FUKUZAWA YUKICHI AND RUSSIA

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Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) was one of the most popular thinkers of modern Japan and he had a great influence upon modern Japanese thought throughout the Meiji, Taishô and Shôwa periods. When he was born Japan was still a feudal country, isolated from other parts of the world, and when he died she had already modern industry, a parliament, compulsory education, and army and navy which had gained victory over China.

At the turn of the ancien regime, Fukuzawa repeatedly stressed the necessity to know the things of the world and Japan's position in it. What he had in mind was to make Japan as civilized as the Western countries, and that as soon as possible.

The Meiji government, after the Restoration, tried to modernize the state from above, with the slogan of "Bunmei kaika" (Civilization and Enlightenment). In this sense, there were some points at which Fukuzawa and the Japanese government met on common ground. However, Fukuzawa, who had hated unequal rights of feudal system as his father's mortal enemy since boyhood, wrote the opening sentences of Gakumon no Susume (An Encouragement of Learning, 1874-76) as follows: "Heaven never created a man above another nor a man below another." This phrase became very popular and even today

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most Japanese know it.

Fukuzawa's another famous slogan is "Independence and Self-respect". He means independence in a double sense; independence of an individual and that of a nation. Fukuzawa saw in his mind's eye the essence of civilization not in material things, but in the "spirit of civilization" and the "spirit of independence" of a nation.

Fukuzawa traveled abroad three times in his life, between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-two. The first trip was a voyage to San Francisco from January to May 1860. He went there as a private servant of the Commander in Chief Kimura Settuno-kami and stayed there about a month. It is interesting that he was not surprised at the explanations of the technologies of telegraphy, sugar refining and so on, because he had known the scientific principles of them beforehand; but he was astonished at "entirely different things in American life." For example, he was shocked to hear from an American gentleman that he did not know where the descendants of George Washington might live and that he did not care at all about it. 3

It is worthwhile to mention that Fukuzawa bought a copy of Webster's Dictionary (sic) with the little money he had. This was really the starting point of English studies in Japan. Fukuzawa realized during his short stay in America that behind the material civilization there was a spiritual civilization, and if one did not understand the latter, one could never understand the nature of Western countries.

His second travel abroad was much longer than the first one; for about one year from the end of 1861 he visited France (where he stayed for 26 days), England (46 days), Holland (34 days), Prussia (20 days), and Russia (42 days). His stay in Russia was the second longest next to that in England. During his stay in St.Petersburg, he visited "companies, schools, hospitals, poorhouses, the Mint Bureau, railway stations, telegraph offices, gas facilities, museums, botanical garden, and libraries." 4

Among other noteworthy activities, it is interesting for us that he visited schools in Russia and investigated the curriculum and tuition. To be sure, he had previously visited schools in England and Prussia, but in the Russian capi-

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tal he visited not only government schools but also a private school of commerce and made inquiries about the number of students, tuitions of resident and non-resident students and so forth. He found that there was a course of gymnastic exercises within the curriculum, and observed the training with interests.\(^5\) He may have thought that the school systems of England or Germany were too advanced and that the Russian system would be an efficient model for Japan. Ten years later, Tanaka Fujimaro of the Ministry of Education of the Meiji government, made investigations about educational systems of Europe, and he paid much more attention to the German system, while virtually neglecting the Russian model. Fukuzawa’s interest in the Russian system was quite contrary to Tanaka’s case.\(^6\)

Before visiting Russia, Fukuzawa had studied about this country by reading Dutch and English books and research materials.\(^7\) We know that most Japanese intellectuals of those days studied about Russia through English materials, and the Anglo-Saxon bias against Russia had an influence upon them.\(^8\) In terms of this, Fukuzawa was not exceptional; but he was very interested in the Russian school system with his practical aim, and he may have been keeping the memory of it for future reference.

His third trip abroad was that to the East Coast of the United States in 1867, and he stayed there for about fifty days. He brought back a lot of books and reference materials\(^9\) as he had brought from Europe. As is well known, after

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5. *ibid.*, pp.80-81.
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coming back from the third trip Fukuzawa published such best sellers as Seiyô Jijô (Conditions in the West) and Sekai Kuni-zukushi (All Countries of the World) and he introduced Russia to the Japanese public in those works.

With reference to Russia, Fukuzawa, first of all, explained her distinguishing features as follows: Russia is a vast country which occupies one-sixth of the entire land area of the world. Then he mentioned that in this country, all powers were concentrated in the hands of the Emperor, who stood upon sixty million people.

For the writing of “Sekai Kuni-zukushi”, Fukuzawa devised a special method; each page of the book was divided into two parts. The lower part was printed in larger type and with illustration, while the upper part in smaller one, but the explanation was more in detail. In the lower page he gave a simpler explanation with a rhythmical sentence, so that one could easily learn it by heart.

Both in Seiyô Jijô and Sekai Kuni-zukushi, Fukuzawa stressed the importance of the role of Peter the Great. Before Peter, Russia was a small northern country, but the Emperor made a radical reform on the model of such advanced countries as England, France, Holland and Sweden. He set up schools, built an army and navy, defended the country and attacked enemies, and finally he made Russia one of the great powers of the world.\(^{10}\)

However, Fukuzawa was not the first person that had ever evaluated the role of Peter the Great. Before him both Watanabe Kazan and Sakuma Shôzan had mentioned about the Petrine reform and expressed high regard for it.\(^{11}\) In his work Shôchû Bankoku Ichiran (Manual of All the Countries of the World) published in the 2nd year of Meiji (1868), Fukuzawa divided the human race into four categories, “chaotic”, “barbarian”, “uncivilized”, “enlightened and civilized.” He classified such countries as the United States, England, France and Prussia as belonging to the fourth category; but as to Russia he emphasized the great gulf between the rich nobles and the poor common people, who were ignorant and suffered from despotic rule.\(^{12}\) He contrasted the United States with Russia, saying that in America there was a rule by law and the whole people were enlightened and enjoyed liberty.

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Fukuzawa, however, did not overlook the military power of Russia. He included her as one of the five big powers of Europe. He wrote that England, France, Austria, Prussia, Russia and the United States constituted “the center of the world civilization.” Then he added that from the viewpoint of wealth of the nation, England and the United States were the first of those six countries, but the from the viewpoint of democracy, the United States was the first of all.13

Such a classification of all countries of the world was, in a sense, the fashion of the time. Fukuzawa must have studied such a classification from Mitchell’s School Geography (1866),14 which he had bought during his second trip to the United States. The same year as Fukuzawa’s Shōchū Bankoku Ichiran was published, a government-inclined journal, Meiji Gekkan (Monthly Magazine of Meiji) also made a classification of the countries of the world as follows: “civilized countries” (England, France, the United States, the Netherlands, later joined by Austria, Prussia, Denmark and Sweden), “enlightened countries” (Russia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the countries of Latin America), “semi-enlightened countries” (China, India, Persia, Turkey and the African nations north of Sahara), “countries of uncivilized manners and customs” (the nomadic tribes in Siberia, Central Asia, Arabia and Africa.), and “barbarians” (the American Indians, and the natives of Africa and Australia).15 This shows that the Meiji government ranked Russia inferior to the most advanced countries and such a ranking necessarily influenced the Japanese people’s view on Russia.

Fukuzawa, who had pointed out the characteristics of Russian politics as autocracy, did not recommend abolishing such a system immediately. He asserted that there were no other means “to adopt”, because Russian people, who were ignorant, poor and powerless, preferred autocratic rule. Even if they would establish a national assembly, it would be nothing but a name, and of no use for the nation. In order to govern such a country, according to Fukuzawa, the only means would be “to strengthen the prerogatives of civilization and enlightenment.” To this judgment he added a footnote in which he changed the wording to “prerogatives of the monarch.” By exercising these prerogatives, he wrote,

13. ibid., p.465, 473.
the Russian monarch could “protect the lower class of the people and lead them to the civilization.”  

Fukuzawa said that such a politics would be the only realistic one in Russia, where the act of emancipation of serfs had been declared a year before, and the Russian autocracy was not the same as that of China. We could interpret, in this connection, his “prerogatives of civilization” and those “of the monarch” as enlightened despotism. Fukuzawa, who had highly esteemed for Peter the Great, insisted here on the efficiency of enlightened despotism.

As to the defects of Russian politics and society, Fukuzawa pointed out troublesome procedures, corrupt practices of government officials, severe censorship, bad communication between the people and the government, arrogance and contempt of the nobles for the people, humiliation and flattery of the people to persons in power, and their lack of courage to improve themselves, and underdeveloped education. In order to overcome these defects Fukuzawa thought that only enlightened despotism would be of practical use. He believed, in his inmost thoughts, in the gradual progress of history.

Fukuzawa explained his gradualism in the second volume of Seiyô Jijô Gaïhen (Supplement to Conditions in the West), in which he wrote as follows: “When we consider the development of history, we see that the political changes had an inclination toward the good with the times, although there were sometimes obstacles.”

In this part of the book, Fukuzawa divided political systems into “constitutional monarchy,” “aristocratic council system”, and “republicanism.” He insisted on the importance of understanding the historical background of those systems and the merits and demerits of revolution.

With regard to the possibility and the process of Russia’s gradual reform, Fukuzawa wrote in one of his main works, Bunmeiron no Gairyaku (An Outline of a Theory of Civilization) (1875), as follows: “If Russia were to reform her political institutions and immediately try to emulate English parliamentarianism, she would be unable to carry out her project and would cause herself great harm, to boot. Why? Because Russia’s rate of development has been far slower than that of England, and the same is true of the sophistication of her

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17. ibid., pp.547-548.
18. ibid., p.423.
people. Russia’s present political institutions suit the present level of her civilization. Nevertheless, it is undesirable for Russia to maintain the empty show of institutions indefinitely, completely disregarding the advantages of civilization. Russia must take careful stock of her present level of civilization; for every step she takes toward modern civilization she must also bring her government up one step, so that both march toward together”.

Among the nineteenth-century Russian thinkers there were such gradualists as Speransky, Granovsky, Chicherin, Turgenev and the liberals of zemstvo. However, the majority of both the Establishment and the anti-Establishment were against even the gradual reform of society which might cause the rise of an opposition movement and would require a lot of time and endurance. And there were not many who wished to build a constitutional regime and civil society by amending the autocracy with the gradual preparation of law.

At the bottom of Fukuzawa’s gradualism, we have to admit, there was his keen insight into the essence of civilization. In his Gakumon no Susume (An Encouragement of Learning), which was published almost at the same time as Seiyô Jijô and soon became a best seller, Fukuzawa wrote as follows: “The civilization of a country should not be evaluated in terms of its external forms. Schools, industry, army and navy, are merely external forms of civilization. It is not difficult to create these forms, which can all be purchased with money. But there is additionally a spiritual component, which cannot be seen or heard, bought or sold, lent or borrowed. Yet its influence on the nation is very great. Without it, the schools, industries, and military capabilities lose their meaning. It is indeed the all-important value, i.e. the spirit of civilization, which in turn is the spirit of independence of a people.”

Fukuzawa, who saw the essence of civilization not in material civilization but in the spirit of independence of a nation, thought that the very spirit of independence should come from the middle class of a nation. According to him, the origin of the tyranny of Asian countries was none other than the prod-

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uct of the ignorance of the people, and if one would like to avoid it, the people should be eager in learning and attain to the same level as that of the government. 22

It is well known among students of Russian history that one of the characteristics of tsarist Russia was the weakness of her middle class. Russian society was divided into two: the nobles, bureaucrats and clergy on one side, and the large mass of peasants on the other. And the mobility of the society was very limited. In contrast with the Russian government, the Meiji government of Japan recognized the importance of education and learning for the modernization of the state, and established the compulsory educational system as early as several years after the Restoration, and it set up a great number of schools for the training of teachers, army and navy, post and telecommunications, railway and so on. It succeeded in attracting poor but ambitious young people toward its side, otherwise they might have become an opposition element to the modern Japanese society.

Fukuzawa continued to follow the situation of Russia by reading English books. In his “Miniō Isshin” (An Innovation of the Mind of People), published in 1879, he introduced the recent political affairs of Russia. He mentioned such events as the autocratic rule of Nicholas I, the emancipation of serfs of Alexander II, the polemics between Herzen and Katkov, Karakozov’s unsuccessful assassination of Alexander II and so forth. He said that the more a country civilized, the more the anti-government movement became radical. In the Russian case, the revolutionaries distributed many illegal newspapers, pamphlets and appeals printed by modern machines. And finally the radical movement attained to the level of the assassination of the Tsar. He further mentioned that such a radicalization could be seen not only in Russia but also in Germany and France for the past thirty or forty years, because of the development of “steam engines, telegraphs, printing machines, postal service.” Then he asked himself whether there was no other way than to refuse such facilities of civilization and suffer from the foreign invasions and become a colony, or to accept them so that the opposition movements would overthrow the government. To answer such a question Fukuzawa referred to British parliamentarianism where the two-party system had been going well for almost one hundred years and there was no

radical terrorism.\textsuperscript{23} Fukuzawa admitted that the present Russian Emperor, Alexander II, was a very gifted person, and he would never fall behind other monarchs in Europe. But because of the lack of parliamentarianism, the Emperor had to hold all powers in his hands and he had to be an object of terrorism. Fukuzawa insisted that the only way "to secure the national polity is to alter the political power at times."\textsuperscript{24} To be sure, Fukuzawa's insistence was connected not only with the comparison of the political systems of Russia and Great Britain, but also with the time of the publication of his work. He must have wished to take the opportunity of introducing the British paralimentarianism for the purpose of opening the Diet in Japan.

Well, then, from where did Fukuzawa get the information about the recent situation of Russia? He wrote that for the writing of \textit{Minjō Ishin} he had referred to "History of Modern Russia written by Mr. Eckaruto \textit{(sic)}, published in England in 1870". Koizumi Shinzō tried to know the exact title and the name of the author of the book, and finally found out that this was "Julius Wilhelm Albert von Eckardt, \textit{Modern Russia Comprising Russia Under Alexander II, Russian Communism, the Greek Orthodox Church and Its Sects, the Baltic Provinces of Russia}, London, 1870".

Julius Eckardt was born in Livonia in the Baltic Provinces of Russia in 1836. He immigrated to Germany when he was twenty-four years old because of his hatred of the Russification policy of the Russian government. From 1867, he worked as an editor of Die Grenzboten, Hamburgische Correspondenz; and later he served the Prussian government and he was appointed German Consul at Zurich in 1900. Among his works there were \textit{Livonia of the 18th Century} (1870), \textit{Berlin and Petersburg} (1880), \textit{From Nicholas I to Alexander III} (1881), \textit{Reforms in Russia} (1882), \textit{Berlin, Vienna, Rome} (1892) and so on.\textsuperscript{25}

It should be noted that he was a Baltic German. Alexander Herzen once caricatured the characteristics of Baltic Germans in his essay "Russian Germans and German Russians."\textsuperscript{26} They were proud of their own culture and generally had higher education than Russians. They disliked and despised Russians. From the end of the 19th century, because of the policy of Russification

\textsuperscript{23} ibid., vol.5, pp.52-54.
\textsuperscript{24} ibid., p.50; pp.59-61.
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they became more Russophobic. Julius Eckardt was a typical Baltic German. And Fukuzawa, who had read Eckardt’s work on Russia, had to be influenced by his Russophobia.

In Eckardt’s work Fukuzawa was not so much interested in the process of the emancipation of serfs, the polemics between the Slavophiles and Westerners and the religious sects as the radicalization of opposition movements and the change of the trend of journalism. But judging from his mentioning of the new attempt to kill the Tsar in April 1879, it is certain that he was following Russian political affairs even after the publication of Eckardt’s work.

In conclusion, for Fukuzawa, Great Britain, with its parliamentarianism, was the model for Japan, while Tsarist Russia was the anti-model. And in his view on Russia there were influences of Russophobia which he consciously or unconsciously got from his reading of English books.