



Title	<BOOK REVIEW>SHIBERIA SHUPPEI : KAKUMEI TO KANSHO, 1917-1922. [Japan's Siberia Expedition : Revolution and Intervention, 1917-1922], By Teruyuki Hara, Tokyo : Chikuma shobo, 1989,xiv+574+25pp., 8,960
Author(s)	STEPHAN, John J.
Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 8, 211-213
Issue Date	1990
Doc URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2115/8017
Type	bulletin (article)
File Information	KJ00000034185.pdf



[Instructions for use](#)

SHIBERIA SHUPPEI : KAKUMEI TO KANSHŌ, 1917–1922. [Japan's Siberia Expedition : Revolution and Intervention, 1917–1922]. By Teruyuki Hara. Tokyo : Chikuma shobō, 1989. xiv + 574 + 25 pp. ¥8,960.

Most historians agree that Japan's Siberian expedition of 1918–1922 left a less than distinguished record. It did not prevent Bolshevization of the Russian Far East. It alienated the population between Lake Baikal and the Pacific. It isolated Tokyo diplomatically. It tarnished the image of the Imperial Army. Popular attitudes about the expedition in Japan were reflected in a contemporary pun : *Shiberia shippai*.

Is any purpose served when yet another voice is added to the condemnatory chorus ? In this case — yes.

Shiberia shuppei is the most important study of the subject since Hosoya Chihoro's *Shiberia shuppei no shiteki kenkyū* (1955). Focussing on 1917–1920, it complements Canfield F. Smith's *Vladivostok Under Red and White Rule : Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Russian Far East, 1920–1922* (1975).

Professor Hara is well qualified to write about a topic so fraught with cross-cultural and inter-regional associations. His knowledge embraces the modern history not only of Russia and Japan but of Korea and China. He is therefore able to illuminate the connections between local, regional, national, and international developments. For example, readers learn how policymaking in Tokyo is related to Japanese communities and enterprises in the Russian Far East. Similarly, actions of Chinese and Korean minorities in Russia are linked to conditions in China and Korea.

An abundance of relevant detail is supported by impressive documentation. In addition to Russian, Soviet, Japanese, and Western printed sources, the author uses Japanese army and foreign ministry archives, together with unpublished papers of key Japanese leaders such as Terauchi Masatake and Tanaka Gi'ichi.

Shiberia shuppei subjects Japanese motives, policies, and behavior to close critical scrutiny. The Imperial Army in particular comes off badly. The Expeditionary Force is portrayed as an arrogant instrument of imperial aggrandizement degenerating into a demoralized and discredited object of an "anti-Japanese people's war." Having engaged in an "immoral war" (p. ii), the expeditionary force lost its "moral authority" (p. 535) and suffered a "moral defeat" (p. 552).

In Soviet parlance, the highest compliment than can be paid to bourgeois scholarship is the protean label "progressive." The "progressive" quality of this volume is adumbrated in its subtitle, *kakumei to kanshō*, an appellation redolent of Inoue Kiyoshi's *Nihon no Sobioto kakumei kanshō sensō* (1951) which Professor Hara praises for "superior arguments" despite their being based on "utterly fragmentary materials" (p. ii). The absence of "civil war" from both titles is significant, for it suggests that the authors regard the primary purpose of the intervention as that of crushing revolution. In fact, whatever Japan's leaders may have thought about the February or October upheavals, a military expedition into Shiberia would hardly have been feasible had Russia not been fractured by internecine struggle.

While a "progressive" approach to the Russian civil war has some advantages (conceptual clarity, holistic comprehensiveness, ready availability of Soviet printed sources, congruency with current academic fashions), its analytic categories and presuppositions are not always able to cope with the realities of human behavior. Faced with contradictory evidence characteristic of a historical phenomenon as tangled as the Russian civil war, such an approach either

founders or resorts to selective amnesia. If the latter occurs, the “progressive” approach merely substitutes new for old stereotypes. How does *Shiberia shuppei* fare in this respect?

While for the most part judiciously phrased, *Shiberia shuppei*'s discourse occasionally resorts to overgeneralization and oversimplification to make a point. In defining his *mondai ishiki*, the author asserts that “Soviet research [i. e. research on the USSR] was taboo before 1945” (p. ii). “Regulated” would be more accurate than “taboo.” Otherwise how does one account for the Soviet research conducted by the South Manchurian Railway Company, the Foreign Ministry, the Imperial Army General Staff, the National Planning Board, the East Asia Research Institute, the Russo-Japanese and Japan-Soviet news agencies, and many other organizations? To assert that the Allies aimed at “destruction of Soviet power” (p. i) overlooks differences in Allied objectives.

Language poses a second problem. *Shiberia shuppei* employs semantic devices from the Soviet political lexicon. One of these is to attribute specific opinions to the “people” or “masses” (pp. 89, 90, 97, 101 ff.). “Bourgeois” and “capitalist” appear at times as pejorative, dehumanizing labels. All opponents of the Bolsheviks are referred to as “counterrevolutionaries” (see for example p. 481), although many in this category supported the February Revolution.

Thirdly, while Professor Hara looks critically at Japanese sources such as the popular press and the official army history, *Shuppei shi*, he shows a tolerant attitude toward Soviet sources. This “progressive” predilection crops up in a variety of contexts, ranging from an unverified figure for victims of Japanese violence (p. 572) to a putative agenda of the United States Railway Advisory Commission in Russia (p. 77). In neither case is a debatable allegation corroborated by an independent source.

To the extent that *Shiberia shuppei* relies uncritically on Soviet sources, it magnifies Bolshevik achievements. The discussion of political trends in Shiberia between February and October 1917 focusses on Krasnoyarsk (described as a “Siberian Kronshtadt” on p. 91) where “Bolsheviks” quickly gained a leading position in the local soviet. Insofar as Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the RSDRP worked together longer in Siberia than in Petrograd, it would be more accurate to speak of “Social Democrats.” Moreover, Krasnoyarsk was atypical of Siberia. To illuminate regional conditions, particularly in the Far East where Japanese eventually took action, it would make more sense to focus on Khabarovsk, where Bolsheviks failed to take control of the local soviet until well after October.

Reliance upon Soviet sources has also led to more importance being ascribed to Sergei Lazo than this short-lived military activist merits (p. 95). Lazo's prominence in Soviet civil war historiography has been boosted by two circumstances. First, his death in an engine boiler made him a powerful symbol of heroism in the face of Japanese perfidy and White savagery. Secondly, when many surviving civil war leaders were removed from history texts in the late 1930s as a result of having been exposed as “enemies of the people,” Lazo's posthumous reputation reached a yet higher plateau, for he was one of the few usable civil war heroes. Readers of *Shiberia shuppei* will find no reference to Lazo's willingness to expend innocent human lives for the purposes of mobilizing popular antagonisms, as he did in the Suchan area in 1919.

Civil wars are savage affairs, and the Russian civil war is no exception. All sides committed cruelties against prisoners and non-combatants. The “moral authority” that the Imperial Army supposedly lost and that Kalmykov and Semenov never had resided neither in Lazo nor Triapitsyn. Yet *Shiberia shuppei* adopts a double standard characteristic of pre-*perestroika* Soviet historiography. Criminals are said to enter White forces (p. 38) but with one excep-

tion (p. 538) make no appearance among the Reds or their allies despite ample evidence to the contrary. Kolchak's army "conscripted" by force (p. 465), but partisans only "recruited volunteers" (p. 521). Homicidal proclivities of Whites and Japanese are copiously cited, but there is no mention of CHON or Cheka execution squads, of how retreating Reds massacred peasants at Vyazemsky in 1918 or of how advancing Reds massacred prisoners along the Khor in 1920. The destruction of villages by Japanese punitive operations is carefully chronicled, but there is no reference to the 1921-style fates of Siberian "Kronshtads."

Where only the victors write history, the defeated have no voice. Soviet accounts of the civil war in Siberia have yet to give a hearing to SRs, Mensheviks, Kadets, anti-Bolshevik Cossacks, religious sectarians, Orthodox priests, *starozhily*, military officers, independently-minded peasants (rich or poor), civil servants, merchants, and others. It behooves western historians to make a special effort to present their testimony. *Shiberia shuppei* cites a few émigré sources, but several important studies are absent, notably : Fyodor Danilenko, *Priamurskii krai* (Harbin, 1935) ; Ivan Gapanovich, *Rossiia v severo-vostochnoi Azii* (Peking, 1933-1934) ; Paul Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy in Siberia, 1917-1920* (Stanford, 1983) ; and Boris Filimonov, *Belopovstantsy* (Shanghai, 1932-1933).

Although the endpapers from *Aziatskaia Rossiia Atlas* provide a general orientation, more detailed maps of Vladivostok, the southern Maritime region, Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchensk, Nikolaevsk, and the Far Eastern Republic would have been helpful. How else can the reader locate Gongota, Dauria, Zimmermanovka, Mago, and other arcane places ? The statistical charts are excellent, but the sources upon which they are based should be identified.

John J. STEPHAN
University of Hawaii