

Nakahama Tetsu

Was that to your liking?

Kurihara Yasushi

2018

Nakahama Tetsu was born in 1897 in Moji-ku, Kitakyushu. He moved to Tokyo when he was 20. He'd planned to work hard at his studies, but was snatched up by recruiters and ended up in the military. And just when he thought his two years of service was up, in 1918 he had the misfortune of being deployed to Siberia and wasn't able to be discharged. Pissed off, Nakahama wrote an anti-war leaflet and had every soldier he could read it. Caught by the military police, he was tossed into military jail.

At this time, Nakahama desired freedom from the bottom of his heart. In the military, you had to kill other people or even throw away your life saying "banzai!" because of orders that came from above. They told you this was natural because it was thanks to the country and His Majesty the Emperor that you were alive today. If you denied this, you were told you were useless, anti-patriotic, and disposed of. Mindlessly kill people? Become a better subject? Damn, ain't that just slavery?

Nakahama was finally discharged in 1920. Hanging around Tokyo for a while, he realized that this world was structured the same as the military. Workers were given money by capitalists, so wasn't it natural they got ordered around? Wives were fed by their husbands, so wasn't it natural they served them? If they didn't obey they were berated that they were useless, ungrateful and so forth. They were asked thanks to whom were they alive. There was a better future in store for you if you worked hard? Become a better citizen? They made you keep your head down and your mouth shut. Ain't that just slavery? Ahh, this world's done for.

While he was thinking this, his older brother died, and his father was on his deathbed. When he went back home his aged mother seemed to want him to stick around. What to do... Nakahama decided to abandon his home and set out on a wandering journey. After all, people were bound to die anyway. You couldn't live being bound by stuff like home and money. If you were living for a better future, you'd spend your whole life not being able to do the things you wanted to. Fuck becoming a better anything. You had to live as if you could die at any minute.

But people were still living bound by this world. Even he was frequently trapped by money, so that was obvious. But what could you do? With this on his mind, he met Furuta Daijiro, who was wrestling with the problem of Saitama's peasants. Furuta thought about it this way: all poor people thought those in power were totally incredible, that without their patronage they'd be dead, that they had to obey them, and that all of this was their life and their future.

But things weren't really this way. The people in power weren't shit. If you lived like you were gonna die, most things weren't a big deal. Let's let the world know this in a way that's easily understood. Give up your body right now and kill the people in power, show the world that you could bring down any of these guys at any time. Destroy the symbols of this world, destroy the you that's trapped too. Live in the moment, seize terror!

The two were quick to hit it off. Let's give it everything we've got, partner. Well, if we're gonna do this, who's gonna get it? Why, the Emperor, of course. That guy says that because he's a living god and protects his subjects like children, it's natural that they should obey him. He's a symbol of this world. But the Emperor Taisei was sickly and dying so there was no need to kill him, and they decided that if they were gonna kill someone it would be his son Hirohito.

Nakahama gathered allies. For this he appealed to day laborers who lacked even a workers' movement to improve their working conditions. In August of 1922 the members, gathered in their hideout, named themselves the Guillotine Society. That name was meant to say "give Hirohito the guillotine!" Gathering savings started with *ryaku*, an abbreviation for *ryakudatsu* [robbery]. They went around to businesses flashing a knife or pistol, threatening people for money. They seized a fair amount, but it was quick to disappear. That's because they were spending it on booze and brothels. Live like you're gonna die and you spend money instead of saving it.

While all this was happening they stole too much in Tokyo and the imperial police began taking a closer look at what was going on. From the summer of 1923 they relocated their base to Osaka. There they began to steal and live the fast life, and just when they said we ain't saving any money, that September was the Great Kanto Earthquake. Osugi Sakae, an anarchist Nakahama and Furuta idolized, was slaughtered by the imperial military policeman Amakasu Masahiko. If that's how it's gonna be let's take revenge, and get back to our original principals.

They then shot Amakasu's brother, but the attack failed. Furuta's attempt to seize money for their savings by holding up a bank also failed, and he stabbed a bank employee to death in error. After this almost the entire membership of the Guillotine Society was arrested. Furuta and Nakahama fled to Korea where they planned to obtain explosives, but didn't have the money. Nakahama returned to Osaka where his attempts at robbery failed and he was arrested. Furuta made a bomb himself, and together with Osugi's friends attempted to kill Amakasu, but this too failed. He was arrested after a little while. Both were sentenced and executed.

The actions of Nakahama and his friends didn't go very well. But that's not what's important. It doesn't matter whether they were useful as assassins or not. Let's stop talking about better futures or living lives we don't wish for. Let's live our lives to the fullest right now. And if we're not allowed to, blow away this world and our lives along with it. If you're gonna do it, do it now, that goes for everything. Blow your life up. Dying in vain is just fine, everyone get eaten by ogres!

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Kuruizake, Freedom

Translated by Max Res. Names in this article are last name-first name, so if anglicized this person's name is Tetsu Nakahama, for example. This is one of a series of prefaces to compilations of Japanese anarchist writings in the book *Kuruizake, Freedom*. *Kuruizake* refers to flowers blooming out of season, so roughly, *Freedom, Bloom when You Will*.

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