

***Japan in the World: Shidehara Kijūrō, Pacifism, and the Abolition of War:***

**A book review**

*by Dr Erik Paul*

Schlichtmann, Klaus (2009) *Japan in the World.: Shidehara Kijūrō, pacifism, and the abolition of war*. Volumes I, and II. Cotranslated by William Carter. Lanham MD: Lexington Books.

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Shidehara Kijūrō (1872-1951) was an important figure in Japan's modern history as a diplomat, bureaucrat, and politician. Shidehara was envoy to the Hague in 1914, ambassador to Washington between 1919 and 1922, minister for foreign affairs between 1924-1927 and 1929-1931, and Japan's first postwar prime minister under the occupation (1945-1946) and instrumental in introducing in Japan's postwar constitution Article 9, dealing with the abolition of war. Shidehara, Schlichtmann writes, 'marks the transition from the old to the new Japan, combining in his person the liberal-pacifist tradition of the Freedom and Human Rights movement, Taisho democracy, and pacifism in the atomic age' (II:324).

The first volume begins with an analysis of Japan's political and philosophical tradition about issues of peace and social justice, and of a world without war. Japanese civilization 'had already developed and evolved an indigenous, distinct "ethics of peace" when the first Christian arrived in the sixteenth century' (I:2).

Chapter II focuses on the international environment and the emergence of modern Japan. The discussion on the origins of Japan's modern foreign relations and its role in the League of Nations serves to introduce Shidehara's role as a diplomat. His life and work are examined in Chapter III of volume I and chapters I, II, and III of volume II. The end chapters of volume II cover the Tokyo trial and analyse Japan's pacifism

and peace politics in the postwar era. The work concludes by considering prospects for peace in the Asia-Pacific region and the world, and international efforts to outlaw and abolish war as an institution.

Japan's emergence in the modern world was prompted by Western imperialism in East Asia in search of territorial acquisition and business opportunities, and forcing Japan to sign a number of unequal treaties with foreigners. Japan responded quickly and decisively to the West's challenge. A young generation of Samurai, including the founder of Mitsubishi, came to power to modernize the country. They knew that unless Japan became powerful, its territory would be sliced off among Western intruders. In this task the West, particularly the British, played an important role in arming and training the military to power and to eventually silence progressive voices, thus aborting Japan's fledgling democracy.

By the end of the 19th Century Japan had a powerful military machine and, according to Japanologist Philip Franz von Siebold, became 'the first non-European state ... to achieve the recognition by the Western powers of its full rights under international law' (I:95). As such, Japan was emboldened 'to acquire for itself, in the modern Western sense, a stake in the assets—in the sense of "legal entitlements" to the world's available resources--which on principle were supposed to be accessible to all' (I:95). Japan's military industrial complex gained more strength with substantial military exports during World War I, providing the Allies with 'armaments and destroyers built in Japanese shipyards ... as well as other provisions and services' (I:239).

Japan played an important part in the construction of the League of Nations. It was an accredited participant in the 1899 First Hague Peace Conference, focusing on disarmament and the peaceful settlement of disputes through compulsory jurisdiction' (I:102); and at the Second Hague Peace Conference (1907) when the 'cardinal question was the arbitration for the peaceful settlement of international disputes through an international court of law' (I:105). Japan participated in the Versailles Peace Conference as one of the 'big five', alongside the United States,

France, Italy and Great Britain. Following the immense human suffering and destruction of World War I there were renewed efforts to negotiate 'a durable peace ... with respect to establishing the principle of sovereign equality, self-determination, and collective security' (I:108). During the Paris Peace Conference the League of Nations became a reality as part of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 as a means to prevent war and settle international disputes. Foremost in the minds of the delegates was to avoid a repetition of World War I.

But the acceptance of Japan as a de facto member of the Anglo-Saxon faction was overshadowed by rising racism in the United States and Western Europe. By the end of the 19th Century, Japanese were being excluded from the British Empire, and in 1907 the United States began to look at Japan as an enemy when 'the American navy devised its secret —Plan Orange, in which Japan was identified as the most likely future "enemy", giving impetus to a far-reaching naval arms build-up program' (I:215).

By 1908, 'all of the settler societies on the Pacific Rim castigated the "yellow peril" and demonstrated against Japanese migration'. Australia's first piece of legislation was the Immigration Restriction Bill of 1901 introduced by Alfred Deakin to 'uphold the purity of the British race and to exclude alien Asiatics as well as the people of Japan' (Paul 2006:2). Pressed by the US, England renounced the Anglo- Japanese alliance, 'thereby throwing in her lot with the Americans in any future Pacific war' (Day 2001:173). 'Australia and New Zealand [among others] ... excitedly welcomed Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet"' (I:222). Shidehara, on assignment in Washington (1912- 13), failed to negotiate change to California's legislation, 'that discriminated against Japanese immigrants' (I:115); and Japan's 1919 proposal on racial equality 'as a basic principle of the League of Nations was rejected' (I:125).

Western racism, with the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 and the rejection at the Versailles Peace Conference of Japan's proposal on racial equality, along with economic restrictions to trade with European colonies, help the rise of Japanese

militarism in the 1930s. This was compounded by the humanitarian disaster in Japan brought by the world economic crisis triggered by the US financial meltdown. The 1929 Wall Street crash and the depression of the world economy which followed, led to drastic changes in international relations in Asia and Europe. The Japanese balance of foreign trade 'sank dramatically by around 50 percent and there was a large drop in the total volume of goods traded in the region'. The sudden 'drop in the prices and quantities of her exports had brought widespread poverty and discontent' (II:148), the end of the silk exports to the United States was a disaster for Japan's peasant population (II:67). At the Nagasaki Mitsubishi shipbuilding plant, 'where until recently 40 percent of the workers had been laid off due to the severe recession, military production began expanding. Battleships were launched in quick succession from newly converted docks' (Nagasaki 2000:6). The economic crisis 'struck a decisive blow to Shidehara's peaceful policy and the acquisition of new territories on the continent seemed to be the only "lifesaver"; Japanese expansionism got off to a new start' (II:150).

On 23 March 1933 Japan, condemned by the League for the seizure of Manchukuo, left the League of Nations. The League of Nations failed because 'it possessed no enforcement powers; there was no mechanism to equip the organization with real competencies to adequately guarantee members states' peace and security' (I:111). Hans Kelsen remarked: 'The League of Nations was certainly too little; the dream of a World State is certainly too much ... Universal peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice ... There must be within the nation, in its domestic affairs, a concept and a practice of social justice or the international relationship upon which peace depends will a fragile thing. No country could be sure of itself in dealing with other nations unless it is highly practiced in the administration of justice in the social life of its own citizens. This was the task for Europe if it wanted to overcome its traditional antagonisms and problems' (II:138). But this was a time when European citizens, faced with serious economic and social problems and widespread political corruption, were increasingly attracted to the politics of the Third Way: Fascism and Nazism. European politics were to engulf the world in

another devastating war with terrible consequences for the people of East Asia, and of Japan in particular.

Schlichtmann's narrative is that 'Shidehara was at no stage an apologist for Japanese imperialism, and that he, and Japanese mainstream politics in general, were on the contrary following a principled course, to maintain international relations which aimed at peace, progress, and cooperation' (II:7). In the larger context of the international peace movement, Shidehara believed that a certain approach to world peace 'would eventually result, ideally, in a democratic world organized along federalist principles' (II:7). Lawrence Battistini, American scholar and pacifist, noted: 'Shidehara hoped to win the confidence and trust of both China and the United States in the motives and intentions of Japan in the Far East. However, his policy was from the beginning opposed by the militants and nationalists' (I:180).

The Tokyo trial, conducted between 1946 and 1949, was concerned with three categories of offences: crimes against peace; murder; conventional war crimes and crimes against humanity. It was 'the first stepping stone ... which would lead to the universalisation of Crimes against Humanity and its derivations, among which, though almost immediately forgotten, was the renunciation of war as an institution. Tokyo had exposed the hard truth that, in fact, war undertaken by sovereign states was a crime against humanity' (II:207).

The book raises again the question of Roosevelt's knowledge of Japan's coming attack on Pearl Harbor, and whether he let it happen to move the US Congress to declare war on Germany (II:134,161). Bernard Röling, one of the eleven international judges at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (Tokyo), thought that the trial 'was simply to avenge the attack on Pearl Harbor', that 'racial discrimination may have been one of the roots of the Pacific War', and that the bombing of Japanese cities, culminating with the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 'were war crimes ... it was terror warfare' (Röling & Cassese 1994:78,24,84). US General Willoughby, the head of G2 in Japan, told Röling that the

trial 'was the worst hypocrisy in recorded history and that he would forbid his son to enter military service' (ibid:85). The Tokyo trial is a reminder of the responsibility of world leaders in the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the case made that former president Bush and prime ministers Howard and Blair should be put on trial as war criminals.

Shidehara was Japan's first postwar prime minister (1945-46) and initiated the first draft of article 9 of Japan's new constitution, which in its final formulation read: 'Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized' (II:195). Until his death in 1951, Shidehara 'lent his name to the World Federalist Movement' along with parliamentarian Ozaki Yukio and Nobel laureate Yukawa Hideki (II:331).

After the war, Japan signed a security treaty with the US and became entangled in the geopolitics of the Cold War, and in the late 1950 the CIA began the clandestine funding of the Liberal Democratic Party (Schaller 1997). The budget for the Self-Defense Force (SDF) increased substantially over the years, along with pressure on Japan 'to engage itself with the United Nations militarily—especially after the German constitution was changed to enable military participation in out-of-area peacekeeping missions' (II:281). In 2000, the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* reported on the existence of nuclear weapons on Japanese soil (Norris, Arkin & Burr 2000). At the same time the process to revise Japan's constitution got under way and gained momentum under the threat of North Korean missiles and pressure from nationalists, and in 2007 the 'Deliberative Council of the Constitution' was set up (II:303).

Later the US Obama administration further engaged Japan in missile defense

deployment, along with South Korea, as a US-NATO strategy to contain Russia and China (Gagnon 2010). There were also territorial issues with Russia in the absence of a peace treaty between both countries, and instances of Japan-bashing in China were further major concerns to the Japanese. Many observers, including Yoichi Funabashi, interpreted these developments as symptomatic of US hegemonic policy to play China and Japan against each other (Funabashi 1993:83).

Much of what happened in Japan and East Asia was determined by Western powers and European conflicts. Edwin Reischauer, the American scholar born in Japan, wrote of the period before World War II: 'The Japanese, claiming equality with China and in contact with all the other units of East Asia ... came closest to the Western concept of international relations, but could hardly develop a family of nations without reciprocity from the others' (I:113). Times have changed and East Asia, with China at its core, is again assuming a dominant position in the region and the world economy. An opportunity now exists for the West to reconcile with East Asia as equal partners in shaping a better and more peaceful world for all. Reading Klaus Schlichtmann is a time to ponder on the causes of war and reflect on the importance of Johan Galtung's work on the symbiotic relations between structures and systems so deeply saturated with social injustices that they spawn violence and war. Peace research is an essential field to study changes necessary to create a world 'in which the prohibition of crimes against peace finds its natural place' (Röling & Cassese 1994:117).

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