Japanese Interest in East-Central Europe
in Historical Perspective

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Historically, Japanese interest in East-Central Europe has followed quite a dramatic course. It would be very interesting and useful to both Japanese and East-Central European researchers to look back upon the mutual interests and studies which have been made according to the interest. On the Japanese side, however, we can mention only one article as a serious study of Japanese interest in East-Central Europe: Prof. Hiroshi MOMOSE's article "A Survey of Eastern Europe from the Viewpoint of Japanese Social Scientists---An Interim Report---", Slavic Studies, Vol. 10, 1966. This is a very valuable survey of the Japanese publications since before World War II as well as the Japanese conceptions of "Eastern Europe".

The present essay is intended, following Prof. MOMOSE's example, to make a little clearer the historical changes of Japanese interest in East-Central Europe, especially in Hungary. It would be convenient to divide the essay into two parts; that is, before World War II and after that.

I. Before World War II

1/. From the viewpoint of the mutual relations between East-Central Europe and Japan, it was, probably, East Central European countries that showed an earlier interest in Japan. The Japanese victory over Tsarist-Russia in 1905 provoked such a keen interest in Japan on the part of East-
Central European countries that Japanese language, literature and arts were gradually introduced there. This was a widespread movement from Finnlnd, through Poland and Hungary, up to Turkey, to say nothing of Asian countries such as India.

It is true that, for example, a member of the Hungarian nobility who took part in the Polish uprising against Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century was captured and sent to Far East (Kamchatska), from where he fled to Japan. It is also true that many German, Austrian, Czech and Hungarian soldiers who were captured by the Russian army during World War I were rescued by the Japanese army which was in Siberia to intervene the Russian Revolution of 1917: they visited Japan on their way back home, of course. There were some other political leaders of East-Central Europe who visited Japan before World War I. The Japanese, however, did not show any serious interest in East-Central European countries. But why?

One of the answers is the political situation of Japan in those days. Japan had no direct foreign interest in East-Central Europe. She was only interested in so far as East-Central Europe might play some role in her political relation with Russia. But such a case was very limited in those days. Another answer is clearly connected with the historical situation of the Japanese development. Ever since the Meiji Restoration, which took place about the same time as Ausgleich, both the Japanese government and Japanese people were so eager to follow the way of the development of more advanced countries and to catch up with them that the government and people of Japan were interested only in the nations of Western Europe, such as England, France and Germany. Generally speaking, it was from England that machinery was imported to Japan in the Meiji Era,
it was from Germany that the educational and legal systems were imported, and it was from France that socialism was first imported to Japan. Thus, it was very difficult for Japan to turn her face to East-Central Europe before World War I.

2/. Even after the War, the Japanese way of thinking remained unchanged, though the United States appeared as another advanced model for Japan to follow, mainly in the economic sense. In the cultural life, introduction of western thought was continued on a still more enlarged scale. It was in this context that György Lukács's works were translated into Japanese in 1927--- The Class Consciousness and The Methodological Problem of Organization. The Japanese Communist Party which was founded in 1922 and reorganized in 1926 was under the theoretical leadership of Kazuo Fukumoto who was strongly influenced by Gy. Lukács's theory. Thereupon, Gy. Lukács was not introduced as a man from Hungary but from Comintern.

In 1920s, however, a moderate advance was marked in the Japanese interest in East-Central Europe by some individual initiatives. For example, a Hungarian named István Mezey, who was among the Hungarians rescued by the Japanese army in Siberia, organized a Magyar-Japanese Society in 1922 at home. On the other hand, a Japanese named Juichiro Imaoka went to Hungary in 1922 to stay there until 1931. Mr. IMAOKA, besides teaching Japanese at Budapest University (Pázmány Péter Univ.), introduced Japanese culture and arts: he published a book Uj Nippon (Athenaeum) in 1928 and helped to organize an art exhibition in 1927. He also visited other East-Central European countries. It was in these years that racial and cultural similarity among "Turán" peoples were
alleged.

On the other hand, the governmental relations between East-Central Europe and Japan were insignificant. The East-Central European countries were diplomatically dealt with by Japanese Embassies at Moscow and Vienna. However, there appeared a few noteworthy works in 1920s. For example, Jumpei SHINOBU, Professor at Waseda University wrote two books: To–Oh no Yume (Dream of Eastern Europe), 1919; Barukan Gaikoshi Ron (History of Balkan Diplomacy), 1921. The land reforms of East-Central Europe after the War were investigated by the Ministry of Agriculture, the result of which was published under the title of To–Oh Shokoku ni okeru Nosei Kaikaku (Agrarian Refoms in East European Countries), in 1924.

3/. In the 1930s, Japanese interest in East-Central Europe grew rapidly in connection with the war in China and anti-Soviet strategy. The Japanese government and military circle were very anxious about how East-Central European countries would act if Soviet Union and Japan should fight each other as a result of the expansion of war in China. It was in this context that efforts were made for a more systematic relation between East-Central Europe and Japan to be established. This was typical in the case of Hungary.

In 1935, Baron Takaharu MITSUI, during his trip through Europe, visited Hungary and offered to present a large amount of money to promote Magyar–Japanese relation. This made the Hungarian government active for the promotion of relations between two countries. This also produced a few books on Japanese culture in 1937. In these circumstances, the Hungarian government proposed to conclude a cultural agreement with Japan, while the Japanese government offered to agree upon the exchange of scholarship students and the opening
of Japanese lecture course alone. In these years (1937-1938),
the cultural exchange through civil initiative was developed,
I. Mezey visiting Japan and the Magyar-Nippon Cultural Associa-
tion being founded in Japan. But the military consideration
on the side of Japan cleared the way for the agreement of
culture and friendship between Hungary and Japan in November,
1938. --- The historical process up to the conclusion of
the agreement will be dealt with by Prof. MOMOSE using
Japanese and Hungarian National Archives in a very recent
future.

Since this agreement was concluded, the Japanese inter-
est in East-Central Europe became more organized and official.
The special Councils were established both in Tokyo and
Budapest for the carrying out of the agreement. Scholarship
students were sent to each country.

Generally speaking, in the 1930s, there seems to have
existed a characteristic division among Japanese attitudes
toward foreign countries.

Owing to the circumstances mentioned above in Hungarian
case, it was conservatives who showed great eagerness in
the studies of the situations and historical backgrounds of
East-Central European countries. Let me cite some of the
publications which appeared in these days, though these are
already discussed in Prof. MOMOSE's article mentioned above.
Mr. IMAOKA, coming back from Hungary, wrote several pamphlets
on Turanism, on the Hungarian cultural and racial situation
in Europe. Diplomatic aspects of the Balkans were dealt with
by Hitoshi ASHIDA, a diplomat who was to become Prime Minster
later: Barukan (The Balkans), 1939. Polish political life
between the Wars was described by Atsushi KIMURA: "Porando
Koboshi Kan (The Rise and Fall of Poland), 1940
On the other hand, Japanese liberals continued to concentrate their attention upon Western Europe and the United States. Faced with the increasing pressure of Japanese fascism in the 30s, they sought in the West a model of modern society and the way to fight against fascism. Consequently, they were not much interested even in those East-Central European countries which were associated with the West—such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia. There were, however, some exceptions.

Land reforms which were carried out all over the countries in East-Central Europe soon after the World War I drew the special attention of some specialists of agriculture in Japan. In 1930, Dr. Yasushi KAWAMURA published a book titled *Chuoh Shokoku no Tochiseido oyobi Tochiseisaku* (Agrarian System and Agrarian Policy in Central European Countries), in which he suggested the necessity of limitation of big landownership and of promotion of free peasant holdings, examining the experiences of the German, Austrian and Hungarian land systems.

Another important work was *Sengo Ohshu ni okeru Tochiseido Kaikakushi Ron* (History of Land Reforms in Post War Europe) written by Katsumasa TANABE, an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, in 1935. Surveying the historical background, the process and the results of land reforms carried out in Rumania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Bulgaria and Hungary, he also suggested the necessity of promotion of the peasant holdings instead of big landownership in Japan. Last but not least, there appeared in this period the "first scholarly work" done by Japanese researchers in the field of East-Central European history. Noburu ORUI, Professor at Tohoku Univ. among a series of books on contemporary Powers, dealt with the political history of the Hapsburg Monarchy and the Successor States with the help of a young historian Mitsuo HAGINAKA:

On the part of Marxism in Japan in this period, it was so complicated a problem to decide how to interpret the diagnosis of the socio-economic and political situation of Japan given in the Comintern theses and how to adapt them to the Japanese socialist movement that there was no room for any realistic investigation of foreign countries including East-Central European countries. Japanese Marxists were, of course, interested in the Russian Revolution and the socialist construction that followed, but they were understood only from a theoretical point of view. It is true that many writings of K. Marx, F. Engels, V. I. Lenin, I. V. Stalin and N. Bukharin were translated and studied energetically, but they were treated like a theoretical Bible without considering the backgrounds of what were written there.

* The Comintern theses on Japan which were presented in 1927 and 1932 were so ambiguous in character that some stressed the importance of the feudal Tenno regime in Japan and others emphasized the development of capitalism in Japan. According to the former interpretation, it was the bourgeois revolution that the Japanese Communists should fight for, while the latter interpretation urged the proletarian revolution in the near future. This is called the "dispute over Japanese capitalism".

Let me add that Gy. Lukács's works on literature and arts were translated into Japanese in 1930s: *Essence of Novels*, in 1936; *Studies of Goethe*, 1937; *On Historical Literature*, 1938; *Marx-Engels's Theory of Arts*, 1934. But he was treated as a Marxist philosopher, not as a Hungarian one.
II. After World War II

1/. As for the new stage of historical development which began after the end of the Second World War, to discuss Japanese interest in East-Central Europe is exactly to discuss Marxism in Japan.

Owing to the defeat of the rightists in Japan, the conservative trend of investigation of East-Central Europe lost its ground after the War. Instead, with the emergency of "People's Democracy" in East-Central Europe and "New Democracy" in China, Marxist investigation of East-Central Europe made a rapid and straight development until 1956. We can mention many translations, informative articles and studies on the People's Democracy in East-Central Europe which were published in this period. As early as 1949, Motoshi KATSUBE wrote an article, "East European Countries---Establishment and Development of People's Democracy". In 1953, KATSUBE again discussed the "Development of the Theory on the State of People's Democracy" in Shiso, and there appeared in the same year the translation from the Russian version of Function and Policy of the States of People's Democracy. In 1954, Tatsuo HARADA wrote an informative article: "People's Democratic Revolution in Eastern Europe", and Tsuneaki SATO discussed the economy of People's Democracy. The year of 1956 was a fruitful year in this field: the political and legal system of East European states were investigated in the Studies on People's Democracy, a collection of works. Among the series of the studies on contemporary socialism, one volume contained two articles dealing with East European countries: Motoshi KATSUBE's article on "Formation and Development of People's Democracy in Eastern Europe" and Shoichiro
The most elaborate work on the socio-economic transformation of East European countries after the War was Motosuke UDAKA's (Professor at Tokyo University) research on the process and results of the agrarian reform under People's Democracy. Let me add the fact that Gy. Lukács's works dealing with socio-philosophical as well as aesthetic problems were introduced again: Existentialism or Marxism?, History and Class Consciousness and others.

People's Democracy, however, was interpreted in an extremely idealistic form in these days, which was partly due to the lack of information coming from the other side of the "Iron Curtain", and partly due to the traditional way of theoretical thinking on the part of Japanese left intellectuals. People's Democracy was hailed as a new and ideal way of socialist revolution in more developed countries and in a more advanced stage of historical development than the Russian Revolution. It was thought to be a combination of democracy and socialism, getting rid of that dark image of the Soviet Russia in 1930s. In this sense, Japanese liberals also looked at People's Democracy with sympathetic eyes.

These conceptions of People's Democracy, we could say, were indeed one-sided. In spite of the Yugoslavian problems since 1947-48, the Japanese Marxist interpretation of the socialist way of East-Central Europe was generally not concerned with the possible internal contradictions in People's Democratic countries. Quite a few historians were aware of the necessity of a more realistic approach to socialism. It was rather non-Marxist authors who paid more attention to the internal conflict in the Soviet Bloc.

The lack of a realistic attitude toward socialist regimes
on the part of Japanese Marxism was clearly manifested when a series of astonishing events occurred in the USSR, Poland and Hungary in 1956. The zigzag process in the socialist world in this year struck the whole people who had been interested in socialism, except quite a few historians.

2/. The year of 1956 was a starting point of transition to a new attitude toward socialism in general, and East-Central European countries in particular. This transition was accelerated by the Chino-Soviet dispute and conflict, and was completed by the economic reforms in the whole of East-Central Europe in the second half of the 1960s and the Czech events in 1968. By speaking of the transition toward a new attitude the following changes are meant.

On the one hand, the attitude toward socialist countries altered on the part of Marxists in Japan. The events of 1956 obliged them to analyze socialist countries more realistically, not through the writings of the leaders of Communists movements alone. Especially, relations of socialism with national factors were stressed by Bokuro EGUCHI, Professor at Tokyo University.

On the other hand, on the part of non-Marxists, the hysterical criticism against socialism which followed in the years soon after 1956 gradually disappeared. The disappointment on the part of liberals has also come to be overcome. Here too, an effort for realistic analysis of socialist countries has come to be made.

In this difficult period, it was "philologists, archeologists and students of literature" who continued to study East European history from their point of view. It was significant that the first comprehensive history of East-Central Europe in the Japanese language was composed by such researchers
in 1958. Those researchers who had specialized in German and Russian histories also have come to study the history, especially political history, of East-Central European countries in this period. All these researchers, faced with so complex a situation in contemporary East-Central Europe, have tried to understand this part of Europe in its historical background with various national, social and political twists and turns.

But it was only at the end of the transitional period that those researchers appeared in significant numbers who can use native languages and materials, and that East-Central Europe came to be investigated from the socio-economic point of view again.

3/. Since the end of the 1960s, there appeared many young students who are interested in East-Central Europe. They seem to be interested in it from various points of view. It might be useful to consider for a while those factors which are arousing Japanese interest in East-Central Europe in the present day.

First of all, let me consider a rather practical factor: that is, the interest of Japanese business in East-Central Europe. I dare say that Japanese business has not paid, or has not been able to pay, serious attention to East-Central Europe because of the lack of commodities to be imported into Japan. There might be a possibility for Japanese capital to make use of labour power there, but this remains in the future.

So, primarily owing to the given natural resources, the interest of the Japanese business circles in East-Central Europe remains and will remain more or less restricted compared with the interest in South-East Asia, for example.
I should like to emphasize that East-Central Europe has a more important position in the Japanese life of culture and thinking than in practical concerns.

Then, what are the positive factors which stimulate East-Central European studies in present Japan?

Fundamentally most of the researchers are eager to find some way of socialist development different from the "Soviet type" of development. It may not be true to say that any pattern of socialist development suitable for Japan is sought directly in the experiences of East-Central European countries, but some suggestions are indeed looked for in them. In this connection, the socio-economic development and structure of East-Central Europe are investigated more realistically, the peculiarities of this part of Europe and the continuation of its history before and after the Revolution being more or less emphasized. Thus the Yugoslavian Problems and events in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia have come to be thrown another light.

The experiences of COMECON has also drawn greater attention. It is sure that COMECON was not paid due attention in the 1950s, but it has come to be noticed, when EEC appeared in Western Europe, as a promising counterpart on the socialist principle. And as the productivity in general has grown so high in the 1960s and 70s that a certain kind of "common market" or "regional intergration" has come to be thought inevitable in Eastern Asia including Japan, the experiences of COMECON have come to be thought very suggestive in contrast to EEC.

The economic reforms which were realized in East-Central Europe in the second half of the 1960s, of course, stimulated the interest of Japanese researchers in this area. Though,
stimulated by this topic, some students found it necessary to study the economic background going back into the past, most of the economists confine themselves in the theoretical schematization of the socialist systems existing in East-Central European countries.

Lastly, I should like to point to a new trend of historiography in Japan. As mentioned above, the Japanese interest in foreign countries has long been directed toward English, French and German historical development; after 1917 toward the United States and Russian development as well. And, except for England and France, which were too advanced to be compared with Japan, German and Russian developments have long drawn special attention among Japanese historians. But both of these have recently been considered rather different from Japanese development. In this sense, more attention has come to be paid to East-Central Europe which lies between Germany and Russia. This is especially the case with economic historians.

This movement corresponds with another new movement which is making energetic efforts to investigate concretely such regions of the world which have not been the subject of researches. More and more works are appearing dealing with the regions and countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as East-Central Europe, making it possible to compose world history in the true sense of the word.

4/. In conclusion, I should like to point to some problems which East-Central European studies in Japan are faced with.

Of course, we are suffering from a serious lack of materials necessary for the investigation of the history of East-Central Europe. But we believe it will be solved any-how in the future, though quite gradually and with much
difficulty.

One of the most important problems for us from the methodological point of view is how to deal with, or how to make use of the works which appeared before the War with a rather nationalistic and rightist character. We have to criticize most of them, but at the same time, we have to absorb some of the achievements of that time.

The other important problem is how to prevent researchers of individual countries of East-Central Europe from isolation from each other: that is how to keep the integrity of researchers. Since studies have come to be carried on an East-Central European scale in East-Central Europe itself, it will be retrograde for Japanese researchers to isolate themselves into studies of individual countries alone.