

THE NEW LEFT IN JAPAN: ACHIEVEMENTS AND GOALS

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A lecture tour through Japan is an exhilarating experience for one coming from the United States where Marxism is not exactly the most popular doctrine. In contrast to the political atmosphere in the States, where even the youth with a cause feels it necessary to vie with non-committed groups in denying an "ideological" foundation for his struggle for freedom, the New Left in Japan is all proudly Marxist, "anti-Stalinist and anti-imperialist, East and West." These sharp outer differences notwithstanding there is a deep affinity of purpose between the new Left in Japan and in the United States. Both the date of birth—1960—and the parallelism of actions—great mass demonstrations in Japan against the American-Japanese Security Pact and, in the U.S., the sit-downs signalling the start of the Negro Revolution—symbolize the beginnings of a whole new epoch of development in both countries.

The 700 that came out, Dec. 4, to hear my first talk at the Telephone and Telegraph Workers' Union hall in Tokyo were representative of the whole spectrum of the New Left. This was seen both from the introductory speeches which showed that, although the meeting was under the auspices of *Zenshin* (1), independent Marxists were also there, and it was made clear from the questions and discussion which followed the talk on "The Negro Revolution, the New Left, and Marxism in America." Furthermore, the questions disclosed an intense desire to develop relations with the second America — the America of the Negro Revolution, of the Free Speech Movement, of rank and file labor struggles, of the anti-Vietnam War teach-ins as well as the analyses of these developments by Marxist groups. And the preponderant presence of youth was made manifest by what I would call the sheer adventure of philosophic explorations, ranging from the historic gulf that separates the "Oriental concept of Void and Nothingness" from the "European (Hegelian) concept of negativity", through Sartre's Existentialism (2), to concrete urgency with which the the Hungarian Revolution invested the Humanism of Marxism.

The focal point of the discussion, however, remained the need for revolutionary regroupment, the need for solidarity between freedom fighters the world over—between workers and students and those who were fighting for and had won national independence from western imperialism that would not fall prey to Stalinism of either the Russian or Chinese variety.

EAGER FOR NEW RELATIONS

I do not mean to give the impression that the whole of the New Left is anti-Stalinist. The oppressive air of Maoism which dominates the Communist Party of Japan (CJP) hangs heavily also over a good part of the intellectual left. As was evident from another meeting, this time at the Waseda University, which was attended by nearly 1,000 students on Dec. 19, more than a little residue of Stalinism is imbedded also in some anti-Stalinist groupings.

The unruly group within the mass audience showed reverent silence only when I quoted Chou Yang:

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(1) *Zenshin* (Forward) is the organ of the NCJRCL. To avoid confusion which would arise from the fact the Japanese Revolutionary Communist League contains the Trotskyist grouping as well as those like *Zenshin* and *Liberation* who have split not only from the Communist Party but from Trotskyism, we will refer to each group by the name of its organ.
(2) I should add that I began to see why my work, *Marxism and Freedom*, when translated into Japanese, became *Alienation and Revolution*.

"The modern revisionists and some bourgeois scholars try to describe Marxism as humanism and call Marx a humanist . . . This, of course, is futile . . . In the early stage of development of their thought, Marx and Engels were indeed somewhat influenced by humanist socialism. But (with the discovery of) the materialist conception of history and the class struggle as the motive force of social development, they immediately got rid of this influence." (3)

Nevertheless, not only was such behavior the exception, not the rule, but here too the Waseda University Students Paper invited me to write for it. In the article, entitled "The Humanism of Marx is the Basic Foundation for Today's Anti-Stalinism", I quoted the same passage from Chou Yang, adding: "Chou Yang notwithstanding, it is not some 'bourgeois scholars' who brought Marx's Humanism onto the historic stage, but masses in motion, masses in motion against established Communism, masses in motion against American imperialism, masses in motion against British, French, Belgian imperialism, masses in motion against all existing societies. 'Stalinism, be it in Russian or Chinese garb, should not be allowed to sully Marx's concept of revolution and vision of the 'all-round' man. . ."

"There must be no more Hiroshimas and Nagasakis. And something a great deal less honorary than 'a degenerated workers' state' should be reserved for retrogressionists, for any who expound the barbarous view that a 'new civilization' can first be built on the ruins of what would be left of the world after a thermonuclear war . . ."

Nearly everywhere I talked in Japan, whether to student audiences or labor groups, academicians or peace rallies. I was met with enthusiastic receptions. The thousands who did so didn't do it because they all agreed with the views of a Marxist-Humanist, but because they all felt the urgency for leaving all doors open in the working out of new international bases in the field of theory as well as in undertaking common anti-war actions and thereby forging new relations on all levels.

I. Hiroshima Internationalism

The deep internationalism of the Japanese youth can be seen in the peace rally held in Hiroshima on Dec. 8. If you retrace the international date line, you'll find it is Dec. 7 in the States.

Now, any one feels very small and very humble when he arrives in Hiroshima. A visit to the Peace Museum is a most harrowing and sobering experience, guaranteed to fill your night with ghoulsh nightmares, and by morning kindling such wrath in you against America for that fiendish act of dropping the A-bomb that you are quite ready to forget that you too are American, and that there is a second America, one that is determined that there be no more Hiroshimas, no more Nagasakis.

It seemed inconceivable that the very city that American imperialism atom-bombed would hold a rally in commemoration of all who died the night when Japanese imperialism attacked Pearl Harbor. Yet that is exactly what took place in Hiroshima on Dec. 8, 1965. I felt trepidation when I arose to speak and I began very slowly:

"While I do not wish to minimize Japanese militarism's role in the second imperialist world

(3) Chou Yang, *The Fighting Task Confronting Workers in Philosophy and the Social Sciences*, Peking, 1963.

war, the day of infamy that will never be erased from history is not Dec. 7, but Aug. 8. And when that day of infamy was extended, and on Aug. 9th, Nagasaki was atom-bombed, hell on earth seemed to be the only reality left. Because we are gathered here to make sure that that dehumanized version of reality does not repeat itself, our anti-war struggles must be inseparable from those aimed at eradicating that which is at the root of all wars: class society."

The breadth and depth of the discussions in Hiroshima revealed also the uniqueness of Japan's anti-Stalinism. First and foremost, its uniqueness was born out of the timing of the first serious break from the JCP. The years were 1956 and 1957. The revision against Russian Communism's suppression of the Hungarian Revolution took place at the same time as the study of Marx's Early Humanist Essays, especially the one on "Alienated Labor."

This study was not for academic purposes, but because of the struggle of Japanese railway workers. The JCP had failed to support the National Railway Workers Union strike in 1957, and this national manifestation of Communist betrayal completed the disillusion of the political tendencies within it that had been fighting party policy on Hungary. Thus the timing helped to keep, as one, politics, philosophy, economics, nationally and internationally.

Secondly, the uniqueness of the new anti-Stalinist movement was due to the fact that this totality of view, learned from practice, carried over into the anti-war struggle. In a land that was exposed to actual atomic bombing the desire for peace is not easily diverted by such spurious argumentation as that of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) which claimed that its bomb was "a workers' bomb," "defensive."

The rationale of the CCP only helped sharpen up the break from Stalinism so that no new stage of reconsideration of the nature of Stalinism was necessary. By the time the Maoists took over the reins of the JCP and plunged into the misadventure of breaking up the Gensuikyo (Japanese Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs), the whole Left, especially in Hiroshima, revolted against the strange admixture of crass opportunism and guerrilla adventurism, in thought as well as in action, that passes for Maoism.

Besides the peace rally, there was a public meeting under the auspices of the Marxist Student League, the Marxist Young Workers' League, and ZENSHIN that was attended by about 300. There were also smaller meetings with the students and the student press of Hiroshima University who were interested in all the details of the Berkeley Revolt.

LABOR AWARENESS

The most impressive part of those meetings with Zenshin which concerned themselves specifically with those questions on which we did not agree — the theory of state-capitalism and my emphasis on the working out of the philosophy of Marxism for our age as taking precedence over the question of "the vanguard party"—was the presence of workers from all basic industries, auto, electric power, shipyards, etc, etc. They were concerned with establishing relations for action, as the Nagasaki Shipyard workers with those in the Clyde in Scotland where Harry McShane had distributed leaflets calling for common action between Scottish and Japanese shipyard workers. And there

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was also deep concern with ideas.

In contrast to what is the situation now among trade unions in the U.S., the political groups in Japan have shop papers that are openly Marxist. Just as a group among the shipyard workers—the Social Science Research Club—were the ones to translate and publish a Marxist-Humanist analysis of The Soviet Economy and the Law of Value—A Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism?, so auto, coal, and steel were most interested in publishing Workers Battle Automation by Charles Denby, editor of News and Letters. In what other countries did groups of trade unionists publish such theoretical as well as class struggle analyses? And where else would a Marxist group that does not fully agree with another Marxist grouping in a different country publish the other's views precisely on the points in disagreement — state-capitalism, and the philosophical essays on Marx's Humanism Today and the Afro-Asian Revolutions?

That this dynamism of ideas characterizes not only workers who are "politicalized" was most clearly evident in Toyota.

II. Toyota Labor Speaks

Toyota, "the East Detroit" of Japan, is a perfect example, and by now a very rare one, of the telescoped, brutalized industrialization of Japan when it was still a feudal country. In Toyota the fantastic remnants of feudalism and paternalism underlie one of the most automated industries, auto. Not only is it a company town such as I have seen in mining towns of West Virginia and Kentucky, or like some of the textile towns in Japan, it has some features that are more like a prison than a town.

Thus the workers not only live in houses owned by the auto company, but these houses are within a compound to which no entrance may be gained, not even by the relatives of the employees, except with permission of the company. Those employees who have a college education live in separate compounds from those with only a high school education; married couples live in different areas from the single men and the single men can have no female visitors.

Not only that. What calls itself a union, run by the right wing of the SP, tolerates these conditions and even manages "to show them off" to the "progressive labor leader" (Reuther) of its sister-city in the United States, Detroit.

It seems that Reuther took the grand tour of the factory, in the company of what the workers consider a company-union, but Reuther considers an example of "Western democracy". He left a picture of himself in the union hall which testifies to his visit. What the workers resented was Reuther's acquiescence to their conditions of labor, and to the town as a whole, which management dominates.

SEEK HUMANIST REALITY

Yet, out of this constricted milieu, one worker, not connected with auto, arose to challenge the economic domination and political monolithism that the auto firm imposed on the town. Masashi Toguchi who had once been a Communist Party member, but broke with it, decided to run for City Council.

Toguchi ran as an independent. The attack Toguchi launched against auto management and its stranglehold over the workers, as well as against the do-nothingness of the union, was concretized in two slogans:

"Down with the Fences!", and "Let's Make Love!" He won handily.

I was invited down there on a Sunday, the workers' only day off. The topic at the afternoon meeting concerned American labor, concentrating on the one hand on the birth of the CIO, and on the other hand, on the wildcats against Automation, which were as much against union as against management.

I had brought greetings for the Toyota auto workers from a group of rank and file auto workers in Detroit, and this was promptly translated into Japanese and read to the 150 who came out to hear the afternoon talk.

The thing, however, that brought the house down was the Detroit workers' expose of Reuther, and the revelation that they hated him as much as did the Japanese workers.

The evening meeting was on straight theory—the void in the Marxist movement since the death of Lenin. But make no mistake about it, Toguchi is completely opposed to Stalinism in general and the JCP in particular. What concerns him is a genuine proletarian revolution.

What the workers discussed that evening was how to realize the humanism of Marxism in practice, how to move in their daily struggles when they have stacked against them the company, the government, the union, the CP.

III. Zengakuren, Marxism and the Academic Milieu

The break that the post-war Japanese youth had made from the older generation has been so complete that to this day there seems to be very nearly no connection between the two generations. It would almost appear that, in rejecting the militarism and capitalism which had brought about the disastrous defeat of Japan, they had rejected anyone who was an adult at the time of World War II.

It is true that the JCP's self-created legend that the Party had been untainted with any of this, and had spent no less than 18 years in jail, brought it large support from the youth as well as the adults in the immediate post-war period. But just as the Socialist Party of Japan (SPJ) was, if you relied on votes alone, (4) the first party of the land in 1947, but quickly dissipated its influence through coalitions with the bourgeoisie, so the JCP's highpoint, in 1949, when they elected 35 delegates to the Diet, took a quick down-turn through its constant betrayal of workers' interests, since they were not interested in fighting the Japanese bourgeoisie, and concentrated solely on the fight against U.S. imperialism. In any case, its hold over the Zengakuren (All Japan Federation of Student Governments) was never total, even when its influence was greatest, from 1948 to approximately 1953.

By the time of the June 1953 convention of Zengakuren, even the Communist Party members were so affected by Zengakuren's militancy that all hundred of their delegation met separately to demand the dismissal of the Central Committee of the JCP. By the time the bourgeois press in America "discovered" the Zengakuren and called it "Commun-

(4) Hiroo Wada, a leader of the SP, admitted that "The ratio of party members to the total number of votes we poll nationally, namely 0.5%, is absurdly small when compared with the figures for the British Labor Party (43.1%) . . . This has still another significance. Mr. Wada does not appreciate, and that is the CP, though smaller, can exert much greater influence than would appear, but the CP's strict discipline and cohesiveness is supported by the state power of China and that has further pull on both the SP and the bourgeoisie."

ist", the Zengakuren was not only free of Communist domination, it was fighting its own battle against the Communist Party line.

The highest point reached by Zengakuren was in that pivotal year 1960 when it led mass demonstrations against both U.S. imperialism and its own Kishi government. And because by then the Zengakuren was not merely a student movement but a political one that truly represented the majority of the people, they succeeded in stopping Eisenhower's projected trip to Japan, and in forcing Kishi to resign.

These, however, were not its greatest achievements. The greatest achievement was this: Out-

clans, Tadayuke Taushima -- and he is an ex-professor--has not only broken from the CP (long before 1956) but has done serious original work. On his own, he began a Marxist study of the Russian economy and came to the conclusion that it was state-capitalist. It is necessary to end our own provincialism and bring his work to the attention of America.

I do not mean to say that the other non-Stalinist intellectuals have either made no serious studies, or are anywhere as pragmatic as the American New Left. On the contrary, there are some serious studies of modern capitalism by Ouchi, and, where it doesn't concern the USSR, by

to the Left; after all, the bourgeoisie in Japan is also "Maoist" since it wants to trade with and profit from China. And, among academicians, like in any other group, some are opportunists and there is plenty of Peking gold around for propaganda purposes.

MAOIST DANGER

All this is true but it is neither fundamental, nor undermines Maoism, first, because that is exactly what that hybrid is--a combination of worst opportunism and adventurism. Secondly, it is precisely such a blend which exercises an attraction for the administrative mentality that characterizes intellectuals in our age of state-capitalism.

Above all, however, as threadbare as Mao's philosophy is, Mao never forgets the pretense that it is related to proletarian revolution. Thus, Peking gold or otherwise, the aura of "Mao's Thought" is this: he constantly speaks of revolution as if he believed in its spontaneity, but he himself, as was evident in his urging Khrushchev to bring in the troops and tanks to put down the Hungarian Revolution, stops at nothing, including counter-revolution, to make sure that the control over any revolution is in the hands of "the Party". . . .

He is trying to be all things to all men by being very rhetorical about "internationalism", but, in fact, glorifying nationalism, especially Chinese. At the same time, although he is forever talking of the brave new third world of underdeveloped lands as "the storm centers of revolution" that will "outflank" the technologically advanced lands, it is the latter he hungers for. And he never forgets that in the East this means Japan, not China.

ROLE OF MARXIST

Needless to say, Mao isn't waiting for any self-developing proletarian revolution in Japan, but is working out class-compromisist, elitist, military "solutions", as in Indonesia, which boomeranged into the great tragedy that it now is (5). The New Left cannot afford to underestimate Maoism's strength, either in Japan or elsewhere. But one can fight it, not by using his tactics of either gold, or empty rhetoric or counter-revolution, but only by having a comprehensive philosophy, such as Marxist Humanism, that does not live in a rarified academic atmosphere, but is part of the very organism and movement of the revolution itself.

Merleau-Ponty once expressed the true purpose of philosophy most succinctly and profoundly when he stated that it must be "spontaneously which teaches." 100 years before Merleau-Ponty, Marx, in arguing against those who wanted "to negate" philosophy by, as he put it, "turning one's back on philosophy . . . and murmuring a few trite and ill-humored phrases," insisted that the only way "to abolish" philosophy is "to realize it," that is to say, make the theory of liberation and freedom itself real. To grasp the meaning of spontaneous action and have philosophy merge with praxis is the only way to realize it. Each by itself is one-sided; only in unity can reality be transformed and thus philosophy realized. It is toward this end that the New Left strives. Therein lies the affinity of ideas between the New Left in Japan and in the United States.

(5) For a further development of this question, see "Revolt in Indonesia: What Next in Asia?" and "Indonesian Communism: A Case of World Communism's Reconsolidation," News & Letters, Oct. 1965. That the Japanese youth is aware of the importance, and the tragedy, of Indonesia is evidenced also in their translation of these articles and publication of them by the newspaper of the Agricultural College of Tokyo University. In general, the student areas in Japan is far superior to the American in the many serious world topics they analyze.



Raya Dunayevskaya at Hiroshima with Tohru Kurokawa, translator.

side of the bourgeoisie, every strata of the population, labor and women included, came alive. In those struggles against the Japan-American Security Treaty, as both symbol of continued American domination and the resurgence of its own bourgeoisie, the self-development of the so-called common man reached so high a point that it created a true basis for independent Marxism--and the beginning of a decline of Zengakuren.

In a word, the very success of its ventures meant the end of one type of cohesiveness. The political tendencies within it, the very ones that helped lead it away from the CP, now found their theories tested in practice, and prepared to shift their concentration from the student movement to the class struggle, and "the building of a revolutionary Marxist party."

TROTSKYISM SHORT-LIVED

The revulsion against the RCP suppression of the Hungarian Revolution led many tendencies to veer toward Trotskyism. That flirtation was a short-lived one, shorter than it had been in any other country that I know of. It is another unique feature of Japanese anti-Stalinism.

The anti-Stalinist youth in Japan refused to follow the 20-year torturous Trotskyist path of criticizing Stalinism as the "loyal opposition" looking for the bureaucracy to collapse at the sight of a mass movement. And they were not about to follow Trotskyism's degeneracy into Pabloist retrogressionism with its belief that the counter-revolutionary CP could become "revolutionary" by "pressure from the left." The three tendencies that coalesced into Trotskyism split apart.

As against the political clarification and differentiation of political tendencies within the student body, the older intellectual, the true academia made no such clean break with Communism. And their isolation from the labor movement made it impossible to see any urgency for the philosophic foundations, the Humanism of Marxism.

Only one of the old academi-

Uns. There are also some serious works on philosophy, for example, A Kakehachi's Philosophical Foundations of CAPITAL, and Philosophy of Economics.

In no case, however, were the academicians, whether in Tokyo, Kyoto, Nagoya, Fukuoka, or anywhere else in Japan, as impervious to discussions as is the American academic world where Marxism remains taboo, and those who "specialize" in it, do so only in as a "know your enemy" type of propaganda. In Japan, contrariwise, I was not only invited to discuss with them in small academic circles, but on public platforms.

The point at issue with the Japanese intellectuals, however, is: can there be an independent working out of ideas unless one is independent not only of the national ruling class, but also of all who use Marxist terminology to cover up exploitative relations in any country? Doesn't blindness to the second group lay the groundwork for retreat to state-capitalism calling itself Communism because, allegedly, it is "one lesser evil" when compared to private capitalism?

Take, for example, the attitude to China's explosion of the A-bomb. It would have appeared to be a suicidal act, in a country like Japan where the anti-bomb movement is so overpowering, to have come out against the limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. And yet, not only did the JCP do so, but by the time, in 1964, China exploded its bomb, Kaoru Yasui, head of Gensuikyo, congratulated Mao! Splitting the Gensuikyo, naturally, helped the anti-Stalinist movement, but it didn't really stop the growth of the JCP, as witness the latest elections. Why? Because anti-Americanism cuts across all "lesser" divisions, and by now even breaking up the anti-war movement is a "lesser" evil.

Under these circumstances, to underestimate Maoism and the pull it exerts on intellectuals, is to blind oneself to the realities of our world. Yet I had been told by some at Tokyo University that we must not "exaggerate" Mao's strength as an ideology attractive