All their [Lenin’s and Trotsky’s] actions are centered on the establishment of political authority. But there is not much difference between the Russian Bolshevik government and the Western gentlemen’s clique governments. Both rest on strong authority. Both are class governments. The main difference is that the strong authority in Russia is not in the hands of the gentlemen’s clique but in the hands of workers.

—Takabatake Motoyuki, “Political and Economic Movements from the New Point of View,” Shinshakai, May 1918

Parallel to the early JCP’s critical engagement with the Comintern-imposed revolutionary framework, another group of Japanese socialists prompted by the Russian Revolution embarked on a “revision of socialism” from the national point of view. In 1919, the socialist Takabatake Motoyuki (1886–1928) declared that national socialism (kokka shakaishugi) was an improved version of Marxism more suitable for post–World War I realities. Like classical Marxism, Japanese national socialism, Takabatake proclaimed, continued to strive for an anticapitalist and social revolution, which would, however, strengthen the role of the state and address the needs of the national community. The Russian Revolution, he continued, was none other than the first of the national socialist revolutions to come in the world.

The emergence of statist and nationalist doctrines on the Left and the Right was a global phenomenon during and after World War I. They were, however, not simply a reaction to the collapse of empires and the appearance of various nation-states. National and statist ideas had come to fruition by the end of the 1910s as a rejection of liberalism (and associated with it, capitalism), parliamentary politics, and internationalist Marxism. Japan’s national socialist doctrines therefore resembled radical ideas about the relationship between the state, society, and the individual, emerging simultaneously most notably in Germany and Italy. Japanese national socialism, however, could be best described as what Zeev Sternhell called the interwar “non-conformist Left.” In their pursuit of a social revolution and revision of Marxism, the interwar generation of socialists in Europe and Japan abandoned the idea of the working class as the prime
revolutionary force and instead replaced it with the nation as a whole. This gave birth to a new concept of the state, which was to organize, direct, and defend the national community, as well as reflect the wishes and aspirations of the newly “awakened” masses rather than those of the old political and economic elites. This desire to go beyond Marxism and find in the nation and the state the true revolutionary force was, as Sternhell argued, “one of the main routes for going from left to right and from the extreme left to the extreme right.”

Takabatake and his followers, however, never became an internal part of the Japanese interwar radical Right, despite collaborating closely with extreme rightist groups. Japanese national socialists stubbornly and publicly identified themselves as Marxists and saw the Soviet Union as their aspiration and the model of the proletarian state. Nevertheless, preoccupied first and foremost with social and economic tensions, Takabatake and his followers found in nationalism, rather than in class struggle and international proletarian brotherhood, the means to awaken the masses to their revolutionary potential and to radically reorganize state and society. The end goal for the national socialists was the destruction of the capitalist order, so that ultimately, in their thinking, anticapitalism replaced socialism. Consequently, Takabatake’s influential interpretation of the Russian Revolution as a national, statist, and anticapitalist revolution made those who were not necessarily on the Left—politicians, reform bureaucrats (kakushin kanryō), and even some among the military—look favorably at the Soviet communist project. Searching for ways to reorganize the social order in the post-Depression period, the bureaucratic and military elite in the 1930s took notice of the national socialist program. Taking advantage of the interest and believing that a revolution was to be made by a “conscious” elite, not the working class, many national socialists (and their ideas) found their way into the highest echelons of power in wartime Japan.

As this chapter demonstrates, the most important moment in the development of Taishō national socialism was Takabatake’s early engagement with the Russian Revolution. Addressing his fellow socialists, he insisted that the Russian Revolution was done in the name of and for the Russian nation, not its working class. By arguing this, Takabatake aspired to transform the Japanese socialist movement into a national socialist one and develop it into a potent political party. In this way, the Russian Revolution was utilized by national socialists to win over the Japanese Left to their radical vision of social and political organization. The curious case of Japanese interwar national socialism is that despite the fact that the turbulent social and political shifts of the 1920s seemed like the most opportune time for national socialism, its adherents had never succeeded in organizing an independent political movement, neither on the Left nor on the Right. On one hand, national socialists failed to convince the Japanese Left to abandon the proletariat and the notion of class struggle as its revolutionary
concern in favor of the nation; on the other hand, the existing state, despite its internal fractures, managed to keep its monopoly on power. Specifically, reform bureaucrats and the military elite, not least stimulated by leftist and rightist agitation from below as well as their programs, eventually came up with their own conception of a new order by the late 1930s.5

Taishō national socialism differed from its counterparts in Germany and Italy in one major way: it arose in the context of the growing Japanese Empire, which had to compete intensely not only with the European powers and the United States but also with another emerging superpower in East Asia, the Soviet Union. Germany and Italy lost the Great War, the aftermath of which prompted the rise of the anticommunist fascist movement from below. Japan, in contrast, as one of the Allies, technically won, acquiring a more preeminent position in Asia. As an empire with expansionist aspirations, Japan benefited greatly from World War I and in the aftermath of the war developed ambitious plans for economic and political expansion in China, which was increasingly challenged by communist Russia. While admiring Soviet state building in principle, Takabatake and his followers developed the most virulent anticommunist critique, which was rivaled only by the anarchists’ attack on Russian communists. But, as this chapter demonstrates, national socialists’ anticommunism stemmed from the same old insecurities and perception that the northern neighbor was the perpetual threat to the Japanese nation. In fact, the old insecurities were superseded in the interwar period by fears of an even more aggressive Soviet imperialism, which additionally buttressed the idea of the primacy of the national community above social classes. Like the conservative bureaucracy, national socialists considered communism and its central doctrine of class struggle to be a tool of the Soviet Union to destabilize the Japanese national community by targeting its most vulnerable segments of society. Taishō national socialism thus was shaped within the imperial context in which the perceived need to forestall Soviet expansionism contributed to its conception of the state and the nation. The explosive mixture of national socialists’ convictions—preeminence of the state, nationalism, elitism, and most importantly, anticommunism/anti-Sovietism—ultimately resulted in their support of Japan’s imperial expansion.

Takabatake Motoyuki’s path to socialism followed the common pattern of his generation of socialists—dismayed at the poverty of the people and at the corruption and elitism of contemporary politics, Takabatake, baptized Christian in his youth (something that he renounced later), found in socialism a moral and theoretical vindication.6 But it was the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 that shaped Takabatake’s political attitude. The war became the crucible for early Japanese socialism, which confronted its followers with the choice of either “the
motherland” or “international solidarity.” Appalled at the hardships caused by mobilization for the war, in 1903 the socialists Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko established the Heiminsha (Commoners’ Society). The society organized antiwar protest meetings and public forums; produced radical antiwar and antigovernment publications that sold well; published works by Marx, Engels, Lassalle, Bebel, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy; and established contacts with the international movement, including with the then-unknown Vladimir Lenin. The antiwar socialist faction was, however, in the minority. Most Japanese leftists supported the war, which they regarded as a war of progress, just and necessary to combat Russian autocracy and imperialism. Still a student, Takabatake strongly disagreed with Kōtoku’s condemnation of patriotism and militarism and instead considered them virtues necessary for the survival and strength of the Japanese state in the face of Russian expansionism. The Russo-Japanese War and the debates over national versus international loyalties left a long and divisive legacy in the Japanese Left and foreshadowed similar debates in the Second International in the wake of World War I.

Takabatake’s enthusiasm for the Russo-Japanese War was influenced by the prominent public figure Yamaji Aizan (1864–1917), who regarded the war as paramount to the interests of the Japanese state.7 Besides the issue of war, Yamaji’s version of state socialism also had a formative influence on Takabatake. In August 1905, Yamaji, by that time the leader of the “right-wing socialists,” announced the establishment of the National Social Party (Kokka shakaitō), which declared its aim to be the reestablishment of socialist practices that Yamaji claimed had already existed in ancient Japan. In his view, ancient Japan possessed a just social order, with a benevolent monarchy presiding over its obedient subjects. To bring back that type of socialism, Yamaji called for restrictions on liberal capitalism, advocated a social-reformist state socialism, and declared the coming twentieth century to be the age of nationalism. Yamaji was strongly criticized by Sakai Toshihiko for his nationalist ideology that concealed the class nature of Japanese society.8 What Yamaji did for Takabatake was that he “ eternalized” socialism as an aspiration for a just social order—separating it from capitalist antagonisms, historical context, and social realities, and thus from the working class itself. In its rudimentary form, Takabatake’s national socialist ideas were shaped during 1904–5 through his support of the imperialist war against Russia and Yamaji Aizan’s version of “ethical” socialism for the sake of the nation.

Despite his disagreement with the antiwar position of Kōtoku Shūsui, Takabatake joined Kōtoku’s anarcho-syndicalist group in Tokyo in early 1907, attracted by its militancy and direct-action tactics.9 The militant phase did not last long, however. Eager to quell opposition to Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910, the Japanese government acted swiftly and indicted Kōtoku Shūsui and
twenty-four other anarchists for plotting to assassinate the emperor. Like the rest of the nation, Takabatake was shocked by the public trial and execution of his former comrades, yet he continued to associate with the shrunken socialist group. Despite the mass desertions from socialist circles, Takabatake stuck with his socialist convictions and worked at Sakai Toshihiko’s publishing office, Baisunsha, as the editor of the international column in their publication Shinshakai.

The Russian Revolution, and the unprecedented policies of the new Soviet regime (dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party, war communism, NEP, militarization of labor unions, etc.), confronted Japanese socialists with challenges for which their education in the West European socialist tradition had not prepared them. The process of the Russian Revolution eventually split the previously unified Left into anarchists, the early communists, and those who soon began to call themselves kokka shakaishugisha, or national socialists. Takabatake needed, however, to go through an intense intellectual engagement with the Russian Revolution before he could launch his own movement. In fact, over the course of 1918 he emerged in the socialist scene as the most effective defender of the Soviet regime. The first public socialist debate, about the nature of the Russian Revolution and consequently the goals and strategies of the Japanese radical movement, was conducted by the two leftist theoreticians, Takabatake and Yamakawa Hitoshi, who would eventually tear the Left apart. Yamakawa, following the Marxist scheme, argued that the Bolshevik Revolution was a social revolution in which the Russian proletarian class toppled the capitalist system.10 In contrast, Takabatake insisted that the October Revolution was not a social revolution from below—in other words, a workers’ mass uprising—but rather a political revolution from above, accomplished by the Bolshevik Party that was made up of the vanguard of Russian socialist intellectuals.

Having confronted the paradox that plagued many socialist thinkers in 1917—why did the world’s first socialist revolution happen in backward Russia, against all the predictions of Marxist theory?—Takabatake’s answer was that Marx was wrong and Lenin was right. Following Lenin, he pointed to the inconsistency of the Marxist belief that a socialist revolution, although an outcome of social and economic contradictions, could be accomplished by a small vanguard of “professional” revolutionaries.11 Takabatake believed that Russia offered a model for Japan. Although Japan’s proletariat was meager and immature by comparison, the Russian example had convinced him that there could be a version of socialism in which backwardness and the existence of the imperial institution were not hindrances but advantages. A small group of revolutionaries could implement changes from above without waiting for the class consciousness of the workers to mature and without dismantling the imperial institution—a move that, he feared, might lead to civil war, as was happening in Russia at the time. Yamaji
Aizan’s version of socialism—devoid of any historical, social, and economic context—certainly prepared Takabatake to accept the Russian Revolution’s “unexpected” timing. Consequently, the first lesson Takabatake retained from his engagement with the Russian Revolution was that the proletariat was, after all, irrelevant for a successful revolution.

As the Bolshevik leaders were consolidating their power in 1919–20, Takabatake confronted another dilemma in Marxist theory—the withering away of the state. Marxists around the world were grappling with the fact that, contrary to Marx’s prophecy that the workers’ revolution would result in the end of the state as a mode of governance, the Bolshevik leadership in Russia was devoting its energy to building an even stronger state than the one it had toppled (despite Lenin’s insistence on the transitory character of the new Soviet regime). Takabatake argued that the reality of the Soviet state, and especially its dictatorial character, revealed that Lenin did not follow or support Marx’s state theory. In the Russian Revolution, he explained, the Bolsheviks seized state power and, acting as the state socialist authority, united the masses to fight capitalists and resist foreign intervention in order to gain national unity and strength: “First, through the implementation of public ownership \[kōyūshugi\], the power of the state concentrated in the hands of the Bolshevik leadership; second, the Bolsheviks abandoned the social-reformist program promoted by labor union movements and legislation; third, they ignored the democratic element of the socialist program, and at times even opposed it.”

In addition to the elitism and statism of Leninism, Takabatake also approved of its nondemocratic style of governance. Hastening to defend the Bolshevik regime against its critics, Takabatake pointed out that “democracy” was an intellectual product of Western capitalist liberal ideology and had nothing to do with the active participation of the people in politics and civic life. In this sense, Bolshevism was indeed antidemocratic and anti-Western. Takabatake argued that even though the October Revolution was a takeover pulled off by a small group of individuals rather than a mass uprising, it had been carried out in the name of and for the benefit of all the people of Russia. Hence, he claimed, the proletarian dictatorship and its violent means for achieving an equitable and prosperous nation-state were justified.

Takabatake pointed out that the reality of the Soviet state and its dictatorial character revealed that Lenin did not follow or support Marx’s state theory. In reality, Russian Marxists approved the state and used it, first to capture power and then to build a socialist economy. The Bolsheviks thus merely revealed the shortcomings of Marx’s state theory and exposed the indispensability of the nation-state. Takabatake blamed Japanese socialists for not clarifying socialism’s core doctrine as it was determined by the Russian Revolution—that is, centralized
production, state ownership, and nationalization of industries. Instead, they allowed Japanese anarchists to take center stage and claim that true socialism was the abolition of the state. Takabatake called for socialists to discredit and distance themselves from the anarchists, whose utopian visions were damaging the socialist movement in Japan.16 Judging from the Bolshevik success, the Japanese Left must realize, Takabatake insisted, the paramount importance of politics and the state in the reorganization of society.

Moved by the Russian and German revolutions to take action, Takabatake grew increasingly impatient to start a mass movement and organize a political party, despite Sakai’s wariness. He assembled around himself a group of young men—Kitahara Tatsuo, Endō Tomoshirō, Mogi Kyūhei, and Ozaki Shirō—who came from the universal suffrage movement but, inspired by the Russian Revolution and frustrated at the passivity of the “masses” (minshū), sought out Takabatake in hopes of participating in more radical actions. Ozaki Shirō wrote in 1918: “A new era needs new people. New people must practice a new politics under a new system and new forms of organization. We must destroy the old system first in order to welcome a new era.”17 In the November 1918 issue of Shinshakai, Endō Tomoshirō announced: “Even in the radical Russia before the revolution, anarchism and non-statism were dominant, but the revolution created a new government and is building a new nation-state. In other words, anarcho-communism destroyed the old system but is building a new society on the basis of national socialism [kokka shakaishugi] and collectivism. This should become for us a condition to achieve success in the present world.”18 In early 1919, Takabatake and his followers broke from the old socialist group and created a small vanguard group, kokka shakaishugi. Takabatake’s ambition was to develop it into a potent movement, but the group struggled financially, falling apart in a few months. Nevertheless, the successful socialist revolution in backward Russia inspired these young men in the belief that they could replicate it at home. Captivated by the Leninist vanguard group and ignoring the role of the working class, Takabatake was ready to venture outside the social-democratic system to search for more radical solutions to Japan’s problems.

Kokka is an ambiguous term that entered common usage in the early Meiji period. It denotes both the nation as a group of people and the state as an institution of government. The double meaning of kokka as “nation” and “state” served Takabatake’s purposes, for it enabled him to imply that (a) the ethnically homogenous Japanese masses (kokumin) constitute the nation; (b) the Japanese nation is coterminous with the state; and (c) socialism provides economic equality for all members of the nation-state, thus ensuring its unity and stability. In his founding statement, Takabatake explained:
Strictly speaking, *kokka shakaishugi* must be translated as state socialism, because national socialism is translated as *kokuminteki shakaishugi*. However, we translate into English our theory of *kokka shakaishugi* as *National Socialism* [sic]. In the West, state socialism denotes social reformism, and thus although it has “socialism” in its name, in fact, in its essence social reformism is against socialism. *National Socialism* is almost not used, except by the famous English social democrat [Henry Mayers] Hyndman, who named his party the National Socialist Party. There are also few socialist parties in the world that use “national” in their name. But if you think about it, the majority of socialist parties in the world are national socialist. Those who laugh at our theory of national socialism, claiming that nationalism [*kokkashugi*] and socialism [*shakaishugi*] are like water and oil, are in fact ignorant of the global trend of socialism.19

It was not the case, Takabatake believed, that the state is a necessary step to achieving socialism; rather, socialism is needed to guarantee the well-being of the nation-state. The state, using its economic and political power, was responsible for implementing social reforms and establishing a welfare system to eliminate economic inequality. As Takabatake put it, “national socialism is a hybrid of socialism and statism, and therefore best described as state socialism [*kokka shakaishugi*], rather than national socialism [*kokumin shakaishugi*].” The blend of nationalism, statism, socialism, and anticapitalism was, Takabatake pointed out, the present trend in global Marxism.20 And this global socialist trend of national interests trumping international ones, he argued, was exemplified by none better than the new Bolshevik regime.

By 1919, Takabatake had sensed that classical Marxism had already become anachronistic in the reality of the post–World War I world. Contrary to Marx’s belief that “the working men have no country” (*The Communist Manifesto*, 1848), that liberation of the workers hinged on their internationalist solidarity, it was apparent to post–World War I socialists that revolutionaries did have a country. Marx and Engels believed that capitalism was causing national differences and antagonisms to disappear and dismissed nationalism as a political sentiment produced and disseminated by the bourgeoisie. Takabatake joined many other foreign Marxists who grappled with the idea of an alternative association to class. Social class, they argued now, was not responsible for shaping human consciousness, beliefs, and commitments.21 Revisions of Marx’s view of history had already begun with Friedrich Engels, who pointed out that long before the rise of economic classes, humans associated with each other in families, tribes, and kinship systems. This suggested that Marx’s claim that “the history of all
hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” could not be true without important qualifications.22

Ultimately, Takabatake’s belief that the masses had two fundamental desires—national unity and economic equality—led him to abandon the Marxist concept of workers’ international solidarity, as well as the notion of “class” itself. Socialism, Takabatake believed, was not about the working class but about the whole nation. Takabatake observed that workers experienced ethnic and racial or historical and cultural bonds, rather than a sense of belonging to a class. Therefore, not only worker unionism but the whole of society ought to be based on a sense of belonging to one ethnic nation (minzoku) with a shared language, culture, and history. Given post–World War I reality, in which the world was being cut up into nation-states, Takabatake believed that nationalism (kokkashugi) was the best path to creating and organizing workers’ unity.23 As particular measures, Takabatake offered the slogan, “Japanese proletariat, unite,” in place of “Proletariat of the whole world, unite,” and advocated the establishment of a Labor Day specifically for Japan, which would be celebrated instead of International Labor Day on May 1.24

Viewed from this perspective, the genealogy of Taishō national socialism was different from the version for which Germaine Hoston has previously argued. For Hoston, Marxism was appropriated in the early 1920s in order to respond to “Japan’s domestic ills during the Taishō era,” but “the addition of a nationalist or statist element to Marxism was a rational response to the changed, threatening conditions of its international context.”25 Hoston then argues that this sense of crisis and external threat culminated in a mass “ideological conversion” (tenkō) of Japanese communists in the 1930s that united both Left and Right in support of Japan’s expansion into Asia in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, Hoston finds the cause of nationalism in the Taishō period to lie in the “indigenous patterns of thought on the kokutai (national polity),” nationalistic attachment to which Takabatake, as well as other leftists who were committed to tenkō, could not overcome. Interwar socialists, Hoston concluded, abandoned Marx’s internationalism and ended up as nationalists, “advocat[ing] values traditionally identified with the Japanese kokutai—harmony between ruler and ruled, collectivism, and ethnic unity personified in the emperor.”26

The roots of Taishō national socialism, however, were neither in the “indigenous” nationalist attachment to the land and the monarchy nor in the “hostile” international context of the day. It is true that the national socialists, like other rightist groups, embraced the doctrine of imperial sovereignty. This, however, was more of a tactical move. For the national socialists, when mass politics were not yet developed and when recognition from the political establishment was crucial, the allegiance to imperial sovereignty and the constitutional order granted
by the emperor was a necessary political strategy. Despite their call for “revolution” (kakumei), “renovation” (kakushin), or “reconstruction” (kaizō) of the state and economy, national socialism never appealed to violence or the overthrow of the current political regime by military means, as did the Russian Bolsheviks or Italian Fascists. Rather, Japanese national socialists strategically embraced traditional principles of legitimacy.

Takabatake’s support of the imperial system and his “respect for kokutai” were quite different from the thinking of the conservative Right. He did not support the kokusuishugi (national essentialism) critique of the apparently “mindless adulation” of Western ideas and goods. Neither did he approve of kazokushugi (familism), which stressed “the beautiful custom” of mutual respect between superior and subordinate, nor of nōhonshugi’s (agrarianism’s) spiritual and economic revitalization of the countryside. None of these conservative movements understood the principles of Japanese polity, according to him.27 The rightist suspicions of Takabatake’s view on the imperial institution made their way into a public attack launched by the monarchist poet Fukushi Kōjirō (1889–1946) in 1927. Fukushi published a series of open letters to Takabatake in Yomiuri shinbun in December 1927–January 1928, criticizing Takabatake for his subversive Marxism and for his “disrespect of the imperial institution” based on his abstract, Hegelian-type concept of the nation-state. In his reply, Takabatake tied the veneration of the imperial institution to the force of tradition. Belief in the “unbroken imperial line” (bansei ikkei) was based on historical memory, he argued, and should not be taken uncritically as a religious doctrine: “The emperor was the ruler of the country for centuries, so people naturally deify him and worship him.”28 The only function of the monarchy as the locus of cultural and historical memory was to unite the people and rally them to defend the nation, as happened during the Meiji Revolution of 1868.

To rebuke his rightist critics, Takabatake clarified that his national socialist revolutionary program did not call for the abolition of the monarchy—a measure that was neither necessary nor desirable.29 National socialists also acknowledged respect for ancestral achievements—after all, they pointed out, Japan’s imperial family had founded the nation more than two thousand years ago. Imperial sovereignty ensured Japan’s survival in the modern era, national socialists reckoned, and it was the Meiji emperor, not the people, who granted the constitution. Furthermore, Takabatake pointed out that the Japanese state originated with the founding of the imperial house and therefore would continue to exist only as a monarchy. National socialists thus professed a more secular approach to the Japanese monarchy and were close to the official interpretation of the monarchy offered by Minobe Tatsukichi (1873–1948), a scholar of constitutional law, who regarded the emperor as an organ of the state and the repository of sovereignty,
but who was still a constituent part of the larger entity, the state. This paradigm was overturned in the late 1930s by the conservatives, who established the new orthodoxy of the divinity of the emperor.

Takabatake seemed to be influenced by Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931), a French sociologist whose bestseller, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895)—valued very highly by Mussolini, Hitler, and Georges Sorel—was translated in 1915 by Ōyama Ikuo and Maeda Nagatarō as *Minzoku shinri oyobi gunshū shinri* (National psychology and mass psychology). Takabatake was especially taken by Le Bon’s suggestion that, for the modern individual, only authority from above and outside the masses could unite him with his countrymen, lead them, and thus assuage his loneliness. Following Le Bon’s crowd theory, Takabatake saw behind the support of the imperial system the masses’ desire for a hero, yearning to belong, and denial of their own powerlessness. The imperial institution instills the myth of membership by arousing mass faith and stimulating the masses to action. Through and by the emperor, the masses and therefore the nation unite and acquire power and will. Takabatake saw the same basic desire in the thinking and actions of Japanese socialists who, however, chose the Russian Bolsheviks as their new heroes. Hence, Takabatake urged that, if the *instinctive* loyalty of the people were left alone and not nurtured, directed, and managed by the state, with time, kokutai would be conquered and destroyed either by Western capitalism or Soviet “internationalism.”

The rise of radical programs after World War I was informed not by nationalist attachment but rather by a long-running dissatisfaction with and rejection of capitalism as an economic system and liberalism as its political form. Anticapitalism—or rejection of the principles of private property and private profit at the expense of community—was Takabatake’s guiding principle, which brought him into the socialist movement in the first place and which he never abandoned. By the end of World War I, Takabatake declared, the state in Japan was near collapse because it had been hijacked by capitalists, who usurped and manipulated political power for their own selfish interests. Importantly, Takabatake opposed capitalism because it established the malicious exploitation of one class over another instead of the “pure domination” of the neutral state and confused people into thinking that the state itself was an “evil” institution. Takabatake argued that the main sin of capitalism is that because of its pursuit of profit and exploitative nature, it constantly reproduces class struggle, transforming the nation from the end to the means. Capitalism in principle is not able to produce a unified nation-state and sustain its citizens’ loyalty. His group’s task, therefore, was to advance the rescue of “the Japanese state and people from the poison of capitalism” by advocating a radical economic measure: the nationalization of land, big industry, and business. If the capitalist system were abolished and a “patriotic economic organization” established to oversee the
economy, conflict between capital and labor would disappear. A true state would stop being an exploitative organ, win back the loyalty of its people, and establish unity between itself and the national community.35

Ultimately, however, the key to social and economic equality and development became who managed the state and politics and how. In this regard, Takabatake was influenced by people like Robert Michels (1876–1936), a German-Italian sociologist who developed the theory of elites and evolved from a Marxist to a Fascist. Like Michels, Takabatake asserted that the state should be managed by its best minds, which would constitute a new ruling elite. Thus, in his scheme, forms of political organization—be it democracy or autocracy—became irrelevant. Takabatake wrote that democracy as popular self-rule was merely a myth created to satisfy the crowd. Even if it were implemented as a style of government, it would only bring disintegration and chaos. Only the state as a transcending power was capable of quelling class conflict.36 Takabatake thus did away with the traditional Marxist distinction between the primacy of productive forces and the state’s political superstructure. The political authority, or the elite, can permanently alter the social structure (not the other way around), and the state acquires its own dynamic, independent of the mode of production. The ruling elite and the state can then impose their will on the masses—which become, in this scheme, classless and homogeneous. Hence, the state stops being the “executive organ” of society and acquires an authoritarian character.

As a political ideologue, Takabatake tended to stress basic values, offering almost no details on the economic structure of the new state, nor did he explain by what means his economic and political vision should be implemented. But this vagueness was also intentional, because it enabled him to attract ideological support from groups with different belief systems. In 1919, Takabatake and his group found support among the famous group of nationalist pan-Asianists—Mitsukawa Kametarō, Ōkawa Shūmei, and Kanokogi Kazunobu. Through Mitsukawa, Takabatake met Kita Ikki, whose national socialist program closely resembled Takabatake’s ideas. However, they never became friends or collaborators, never mentioned each other in their writings, and their paths seemed never to cross again, most probably because of Kita Ikki’s sinister reputation and his eccentric and gangster-like behavior.37 In contrast, Takabatake was emerging as a respectable theoretician, being contracted in 1919 by a publishing company to translate Marx’s Das Kapital.38 Invited by Mitsukawa Kametarō to a meeting of the Rōsōkai group to give lectures on socialism, Takabatake attracted a great deal of attention from the military officers in attendance.39 Mitsukawa recalled that senior army officers were surprised to learn from Takabatake’s lectures that socialism, and
particularly its anticapitalist message, corresponded to their own vision of how to reconstruct the Japanese state.\textsuperscript{40}

Takabatake explored different ways of popularizing his vision, and the post–World War I period, when there still was extreme fluidity among groups with different political and ideological leanings, afforded him many opportunities to mingle with the right kind of people. The Pan-Asianist Mitsukawa proved to be particularly useful. Through their friendship, Takabatake relied on many of Mitsukawa’s extensive contacts among the media and upper echelons of the intellectual and military world. In 1921, Mitsukawa arranged a meeting between Takabatake and Home Minister Tokonami Takejirō (1866–1935) and the head of the Home Ministry Police Affairs Bureau. At the meeting, Takabatake asked for permission to establish a national social party, but the authorities refused. However, he was successful in gaining the home minister’s approval to publish and distribute his translation of Marx’s \textit{Das Kapital}, which proved to be Takabatake’s life achievement.

Takabatake’s connections, however, proved insufficient to launch a mass movement, because his national socialist group was deemed too radical and was constantly harassed by the police, forcing it finally to disband in 1920.\textsuperscript{41} The police deemed the group’s critique of the state as the political instrument of big capital to be a direct assault on the national body politic. Thus, even though the national socialist group professed loyalty to the Japanese state, the authorities did not tolerate its overtly radical anticapitalist rhetoric. The failure of the national socialist group in the early 1920s suggests that their conflation of statism and anticapitalism did not yet have sufficient political appeal for the military and bureaucracy, a goal the group would achieve in the 1930s.

To initiate a mass movement, national socialists needed to appeal to nationalist sentiment. Nationalists are usually most successful when they can mobilize support against an alleged threat to the nation. The real or imagined threat might come from a variety of directions and could be utilized simultaneously or separately. The threat might come from a political or ethnic minority: in imperial Japan it was the Japanese communist group and the Koreans; from an internationalist political movement like Soviet communism; and from the persecution of a country’s nationals abroad, as exemplified by the 1924 anti-Japanese Immigration Act in the United States. In his feverish attempts to gain the support of the Japanese public, as well as leftists, by appealing to nationalism, Takabatake used all the rhetorical techniques at his disposal.

How far to the right Takabatake’s thinking leaned can be gleaned from his reaction to the mob massacre of almost six thousand Korean and Chinese residents, as well as a dozen Japanese labor activists, socialists, and anarchists, in the aftermath of the great Kantō earthquake of September 1, 1923. Takabatake
responded to the massacre with an article titled “Taishū no shinri” (Psychology of the masses), which was published on the front page of the magazine Shūkan Nihon, the organ of the right-wing organization Taikakai (Taika Reform Association). He speculated that the Koreans might have been doing what they were accused of (looting, raping, murdering), but he also pointed out that the murderous behavior of the Japanese working-class mob was normal. He declared that the basic feature of mass mentality was its irrational “instinct” (honnō), with its two coexisting elements—patriotism (aikokushugi), which manifests itself at times of national distress, and victim mentality (higaisha tarubeki shinri), which refers to the people’s self-perception as victims of unjust economic and social circumstances. For Takabatake, this mob patriotism should be vindicated, cherished, and indulged. He welcomed the outburst of “patriotic” spirit among the masses and derided Japanese communists for their naïve belief in the “internationalist” spirit of the workers. Similarly, Takabatake tried to rally people to his national socialist cause in his discussion of the 1924 Immigration Act, which virtually banned Japanese immigration to the United States. In an attempt at racialized writing, Takabatake attacked the United States’ decision but pointed out that historical development was governed by the conflict between white and nonwhite races, rather than social classes.

But it was the Soviet Union and its Japanese communist agents that Takabatake singled out as the foreign threat in the face of which the nation must arise and unite, and Japanese socialists should embrace his leadership. Despite the Soviet Union being the inspiration for Takabatake’s ideal “proletarian state,” he changed his position dramatically after the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) was established in 1922. What most bothered Takabatake was that the JCP was created as a Comintern branch, with Comintern money and under its firm guidance. In fact, replacing capitalists with communists as public enemy number one, national socialists joined the government’s crackdown on communists and anarchists. When the police and public learned about the existence of a Japanese communist cell after the arrest of Kondō Eizō in May 1921, Takabatake was outraged. He saw the Comintern’s actions as Russia’s direct meddling in Japanese domestic politics. When as the consequence of the communists’ arrest the government introduced the Anti-Radical Bill in 1922, Takabatake threw his support behind the proposed legislation. In his public attack he declared that the bill was fair, necessary, and even urgent, and his support of it marks the first instance in which he openly went against his former comrades.

By the mid-1920s, Takabatake did little to hide his loathing of Japanese communists, whom he regarded as Soviet agents conspiring to destabilize domestic politics. When the first Japanese proletarian party, Nōmin Rōdōtō, was banned by the government in 1925, Takabatake cheered the decision by declaring the
whole proletarian movement to be a cover for Comintern activities in Japan. He also welcomed the 1925 Peace Preservation Law, which targeted leftist radicals and criminalized the expression of any ideas that aimed to alter the kokutai. He called on the government and police to continue even further in persecuting Japanese communists as traitors to the nation, working for the benefit of the Soviet Union. The more public Takabatake’s contempt for Soviet communism became, the more distance grew between him and his former socialist friends. When Takabatake threw a big celebration on completing his translation of Das Kapital in 1926, no one from the socialist group accepted his invitation. At this point, the socialists were openly calling him a fascist.

Because for Takabatake socialism was first and foremost a means to increase the country’s strength, he fundamentally distrusted the internationalist slogans of Russian Bolsheviks. Takabatake rebelled against the Comintern’s policy of protecting the Russian Revolution and could not accept “proletarian internationalism,” in which defense of the USSR against imperialist powers was a more important priority than the domestic interests of workers in their home country. In the end, Takabatake declared that the Japanese needed to reject communist internationalism and capitalist democracy alike.

Capitalists shout “brothers and sisters” while exploiting workers; socialists sing “internationalism” while offering their fellow socialists as human bullets. In words, they are internationalist; in their hearts, they burn with nationalism. Unless as a country and as a nation we become strong, unless we achieve equal strength with the West in wealth, science, military power, social organization, and revolution, we can give up on internationalism as the topic of Westerners. The utmost goal for the Japanese now is to achieve strength as the Japanese.

Takabatake declared that Western Marxists treated their Asian fellows as servants and deep in their hearts wanted to enslave them for the advancement of their own capitalism and socialism. More importantly, rather than treat Soviet communism as an alternative socioeconomic and political order, Takabatake began to operate within the racialized East-West framework, in which the Soviet Union and Russian communists were firmly placed within the white “West,” with all the negative attributes it implied. Takabatake, for example, insisted that Russian socialists despised nonwhite people. For the Japanese to become equal with the West, they needed to reject communist internationalism and democracy alike.

The turnabout, given his previous defense of the Russian Revolution, was dramatic. Concerned about the expansion of Soviet influence in Japan and East Asia, Takabatake warned that, like other Western powers, the Soviet Union aimed at colonial expansionism. Soviet Russia’s foreign policy seemed aimed at territorial
expansion in a manner reminiscent of tsarist Russia’s, which in Takabatake’s view demonstrated that Soviet Russia was using the concept of the world socialist revolution to achieve world domination. Takabatake pointed out that by 1924, the USSR had regained the old tsarist territories Russia had lost after the revolution. Now Soviet Russia was restored to the same size and inclination toward territorial expansion of its former imperial state. The Soviet Union was in fact more dangerous than other Western countries because it manipulated people’s discontent with their domestic social and economic system: “Communism is imperialism that uses socialism as its weapon. It is easier to fight a military threat, but here they target the social system. To fight it, we need to carry out a fundamental reconstruction of our social system [italics mine]. Proletarian imperialism is more dangerous than tsarist imperialism. Japan must watch out for Russia.”

With the passage of the Peace Preservation Law, an emerging police state did an effective job in suppressing the internal enemies of the nation. The JCP also disbanded in late 1923. Since there was no menace to nationalism at home that might have aroused a sense of danger and compelled masses of people to join their movement, national socialists turned to portraying the Soviet Union as an obstacle to Japan’s aspirations for empire in Asia. In 1927, Takabatake's most important article on the issue of Soviet expansionism, “Rōnō teikokushugi no kyokutō shinshutsu” (Proletarian imperialism’s advancement to the Far East) dealt with the case of Outer and Inner Mongolia. After having some success in creating “Soviet colonies” in Central Asia, Soviet Russia “colonized” Outer Mongolia, making it an outpost for spreading Bolshevism throughout Asia. Takabatake described in detail the formation of the Mongolian People’s Party in 1921 under the leadership of the Comintern and the establishment of the Mongolian People’s Republic in 1924. Takabatake took great pains to demonstrate that Soviet expansion violated the interests of the Mongolian people, arguing that Comintern agents had murdered Mongolian nationalists and opposition members and manipulated Chinese revolutionary forces, including the nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen, into allowing Mongolia to become a Soviet satellite-state. Takabatake expressed concern that the Soviets planned to annex Inner Mongolia, which together with South Manchuria was in Japan’s sphere of interest, and turn a united Outer and Inner Mongolia into an outpost for spreading Bolshevism throughout Asia, particularly in China. He was especially alarmed at the news that Red Army officers were being sent to China to create and head military academies. Takabatake warned that the danger of Soviet internationalism lay in its special ability to capture the hearts of colonial people with socialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric. By relying on the help of the Comintern to achieve national liberation, the Mongols and Chinese had stepped on a sure path to becoming Soviet colonies.
Accusing the USSR of imperialist intentions, Takabatake obviously could not avoid addressing Japanese imperialism on the continent. His view was that Soviet expansionism was a symptom of the imperialist drive at the heart of every state, whether proletarian or capitalist. Indeed, in one of his few articles on Japanese colonialism, Takabatake argued that Japan’s imperial project was the result of a natural drive for territorial expansion rooted in the nature of any state. Moreover, Takabatake justified Japanese imperialism as a reaction to Western imperialism, as if this were an unavoidable requirement of international politics.

Nonetheless, imperialism per se and natural impulses for expansion, Takabatake continued, must be contained. Like Kita Ikki, Takabatake criticized Japan’s imperialist advance in China, insisting that Japan must respect and aid China’s efforts to build an independent national state. Independent nation-states working in mutual respect—that was his vision of the international order. Unlike Japanese pan-Asianists, he did not think domestic reconstruction depended on Japanese expansion in Asia. Takabatake’s attitude toward China wavered between concern with the growing strength of Chinese communists, presumably under the Soviet spell, and his desire to see an independent Chinese nation-state, for which cooperation with the communists was necessary. Takabatake urged Chinese radicals, both nationalist and communist, to make a more unified effort at building a strong Chinese nation-state that could resist foreign encroachment—by which he meant the Soviet Union rather than Japan. To achieve this, he believed, the Chinese must learn to emulate the original patriotic spirit of Vladimir Lenin, the “true Russian nationalist,” who managed to strengthen a devastated Russia and unite it under a single-party regime. Takabatake concluded that if China did not succeed in producing its own Lenin, Mussolini, or Kemal Atatürk, even though it might free itself from the bonds of imperialist powers, its destiny was to become “food for proletarian imperialism.” Witnessing the growing strength of Chinese communists within the Guomindang, Takabatake concluded that Chinese nationalist forces were hopelessly “contaminated” by communists and “Russian agents.” However, he was highly critical of the Chinese nationalists’ purge of communists in April 1927, because he believed it weakened the Chinese independence movement. He argued that the purge was necessary but premature and ought to have followed the establishment of a strong independent Chinese nation-state.

Ultimately, Takabatake sided with his pan-Asianist friends in categorizing the Japanese Empire as nonimperialist and even benevolent, and representing it as a defensive measure against Western (including Soviet) imperialist advances. The difference was that pan-Asianists thought of the Anglo-American powers as the greatest evil to combat, making cooperation with the Soviet Union necessary. Contrary to that, Takabatake, together with the army, insisted that Soviet
imperialism represented the greatest danger. As we have seen, fear of the Soviet Union’s advance in northeast Asia was paramount in Takabatake’s transformation into an anticommmunist but also in his decision to support the Japanese Empire, whose role was to defend Japan’s interests and liberate all of Asia from capitalist and proletarian imperialism. He feared that after Mongolia, Manchuria would be the next place to become a potential “Soviet colony,” and thus it was Japan’s mission to defend the Asian borders. For Takabatake, the Japanese Empire was the only force capable of stopping the Bolshevik advance in East Asia and liberating Asia from Soviet imperialism; and therefore the Chinese government would have to acknowledge Japan’s supreme role on the continent and yield to its dominance. Although Takabatake died before the Japanese government started hostilities in China, he and his later followers regarded Japanese imperialism as a moral crusade to save Asia from the Russian/Soviet imperialist encroachment. In the 1930s, however, Takabatake’s followers abandoned his anti-Soviet sentiments. National socialists became so concerned with the rise of the Chinese Communist Party and the threat it represented for the Japanese Empire that they began to advocate an alliance with the Soviet Union as a means to contain and control the activities of the CCP.54

After Takabatake’s initial national socialist group failed to gain the approval of the authorities, he made another bid to initiate a political movement by teaming up with the respected conservative professor of law Uesugi Shinkichi (1878–1929). Uesugi, as discussed in Chapter 5, gained notoriety from his involvement in the Morito Incident in 1921, when the junior professor Morito was expelled from Tokyo Imperial University for his article on Kropotkin’s anarchism. In January 1923, Takabatake and Uesugi established the Keirin Gakumei (Statecraft Study Association)—which, together with the Gen’yōsha and the Kokuryūkai, was considered by contemporary commentators to be the main progenitor of all important nationalist organizations.55 Takabatake hoped that Uesugi would provide finances to establish a political party through his higher-up connections. The immediate incentive for the establishment of the association was the victory of the Italian Fascist Party in October 1922. Takabatake, however, was more impressed with Mussolini’s political success than the content of his Fascist program. According to a bizarre anecdote, when Takabatake heard of Mussolini’s victory, he became very upset at his own failures and, in a fit of rage, repeatedly punched a wall with his fist until it started bleeding, after which he was unable to hold a pen for a month.56

The main tenets of the Keirin Gakumei group were total social mobilization and militarization, struggle against capitalism and the contemporary political system, and opposition to communism and the Soviet Union in particular. The Keirin Gakumei oath succinctly expressed the group’s allegiances and ambitions:
“We pledge our total devotion to the emperor [tennō], to revealing to the world the genius and abilities of the Japanese nation [Nihon minzoku], to the domestic preservation of the true spirit of the Japanese nation, and to groundbreaking new work on opening a new era in world history.” Moreover, Uesugi’s statements regarding the objectives of the association might be easily characterized as fascist: “The goal of the association is, by educating the spirit and the body, to nurture future statesmen who will display steel-like strength of spirit and body. Who but us can create warriors [bushi] to promote the glory of our national polity?”

Takabatake, however, drew inspiration from the Soviet experiments. He was apparently inspired by Leon Trotsky, the founder of the Soviet Red Army, and his tactics for the militarization of labor unions. During the Russian Civil War, Trotsky used labor unions to draft workers into the Red Army, thus transforming them into official arms of the Bolshevik regime. Trotsky described the “militarization of labor” as “the inevitable basic method for the organization of our labor force.” Approving the militarized nature of the proletarian state, Takabatake began to advocate universal conscription, substantial increases in military spending, and compulsory military education in schools and workplaces. Takabatake envisioned a nation of soldiers—be they workers, women, or children—so that when the time came, everyone could contribute to the war effort. In the end, for Takabatake the proletarian state would have to be led by a single party, economically and politically centralized, militarized, and with unlimited control over society.

The creation of the Keirin Gakumei group greatly alarmed Japanese intellectuals, activists, and bureaucrats from the Ministry of Justice, who sensed in this alliance the beginning of the new Radical Right and saw the association as the first fascist organization in Japan in the manner of Mussolini’s Fascist Party. In March 1923, the leftist magazine Kaizō ran a special issue under the heading “Shinkō aikoku dantai hihan” (Critique of the new patriotic organizations), in reaction to the formation of the Keirin Gakumei. Commentators did not fail to notice parallels between it and Italian Fascism and remarked on Takabatake’s ambition to become the Japanese Mussolini. The association, and Takabatake’s public attacks on Japanese communists from 1922 onward, resulted in the irreparable breakup of the previously united socialist movement.

Tellingly, Takabatake vehemently denied allegations of fascism on the grounds that the Italian Fascist Party was a party of political opportunists and bullies whose power was based on their association with modern Italian finance and industrial capitalism. Takabatake was so bothered by these allegations that in 1928 he felt compelled to write his last book, Mussorini to sono shisō (Mussolini and his thought), to clarify the differences between national socialism and fascism. Insisting that he was Marxist and anticapitalist, Takabatake essentially
adhered to the Comintern definition of fascism, which treated it as a middle-class reaction sponsored by oppressive government, big business, and the police and working against labor, socialist, and communist movements. Uesugi repeated Takabatake’s arguments, adding that Italian Fascism was a reaction against both communism and socialism. Since communism would never take hold among the patriotic Japanese masses and the Japanese socialist movement was inconsequential, fascism could not emerge in Japan. The Comintern debates in 1922–23 over the nature of Italian Fascism were the first theoretical attempts to explain the new phenomenon, and they were appropriated in Japan not only by leftists but—via people like Takabatake—by the radical rightists and conservatives as well.

There were doubters of Takabatake’s turn to fascism in Japan, as well as in the Soviet Union. In fact, Takabatake’s ideas had already drawn the attention of Soviet scholars in 1933. The Soviet scholars O. Tanin and E. Yohan introduced national socialism in their infamous book *Militarism and Fascism in Japan* (1933). This study was originally intended for internal use in the Soviet intelligence service, but it immediately caught the attention of Stalin. Stalin ordered it to be published in English in 1934 for wider public circulation as part of his campaign against “Japanese fascism and militarism” in the wake of the establishment of Manchukuo in 1932. Not only did Tanin and Yohan note the direct correlation between the rise of Taishō national socialism and the ensuing belligerence of Japanese imperialism, they also identified the broad social support for national socialist ideas (itself an outcome of the expansion of mass political participation). Interestingly, the Soviet scholars did not consider Japan a fascist but rather a militarist state, nor did they think a fascist dictatorship was possible in Japan. They warned, however, that the new nationalist organizations might be used by the army to widen social support for the monarchy, curb big business, and prepare the country for an imperialist war on the continent, which would be aimed primarily against the Soviet Union.

The Keirin Gakumei dissolved within a few years of its formation, mainly due to personality clashes, but its significance rests on its establishment of a theoretical precedent that validated nationalism within the socialist movement and socialism within radical nationalist thought. Both Takabatake and Uesugi used their experience with Keirin Gakumei to work on other rightist projects. Takabatake became especially close to the notorious group Taikakai. The founder of the group, Iwata Fumio (1891–1943), was a *tairiku rōnin* (continental adventurer) in China, where in Shanghai he befriended the radical social nationalist Kita Ikki. At Kita’s urging, and most likely acting as an informant for the Japanese army, Iwata traveled to Siberia twice for intelligence gathering but was captured by Soviet counterintelligence and spent six months in prison in the small Siberian town of Chita. On his return in 1923, he founded Taikakai, which consisted
mainly of rogue elements, with the aim of eliminating “old slave thoughts” and slave-like imitation of foreign revolutionary ideologies and to recover the Japanese military spirit. Iwata saw himself as a follower of Takabatake’s national socialism and as his confidant. With Taikakai’s financial help, Takabatake published his journal Kyūshin (The radical), which was devoted above all to the introduction of Western Marxism to Japanese audiences. Taikakai also acted as the muscle for promulgating Takabatake’s ideas. In May 1923, at Takabatake’s urging, Taikakai gangs attempted to disrupt the welcoming party for the Soviet diplomat Adolf Ioffe, who had come to Japan to negotiate the recognition of the USSR. The most notorious incident perpetrated by the Taikakai gang to which Takabatake’s name was linked, albeit without proof, was the theft of the remains of the slain anarchist Ōsugi Sakae after his murder by the military police in the aftermath of the Kantō earthquake, with the result that the funeral had to be conducted without the body. The irony is that the anarchist Ōsugi was famous for being an outspoken anticommunist: he had supported Japan’s Siberian Intervention and later denounced the Japanese government for its negotiations over the recognition of the USSR. But while Ōsugi rejected communism as an ideological and institutional suppression of human freedom, Takabatake was concerned that recognition would ease Russian access to the Japanese interior. Shocking his former socialist friends, Takabatake, who had always intensely disliked Ōsugi, approved of Iwata’s scandalous theft of the remains and declared such measures to be just punishment for “traitors who supported the cause of red imperialism.”

In addition to his involvement with the Taikakai, Takabatake became an adviser and inspiration to a number of right-wing terrorist organizations, such as Dai Nippon Kokka Shakaitō (the National Socialist Party of Great Japan), founded by Ishikawa Junjūrō, and the Aikoku Kinrōtō (Patriotic Labor Party), created by Tsukui Tatsuo, whose views and organizational structure closely resembled those of the Nazi Party. Takabatake was also connected to the Kenkokukai (National Creation Society), created in 1926 by the former socialists Akao Bin, Tsukui Tatsuo, and Atsumi Masaru. Hiranuma Kiichirō, head of the Privy Council and the House of Peers, personally patronized the organization. It was the same Hiranuma Kiichirō who pushed for the promulgation of the Peace Preservation Law in 1925, and who sponsored pogroms against Korean and Chinese migrant workers in the aftermath of the Kantō earthquake. Through the Kenkokukai, national socialists linked up with powerful conservative bureaucrats and the military.

Throughout the 1920s, numerous rightist organizations and smaller groups used violent political tactics to struggle against perceived enemies of the national community—be they businessmen, outcasts, Koreans, feminists, labor activists, or communists. But most of them lacked a clear political program and therefore
gravitated to national socialism, which by comparison had a coherent agenda—that is, a highly interventionist state, anticapitalism, a state socialist economy in the manner of the Soviet Union, nationalism, anti-Sovietism, and expansion in Asia. Yet the national socialists also had to seek elite patrons for themselves. Witnessing the success of the Russian Bolsheviks in mobilizing the masses, Takabatake hoped to replicate it in Japan. But the reality was that despite the social, political, and economic unrest of the early 1920s, the Japanese state was stable and mass politics still nascent. For political success, national socialists needed not mass mobilization (which would require many years to achieve) but elite manipulation through private contacts and publications and, in the 1930s, assassinations.

Witnessing the success of legal proletarian parties in the wake of the promulgation of universal suffrage, Takabatake ventured on another attempt to create a political party but with the backing of some of the most influential figures of the day. Teaming up with the leaders of the Shakai Taishūtō (Social Mass Party), Asō Hisashi and Akamatsu Katsumaro, in 1926 Takabatake announced the new political program. At a public lecture titled “Musan aikokutō no kichō” (The necessity of the proletarian patriotic party), Takabatake clarified: “There is a tendency among the right-wing groups to act as tools of bureaucracy and parties, while the left, including social democrats, act as tools of foreign (Russian) powers. Neither the right nor the left are patriots. But we are, because there is no power or authority behind our back. We are independent spirits.” Takabatake envisioned a radically new proletarian patriotic party working outside the democratic framework of existing political parties. Takabatake believed that the new party must, in fact, transcend the opposition between Left and Right, thus enabling it to circumvent and trump the political establishment. Takabatake claimed that national socialism professed radical patriotism. The radicalism lay in advocating revolutionary policies to abolish capitalism, as well as to combat communism, while the patriotism of the new party would be expressed in activities that attempted to fulfill the demands of the nation as a whole.

Through the connection of his old friend, the pan-Asianist Ōkawa Shūmei, Takabatake approached General Ugaki Kazushige (1868–1956), who served as army minister in 1924–27 and again in 1929–31, with a request for funding and political support for Takabatake’s new party. That Takabatake approached the military instead of powerful politicians suggests that the military was becoming a new independent political player. Ugaki’s statement from 1925—that political parties could not play the central role of achieving national unity because “the assumption of party politics is the existence of opposition parties,” and that therefore this role must be assumed by the army, “because it is very impartial and has close contact with the people through conscription”—came close to
Takabatake’s thinking. There were rumors, however, that Japan’s Prime Minister Tanaka Gi’ichi was behind Takabatake’s and Asō’s plans to create a new mass progovernment party to counterbalance procommunist parties. In any case, Takabatake’s plans found support among the highest echelons of power: Army Minister Ugaki, Prime Minister Tanaka Gi’ichi, Minister of Imperial Railways Ogawa Heikichi, and a few members of the powerful Seiyūkai Party expressed their approval. Anticapitalist rhetoric did not scare them away anymore. By the end of the 1920s, in the wake of the Great Depression and its disastrous effects on the Japanese economy, the eagerness of state authorities to defend capitalism had waned. According to police manuals of the time, acts attempting to change or deny the private property system by peaceful means were to be permitted and even supported. National socialism, which promised relief from social and economic problems by means of total control of the economy by a centralized state, social mobilization, and national and bloc self-sufficiency, finally found great resonance among the military (which had long been interested in such a measure), as well as among right-leaning politicians and bureaucrats.

Takabatake died unexpectedly in December 1928 at the age of forty-two from cancer, just as his political career was taking off. Takabatake’s national socialist group was neither very successful nor influential during the 1920s, but it took off at the end of the decade, when society and the political world began to be destabilized by the repercussions of the Great Depression. Although the developments of the 1930s are outside the scope of this study, we can point to a remarkable continuity between Takabatake’s thought and the trajectory of social thought in the following decade. Takabatake’s ideas found great resonance among those at the top of the political world in the post-Depression period of the 1930s. Under the leadership of Tsukui Tatsuo (1901–1989) and retired colonel Ishikawa Junjūrō (1899–1980), the national socialist group continued Takabatake’s plans to form an alliance with the army, reform bureaucrats, and proletarian political parties, and seek different possibilities and support groups to implement what they thought were necessary political and social changes. Reform bureaucrats (kakushin kanryō) of the 1930s, for example, greatly sympathized with leftist anticapitalist aspirations and with the national socialists’ belief in the technocratic rule of the few. The national socialists also actively cooperated with social democratic and proletarian parties and groups in the 1930s, working on bringing to power right-wing national socialist factions within those parties. At the Congress of the Shakai Taishūtō in January 1932, three resolutions directly inspired by Takabatake’s national socialism were accepted: anticommunism, anticapitalism, and antifascism. Social democrats (shakai minshushugi ha) drew on a national socialist program of anticommunism and statism to tackle the Shōwa Depression and even formulated the concept of a “Far Eastern International,” which would
eventuate socialism at home and ensure solidarity among Asian people. It was envisioned by the members of the newly established Shakai Taishūtō that the relationship between Japan and the Far Eastern International would be identical to that between the Soviet Union and the Third International.76

National socialists’ manipulation of the elite continued through personal contacts and publications. In 1931, in the wake of the Manchurian Incident, Tsukui Tatsuo and Ishikawa Junjūrō teamed up with Ōkawa Shūmei and established the Nihon Shakaishugi Kenkyūjo (Research Institute of Japanese Socialism), with its monthly publication Nihon Shakaishugi, later renamed Kokka Shakaishugi. In Ōkawa, national socialists found another powerful patron, who was at that time the head of the Research Institute of the SMRC and taught at a small private academy on the grounds of the imperial palace.77 The Research Institute of Japanese Socialism declared its aim to build a new Japan based on the principles of state socialism, with the goal of strengthening Japanese ethnic communal spirit.78 In its publications, national socialists criticized laissez-faire capitalism, advocated a centralized planned economy, and sought the elimination of the class struggle between labor and capital. They also glorified Japanese imperialism, viewing international relations as a war between nationalities (minzoku tōsō), in which the Japanese nation had the natural right to fight against Anglo-American white imperialism.

What is important for us is that national socialists of the 1930s never sought to contest the objectives of the Russian Revolution, which they understood in their own way. Like Takabatake, they continued to aspire for a Soviet-type single-party regime structured around revolutionary principles, lauding Stalin’s Five-Year Plan and publishing extensive research articles on Soviet industrialization efforts. In this they combined forces with the Ōkawa-run Research Institute of the SMRC, which was also keenly interested in Soviet industrialization. They extensively covered the struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, unequivocally supporting Stalin. National socialists saw Stalin as the true heir to Lenin and lauded the “socialism in one country” doctrine proposed by Stalin and Bukharin. Remarkably, national socialists identified themselves as orthodox Stalinists and criticized Japanese communists as Trotskyists. National socialists dismissed Trotsky’s “permanent revolution” doctrine, according to which the Russian Revolution was the first among world proletarian revolutions, on the success of which its survival depended. In a fascinating twist of rhetoric, national socialists disparaged the JCP as Trotskyists because the JCP followed the orders of the Comintern, instead of formulating an independent national socialist program, and relied on Russian communists to build socialism in Japan. National socialists called themselves Stalinists because they agreed with his doctrine of “socialism in one country,” which placed priority on the national community over the international one, and
they were confident that socialism could be built within a nation without reliance on the revolutionary transformation of the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{79}

One of the organizations in which national socialist theory found acceptance was the Shōwa kenkyūkai (Shōwa Research Association), a brain trust for Prince Konoe Fumimaro, the most popular politician of the day. Intellectuals, politicians, and bureaucrats of the association, such as the economist Shintarō Ryū, the political scientist Masamichi Rōyama, the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi, and the economist Takahashi Kamekichi, relied heavily on Marxism for their analysis of society and rejected the principles of capitalism and liberalism in favor of the nationalization of industries, a single-party regime, and a state-regulated economy. Not coincidentally, many of the members of the Shōwa Research Association were former socialists and communists.\textsuperscript{80}

Most of the members of the association participated in the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (IRAA), created by Konoe in 1936 to provide an institutional backing for his vision of national political unity. The IRAA geared up for nationwide popular participation, which “could mobilize the total energy of the state and enable all national subjects to act as one in assisting imperial rule in wartime Japan.”\textsuperscript{81} The IRAA was part of a larger movement, the New Order in East Asia, which declared cooperation among Japan, Manchukuo, and China as the foundation of peace and justice in East Asia, ensuring a joint defense against the communist Soviet Union, an economic alliance, and the creation of a new “culture.” Nevertheless, the IRAA and the New Order movement were criticized by conservatives and some rightists for being too communistic, and there were allegations that communist elements had infiltrated the association and were using it as a base for their propaganda activities. Konoe acknowledged at a press conference that it was influenced by communist ideology and admitted that left-wing people joined it. But he effectively justified the situation by comparing the New Order movement to a huge drum: “Beat it hard, it sounds strong; beat it lightly, it sounds soft. At times it may sound Nazi, and at other times it may sound Marxist, but its true sound is rooted in Japan’s kokutai.”\textsuperscript{82} In a way, he summarized the whole trajectory of national socialism in interwar Japan.

Takahatake perceived the period after World War I as a time of great transformation in which the Western liberal capitalist and imperialist order was destined to be supplanted by new models. As Japanese society and politics stood at a crossroads in the post–World War I period, the Bolsheviks embarked on their own revolutionary experiment under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, and as such the new Soviet Russia became the inspiration and model for post–World War I political thinking in Japan, as elsewhere. Remarkably, despite all his anti-Soviet and anticommunist agitation, until his death Takahatake regarded himself as a

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true Marxist, while the Soviet regime remained for him an ideal proletarian state. Takabatake’s analysis of the Russian Revolution and his attempts to formulate an alternative to Soviet communism attracted those on the Left and the undecided who doubted the universal applicability of the Russian Revolution and had trouble with the notion of “class struggle,” fearing it would emasculate the national collectivity. Appropriating many features of Soviet communism, Takabatake engaged in formulating a political program that would fit, he believed, the needs of the Japanese nation-state and its people.

Takabatake’s bid to lead a “reformed” socialist movement in Japan in the early 1920s had important consequences. His theory of national socialism implied the elimination of all political competition—left, right, and center; the supraclass elite’s dictatorship; total control of all institutions, including economic ones; and higher collective purposes. His split from the socialists and his formulation of a nation-centric socialism divided and weakened the Japanese Left; his public attacks on the Soviet Union and international communism discredited the spirit of internationalism and justified Japanese imperialism; his writings inspired and legitimized attacks by rightist gangs against his former fellow anarchists and socialists; his doubts about workers’ political potential undermined the nascent labor movement; and his statism sanctioned the government’s dictatorial politics. In his drive to overcome the tensions and contradictions of modern mass society and capitalist industrial development without making Japan a communist state Takabatake formulated political thought that offered at its core a totalitarian state model.