity with Korean workers (again a section on its own); this was followed by an item on defence of the Soviet Union, a short item on education, and finally the singing of the PROT song and the TRAM song (TRAM being the Soviet Theatres of Young Workers²). The evening was rounded off with another rendering of the Internationale.³

The Red Megaphone was a much more ambitious form of revue-type entertainment than Living Newspaper had been. According to Engeki Shimbun, during the first seventeen performances at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō the average audience was three hundred.⁴ It is possible that this is an exaggeration, but as this number still only represents about half capacity, it does not appear to be the wild exaggeration that one might expect if any were made at all. Three hundred was still a considerable achievement as few plays had run

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1. Save the Farmers. See Plate 5.
 2. International Theatre (organ of the International Union of Revolutionary Theatre), ii (Moscow, 1932), 28.
 3. The summary of the complete programme is taken from Murayama Tomoyoshi, Akai Megahon, Sayoku Gekijō (Jan., 1932), 1-10.
 4. Engeki Shimbun, viii (15 Jan., 1932), 2.

as long in shingeki history.

The acting techniques required for Red Megaphone performances were very different from those necessary for a full length play. Since the opening night of Tsukiji Shōgekijō Japanese shingeki actors playing in long plays had been criticized for quite fundamental deficiencies in acting technique. The standard of technical skill required for the new revue entertainment was high, but it was within the capabilities of the actors. Above all the emphasis in the production notes that accompanied the published versions of the various items was on discipline. Sprechtchor, dancing and singing were all group entertainment forms and their effect depended upon overall clarity of diction and movement. This in itself depended on hard rehearsal and discipline. Complete control over the voice was the basic requirement for the individual actor. He or she had to be able to raise or lower its tone, its volume and its speed in speaking, while at the same time preserving the utmost clarity.¹ Regional accents were not allowed unless every single actor used the same one; any dilution of the overall uniformity of the voices would lead to a loss of clarity.²

Murayama was not allowed much time to savour his success with Red Megaphone. Before the run was over, he was arrested again. Engeki Shimbun reported that he had been arrested at a General Meeting of Sayoku Gekijō on the charge of having read aloud to the meeting an appeal by the PROT Standing Central Committee concerning a coming competition of revolutionary drama.³

1. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Kinga Shinnen no Enshutsu Tebiki, ibid., vii (1 Jan., 1932), 4.

2. Ibid..

3. Murayama Tomoyoshi Futō Kensoku saru, Engeki Shimbun, viii (15 Jan., 1932), 2.

The previous issue had reported the release of Senda Koreya.¹ Senda had been in Germany since the end of 1927 and he had returned to Japan with a German wife (thus having achieved what Sadanji had failed to do) at the beginning of December, 1931.² As most of the knowledge about sprechtchor in Japan had been gained from his reports on German theatre, he would as a matter of course have been involved in Red Megaphone, had he not been almost immediately arrested on 9 December.³ The reason given for his arrest had been his presence at the Second Enlarged Plenum of I.A.T.B. in June, 1931. Both these arrests were therefore specifically aimed at PROT's international connections. That this was not coincidental may be proved by the fact that the four items of Red Megaphone that were banned were all international in character.

The emphasis on PROT's role in an international movement of revolutionary drama distinguished 1932 from any previous year in the organization's history. Due to inefficient organization on the part of I.A.T.B., PROT had not been able to take part in the celebrations of I.A.T.B. Day in February, 1931. PROT was determined that this should not happen in 1932 and used all the propaganda facilities at its disposal to publicize the necessity for wholehearted participation in world-wide revolutionary theatre.

The main headline of the New Year issue of Engeki Shinbun was: 'I.A.T.B. Second Drama Olympiad.' The first issue of Purotto contained several articles on the work of I.A.T.B. and affiliated national drama leagues, and an editorial announcement gave most prominence to PROT's international activities. From this time until the end of February the pages of both publications were dominated by articles on the Olympiad.

1. Senda Koreya Shakuho, ibid., vii, 2.

2. Ibid., vi (15 Dec., 1931), 2.

3. Ibid..

The scale of the 1932 Olympiad was to be very ambitious and Japan, together with the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia, had been responsible for proposing the new enterprise.¹ National drama competitions were to be held, organized by the national proletarian drama leagues, and a grand final - the Olympiad itself - would be held in Moscow in August between the best national drama groups. The first round in Japan was set for 15 February, I.A.T.B. Day.

The drama competitions, however, were only one aspect of the Olympiad activities. A spirit of competition was to pervade all the normal activities of the proletarian drama movements. In Japan, drama groups were to compete with each other in attracting new members, as were the circles also; playwrights should vie with each other to see who could write the most plays; internationally, Japanese groups would be paired with foreign groups and they would compete to see which could increase its activities by the greater amount. The International Olympiad was to be the occasion for a supreme effort to bring success to the revolutionary theatre movement.²

The police were well aware of this and considered that the situation had to be carefully controlled.³ They evidently decided that the usual methods of interference were not sufficient, and they tried a new way of harassing the performances of the plays in the Tokyo part of the first round competition. They insisted on actually seeing the plays being performed on the stage. The police performances began on 13 February (the day the real ones should have), continued well into the night and were resumed very early the following morning. The exhausted actors were finally able to begin performing in the competition on the evening of the 14th. Every reference to I.A.T.B. and the Soviet Union was forbidden.⁴

1. Engeki Undō no Dai-jūi, Engeki Shimbun, x (15 Feb., 1932), 2.
2. Engeki Undō no Kokusai-teki xx (kakumei)-teki Kyōsō ni kansuru Geki, Purotto, Special Issue (15 Feb., 1932), 1 - 14.
3. Keiho-kyoku, Naimu-shō, Shōwa Shichi-nen-jū ni okeru Shakai Undō no Jōkyō, p.519. Referred to below as Shakai Undō no Jōkyō (1932).
4. Tōkyō Shibu Kyōen Kaishi, Engeki Shimbun, x, 2.

There seems to be some doubt whether the performances which were given by various Tokyo groups in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō for the next ten days constituted the competition as originally planned or not. The April issue of Purotto states quite clearly that the competition did take place in spite of interference by the police. It lists the six participating groups and the titles of the plays they performed.¹ Shingeki no Yonjūnen says that the competition was banned but that two plays were performed as a co-operative production by the six groups.² As there are comments in Engeki Shimbun and Purotto on at least two of the other four plays, it seems improbable that the number of plays was restricted, although some may have been almost unrecognisable after censorship. It seems most likely that all six plays were performed, each by the group that would have performed it in the competition, but that to satisfy the police there was no open suggestion that the performances in any way constituted a competition. This would explain why no announcement of the result appeared in either Engeki Shimbun or Purotto.

The six groups were Sayoku Gekijō, Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, Mezamashi-tai,³ which was the new name of Puroretaria Engei-dan, Sengo Gekidan (a Korean group), Tōkyō Zen'ei-za (a workers' group), and Yokohama Seinen Gekijō.⁴ The first three groups performed plays written especially for the competition, while the others performed plays already established in the proletarian drama repertory.

Sayoku Gekijō performed a new play by Murayama Tomoyoshi, an event in itself after the considerable period during which he had not written any long plays. This one was entitled Akai Hibana no Hitobito.⁵ It was set in

1. Nigatsu Sangatsu ni okeru Purotto Kakuchi Katsudō Hōkoku, Purotto, I. iv, 98.

2. P.216.

3. Wake Up! Troupe.

4. Yokohama Youth Theatre, A small, local group.

5. Red Spark Men.

Berlin in the summer of 1931.¹ In three scenes it portrayed the work of an agit-prop drama group called Akai Hibana no Hitobito against the background of the rise of the Nazis. It showed the group rehearsing, a playwright gathering material from workers in a bar, the organization and educational activities of the group, the building up of a new play, and finally a send-off by grateful workers as the group left for an extensive tour of the countryside to try to bring political enlightenment to the villages. The Mezamashi-tai play had been written by Shima Kimiyasu and was entitled Aoi Yunifuōmu.² The subtitle was Rōdōsha Jiritsu Gekidan no Seichō no tame ni Sasagu.³ In eight scenes Mezamashi-tai demonstrated how workers could use drama for political purposes in their factories.⁴ After introducing themselves as a group,⁵ they acted a scene at a factory where there had just been an accident due to the owners trying to economize on the maintenance of machinery. A play is then shown being worked out by the workers concerned. Subsequent scenes satirize commercial drama and show how short revue-type pieces on political subjects can be created easily and quickly by people who have little previous experience. It is then announced that a sprechtchor written by just one such worker has been sent to Mezamashi-tai and it is performed as a seventh scene. There is then a final sprechtchor, in which the members of Mezamashi-tai urge the audience to write plays and form groups in their own factories.

Both these plays used a variety of techniques. They contained scenes which were performed realistically. They also demonstrated the singing, dancing, choral speaking and group movement that had been developed during

1. The text used is Purotto, I. iii (Mar., 1932), 90-111.

2. Blue Uniform. 'Blue Blouse' groups existed in several European countries. The International Theatre, 11, 13 and 15.

3. Dedicated to the Growth of Independent Workers' Drama Groups.

4. Ibid., I. iv, 13-43.

5. See Plate 6.

the production of 'red revues' from the time of the first Ikita Shimbun. These plays are distinguished from the latter in that instead of teaching politics through drama the object is to teach how to teach politics through drama. Thus all the experience of the proletarian drama movement over the previous four years had now been subordinated to a narrower goal than ever before. Although the context was international, proletarian drama had turned in upon itself.

More arrests started the day after the performances at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō finished. These arrests were selective and highly efficient. For example, Sawamura Sadako was arrested within three days of joining the Communist Youth League. At the start of her interrogation she was told exactly where and by whom she had been persuaded to become a member. She comments that the police knew far more about the internal organization of PROT than she did.¹ Police reports contained detailed charts of Party and Youth League participation in the various cultural leagues.²

This police action seriously disrupted the ambitious plans that had already been laid for May Day, 1932. The proletarian drama movement had gained new confidence from its successful development of the new short drama forms and the enthusiasm engendered by the international competition, however misdirected, had encouraged PROT to regard May Day as an appropriate occasion for an all-out, unified effort. PROT had participated actively in previous May Days, but it was determined that in 1932 the whole exercise should be more carefully planned. For the first time there were to be 'preparatory productions for May Day'.³ Sayoku Gekijō was to perform in the Tsukiji Shōgekijō while Shin Tsukiji Gekidan was touring with another play.

1. Sawamura Sadako, Kai no Uta, pp. 132-4.

2. For example, Shakai Undō no Jōkyō (1932), p.500.

3. Mē Dē jumbi kōen.

Then, starting on 1 May, Shin Tsukiji Gekidan would take over the Tsukiji Gekijō with their play while Sayoku Gekijō toured with theirs. In the event the preparatory productions took place with considerably changed and reduced casts and the two groups had to combine their resources to be able to perform at all on May Day itself.¹

The preparatory production was to consist of a new play by Murayama Tomoyoshi and a 'special edition' of Ikita Shimbun. The latter was banned and an entertainment entitled Sā Mē Dē Da² took its place. This had been compiled by a meeting of the literary section of Sayoku Gekijō and put into its final form by Hisaita Eijirō.

Murayama's play was entitled Shimura Natsue (the name of the heroine) and it had five acts and sixteen scenes.³ As in the case of Fujimori Seikichi's Nani ga Kanojo o Sō Saseta ka, the play revolves around one girl who suffers through the pressures of a wicked society. Natsue is very different from Sumiko, however, in that she solves all her problems in the most constructive way possible, in the way most likely to further the revolutionary cause in Japan. She is the daughter of a poor country family, which has to give her in 'human pawn' to a local landowner in order to buy a power loom. The family's debts only increase and they finally escape by night to Tokyo, where Natsue takes a job in a big factory. She works so hard that there is a general reduction in piece-work rates, and as a protest against this she stays away from work for a fortnight. Realizing that such individual protest is meaningless, she returns to work to throw herself into union work. She falls in love with an outside Communist organizer, but when he is unmasked as belonging to a discredited faction within the (still illegal)

1. Sayoku Gekijō Shin Tsukiji Kyōdō Pamfuretto, Mē Dē Kinen (May, 1932), 2-5.

2. Right! It's May Day.

3. The text used is Puroretaria Bungaku, I. v (Ap., 1932), 6-62. (Puroretaria Bungaku had appeared in previous years, but the 1932 issues were referred to as Volume I.)

Communist movement, she spits in his face, casts him aside and leads her fellow workers into a strike under the direction of the proper faction. She is arrested at the end of the play, but her fellow workers, inspired by her example, resolve to carry on the struggle.

Technically the play is very interesting. It contains in good measure the shimpa elements that were noted in Murayama's 1931 plays. It also makes use of the new techniques of small scale drama. Two of the scenes are in sprechchor style and are referred to as such in the programme. They would seem to be rather artificially introduced and it does not appear that the technical problems of inserting this type of material into what is basically a realistic play had seriously been considered. Given that the main purpose of proletarian drama at this time was agitation and propaganda and that the long drama form was still granted official recognition, the combination of realistic with formalistic techniques offered certain advantages and it is significant that Murayama used such a combination so soon after Red Megaphone.

Shimura Natsue received high praise from the proletarian literary movement. It was said to mark the highest point in the growth of proletarian drama.¹ This judgement was probably based on the new technical style of the play and on its political content. The Communist Party newspaper Sekki², however, considered that the political points could have been made more clearly.³ They were certainly more detailed in a non-ideological sense than in any previous proletarian play. Some quite detailed discussions of socialist theory had appeared before, but in Shimura Natsue no less than six

1. Ōyake Sōichi, Murayama Tomoyoshi no Koto, Puroretaria Bungaku, I. x (Aug., 1932), 65-6.

2. Red Flag. The reading of the two ideographs of the name was changed to Akahata after the war.

3. Quoted in Akiba, ii. 725.

contending factions in the Japanese left-wing political movement are brought onto the stage. Five of them are listed on the front page of the programme in a sentence which by its position should be designed to excite the interest.¹ It is impossible to conjecture how familiar an audience ideally composed of workers would have been with the bitter feuding within the left-wing political movement in general and among the members of the Communist Party, both in and out of prison. The importance this theme has in the play, however, is a further example of how the proletarian drama movement had become preoccupied with the immediate problems directly affecting those concerned in leading it. The tendency to look inward had been continued and intensified.

Murayama never saw this play performed. His arrest in the series which had continued intermittently since the middle of February came on the day of the first night.² The actress playing Natsue was also arrested and had to be replaced at virtually no notice. The director, Sugimoto Ryōkichi, escaped with a dramatic cry of 'Farewell' through a window at the back of the theatre.³ He went underground, as had the few Communists like him who had escaped the efficient police drives.

Sa Me De Da, which was performed together with Shimura Natsue, was a compilation of eight scenes in Red Megaphone style. The history of the May Day tradition was traced and the audiences were urged to make May Day 1932 a serious demonstration of the unity of organized left-wing workers in support of their political and social demands. There were those, especially the Social Democrats, who were trying to turn May Day into a merry festival. They

1. Matsumoto Collection, XX.

2. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Yonjūnen, p.156.

3. Ibid.

must be repudiated and due preparation made for a proper May Day.¹ In the event the police allowed the extreme left hardly any time for such preparation. Engeki Shimbun was only able to publish its special pre-May Day issue a few days before May Day itself instead of about a fortnight before as it had planned.

For the left-wing movement as a whole May Day 1932 was a disaster. All parts of the movement had been subjected to the carefully executed arrests that had so weakened PROT. On May Day itself 6,500 police were on duty in the streets of Tokyo and a further 765 people were arrested.² The joint May Day production by Sayoku Gekijō and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan was performed under very difficult conditions. Ozawa Sakae, Secretary General of Sayoku Gekijō and cast in a leading role, was arrested in mid-run.³ There had been hardly any help in rehearsal from those with most experience. Almost all of them were in prison. Hijikata Yoshi, sensing how dangerous the situation was, had not been appearing at the theatre for some time. He did attend some of the rehearsals of one of the two May Day plays, but from that time onwards he confined himself to bed because of sickness.⁴ The play itself, written by a young and inexperienced playwright, was heavily criticized in Purotto. Murayama Tomoyoshi had shown what long and hard efforts were needed to acquire the ability to write plays with the degree of political complexity that was now required. It was not something that one could achieve when circumstances suddenly forced responsibility on one. Shimura Natsue was the last play Murayama wrote for many years. His creativity had become too closely linked with the political struggle.⁵ With

1. Purotto, I. v (May, 1932), 29-40.

2. Beckmann and Okubo, p. 226.

3. Tōkyō Sayoku Gekijō Katsudo Hōkoku, Sayoku Gekijō Pamfuretto (June, 1932), 22. (Ozawa's stage name now is Ozawa Eitarō.)

4. Hatta Motoo, Yonjūnen, p. 51.

5. Murayama Tomoyoshi, ibid., p. 156.

the Kwantung Army's activities in Manchuria, political assassination at home (beginning with the May 15th Incident) and intensive police pressure on the whole left-wing movement, the most prolific and successful proletarian playwright found his inspiration blocked.

The first reaction of the two PROT publications, Purotto and Engeki Shimbun, to police interference with the 'May Day struggle'¹ was to assert with a show of confidence that the work of the proletarian drama movement would continue. Under a headline of 'At our Tsukiji Plays will Continue' Engeki Shimbun listed the productions planned to take place at the theatre during the next few months.² Purotto devoted most of its subsequent (and last) two issues to the problem of strengthening the organization of the league.

Both Shin Tsukiji Gekidan and Sayoku Gekijō were still involved in the international drama competition. The results of the first round were never announced, and the PROT Standing Central Executive Committee was forced to admit in the June issue of Purotto that it was only possible to publish incomplete figures indicating the achievements of the various competing groups because many of the records had been confiscated by the police.³ Both groups tried to prepare productions for the next round of the competition, in July, but in both cases a ban was imposed. Instead of the intended plays, Kirshon's City of the Winds was performed by each group in turn.

Meanwhile it appears that serious doubts were entertained within PROT about the likelihood of any group being allowed to compete in Moscow.

1. It was another symptom of the subordination of drama to politics during this period that productions were planned around a schedule of 'struggles'. The struggle was always political and involved all sections of the extreme left-wing movement. It was usually focussed on a single significant day, such as May Day, International Youth Day, etc..

2. Engeki Shimbun, xvi (15 May, 1932), 3.

3. XX(Kokusai - censored) Kyōsō no Seika (1), Purotto, I. vi, 56-67.

Although nothing appeared in print in Japan, a report in the I.A.T.B. bulletin, The International Theatre, stated: "The entire campaign is being carried on under the slogan "Let us go to Moscow". There are doubts whether it will be possible to break through the police barriers, but all the forces of the movement will be directed towards this end'.¹

These fears were fully realized. Sayoku Gekijō was selected to represent PROT in Moscow and a send-off performance involving as many PROT members as possible was planned for September. The programme as originally planned was forbidden and other items had to be hurriedly substituted. In addition the Sayoku Gekijō actors were absolutely refused passports. The Japanese police were not only successful in preventing PROT participation in the Moscow Olympiad; they were also indirectly responsible for the postponement of the whole competition. It is clear from articles in The International Theatre that PROT was one of the most dedicated and active national leagues in I.A.T.B. and the absence of its competing group would have had a serious effect on the credibility of the Olympiad. Accordingly the competition was postponed until the spring of 1933.

Apart from these social pressures on proletarian drama there were also signs of a resurgence of the 'academic' drama that had been championed by the 'artistic' group within Tsukiji Shōgekijō and the leaders of the later Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Tomoda Kyōsuke and Tamura Akiko founded a group called Tsukiji-za which gave its first performance in February, 1932. The playwrights Kishida Kunio and Kubota Mantarō were associated with it and as a result of their encouragement many new shingeki plays were published in a

1. The Preparations for the Olympiad in the various Sections of M.O.R.T., The International Theatre, ii, 6.

new magazine Gekisaku.¹ Kishida had published articles on shingeki during the second half of the 1920s and Gekisaku became known as the magazine which reflected his views. He acknowledged the influence of the contemporary French theatre and his ideas on drama were generally based on the importance of beauty in the words of the dialogue.² This was far removed from contemporary proletarian drama, whose practitioners had earlier been able to dismiss Kishida with contempt. Kishida and Tsukiji-za could not be so dismissed in late 1932 and 1933. The group had a superlative actress in Tamura Akiko³ and it performed plays by talented young playwrights. One such was Tanaka Chikao, whose play Ofukuro⁴ was performed with great success by Tsukiji-za in June, 1933, after having been published in the first issue of Gekisaku three months earlier. Ofukuro depicts the tensions within a family consisting of the mother of the title, her son, in whom she herself has great hopes but who does not want to be mothered, and her daughter, who is modern and does not act as the mother believes a girl should. The daughter is more remote from the mother than the son, and the mother finally decides to follow the son when he leaves home for his first job.⁵ The play's characterization is sensitive and the situation was one with which many young and middle-aged Japanese of the time could identify. The success of Gekisaku and Tsukiji-za was an indication that the hold of proletarian drama over shingeki was weakening.

Neither Sayoku Gekijō nor Shin Tsukiji Gekidan were able to perform more than once for the rest of 1932 after the Olympiad fiasco, and only then

1. Playwriting.

2. A selection of Kishida's articles during this period was published in Kishida Kunio, Engeki-bi no Honshitsu (Hayakawa Shobō, 1948).

3. A glowing tribute to Tamura's contribution to Tsukiji-za's success is given by another great shingeki actress, Sugimura Haruko (also associated with Tsukiji-za) in Sugimura Haruko and Koyama Yūshi, Joyū no Isshō (Hakusui-sha, 1970), pp. 52-3.

4. Mother.

5. The text used is Gendai Nihon Gikyoku Senshū, vii. 9-36.

under the severest restrictions. The play proposed by Shin Tsukiji Gekidan was banned and the substitute, Murayama's Tōyō Sharyō Kōjō, could not be cast completely even by involving the non-acting members of the group. Both groups performed only three times each in 1933 and all these productions incurred considerable financial losses. The police had extended their harassment to the audiences and to have one's name and address taken by the police at a performance by a PROT group was tantamount to losing one's job. Worker content of audiences dwindled to almost nothing and many of the regular intellectual patrons of proletarian drama were cowed into submission by the increasingly hostile social and political environment.

Even when compared with previous years 1933 was a particularly inhospitable year for the left-wing movement in general. Apart from a continuation and intensification of the kind of police activity that had become routine, the year was marked by incidents which seemed to symbolize the hopelessness of the situation. One such was the murder of Kobayashi Takiji by the police on 20 February and their subsequent interference with the wake and the funeral. Four months later, in June, the recantations of the Communists Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika caused a sensation. The two Communist Party leaders had received life sentences in October 1932 and as early as January 1933 reports that they might defect from the Party appeared in the newspapers. This was denied by both of them at the time. When the formal public announcements of their defections were made in June, they maintained that it was not Communism or socialism as such but the Communism of the Japan Communist Party controlled by the remote and bureaucratic Comintern that was being rejected.¹ In spite of this disclaimer, the statement by Sano and Nabeyama was referred to as one of tenkō ('recantation', or, more usually, 'conversion'), and it was the signal for a flood of such statements from other left-wing political prisoners. Murayama Tomoyoshi

1. Beckmann and Okubo, pp.245-9.

was one of those who converted. In the statement he handed to the prison authorities he reaffirmed his belief in Communism as an ideology but contracted not to engage in direct political activity. He also issued notice of his withdrawal from membership of the Communist Party. He was released, and within a few months he had written the first of his agonized 'conversion novels'.¹

One way of avoiding the necessity of converting was to leave Japan. To do so legally was open to only a very few. Sano Seki, son of a distinguished doctor and involved in left-wing drama from the time of Zen'ei-za (he was also the elder brother of Sano Manabu), had been allowed to travel to the Soviet Union the year before and he was now working for I.A.T.B. in Moscow. Hijikata Yoshi, from a noble family, was a particular problem for the police, as they could not arrest him formally (he was temporarily detained on one occasion) without the permission of the Imperial Household Ministry. It was a considerable relief to them when Hijikata applied for a visa to leave Japan for health reasons. Strict conditions were attached to his visa, including a prohibition on visits to Germany and the Soviet Union. Hijikata, however, had made a secret arrangement with Senda Koreya, now the chief Communist Party liaison man in PROT² and at that time at liberty, to represent PROT at the Olympiad in Moscow.³ Shibai no Tomo⁴, a cheaply produced news-sheet which appeared briefly after Engeki Shimbun was forced to stop publication in March, triumphantly announced his arrival in Moscow.⁵

1. Murayama Tomoyoshi, Yonjūnen, p.160. The novel was Byakuya, published in May, 1934. For a sociological explanation of Murayama's conversion see K. Tsurumi, Social Change and the Individual (Princeton U.P., 1970), pp.58-60.
2. Senda says in his shuki (notes prepared for public prosecutor) that he received a copy of the Comintern 1932 Thesis for the Japan Communist Party from Sano Seki in about September, 1932, and tried to apply the new policy to PROT. Itō Kunio (Senda's real name), Shuki, signed on 27 March, 1941, Suginami Police Station, paragraph 78.
3. Ozaki and Ibaraki, Hijikata Yoshi, pp.176-8.
4. Friends of the Theatre. (Literally, Friends of Plays.)
5. Shibai no Tomo, 18 June, 1933, 2.

In spite of Shibai no Tomo's assertion that the police persecution had failed, it was becoming obvious that it had not. Later in 1933 Sakka Dōmei suffered a number of defections due to conversions, notably that of Fujimori Seikichi in November.¹ It issued a statement announcing its dissolution in March of the following year. In the same month another league affiliated to KOPF dissolved itself, Nihon Purorretaria Bijutsuka Dōmei.² In July Nihon Sobuēto no Tomo no Kai³, also affiliated to KOPF, announced its own dissolution.⁴

The Fifth General Meeting of PROT was to have been held on 16 April 1933, but it had been banned immediately after having been declared open. The slogans that were to have been adopted had shown that PROT was still conscious of its roles as part of the proletarian cultural movement in Japan under the leadership of KOPF and as a member of an international revolutionary theatre movement under the leadership of I.A.T.B.. The content of these slogans, however, was much the same as those adopted by the Sixth General Meeting of Sakka Dōmei and the latter league had gone out of existence within nine months of the meeting. The police detected an inclination among the delegates to the PROT General Meeting to free the league from its obligations to the two larger organizations.⁵

On 13 June 1934 a zadankai was held to discuss the future of shingeki and all the Tokyo PROT groups were represented on it. Murayama Tomoyoshi proposed dissolution and the formation of a single group from the most talented members of the individual groups then in existence. Miyoshi Jūrō

1. Shea, Leftwing Literature, p.231.

2. Japan Proletarian Artists League.

3. Japan U.S.S.R. Friendship Association.

4. Kenji-kyoku, Naimu-shō, Shisō Geppō (marked Secret), ii (Aug., 1934), 95.

5. Ibid., 101.

and several others opposed this. On both sides, however, there was a willingness to discuss a concept of drama that was not wholly linked with politics; the term used for this in the discussion was 'Osanai-ism'.¹ The discussion was continued on 22 June, but still no conclusion was reached. On the 30th a third and final meeting was held. By this time the positions of Sayoku Gekijō (which in the previous month had changed its name to Chūō Gekijō²) and Shin Tsukiji Gekidan had crystalized, the former being in favour of dissolution, the latter against. There was, however, agreement between the two groups that in the present circumstances PROT's existence had become meaningless, and the two groups took it upon themselves to issue a Resolution on the Dissolution of the League, which was sent to all members.³

In order to make an official decision an Enlarged Central Committee Meeting of PROT (that is, including representatives from regional branches) was called for 15 July 1934. It was a sad meeting. There had been no response from the regional branches and Hisaita Eiijirō, the chairman, was forced to ask the meeting to decree that a meeting of the representatives of the Tokyo branch (which was what this meeting effectively was, with a few exceptions) should be recognized as an Enlarged Central Committee Meeting. This it did, and a Declaration on the Dissolution of PROT was unanimously adopted. The Declaration specified the violent change in social conditions as the reason for PROT being unable to continue existing. Listing the achievements of the Drama League in the first sentence, it referred to PROT as a national organization for a drama movement of the working masses. Hisaita closed the meeting with the unhappy observation that not one representative of those working masses had attended.

1. Ibid., 102-4.

2. Centre Theatre.

3. Ibid., 105.

CHAPTER 9.

Conclusion

Various explanations are offered by Japanese historians and critics for the collapse of the proletarian drama movement and the wider proletarian literary movement in 1934. Depending on the political ideas of the writer the collapse can be attributed to the success or failure of the proletarian authors and playwrights in assimilating an ideology that affected their creative work. Any type of socialist ideology would be regarded by some as a factor which might cause a weakening of personality and diminution of creative power; others would consider that anything less than a thorough-going Communist ideology would fail to give the necessary conviction and inspiration to the creative writer.

The physical pressures on left-wing artists in Japan during the 1930s were certainly very great. Police treatment of political prisoners was as brutal in Japan as in many other countries at the time. There seems no room for doubt that Kobayashi Takiji was tortured to death by the police, even accepting the latter's explanation that he suffered a heart attack. The photographs of his body are appalling and the thoroughness of the police methods is demonstrated by the refusal of the main university hospitals to carry out an autopsy when asked to do so.¹ Even without the maltreatment

1. As in most cases of this kind, all the evidence inevitably comes only from the aggrieved side. Photographs can be faked. After interviewing Kobayashi Takiji's sister and several people who were themselves imprisoned in the 1930s, I am satisfied that even allowing for a considerable amount of exaggeration the physical pressures brought to bear by the police on political prisoners at this time can only be described as crude and brutal.

the prospect of long years in confinement was unthinkable to left-wing intellectuals and especially literary men, who had experienced the exhilaration of the left-wing intellectual cause in the 1920s. It is easy to underestimate the intellectual excitement of this period because it came to such a sad end, but in the eyes of many young writers and artists Marxism had offered an artistic release and fulfillment that they had never dreamed was possible.

Apart from the capitulation of many individuals, the arrests also brought the collapse of PROT as an organization. On paper this organization was not small. The police estimated that at the end of 1932 there were seventeen PROT branches, twenty-six drama groups containing a total of 453 members and approximately 817 people belonging to over seventy-five drama circles.¹ Yet there was virtually nothing left of this organization eighteen months later. The reason for this was that in spite of repeated published intentions to decentralize the organization and spread it through the circles, the leadership was still concentrated in Tokyo and in the hands of a small number of people. The fact that these leaders were members of the Japan Communist Party exposed them to the most intensive police activity, and the smallness of their numbers meant that the arrests of a few individuals could jeopardize the whole organization. It seems clear that the most crippling blow came with the arrests of March and April 1932. It is significant that these were carried out just at the time when the Communist Party was being most successful in bringing PROT under its control. It was also the time when the confidence of the Party was being manifested in the great publicity given to the International Drama Competition. The collapse of

1. Shihō-shō, Puroretaria Bunka Undō, pp.192-5.

proletarian drama as an organization can be directly attributed to narrow political control of PROT.

While the proletarian drama movement as organized in PROT collapsed in 1934, the idea and the practice of writing and performing plays, especially long plays, based on Marxist thought, continued throughout the 1930s. Two of the five plays generally acknowledged since the war as masterpieces of left-wing drama were written after 1934. They are plays of 'socialist realism', the critical term which replaced 'dialectical materialism' to indicate the guiding theoretical principle of the time. Hisaita Eijirō's Hokutō no Kaze¹ and Kubo Sakae's Kazambaichi² have both established a permanent place in shingeki history. The former was written in 1937; the latter was in two parts, the first published in 1937 and the second in 1938. Both playwrights had been active in the proletarian drama movement, Hisaita from as early as 1926. Neither had lost his belief in Marxism as the basis of a creative method in spite of the events of 1933 and 1934, in particular the conversion statements of many of their friends. Hisaita and Kubo were only two of a large number of left-wing playwrights who continued their work in the mid-1930s.

The question then arises why, if the organization had collapsed (and organization had been accepted as a necessary part of the left-wing cultural movement from 1925) and many of the leading practitioners of proletarian drama had been discredited through their conversions, left-wing drama remained a potent force in the later 1930s and indeed until the present day.

From the voluminous literature of all kinds which is concerned with shingeki history the answer to this question would seem to lie in the years 1929 and 1930. These were the years of

1. North-east Wind.

2. Ash Terrace of the Volcano.

Murayama Tomoyoshi's Bōryokudanki, Fujita Mitsuo's adaptation of Taiyō no Nai Machi and other notable productions. In terms of the size and composition of the audiences which these productions attracted they were the great successes of proletarian drama. As we have seen, Fujita's adaptation was heavily criticized inside the movement, but the production still had considerable significance in putting on the stage an acclaimed proletarian novel, itself written and published in 1929. Both Bōryokudanki and the novel Taiyō no Nai Machi have been regarded as masterpieces of proletarian literature because, with Kani Kōsen, they marked the convergence of theoretical and creative aspirations. The ideological content was not significantly different from that required after the proletarian drama movement had come under the leadership of the Japan Communist Party. The change from 'proletarian realism' to the 'dialectical materialist method' was not one of political ideology. Proletarian drama was Communist in ideology in 1929, even if it was not Communist in organizational terms. The significance of 1929 and 1930 in the history of proletarian drama lies more in the brief but substantial unity which was achieved between all the elements of a stage production, the playwright, actors, audiences and critics.

This period was also important to shingeki for another reason. Sayoku Gekijō, as a company, was stable in the sense of a lack of disagreement among the leaders. There had been initial tensions between the former members of Zen'ei Gekijō and Puroretaria Gekijō and there were later internal struggles over the assertion of Party control, but Sayoku Gekijō in 1929 had a unity of outlook that may have been partly due to a democratic organization but which owed much to a corporate confidence in the drama that was being developed. There was not the fundamental disagreement between leaders that had occurred between Tsubouchi Shōyō and Shimamura Hōgetsu in the case of Bungei Kyōkai and Osanai Kaoru and Hijikata Yoshi in the case of

Tsukiji Shōgekijō. Tsukiji Shōgekijō itself was undergoing a period of severe internal stress in 1929. Sayoku Gekijō was therefore in 1929 something quite rare, creatively and organizationally, in shingeki history.

The fundamental inspiration for this brief period of unity and stability was left-wing thought and several explanations can be offered for the influence that socialism had on the shingeki movement. The role played by Tsukiji Shōgekijō in this process was very important. Physically it was a powerful focus of a new drama movement which was supported almost wholly by intellectuals. The building had been constructed soon after most of the Tokyo theatres had been destroyed by the Earthquake. The venture began with a quarrel among shingeki leaders that to many progressive intellectuals epitomized the clash between the old, established generation and themselves. It would have been odd if these progressive intellectuals had not been left-wing in ideology at this time. In all the countries to which Japan had looked in her modernization the years following the First World War had brought a great increase in intellectual interest in socialism. Much of the culture of the 1920s in Europe reflected this. In particular the expressionist drama of Germany, which Hijikata Yoshi was so enthusiastic in producing at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, was an example of this.

In 1929 and 1930 socialism appeared to have performed great services for the shingeki movement and to have led to achievements that might otherwise not have been gained. It is more questionable whether the legacy of proletarian drama has been of benefit to shingeki since the Second World War, but shingeki, as other aspects of Japanese culture, has been affected by the general soul-searching on the part of left-wing intellectuals in the post-war period and this must also be considered in any assessment. If any positive disservice to the development of shingeki can be attributed to left-wing thought, it is that it deflected actors and directors from their main task. Actor

training was discussed by the Tsukiji Shōgekijō leaders, but never properly put into practice. The left-wing drama movement set up two drama study centres, but by this time the whole conception of drama was being eased into a Marxist mould and there were so many theoretical problems that practical training for actors received low priority.

In every respect it would have been remarkable if shingeki had not passed through a left-wing period in its history. Its struggle against the traditions of the past lasted right through to the beginning of the heyday of pre-war Marxism. When re-established after the Earthquake it was concentrated in one building. From the beginning it was an intellectuals' movement and at the inception of Tsukiji Shōgekijō one large group of modern playwrights, most of whom were not and did not become Marxist, was specifically excluded. The most modern European plays, which excited great interest at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō, had some connection with socialism. Marxism became the intellectual fashion and exerted such a potent influence that even an ultra-individual such as the energetic and prolific Murayama Tomoyoshi thought it an essential discipline for his creative instinct. And finally in the pre-eminent place accorded to theory the left-wing drama movement developed features in common with other political and cultural left-wing movements of the time. The continuance of the idea of left-wing drama even after narrow political control had caused an organizational collapse showed and still shows how deeply this idea took root in the Japanese modern drama movement. Every shingeki playwright since the collapse of PROT has had to make a conscious decision on his attitude towards the relationship of left-wing political ideas and drama. Given the circumstances in which shingeki developed in the 1920s it could hardly have been otherwise.

PLATES.

The photographs which follow illustrate some of the small scale drama that was developed by PROT groups in 1931 and 1932. Photographs of productions of full length plays have not been included, as such illustrations are available in published books on shingeki history. There is a particularly fine collection of such photographs in Yamamoto Yasue Shashin-shū, the documentary volume of which has been frequently cited in this thesis.

The original photographs were kindly lent by Matsumoto Kappei. The reproductions used here were prepared by Andrew Powell.

Plate 1.

This photograph is not identified, but it shows clearly the conditions in which Puroretaria Engei-dan performed when sent to the scene of a strike.



Plate 2.

A performance by Kyōto Zen'ei-za of Puro Saiban,
a short play by Shinjō Shin'ichirō written in 1931 (see p.297).
In this comedy a Japanese and a Korean worker are encouraged to
make up their differences by a 'proletarian lawyer'. At the end
they demonstrate their solidarity by beating a company spy (as
shown in this photograph).



Plate 3.

A performance by Sayoku Gekijō of Torukushibu Tetsudō
no Kensetsu, one of the items of the first Living Newspaper.
See p. 300.



Plate 4.

Kinga Shinnen, one of the items which made up the
Red Megaphone programme. See p. 312.



Plate 5.

An open air performance by Mezamashi-tai of Nōmin o Suke. See p. 313. Sawamura Sadako is in the centre.



Plate 6.

The first scene of Aoi Yuniuōmu in which Mezamashi-tai introduced itself and its work to the audience. See p. 318.



Plate 7.

A performance by a local drama group. The recommendations in Engeki Shimbun on the performance of agit-prop pieces seem to have been followed here in the costumes, positioning and gestures.

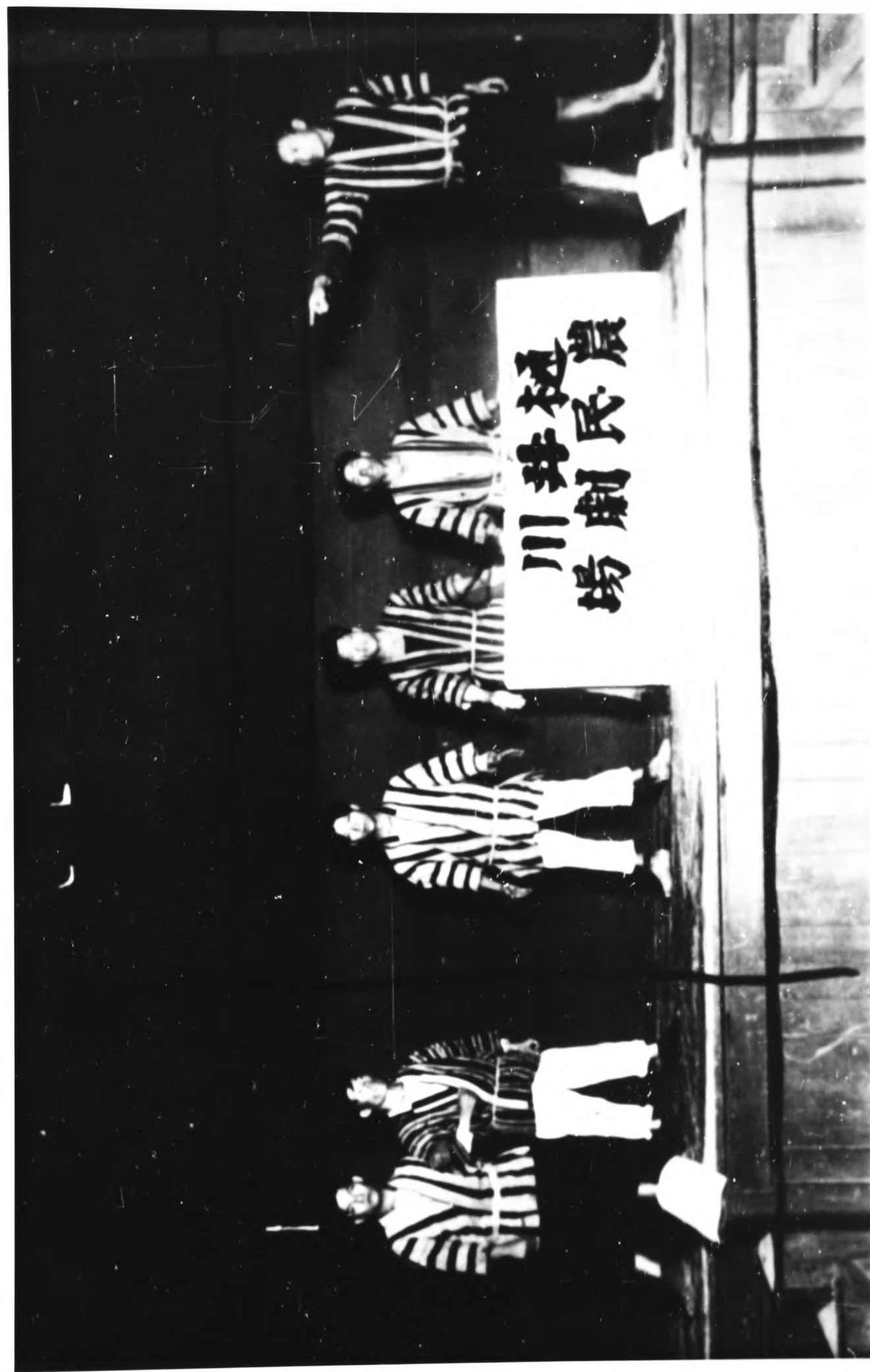


Plate 8.

A performance by the Okayama Zensen-za. The play is not identified, but from the posters hung at the back of the stage it seems that its subject was a labour dispute. A poster to the left of the stage announces a banning, probably of a play for which the present one was substituting.



Plate 9.

Cover of the programme for the send-off performance
for the PROT representatives to the Moscow drama Olympiad,
September 1932. See p. 325.

才盟同劇演者働勞際國
 送別其同公
 遣派代表トツロ
 リムピアー
 フ



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<u>Engeki Shimbun</u>	Sept., 1931, to March, 1933.
<u>Engeki Shinchō</u>	1st series: Jan., 1924, to June, 1925. 2nd series: Ap., 1926, to Sept., 1927.
<u>International Theatre</u>	Organ of International Union of Revolutionary Theatre. Irregularly, from 1932.
<u>Musansha Shimbun</u>	Sept., 1925, to Aug., 1929.
<u>Nappu</u>	Organ of Zen Nihon Musansha Geijutsu Dantai Kyogikai. Sept., 1930, to Nov., 1931.
<u>Puroretaria Bungaku</u>	Organ of Nihon Puroretaria Sakka Dōmei. June, 1930, to Oct., 1933.
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