

take you another ten minutes on the trolley, so you'd be getting home at about nine ten. That gives you twenty-five or thirty minutes more."

"Thank you. You're right." So we went back into the park, holding hands. We found a bench by a tree and sat there quietly with our cheeks pressed together. Finally, we had to leave. When we got to the park exit, I asked Pak, "Where are you going from here?"

"I think I'll drop by at my friend's place in **Kōjimachi**," he replied without enthusiasm.

"Aren't you insecure, not having a regular place to live?"

"Of course I feel insecure," he said, looking down at the ground. "When I am healthy like this it doesn't matter, but when I get sick I really feel helpless. Even people who are kind to you ordinarily don't want you around when you're sick."

"People are heartless. You look frail too. Have you been seriously ill since you've come to Tokyo?"

"Yes. Last spring I caught a bad flu. But I had no one to nurse me, so I suffered in a flophouse in Honjo for three days without food or drink. I thought I was going to die. It was really frightening."

I was overcome and tears tilled my eyes. I gripped his hands firmly. "If I had only known you then. . ."

A moment later Pak said firmly, "Well, good night. I'll be seeing you soon." He let go of my hands and hopped on a trolley headed for Kanda.

I stood there watching his trolley leave and said to myself as if in prayer, "Please wait a little while longer. Once I finish school we shall be together. I will always be with you from then on. I won't let you suffer alone when you are sick. If you die, I shall."

I am ending my account here. From this point on I am not allowed to write about anything except my life with Pak. But I **have** completed what I had intended to write about. Why did I do what I did? I shall not offer any explanation, for here I wanted to tell the story of my life. Sensitive readers will no doubt understand the reason for my activities. I am certain of this. Undoubtedly my life here on earth will soon end. But even **if an** individual physical being is erased from the world, I am convinced that the essence will survive in the reality that is eternal. I am ending this crudely written account with Perfect composure and serenity. **May** all the people and things I love be blessed with good fortune.

[The following excerpts are from Kaneko's interrogation on November 22, 1923.]

Question: Why did you embrace **nihilism**?

Answer: Because of the circumstances of my family and the ensuing social oppressions.

Q: What about your family?

A: I have no family in the true sense. . . . I was abandoned by my parents and separated **from** my brothers and sisters. I had no family life. My birth was not recorded, so I was oppressed by the society. It is the fault of the social system. . . . [After coming to Tokyo] I read the writings of Sakai Toshihiko and socialist magazines. Observing this, my parents seemed to be concerned that I was inclining toward socialism. In about 1922 I became acquainted with a Korean, Pak Yeol, who was unknown and propertyless. I decided to live with him and informed my parents about this. . . . After I started living with him my father wrote me a letter, in May of that year, contending that I was a descendant of a Chancellor of the Realm, Fujiwara-no-Fusamae [681-737], who lived over a hundred generations ago. I was besmirching this illustrious Saeki family line by living with a lowly Korean. He was disowning me and henceforth I was not to think of him as my father, he wrote. So I was disowned by my father, who had already abandoned me. Mother too had abandoned me. . . . She even considered selling me to a **whore**-house. . . . My parents bestowed no love on me and yet sought to get whatever benefit they could out of **me**. Theirs is a truly selfish love, a form of greed. So I, an object of greed, fail to understand the meaning of filial piety. The so-called morality is based on the relationship between the strong and the weak. That morality is always manipulated to serve the **convenience** of the strong. That is, the strong insists on preserving his freedom of action while demanding the submission of the weak. From the standpoint of the weak, morality means an agreement that calls for one's submission to the strong. This moral principle is common through all ages and all societies. The primary aim of those in power is to preserve this moral principle as long as possible. The relationship between parents and children is also based on this principle. It is only coated over with the attractive-sounding term "filial piety."

Q: How did you come to associate with socialists and eventually arrive at nihilism?

A: Three intellectual groups influenced me while I was peddling newspapers. . . . One was a Buddhist salvation group, the second was the Christian Salvation Army group who beat their tambourines, and the third, the long-haired socialists who cried out in desperate voices. . . . I first approached the Salvation Army group.

(She then relates her experience with Saitō—identified in her memoirs above as Itō. She explains she grew disillusioned with Christianity when he said he had to end his friendship with her because he had fallen in love with her.)

What an extraordinary contradiction for a Christian to preach love on the street corner then fail to follow through on a pure, unblemished love. Christians have become fettered to the concept of God which they created. Theirs is a cowardly faith of slaves. The virtue and beauty of human beings is to live naturally, ungoverned by external forces. I decided that I could not embrace Christianity, which preaches the doctrine of life that conflicts with the ideals of beauty and virtue. So I abandoned Christianity. . . .

[She was then befriended by a socialist, Hori Kiyotoshi, but she became disillusioned with him also because Hori, she claimed, was a hypocrite. He concealed his relationship with his geisha wife, fearing that it would hinder his chances of getting ahead in the world. He also made all of those under him do all the work in his printing business while he idled his time away.]

I was also introduced to another socialist, Kutsumi Fusako [see Kunō above]. Her family life and principles were no different than Hori's. Kutsumi took care of her own personal needs but paid no heed to her children's needs. She would find some excuse to go out with a young man and stay out all day long. I heard her remark that all she had to do was to get on the platform and make a speech about socialism and say "The present society must be destroyed" to get the police to intervene. The next day the papers would report that Kutsumi Fusako made an extremist speech, and so the police prevented her from speaking. I got disgusted with the widespread desire among the socialists to get their names in the papers. At this time Kutsumi had no money even to

buy food, so she pawned my clothes. She then let the redemption period expire and allowed the pawnshop to sell them without my permission. I am not complaining about losing my clothes, though she knew that I needed them because winter had come. She showed no sense of responsibility. I detested her attitude, a socialist who gives no thought to other people's needs and thinks only of feeding herself.

I had imagined that socialists were people who rose above the meaningless customs and morality of the society. I envisioned them to be courageous fighters with no interest in so-called fame and honor and social reputation. I thought they were warriors fighting to destroy the perverted society of today and striving to create an ideal society. However, even though they denounce the irrational and hypocritical aspects of the society, and pretend that they are indifferent to social criticisms and to fame and reputation, they in fact are governed by and are concerned about the standards of the mundane society. They seek to adorn themselves with conventional ornaments and take upon themselves conventional values. Just as generals take pride in the medals on their chests, socialists covet records of arrests in order to earn their bread. They take pride in this. When I realized this fact I gave up on them.

I also came to be appalled at the somnolence of the peasants, who are mired in pain but feel no pain, and the ignorance of the workers, who work diligently while they are being devoured to their bones. If the chains that bind them are removed, they are likely to go to the wielders of political and economic power with their chains and beg them to chain them up again. Perhaps they will be happier if they are allowed just to sleep in ignorance. So I got disgusted at all currents of thought and from the spring of 1922 tightly embraced the nihilistic beliefs I hold today.

As for the significance of my nihilism. . . in a word, it is the foundation of my thoughts. The goal of my activities is the destruction of all living things. I feel boundless anger against parental authority, which crushed me under the high-sounding name of parental love, and against state and social authority, which abused me in the name of universal love.

Having observed the social reality that all living things on earth are incessantly engaged in a struggle for survival, that they kill each other to survive, I concluded that if there is an absolute, universal law on earth, it is the reality that the strong eat the weak. This, I believe, is the

law and truth of the universe. Now that I have seen the truth about the struggle for survival and the fact that the strong win and the weak lose, I cannot join the ranks of the idealists and adopt an optimistic mode of thinking which dreams of the construction of a society that is without authority and control. As long as all living things do not disappear from the earth, the power relations based on this principle [of the strong crushing the weak] will persist. Because the wielders of power continue to defend their authority in the usual manner and oppress the weak—and because my past existence has been a story of oppression by all sources of authority—I decided to deny the rights of all authority, rebel against them, and stake not only my own life but that of all humanity in this endeavor.

For this reason I planned eventually to throw a bomb and accept the termination of my life. I did not care whether this act would touch off a revolution or not. I am perfectly content to satisfy my own desires. I do not wish to help create a new society based on a new authority in a different form.

Q: What is your opinion concerning the Japanese state and social system?

A: I divide the Japanese state-social system into three levels:

The first class is the royal-clan members.

The second class is the government ministers and other wielders of political power.

The third class is the masses in general.

I regard the first class, the royal clan, as pitiful victims who live like prison inmates whose comings and goings are strictly regulated, just as they are for the imperial regent. I think they are pitiful puppets and wooden dolls who are being manipulated by the second class, the real wielders of power, in order to pull the wool over the eyes of the masses. The third class, the masses, as I mentioned earlier, are ignorant beyond salvation. The second class, the wielders of political power, are the ones who have the real Power to persecute the weak, like myself. For that reason I feel nothing but bitter hatred toward this class. Whereas in reality the second class is the actual wielder of power, the first class is the formal wielder of power. So these two classes go hand in hand. Consequently I place the second class on the secondary level and direct my rebellious sentiments against the first class. I also contemplated throwing bombs at both classes. Pak Yeol and I talked about this.

I am keeping a journal of my days in prison. On November 6 I

wrote: “The rights of the people are being tossed about by the wielders of power as easily as if they were handballs. The government officials have finally thrown me in prison. But let me give you some sound advice. If you wish to prevent the current incident from bearing fruit, you must kill me. You may keep me in prison for years but as soon as I am released I will try the same thing. I will destroy my own body and save you the trouble. You may take this body of mine anywhere you please, to the guillotine if you wish or to the Hachioji prison. We all have to die eventually. So you may do as you please. You will only be proving that I lived true to myself. I am perfectly happy with that.” You expect me to compromise with you people, change my way of thinking, and live in conformity with the ways of the society? If I could compromise with you now, I would have compromised with you when I was out in society. You don’t have to preach to me about that. I have enough sense to understand that. I am prepared for whatever you may do to me. So do as you please. Don’t hesitate. To tell the truth, I would like to go out into the world once more. I know that all I have to do is make my bid by saying “I have undergone a change of heart,” and bow my head. But I cannot destroy my current self so that my future self can survive.

Officers, let me proclaim courageously to you once more: “Rather than prostrate myself before the wielders of power, I prefer to die and be true to myself. If this displeases you, you may take me anywhere you wish. I am not afraid of anything you may do to me.” This is the way I have felt in the past and it is the way I feel now.

Q: Did you become acquainted with Pak Yeol after you developed this manner of thinking?

A: That’s right. After I met Pak we talked about our ideas and found that our views were similar. So in order to work together we began to live together.”

[During the course of the interrogation Kaneko revealed her opinion about the emperor system candidly]:

Even before I met Pak Yeol I believed that the emperor was a useless entity. Pak and I got together because we agreed about this. We joined hands as comrades to overthrow the emperor system. By nature human beings should be equal. And yet human beings who are equal by nature have been made unequal because of the presence of an entity called the emperor. The emperor is supposed to be august and exalted. Yet his photograph shows

that he is just like us commoners. He has two eyes, one mouth, legs to walk with, and hands to work with. But he doesn't use his hands to work and his legs to walk. That's the only difference. The reason I deny the necessity of the emperor system rises from my belief that human beings are equal.

We have been taught that the emperor is a descendant of the gods, and that his right to rule has been bestowed upon him by the gods. But I am convinced that the story of the three sacred treasures [the sword, the mirror, and the jewel, which came down from the age of the gods as emblems of imperial authority] is simply a myth plucked out of thin air. If the emperor were a god, then his soldiers would not die. Why were tens of thousands of royal subjects killed by the Great Earthquake in his immediate presence? We have in our midst someone who is supposed to be a living god, one who is omnipotent and omniscient, an emperor who is supposed to realize the will of the gods. Yet his children are crying because of hunger, suffocating to death in the coal mines, and being crushed to death by factory machines. Why is this so? Because, in truth, the emperor is a mere human being. We wanted to show the people that the emperor is an ordinary human being just like us. So we thought of throwing a bomb at him to show that he too will die like any other human being.

We have been taught that the Japanese national polity consists of an unbroken lineage of the imperial family throughout the ages. But the imperial genealogy is really fuzzy. And even if the genealogy is unbroken through the ages, it signifies nothing. It is nothing to be proud of. Rather, it is shameful that the Japanese people have been so ignorant as to acquiesce in having babies foisted upon them as emperors.

Under the emperor system, education, laws, moral principles were all devised to protect the imperial authority. The notion that the emperor is sacred and august is a fantasy. The people have been led to believe that the emperor and the crown prince represent authorities that are sacred and inviolate. But they are simply vacuous puppets. The concepts of loyalty to the emperor and love of nation are simply rhetorical notions that are being manipulated by the tiny group of the privileged classes to fulfill their own greed and interests.*

FIVE

THE SEKIRANKAI

The Red Wave Society

Though the *Seitō* circle started out as a literary group, it became increasingly involved in social issues, especially those dealing with women. Only on rare occasions such as *Seitō's* publication of Fukuda Hideko's article on socialism did Hiratsuka Raichō and her colleagues take up broader political or economic questions. It was not until Itō Noe took over the journal that a greater emphasis was placed on broader social questions. Itō Noe was one of the few *Seitōsha* members to become directly involved in political or social action. She serves as a bridge between the literary-minded, more elitist group of *Seitōsha* members and the more activist group of socialists and communists who emerged in the early 1920s, the group of women who came together in the Sekirankai, the Red Wave Society.

After the execution of Kōtoku Shūsui, Kanno Sugako, and others, the socialists and anarchists maintained a low profile. The Japanese entry into World War I brought about a wartime boom, and initially there were fewer economic difficulties and social tensions. But the end of the war brought an economic downturn that led to increasing labor disputes and social unrest. In 1918 riots broke out throughout the country over the enormous increase in the price of rice. The violent suppression of the rioters created great social tensions and raised the hopes of those aspiring to stage a revolution in Japan similar to the one that had just occurred in Russia. The Bolshevik Revolution had had a tremendous impact on the thinking of the Japanese socialists and communists. In its wake, the radical elements among both groups, as well as among labor organizers, grew increasingly militant. This resulted in a split in 1925 between the moderate