

3. Spirit

Abraham Ben Jhoseph
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The spirit of the kibbutz or other commune is, of course, very difficult to catch in words, or even in feelings when one is visiting it. After all, we pretend to have a science of psychology, we really know nothing fundamental about how the mind works, for we do not know what kind of non-physical **energy** we are dealing with. Even if we did, it is doubtful whether mind can examine mind: whether the instrument can examine itself. In the East, however, there is a distinct belief that it can; and there are ways round the problem to some extent, at least. It seems that they skip over the problem rather than solve it by full explanation. But this, too, can be valuable.

The above somewhat cryptic introduction looks irrelevant. But, as we shall see later, it is very relevant indeed in connection with one Japanese commune federation.

Turning to the subject itself, though, one can easily enough define the spirit of a kibbutz by saying it is the social atmosphere of the place. This is inadequate also; Obviously it is very vague and does not mean much. But it with have to do, as general basis. As stated at the beginning, one cannot catch a word like "spirit" really clearly: one has to talk round it and imply it.

In the case of the Israeli kibbutz, the underlying spirit is, basically, relatively fairly clearly. It

生きがい

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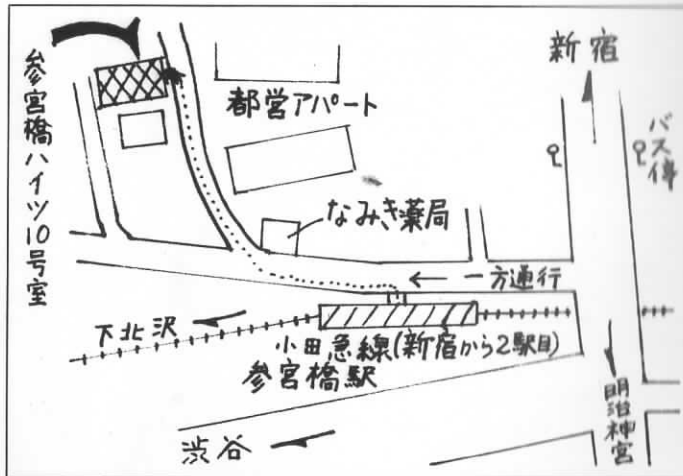
平凡人の体験記録にすぎないが、永い七十余年を文字と
おり精一バイ生き抜いてきた足跡を、日誌に基づいてま
とめたものが、この「生きがい」である。時代は大きく
変わったが人間の本质に変わりはないので、境遇を同じ
くする青年諸君には今日でも参考になるであろうと確信
して、誇張も虚飾もなく正直に書いてみた。……人類は
共同体なり、協同協力の中にも個人の安定も世界の平
和もある。……(序文より)

キブツ・戦争・オレンジ
●イスラエルの記録
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イスラエル四〇〇〇年の歴史から中東戦争とキブツを語
るユニークな記録。

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is essentially Zionist, as mentioned in the first article of this series, the one on origins. It is national-centred; there is immense national pride in it, closely connected with the army. The kibbutz is vastly more than an army camp. In fact, it is not that at all. Nor, even today, does it really have a militaristic spirit, although members have to be soldiers part of the time, and their mental outlook may be somewhat affected by this in many cases. But the kibbutz is usually a place where, in conversation with the members, one can sometimes feel the Israeli flag in their minds, as it were. This need not be definitely bad, perhaps, though, of course, it may be unduly exaggerated on occasion. Something of the same sort may exist in the giant Chinese communes or the Russian and other kolkhozes, but there it is likely to be comparatively very much diluted.

On top of this is a socialist spirit. In the past, this was strongly political. Members commonly looked on the kibbutz as a political cell of their parliamentary Party. The kibbutz was a propaganda centre for socialism. In any really strong sense, this is true of very few kibbutzim today. Socialism has not advanced in Israel, so there is a good deal of depression about it. The Histadrut has become more like an ordinary federation of trade unions: less and less a workers' economic system in itself. In spite of a good deal of socialistic education in the past, it does not seem to have left much pervading impression by now. Even so, varying according to federation (originally strongly political), the kibbutz

does have at least a little socialist spirit in general.

And then there is the vital matter of cooperative spirit: that intangible human feeling of sharing, of friendship, of togetherness or one-ness, or common unity of purpose and outlook: man as a social animal in his best comradeship. There is a good deal of this in the Israeli kibbutz; but it is rather unfortunate and a great pity that it has not everywhere developed as effectively as it surely should have done. It should be the heart of kibbutzism, as expressed in Mordechai Amitai's superbly clear, basic book, "Together," previously serialised in "Gekkan Kibbutz." But, in fact, the Israeli kibbutz is often rather split up into cliques. Nor do members very often step out of their own work branches or temporary management-fields and help others in a general kibbutzic way. Many years ago, the eminent late social psychologist and education specialist of the most left-wing federation, Shmuel Golan, of international status, said, "We know how to build a successfully profitable business cooperative, but we have not yet found out how to build a real fellowship." This has remained true, in most cases, so, recently, group therapy has been introduced into more and more kibbutzim in order to bring the members spiritually together more effectively. Meanwhile, they do cooperate quite well on the national and socialist bases, with a fair degree of fellow-feeling too, and in many, though not all, kibbutzim, the level of cooperative feeling is quite high.

Like so many things in the East, the Japanese commune

spirit is quite different and, to a considerable degree, opposite. This is not altogether surprising, for the Eastern outlook is fundamentally opposite in being introvert rather than extravert, mentally rather than materially oriented, static more than dynamic. The fact that Japan today is obviously highly dynamic does not very much alter this position in the present context, at any rate. For one thing, the countryside, where the communes nearly all are, is not extremely affected, in spite of considerable small-scale rural industry, packaged foods and television everywhere. The country people absorb all this superficially, but largely remain mentally more or less where they were before. Not always, of course; but quite commonly, one may suppose. And it is these country people who usually compose the communes. Except in a few cases, Western-outlook or really modernised town people are very rare.

So one can look in vain for socialist spirit in the Japanese communes. The members are rarely politically interested; nor do they regard the commune as having any responsibility to guide Japan in the direction of more socialism in regard to democratic organisation of the village, breaking down the boss system left over from feudal times, and suchlike considerations. As for national spirit, they hardly worry about it at all. So we are left with the pure cooperative spirit discussed above at the end of the Israeli section of this article. And in Japan, we see it blossoming really remarkably. Owing to the mentality of the people, they do not have many of the diffi-

culties the highly individualistic Westerners have in regard to it, so they forge ahead really strikingly.

The most extreme expression of this is found in the Yamagishi-kai communes. Here, although general culture is mostly conspicuous by its absence, they have (from the outsider's point of view) the extraordinary habit of putting most of their mental energy into a system-not-a-system of utterly friendly, intensely unificatory, cooperative discussion. This is discussion deliberately designed to unite, not to divide. Hence there is no voting, with its splitting tendency, as is universal in the Israeli kibbutz: only a Quaker-like joint consultation in order to arrive at consensus. Of course, with the best intentions in the world, the consensus may not always be true. A dominant personality may, without definite intention, do some brain-washing, in effect. Many members may get tired, and agree half-asleep. Others may have private reservations, but more or less effectively repress them. (And if you are living in community seriously, perhaps that is sometimes the best thing to do.) But at any rate, the overwhelming spirit is one of generally prevailing unison and mental peace. Even if it can hardly be always 100% genuine, it is a most notable achievement and certainly makes for the smoothest possible community-living.

Instead of fostering general culture, as in the Israeli kibbutzim, the Yamagishi Movement concentrates not on evening-classes, study-circles, and rural-colleges potentially leading to a planned kibbutz-university, but

on an adult school, held at both the south and north main centres of the Movement, its chief kibbutzim, in which definite mental training for this deeply cooperative attitude is given in one-week or two-week courses. A description of this training does not belong here. One can b u t say it is associated with a kind of unselfish self-forgetfulness, an utter absence of p a s s i o n, intense fellow-feeling - yet not to an extreme Buddhist degree of annihilating individuality. Control, yes; but not the rigid type of Western control: rather an induced innate control, springing from learned principles of Eastern universality-though, summed up in the phrase, "ittai shakai" - "one-body society". If this is absorbed properly, even annoyance is impossible. for one flow, in the universal flow of nature together w i t h one's comrades. What an ideal training for peaceful kibbutz living! B u t is it over-done rather too peacefully to be evolutionarily constructive and sufficiently justify man's wonderful potentialities also in the spiritual realm, an Israeli kibbutz member would ask from the basis of his different spiritual outlook?! That is a matter yet to be argued out. But not here!

What of the other Japanese communes? The extraordinary thing is that, even without Yamagishiism, they all have this same tendency to intense cooperative feeling. It calls to mind the aim, although hardly the achievement as a rule, of the innumerable tiny American youth communes today. Thanks to the Eastern mentality, it arises and is quite workable, even without much, or perhaps any. con-

scious effort. Given strong, perhaps charismatic, leadership, it develops and maintains itself easily enough. In Japan, people know how to behave socially. And, when they have come into community, they do. The spirit of intensely friendly cooperation at the fairly loosely-knit moshav-shitufi of Higashiyama-Sangyo can be seen and felt at once by any visitor, even if its inner essence can hardly be defined. A n d at the other Japanese communes, the same sort of atmosphere can more or less be at least vaguely caught.

Only in the case of the religious communes is there an extra spirit: obviously the religious one. Everyone is oriented in a worshipful frame of mind. They can not easily mentally clash (although disputes are n o t impossible: there might be doctrinal ones, too). And here, at last, we have a meeting-place with the Israeli kibbutzim, but only with the very few religious ones in Israel. For /they too, of course have this binding, worshipful attitude. It is a small point of contact, though. On the whole, as has been attempted to show, the spirit, the atmospheric feeling. of Israeli kibbutz or of Japanese commune society are poles apart. Nevertheless, do not let us say they have no connection at all. They are b o t h close h u m a n communities.