

The Zengakuren



THERE ARE FEW COUNTRIES in which the gap between generations is so extreme as in Japan. This is largely due to the rapid transformation of Japanese society during the past century. In less than a hundred years, Japan has moved from a feudal society to the stage of the primitive accumulation of capital, and rapidly emerged as a mature capitalist and imperialist power. In this century, Japan was further transformed by war and aggression, imperialist expansion abroad and brutal exploitation and suppression of the people at home. The older generation was unable to react adequately to these rapid changes which has made it vulnerable to the

criticism of a highly conscious new generation.

On the other hand, modern political, social and ideological events have placed great pressures on young Japanese students and they have seriously and independently tried to comprehend and meet them. Japanese students have embraced a revolutionary image of the future ideal human society and for this they have suffered a great deal in their struggle to overcome the ugly realities of contemporary Japan. In this student movement lies the promise of the future and the revolutionary power needed to achieve it. Those who ignore or mock at this will be ignored by history itself. Ours is not the age of impasse and I believe that the youth of the world will find the way out themselves.

The Marxist leanings of the post-war Japanese youth has its roots in the telescoped and brutalized evolution of Japanese capitalism. If it was true as Marx suggested in 1844 that "For Germany, fundamental revolution or universal human liberation is not a utopian dream, but a revolution which would never touch the pillar of the house is a dream," it is even more true for post-war Japan. The post-war generation was keenly conscious of the need for a thoroughgoing socialist revolution. That, and not incomplete democratic reform, could save the people of a nation that was almost completely ruined after the Second World War.

Indeed, it was not only the students who sought a radical solution to the tragedy of post-war Japan; mass movements of peace and democracy fermented within Japan after the war and many workers and intellectuals believed that nothing short of Marxian socialism could guarantee the success of these movements. Nevertheless, the promise of socialist revolution did not materialize largely because the leaders of the pre-war generation, on the whole, were corrupted or defeated by the reaction and militarism which characterized Japanese life. The pre-war generation proved incapable of providing either political or ideological leaders commensurate with the socialist potential in post-war Japan. It was not merely that the conservative parties were nothing but bands of war criminals and fascists, considered enemies of the people by the youth, but the parties of the left were also held in low esteem—and justifiably so. The Democratic-Socialist Party had been the wartime accomplice of the Conservatives, the right wing of the Socialist Party was suspect on the same grounds, and the Communist Party had waged an ineffective struggle against the reaction. While the older generation of the Communist leadership, exemplified by Kyuichi Tokuda, Secretary of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), boasted that they had been imprisoned for eighteen years because of their opposition to reaction, the youth, acknowledging the integrity of these men, saw this not as a glorious accomplishment, but as a disgrace, a defeat. The older leaders wanted to reconstruct a socialist movement based on the legend of eighteen years of imprisonment and its pure past; the younger generation tried to reconstruct the movement by attempting to understand and overcome the causes of the disgraceful defeat. While the youth did not simply want to turn its back on the past of the Japanese Socialist movement, it did not want to accept it unconditionally.

Until the complacent leadership of the JCP could be overcome, therefore, the revolutionary movement was blocked. At the end of the war, large sections of the Japanese people turned to the JCP because it, indeed, had been the only Party that had not been an accomplice of, or contaminated by, the reaction. This turn to the JCP reached its climax when thirty-five Communists were elected to the Diet in 1949. The illusions about the JCP had to be examined and dispelled.

THE JAPANESE COMMUNIST PARTY, bureaucratized and stagnant, was too incompetent to lead the Japanese people. Although it is true that in the final analysis the failure of the JCP was the responsibility of the Japanese people, it is not sufficient to explain it by pointing to this failure or to such objective circumstances as the cruelty of the ruling class. The JCP failed to make the necessary criticism of its own mistakes and no one outside of the Party did so because all deferred to the fact that the Communists had resisted the reaction more courageously than any other group in society. The Party became complacent and considered even constructive criticism a criminal attack. As a result, the postwar generation gradually began to abandon the JCP.



Although the youth moved away from the CP, it remained hostile to that section of the pre-war generation which was attracted by "American democracy." While the older generation of revolutionaries succumbed to this vision, the younger generation quickly understood its limitations, considering it not thoroughgoing but hypocritical. For these young people, democracy had to be based on the idea of real social equality. They were fully aware of the fact that "American democracy" denied social equality at home, and gave important assistance to the revival of Japanese monopolies, freed war criminals who returned to positions of importance in society, oppressed the socialist movement and drove part of it underground. The American occupation forces openly interfered with Japanese workers' strikes, suppressing them by mobilizing tanks and airplanes.

If the Japanese post-war generation regarded American democracy as incomplete and hypocritical, Stalinist socialism was treated similarly. The youth began to realize that Stalinist socialism was a distortion of the thought of Marx and Lenin.

THE POSTWAR COMMUNIST MOVEMENT began with great sympathy for the Communist Party, then passed through a period of disappointment and is now ready to break with the past and attempt regroupment. The history of the conflict between the Zengakuren and the Japanese Communist Party best exemplifies this development.

"Zengakuren" is an abbreviation of "All-Japan Federation of Student Governments," a unified, national student organization. It was founded in September 1948, directly stimulated by the nation-wide student struggle against the government proposal to raise the tuition at government universities. Encouraged by the revolutionary upheaval of the post-war labor and socialist movements, the Zengakuren reflected general social changes in Japan. From its inception, this student movement was directly involved in general political events in keeping with its basic slogans, "peace, democracy, democratic education, and better student life."

The movement began with the struggle for the democratization of the campus. Professors with militaristic tendencies had to be expelled while those who had been deprived of their rights because of socialistic or liberal views had to be recalled to universities. The students won these victories through open struggle. More than this, Zengakuren has always tried to

act in concert with other political and cultural organizations, such as Sohyo (Japanese General Council of Labor Unions), the Socialist and Communist parties, while maintaining its autonomy.

In the past thirteen years, Zengakuren has organized a number of major campaigns including the struggle for the removal of American military bases, against nuclear bases in Okinawa, for prohibition of atomic and hydrogen bombs, against the nuclear armament of Japan, against imperialist intervention in Korea, against British and French aggression in Egypt, in support of the war for Algerian national liberation, for restoration of diplomatic relations between Communist China and Japan and against the U.S.-Japanese security treaty. In addition to anti-imperialist and anti-war demonstrations, Zengakuren has fought for democracy and democratic education, opposed the "red purge" in the universities, fought for increased scholarships, improvement of campus facilities, against raising tuitions, as well as opposing other laws that would have denied academic freedom and curtailed the freest expression of electoral democracy.

ZENGAKUREN IS A MASS organization of students, a national federation of many student governments, and not a monolithic organization like the Communist Students' League. At present, there are 140 university student governments affiliated with Zengakuren, as well as some 280 autonomous units. There are approximately 300,000 members.

The program is decided at a national convention, usually held once a year at which representation from each autonomous unit is based on its size. Between conventions, the organization is directed by a Central Executive Committee and Secretariat. The program of Zengakuren is adopted after heated discussions in each class, circle or dormitory.

ALTHOUGH MOST OF THOSE who have been elected leaders of the Zengakuren are Marxists and originally members of the Communist Party, recent years have seen a sharp conflict between the two organizations. This conflict became public in the Fifties when the Communist leadership attacked student Party members as anti-party agents and started a mass expulsion campaign. This conflict has its roots in the history of the Japanese Communist Party.





During the period between Japan's surrender and 1950, the CP considered the American occupation troops a liberating force and advocated a peaceful, democratic bourgeois revolution under the aegis of these troops. This was in line with the theory that the bourgeois revolution had to be accomplished before advancing to socialism and resulted in suppressing the struggles of the Japanese working class which had begun to organize for purposes beyond bourgeois reforms. Student members of the CP opposed this policy, aware that it lagged behind actual developments, and began to organize anti-imperialist campaigns. In 1950, the Cominform sharply criticized the Party for this policy of accommodation. It pointed out that the Party's program glorified imperialism and urged the preparation of an anti-colonial struggle against the transformation of Japan into an American colony.

This created extreme confusion within the Party leadership. Stimulated by this situation, student members demanded of the leadership that the Party thoroughly examine its previous course. During this fight, the student leaders went beyond criticizing the Party in the Cominform's terms and developed a revolutionary critique of the CP's program, organization and tactics.

The Party's answer was to condemn these student opponents as a Trotskyist, ultra-left, anti-Party group and to expel Akio Takei, President of Zengakuren, and many others.

The second period of the post-war history of the CP began in 1950 and ended with the Sixth National Conference in 1955 and the criticism of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the following year.

After temporary confusion and internal conflicts, the Party, subservient to the dictates of the Cominform, accepted its criticism and adopted a "New Platform" in 1951. This platform defined Japan as a semi-feudal colony and stipulated the need for a democratic revolution of national liberation in order to realize national independence and bourgeois democracy.

Lacking any facility for independent thought, the leadership of the Party was eager to imitate the techniques of the Chinese Revolution, without consideration for the vast differences in the historical and social background of the two countries. The Party adopted methods based on guerrilla

troops and the establishment of liberated areas in remote regions despite the fact that, unlike China, Japan is a highly developed capitalist country.

The Party organized demonstrations involving throwing Molotov cocktails at police stations. These unprepared and provocative activities, calling the workers into the streets for certain defeat, resulted in a loss of support among the masses. At the same time, the CP intensified its campaign against the anti-Party leadership of the Zengakuren and replaced them with faithful and cooperative Party members.

Under this new leadership, the student movement was totally disoriented. The strategy combined sporadic armed attacks with a conception of a national, bourgeois revolution. As a consequence of this suicidal policy, the Party could not maintain the leadership of the Zengakuren for more than a few years. By 1955, this policy, combined with surprising revelations of moral and financial corruption made the bankruptcy of the Communist Party readily apparent.

At the Sixth National Conference of the Party in 1955, the leadership went through the motions of evaluating its adventuristic and bureaucratic errors. This criticism, however, was nothing more than a token gesture since the tone of the Conference was set by a statement which said: "The events and experiences of the Party which have taken place since the adoption of the new platform (1951) proved that all the stipulations of this platform were perfectly correct." The Conference failed to perform the essential task of reexamining its ideological and political activities and inaugurating a new strategy for the liberation of the Japanese working class. It did nothing to eliminate the Stalinist attitudes which had permeated the Party since its founding in 1922.

What was needed was nothing less than the following: a rejection of the outdated dogma that Japan was a semi-feudal colony in need of a national, bourgeois revolution; a criticism of Comintern theses on Japan in 1927 and 1932; and a re-evaluation of the methodology and philosophy which had produced these catastrophes.

The mistakes of the 1951 platform were not simply *Japanese* errors; they were errors which permeated all the activities of both the Comintern and the Cominform in Stalin's era. This was the crucial source of the strife between the leaders of the Party and its student members.

As a result of this failure of the Party leadership, student members started their own study of the history of the international Communist movement: the history of the October Revolution, the Popular Front in Spain, economics, philosophy and socialism, depending not on any authority, but only on themselves. They critically examined authors condemned in official circles, as well as the classical works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Jean Paul Sartre and Lefebvre were popular among them. They dared criticize not only Stalin, but also Khrushchev or Mao-Tse-Tung and they never accepted even Marx and Lenin uncritically. In the course of this process of self-education, student members began to lead actual class struggles.

IN JUNE, 1958, at a meeting of more than 100-Communist delegates to the National Convention of Zengakuren, thoroughgoing criticism of the

incompetent Party leaders was made. The Party leadership made an attempt to declare the conference invalid but under attack from the students, they withdrew and the conference adopted several important resolutions concerning ideology, strategy and organization. The last resolution demanded that the Party Convention dismiss all members of the Central Committee of the Party and was passed 105 to 0 with 1 abstention.

The Party leaders decided to expel the student members and invented the myth that the students had used physical violence and that they were part of a conspiracy organized by agents of American imperialism. A number of student members were expelled, resulting in the disappearance of Communist cells from many key universities and the formation of new, independent, socialist organizations. These socialist students began to develop their own, independent road. They reformed Zengakuren and helped to shatter the authority of the Party. The answer of the CP was to attack the Zengakuren as a band of provocateurs.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CONCLUSION of the new Japanese-U.S. Security Treaty involved all of Japan in 1959 and 1960. Its climax was a world shaking event. Zengakuren, headed by a young Communist group which had abandoned Stalinism, played an extremely important role. Not only did the Japanese ruling class attempt brutally to suppress this movement, but the Communist Party denounced Zengakuren as an enemy of the working class and an agent of American imperialism. The Party actually attempted to destroy Zengakuren during this period.



The Party insisted that the revision of the security treaty would intensify the degree of dependence of the Japanese nation upon American imperialism and that the struggle against the treaty should be a national struggle, anti-American in character, in which the entire nation could unite against a small band of traitors. As a result, the Party opposed demonstrations and strikes which, according to it, might prevent the participation of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. Zengakuren, on the other hand, interpreted the revision of the treaty as the reorganization of the alliance between Japan and the United States resulting from the strengthening of Japanese monopolies which could demand more favorable terms from the United States, and American hopes to integrate these new monopolies within the sphere of an American controlled world market.

Zengakuren concluded that the revision of the treaty would be an important step for imperialist expansion and we therefore insisted that the struggle should be organized, not as a national, anti-American campaign, but as a class struggle, headed by the working class, against Japanese monopolists. Thus Zengakuren opposed any suppression of violent forms of struggle such as strikes and mass demonstrations.

The entire conflict between the Communist Party and the Zengakuren cannot be detailed here, but certain examples must be cited:

- The CP was opposed to the slogan "overthrow the Kishi government" presented by labor unions and Zengakuren during the summer of 1959 on the grounds that this might weaken the position of anti-Kishi elements within the Conservative Party and thus limit the range of unified action;

- The CP tried to hinder workers and students from demanding the withdrawal of the revision of the treaty on the occasion of the Fifth World Conference Against A and H Bombs held in Hiroshima in 1959;

- On November 27, 1959, thirty thousand demonstrating workers and students entered the Diet compound. The CP condemned this action as provocative and opposed any demonstration in the neighborhood of the Diet building. Even the Socialist Party criticized the Communist Party as rightist and defeatist.

- The CP violently opposed the demonstration at the Haneda Airport on January 16 for the purpose of hindering Prime Minister Kishi's trip to the United States to sign the treaty. When Zengakuren and some revolutionary labor unionists carried out the demonstration, they were attacked by the CP even more severely than by the government and the Conservative Party. The CP expelled a number of intellectuals who had helped those arrested on this occasion.

- On June 15, Zengakuren demonstrators were attacked by the police and one girl from Tokyo University was killed and a great many others were injured. The CP prevented workers from helping the student demonstrators, attempting to isolate Zengakuren in the area of the Diet compound.

- The CP refused to attend the funeral of Miss Michiko Kanba, the Tokyo University student killed in this demonstration and, instead, criticized her for participating in the demonstration.

As a result of this policy, a great change occurred within the socialist movement in Japan. Revolutionary workers and intellectuals grasped the nature of this development and supported the Zengakuren and its criticism of the CP. Many members left the Party in groups; others were expelled. Not only intellectuals were the targets of this treatment. Many workers in key industries left or were expelled from the Party. The regional committee of Minato Ward, Tokyo, one of the most important regions, declared that it would not approve the leadership of the Party and would go its own way to build a revolutionary party. The strong Communist cell within the labor movement at Nagasaki Shipping Company decided to leave the party. The cell at Taisho coal mine and the Atsumi village cell, one of the most famous in the agricultural area, also left the Party. Many intellectuals abandoned the Party, as well.

WITHIN THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN JAPAN, a great number of independent Marxist groups appeared. These new groups were far from being politically identical, nor were they intimately related. However, each began to search for the course of revolution in Japan on its own initiative. They were called the "New Left" because they had the same aspiration for the reorganization of leftist ideas and the reconstruction of a revolutionary party. This "new left movement" is advancing, however slowly.

The future of the socialist movement in Japan depends on the "New Left" movement to a great degree. So far, this movement has not been entirely successful in overcoming its labor pains. No group has been able to establish itself as the leading organization and a number of small groups are repeating the process of division and fusion. What is vitally important at the present, in order to overcome this deplorable situation, is the ability to overcome Stalinist habits and formulate new ideas. Through conflict with the Party, these groups have already deepened their criticism of Stalin. However, their weak point is that generally they do no more than criticize Stalinist tactics and strategy. The dispute has remained abstract, over such formulations as: socialism in one country or world revolution, class struggle or national struggle, democratic or socialist revolution? They have not yet come to grips with the problems brought about by the stagnation of Marxism during the Stalinist era. They are behind the developing class struggle in formulating new ideas, and they have found no new theory of organization which overcomes vulgar materialism.

The most important task ahead for the "New Left" is the formulation of new ideas while leading actual class struggles. In this process, the "New Left" can succeed in forming a strongly unified front. But the remnants of Stalinist thought which remain unnoticed within the "New Left" prevent this work. There is something of the tragi-comedy in the fact that many of those who cry for de-Stalinization have not been able to overcome Stalinism in their way of thinking.

THE FOLLOWING, IN MY OPINION, is necessary to formulate new revolutionary ideas:

It is not enough to say simply that Marxist philosophy is materialistic. The philosophy and thoughts which Marx developed were an attempt to resolve the opposition between materialism and idealism formulated in the process of criticizing the system of Hegelian philosophy. Marx put an end to the repeated confusions concerning the relations between existence and consciousness. He placed living human beings in the center of his philosophy instead of dissolving everything into material substance. Marx's human being was not Feuerbach's, but a human being of historical and social existence, living under certain relations of production. Therefore, the subject of history was a historically and socially living human being. Marx's philosophy was based on the understanding of active human processes, of men creating newer and greater objective existence without limit.

The failure to understand the role ascribed to consciousness in Marxist thought caused an underestimation of the role of human initiative. And this gave rise to a dogmatized, crude materialism which never looked beyond

formulas; which took into account only material, objective reality, but never the nature of human consciousness at any given moment.

Marx never intended to elaborate a fixed system of philosophy. Actually, the last philosophical judgment that Marx made was to "aufheben," to transcend and abolish, philosophy.

Marx wrote in *The German Ideology* that:

where speculation stops real and actual science starts in actual life. Philosophy, which is independent, loses the means of its existence, as soon as the description of reality begins. What can replace this philosophy is nothing but mere summarization of the most general conclusions **which are abstracted from observations of historical development of human beings.** Even that which can be obtained as a result of this abstraction, in itself, has no value, if it is cut off from actual history.

The same idea is repeatedly found in other works of Marx and Engels including *Anti-Duhring* and *On Feuerbach*.

In this spirit, Engels mocked those who made a dogma of historical materialism. In a letter to Conrad Schmidt in 1890, he wrote: "I emphasize that the whole of history should be restudied." In this respect, it should be evident that the process whereby Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx formulated their ideas, particularly those which Marx went through in formulating his thoughts, should be restudied. It is especially necessary to understand how Marx proceeded from the criticism of philosophy to economics. It is necessary neither to deny any meaningful relation between the early Marx of the *Manuscripts of 1844* and the later Marx of *Capital*, nor to insist that the relationship is easy to comprehend because it is direct. In this connection, it is vitally important to study the process whereby Marx's thought went from the discussion of alienated labor in the *Manuscripts*, to labor power as a commodity in *Capital*. This would help to clarify the development of Marx's humanism through his study of economics.



Second, Marxist economics should be reorganized and developed. Under Stalinism, Marxist economics have been sterile. We failed to develop the theory of capitalism which Marx had established in *Capital*. As a result, we were unable to find the correct method for analyzing various stages of the historical development of capitalism and we could not correctly understand a particular stage, that of imperialism, in concrete detail. Moreover, this led us to errors in failing to make clear the nature of the period of the world revolution and its intimate relationship with the nature of world economy that began with the Russian Revolution.

We must use the theory of capitalism which Marx elucidated by examining the prototypical form of the evolution of industrial capitalism in England in order to understand the various stages of historical development and in order to analyze specific situations.

In this respect, Marxist economics in Japan has achieved a great deal but it is urgently required that we deepen the analysis of problems such as the impact of capital accumulation in various countries and at various stages of the development of world economy in order to meet the Stalinist interpretation head-on. It may be impossible to establish a socialist theory of society without this fundamental approach to the problem. I think it is urgent to concentrate on analyzing the conditions of economic development in Japan, paying careful attention to the development of the world market.

Third, the history of the international and Japanese socialist movements should be re-examined. During the Stalinist period, history was systematically distorted. Historical writing emanating from the Soviet Union shows no fundamental improvement, even today. The "Party history" of the Khrushchev era should not be allowed to replace Stalin's *History of the CPSU*. Both are false. It is our feeling that the entire history of the Russian Revolution and subsequent developments in the Soviet Union should be rewritten, elaborating on the lessons of the October Revolution, the views of Trotsky, Stalin's mistakes, the historical and social background which makes it possible for Stalinism to dominate Russia and the international Communist movement, analyzing the popular front in Spain, German fascism, etc.. Great efforts must be made to do serious research and produce noteworthy material.

Fourth, the theory of organization and of the Party should be re-examined. Stalin's errors cannot be attributed solely to faulty strategy and tactics but must be understood in relation to the theoretical problems we have raised. A theory of organization must emerge which relates theoretical principles to actual politics. Science must not be allowed to become the slave of politics. The vanguard party, the united front, the Chinese communes—these are some of the areas which must be examined and understood if we are seriously to discuss the future of human liberation.

We have only started our work. I am convinced that the socialist movement in Japan, in solidarity with our comrades throughout the world, will make slow but steady advances in the direction of human liberation, advances that will be filled with suffering and hope. When the revolutionary thought of the "New Left" begins to influence the mind of the Japanese working class, it will become a mighty power that will shake Japan and the world.

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The Socialist Party



A GLANCE AT THE MAIN EVENTS that have taken place in the space of the past year will suffice to make clear the central problems of Japanese politics. In June of last year there took place the large-scale mass demonstrations against the Japanese American security treaty. The treaty itself was concluded, but the invitation extended to U. S. President Eisenhower to visit Japan was withdrawn, and the Kishi government fell. The Diet was dissolved by the new Ikeda government and a general election held in November. Throughout the election campaign the greatest, indeed the only, point at issue was "neutrality." The principal questions confronting this year's Diet were the bill concerning the strengthening of Japan's defense force, the Agricultural Standards Act, and the bill for the prevention of political acts of violence (which, however, was not passed).

These are the main events to which I referred above. Before proceeding, let us first take up the results of the general election of November 1960.

<i>Party</i>	<i>No. of Seats Won</i>	<i>No. of Votes Polled</i>	<i>% of Votes Cast</i>
Liberal-Democratic	296	22,740,265	57.56
Socialist	145	10,887,137	27.56
Democratic Socialist	17	3,464,147	8.77
Communist	3	1,156,723	2.93
Independent	6	1,260,849	3.18
Total	467	39,509,121	100.00

Although Japan's socialist parties have a history of over sixty years, it is only since the Second World War that they have become a real political