

Tokutomi Soho, 1863-1957: A Journalist for Modern Japan. By John D. Pierson. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. Pp. ix + 453. \$30.00.)

Tokutomi Soho, 1863-1957: A Journalist for Modern Japan is a long account of a major publicist whose opinions on public affairs in Japan were influential for well over half a century.

Placing the young Soho in his historical and geographical milieu, Professor Pierson first presents the Tokutomi family's background in Kyushu. The development of Soho's early thought is then admirably related: his student days in Tokyo and in Kyoto (at Doshisha), his short-term conversion to Christianity, and his longer absorption in Western liberal-democratic views. Soho's early experience as an educator, directing his own school in Kyushu by the age of twenty, is well recounted. And the young man's early socio-political tracts are clearly summarized and analyzed, their indebtedness to Spencer being properly adumbrated.

Soho became a major spokesman for liberal-democratic reforms. His efforts as a journalist, both his initial books and the periodical he started in Tokyo, Kokumin no tomo (The Nation's Friend), enjoyed phenomenal success. His publishing ventures, in terms of scale, diversity, and format, were prototypical of the modern Japanese publisher.

Soho's views on liberal democracy were to undergo a change. By the 1890s, jolted by events in the real world that undermined his overly sanguine, idealized view of the West, he reacted to his earlier formulated ideals in a pessimistic way: the key to respect as a nation, he felt, was power. Pierson traces the development of Soho's views toward positions that were fully imperialistic, statist, and nationalistic. This shift in opinion, together with Soho's later close association with the government, especially the Katsura cabinets, provoked the reaction in his erstwhile liberal-minded comrades that he was an "apostate."

Soho was to see his own position vindicated, for by the late 1920s his views on the Japanese imperium and Yamato superiority had become the norm. Though no longer close to the inner circles of government, he exerted considerable influence as a publicist throughout the 1930s. His views remained unchanged with the advent of the war; and in defeat he was unapologetic.

The span of Soho's life covers nearly a century of modern Japanese history. It is enormously useful to be able to look at some knowledgeable human personality through whom one can relate to modern events, rather than face the boring roster of colorless, generally lackluster politicians, generals, and bureaucrats that pass as modern Japan's leaders in survey histories of the period. In this respect, Pierson's study is nicely complemented by J. W. Dower's recently published Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), which covers an overlapping seventy-five-year period.

Pierson's study is especially good for its portrayal of the late-Meiji period. Much of the energy of the age, the confusing array of prospects it

seemed to offer, and the deeply rooted Tokugawa attitudes that remained at its core are well communicated. Pierson's study also provides a useful antidote to any temptation one might have to overestimate the forces at work in Japanese society promoting "Taisho democracy." For the post-Taisho period, however, the author is less energetic; his subject's personality and opinions have become predictable. And unfortunately, one is not given a sense of how pervasive militaristic attitudes and values became in the society at large.

Pierson's apparent intent is to present Soho sympathetically, not to be his apologist. He succeeds well at this when explaining the public reaction to Soho's involvement in the Katsura government, as well as Soho's own point of view. He is more the apologist, however, when pointing out the contradiction between his subject's own personal ideals and actions (p. 164). Also, he does not explain as clearly as he might the post-World War II revulsion for much of what Soho had stood for. One of the interesting features of the book, however, is Soho's apologia pro vita sua submitted to the Allied occupation authorities. As his arguments are not without merit, Pierson's summary of them makes for sober reading.

The author early on (p. 11) argues that the public and private Soho are virtually indistinguishable. That is to say, the man's public life, with its prodigious journalistic output, was in large measure his life. Yet, one does wish to know something more of the personal side of such a recent figure. We learn at one point that he sired eleven children. Nothing more is heard of them until suddenly, chapters later, we learn that the eldest son is thirty-three years old. Similarly, his mother's conversion to Christianity, said to have probably contributed to that of his wife too, is mentioned only in passing (p. 161).

There are some inevitable anomalies or omissions in what is otherwise a well-edited and attractively printed volume. We get two different translations for *heitenka* (pp. 39 & 112) and for *koshitsuchushinshugi* (pp. 350 & 357); in the latter case, both renderings are fine; in the former, however, the one on p. 112 is preferable. For the most part, we are conveniently given English-language translations of Japanese book titles, and are supplied even with the Japanese title for a work like Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (p. 104). But it is unfortunate that the Chinese and Japanese titles listed on p. 93 as textual and supplemental readings for Soho's students are not translated and identified. Similarly, the significance of Sun Tzu (p. 387) may not be clear to many Japanologists, let alone other readers. Occasionally, the author's otherwise necessary recapitulations of general points become repetitious (as on p. 360). Finally, one does sorely regret that the author did not include a sample passage or installment from Soho's monumental, 100-volume history of Japan from the time of Oda Nobunaga through the Meiji period, *Kinsei Nihon kokumin shi*.

Pierson's book is well written. Its subject's views are presented clearly. A sense of the continuum that runs between the Japan of 1880 and that of 1950 is communicated through the personage of Tokutomi Soho.

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