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**Class Struggle and
Technological Innovation
in Japan since 1945**



Muto Ichiyo



Hilary Driver 1987

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* NSR No.4 is available in French as Part One of Daniel Bensaïd, *Stratégie et Parti*, Paris: La Brèche, 1987.

** Note: CER No.4 is composed of two updated chapters of M. Lowy's *The Politics of Uneven and Combined Development*, available from New Left Books, London.

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Introduction

For several years, the media of most capitalist countries in the world —particularly the business press— have been running headlines on Japan's "success story." Right-wing employers and social-democratic technocrats have joined in a chorus to sing the praises of its "economic miracle." All Western governments use the "challenge" of Japanese competitiveness to justify their austerity measures and new attacks on trade-union rights.

The Japanese model has become the example of the new social order which the ruling class of developed capitalist countries wishes to impose on the labor movement. A whole new mythology has been created. One of its chief arguments is the myth that the class-collaborationist "consensus" which has brought social peace to large Japanese corporations is based on harmonious relations between workers, foremen and management. This allegedly reflects a deep-seated feature of Japanese culture.

The ideologues who claim this, boast that the case of Japan invalidates the narrow economic determinism—which they wrongly identify with Marxism—that would have wage-earners struggling against bosses. But they have themselves come up with a far more tyrannical sort of determinism: that of culture, of the eternal soul of Japan. In fact, their theories have little to do with the contemporary history and reality of class relations in this East Asian archipelago. But that will not stop such ideas from being fashionable since their function is directly political: they are designed to facilitate the acceptance of the current capitalist reorganization by the working class and its organizations. For instance, while marvelling at the uniqueness of Japanese national identity, employers and technocrats have not hesitated to call on "their" workers to adopt the same responsible—read: submissive—spirit which they believe they have discovered among Japanese wage-earners.

Japan's history and culture are profoundly original, of course. But there as elsewhere, history is made and transformed by human beings and culture brims over with political conflict and social antagonism. This rich history must be restored. It is with that goal in mind that we are publishing this important study on class struggles in Japan since the Second World War by Muto Ichiyo.

Muto Ichiyo works on *AMPO Japan-Asian Quarterly Review*, an English-language periodical published out of the Tokyo-based Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC). He has written many articles on the situation in Japan, the Liberal-Democratic Party regime, the people's struggles and the labor movement. Together

with Inoue Reiko —also an *AMPO* collaborator— he has undertaken to write a fundamental history of the Japanese "New Left." This movement was born in the 1960s, mainly in the Zengakuren (All-Japan Federation of Student Unions) and split-offs from the Japanese Communist Party, as part of the radicalization that generated a youthful, radical and dynamic far-left. (See Muto Ichiyo and Inoue Reiko, "Beyond the New Left, In Search of a Radical Base in Japan, Part 1, 2-1, 2-II," *AMPO*, vol. 17, nos.2-4, 1985.)

This revolutionary left included a variety of political currents. Among the organizations created in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, we should note the Communist League (Bund), which was quite important in the earlier period, the three groups that adopted the name of Revolutionary Communist League: the Chukaku (central nucleus), the Kakumaru (revolutionary Marxists) and the Japanese section of the Fourth International (JRCL), and lastly Kaiho (Liberation), which unlike the others came out of the Young Socialist League, the Socialist Party's youth affiliate.

Muto never belonged to any of these organizations. But he nevertheless experienced the whole period of this new left's rise and decline, up to and including a crisis the symptoms of which were already visible in the late 1970s. He and Inoue Reiko subject these developments, including the history of Japanese Trotskyism, to a critical review. Their assessment certainly deserves to be discussed. Beyond specific judgements, their work is a pioneering undertaking: to rekindle the memory of the activists of these decisive years, analyze their legacy and draw the necessary lessons for the future.

The same spirit guided Muto Ichiyo in drafting the following essays on the Japanese labor movement from the aftermath of World War Two to the early 1980s. In addition to precise information on the history, organizational forms and struggles of Japanese trade unions, the reader will find a detailed analysis of the evolution of class relations in the contemporary period in Japan. Muto demonstrates that the present structure of the Japanese labor movement, far from reflecting the eternal laws of the Japanese soul, is the product of specific events, particularly the struggles of the 1950s. He explores the nature of the "complementarity relationship" that bound Japanese and US imperialisms after World War Two, and reveals its impact on the domestic scene in a "wholeist" analysis of the situation. The implications of current tensions between Washington and Tokyo are examined in that framework.

One of the most original aspects of these essays is the discussion of Japan's changing industrial structure.

Muto stresses the extent to which the impact of new technology on class relations was not predetermined. He argues that the outcome depended on the respective ability of both players—employers and the labor movement—to master the "new rules of the game" that came with new techniques. Japanese-style rationalization, *gorika*, was the employers' response; labor's, the wage-centered spring offensive, or *shunto*. Muto shows quite convincingly that the latter strategy was too narrow, and therefore ineffective.

Since the essays reproduced here were written, the economic and social reorganization described by Muto has proceeded apace. In January 1987 a further step was taken with the privatization of the Japan National Railways.

The bulk of this *Notebook for Study and Research* Number 5 is composed of three serialized historic articles published in *AMPO* in 1982. As an introduction, we have selected another article published in 1984 in the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale*, in

which Muto brings together the various threads of his analysis of the changing relations between the US, Japan and the labor movement. Finally, we have drawn on a third essay, "Class Struggle on the Shopfloor—The Japanese Case 1945-1984," published in *AMPO* in 1984, for a presentation of the general argument on technological innovation and workers power, and to add a few points to the main article. To avoid repetition while maintaining the continuity of the exposition, we have summarized, and sometimes moved, certain passages (indicated by square brackets or parentheses). We hope that the publication of this *Notebook for Study and Research* will contribute to a better knowledge of the Japanese labor movement. We hope that it will stimulate comparative studies of the class struggle in developed capitalist countries and foster the discussion on the evolution of their industrial structure, the challenges faced by the trade union movement and the tasks of revolutionaries in imperialist powers.

John Barzman

Pierre Rousset

PARC-AMPO

AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review is published in Tokyo. It is written in English and circulated internationally.

AMPO is the acronym of Anti-Military Pact Organization. The name evokes the memory of the great mass mobilizations against the Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty signed by Washington and Tokyo in 1960—in fact an inter-imperialist military treaty.

The first issue of *AMPO* appeared in 1969, in the wake of the student radicalization and development of the "new left." It is presently being published by the Pacific-Asia Resource Center (PARC).

PARC was founded in 1973. It is an independent organization created thanks to the existence of the network of activist contacts and exchanges established in the Asian and Pacific regions through the circulation of the review in its first four years.

PARC also publishes a Japanese-language quarterly, *Sekaikara (From the World)*.

AMPO's first aim is to introduce overseas readers to the struggles of the Japanese people. It has carried many articles on the democratic and social movements, on the environmental and anti-nuclear movements as well as on trade unions and workers' struggles in the archipelago.

Solidarity with national liberation struggles is another major theme and *AMPO* has dedicated much space to the fight of the peoples of the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Indochina, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and the South Pacific islands have received particular attention.

To contribute to the resistance against its own imperialism, *AMPO* has published a number of studies on Tokyo's foreign policy and the international deployment of Japanese capital from Indonesia to South Af-

rica.

Strengthening links between progressive activists in the region is a constant concern of *AMPO*. It participates in united solidarity actions and supports direct exchanges between the Japanese and overseas popular and progressive movements.

AMPO has also circulated several in-depth studies, notably on transnational corporations, and often publishes special issues on particular topics. We noted in particular:

◆ A triple issue on "free trade zones": "Free Trade Zones and Industrialization of Asia," vol. 8, no. 4, vol. 9, nos. 1-2, 1976-77, 214 pp.

◆ The issue published for the tenth anniversary of the foundation of PARC, which presents the goals of the Center and the review *AMPO*: "Opening Up Our Future in Asian-Pacific Solidarity," vol. 15, nos. 3-4, 1983.

◆ An issue which focuses on the Philippines in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship: "The Philippines—Reflecting and Adapting," vol. 18, no. 1, 1986.

◆ A special issue on the struggle of women in Japan: "The Challenge Facing Japanese Women," vol. 19, no. 1, 1987.

Published by anti-imperialist activists who do not belong to the main organizations of the Japanese left and far-left, *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review* is currently one of the main sources of information in English on people's struggles in Japan and the region.

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Japan in the U.S. Dominion State, Labor and Politics in the 1980s

Muto Ichiyo

NSR

N°5

[Since his election as Prime Minister in November 1982, Yasuhiro Nakasone has tried to deepen the break with the political system that prevailed in Japan from 1955 to 1975. In so doing though, he had to avoid clashing too abruptly with domestic public opinion, still very attached to material improvements and the status quo. In foreign affairs too, Nakasone had to walk a thin line between pledges of continued peaceful development addressed to the capitalist governments of South-east Asia, and the exaltation of Japan as the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" of the West before President Reagan in Washington. This careful balancing act is deeply rooted in the crisis of the twin political systems of postwar Japan.]*

I. US-Japan Division of Labor

The Japanese bourgeoisie has, thus far, handled the potential national crisis fairly well, and it will continue to do so unless and until its major programs, political ideological as well as economic, crumble on two fronts — military-cum-diplomatic and labor.

The Siamese twin coexistence, or back-to-back connectedness of the two parallel systems of post-World War Two Japan, the "Peace Constitution" system internally and the military alliance system with the United States which functioned mainly externally, worked magnificently during most of the postwar period. This parallelism, originating in the occupation period, is based on an arrangement between the ruling political groups and bourgeoisies of the two countries. Under this felicitous arrangement each country performed complementary functions. After the shattering defeat in its hopeless attempt to wrest the Asian Pacific region from Western powers for Japan's "co-prosperity" sphere, the battered Japanese bourgeoisie could not hope to repeat the adventure. It sought instead to turn to account US military, political and economic domination of capitalist Asia (and the Third World in general, upon which Japan had

to rely for resources) as a new framework within which it could pursue its own goals. This meant for the Japanese ruling class the partial relegation to the United States of its own imperialist superstructural functions, mainly military but also some diplomatic and political functions. In exchange it would devote itself to rebuilding and expanding its economic base. In this remarkable case of working through a borrowed imperialist superstructure, the military alliance with the US became a built-in feature of Japanese capitalism.

The deal was beneficial to the United States too. The United States established its right to use Japan, Asia's leading industrial power, as its military outpost and the single most important logistical base for military operations in Asia (a "right" fully exercised during the Korean and Vietnamese wars). The US simultaneously enjoyed the benefit of a dynamic capitalist economy buying vast quantities of US grain, machinery and technology and serving as a showcase of capitalist development in a shaky revolution-fraught Asia. Most importantly, this *quid pro quo* barred Japan from again venturing to build its own exclusive empire as a threat to the United States.

This division of labor between the United States and Japan, is essential to understanding postwar Japanese development, for it has had a pervasive effect upon the formation of society, polity and ideology. It was not just relatively lower military expenditures that contributed to the unprecedented growth and prosperity of Japanese capitalism. More importantly, the whole setup made possible by the complementarity deal helped shape a polity as well as a social, economic and ideological environment for postwar Japan which facilitated maximization of economic pursuit. Thanks to this division of labor between military and economic, the Japanese ruling class had little need to mobilize politically and ideologically the masses to fight a war, and this circumstance accordingly could seal off internal Japanese politics from external turbulence. This separation imparted peculiar parochial characteristics to internal development. Rule was the rule of economics, and the Liberal Democratic Party, which has monopolized power ever since the occupation period (except for a brief intermission of Socialist coalition government in the 1947-48), embodied this rule. Given this ideal circumstance of germination, corporate power quickly took root, proliferated and expanded. The state with its efficient bureaucracy worked to coordinate conflicting business interests in order to maximize corporate interests. In the whole period of what is often called "Postwar Democracy", the social integrative power of big business corporations came to

* This report was originally prepared in April 1982 for the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics, Historical Systems and Civilization based at the State University of New York at Binghamton, N.Y.

It was published with slight changes in *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale*, Fall 1984 Volume VIII, number 3.

[In the present version, developments concerning the organization of work and trade union unity, items discussed in detail in the following article, have been eliminated (indicated by parentheses around three dots (...)) or summarized (indicated by brackets []). The editors NSR.]

overwhelm the political integrative power of the state as such.

Problems were already lurking. Those who designed this course of development as a stop-gap or a transitional process, *en route* to the reestablishment of Japan as a full-fledged imperialist power experienced this paradise of economism as a bit of an aberration. Thus, Fukuda Takeo, later Prime Minister, deploring the individualistic tendencies prevalent among youth, railed against the theme of a popular 1960s love song, which says, "The whole world is for us two." "You should remember," he said, "that you two are for the whole world, not the other way around." Though nobody took seriously the old Meiji boy's admonition, the LDP's official ideological program, and among others the Education Ministry's sustained, tenacious battle against the Japan Teachers' Union and its "Democratic Education" program, precisely followed the same line as Fukuda's — less individualism, less assertion of the rights of individuals, more collectivism and self-sacrifice, more respect of elders, duty before rights, more love for the nation and state, and ultimately more concern about national defense. The right traditionalists in the LDP, bureaucracy and education circles, pushed this line, praising, whenever they could be frank, the moral values of the Meiji Imperial Rescript on Education (loyalty and sacrifice to the nation, filial piety, and respect for the Emperor).

"Economism and the "Company World"

But these admonitions were self-defeating as the Japanese bourgeoisie and LDP had long based themselves precisely upon a socio-political formation that inevitably secreted and spread crass economism, competition, and hence individualism. This was the chronic dilemma *and* scourge of the postwar Japanese ruling class which opted for integration with the American empire.

In spite of officially approved cartels, "administrative guidance by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), and all other official measures to coordinate conflicting business interests, competition was of course never eliminated. Competition was indeed sharp among "corporate groups" each comprising an entire business complex — a bank, a giant trading firm (*sogo shosha*), heavy industrial, light industrial, chemical and petrochemical and marketing companies, subordinating in their train numerous subcontract and affiliate firms. Competition was also ruthless among giant firms in the same business area. Thus Mitsui & Co. and Mitsubishi Corp. (both *sogo shoshas* representing their respective corporate groups) were engaged in cut-throat competition over market shares and overseas projects, and the two auto firms, Nissan and Toyota fought a never-ending giants' contest.

The secret of Japanese capitalism is its success in translating this severe inter-firm and inter-corporate group struggle into competition among individual workers. Contrary to the widespread myth in the West about "traditional collectivism and the allegiance of the Japanese working class to management," it is this highly

individualistic competition that has so far succeeded in creating labor's seeming collectivism and allegiance to management. Kamasha Satoshi, a labor journalist, who himself worked at a Toyota auto plant, reports how management and the union constantly reminded the workers of rival Nissan's output and sales, and urged them to emulate and surpass it.¹ The intra-firm system was so organized as to set one worker against another in increasing productivity so the company could compete effectively with its rival firms. (...) [It included an array of devices that spread far and wide during the 1960s, foremost among which were the notorious Quality Control (QC) campaigns, subcontracting and various forms of repression.]

Political Repression of Labor

As capitalism required primitive accumulation before it could stand on its own feet, corporate omnipotence has as its prehistory extra-legal and extra-economic steps of stamping out factory militants and suppressing the potentially revolutionary labor upsurge of the immediate postwar years. That was accomplished by the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP), Douglas MacArthur, in the form of the "red purge" carried out prior to and following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950.

But that was not enough. After the collapse by repression of the militant Sanbetsu (Confederation of Industrial Unions), the Socialist-led Sohyo (General Council of Trade Unions) was created with the help of SCAP. Through this major new labor federation the US sought to forge an effective anti-Communist labor fortress behind the United States. Sohyo soon disappointed its designer by maintaining a militant trade union line. (...)

Thus after the ground was roughly bulldozed by the US occupation, the Japanese bourgeoisie still had to fight its way to wipe out the stubborn power of workers. Where necessary, violent suppression was used, and the right-wing Domei (Confederation of Labor) unions attempted to split the still militant unions.

But the single most important factor that undermined the workers' power on the shopfloor of key industries was technological innovation wedded to new labor control systems. "Scientific" labor control systems were originally imported from the US through the Japan Productivity Center set up in 1955. From the beginning these labor control systems were organically and consciously combined with the restructuring of the production process. (...)

The steel industry is where the Japanese bourgeoisie earned its worldwide reputation. It is in fact the first industrial branch that set out to carry out comprehensive technological-cum-managerial innovation in the latter half of the 1950s. The brand new Tobata mill of then Yawata Iron and Steel Co. (now part of Nippon Steel Corporation - NSC), with the most advanced computer-controlled blast furnaces and strip mills, was organized on an entirely new labor system based on the separation of "line" from "staff": "line" meaning workers who had

no say, and no role to play in controlling the production process as such. (...) The whole stratum of skilled workers, who used to be the core of worker collectivism, was wiped out in due time.

The situation differs from industry to industry, but the technological revolution — a permanent revolution for that matter — had more or less the same effect — and goal — of causing the disintegration of workers' collectivism on the workshop floor through the elimination of traditional skilled labor and the reduction of qualitative and hard-to-measure worker expertise in favor of quantitatively measurable standard works. This same process abolished or minimized the need for cooperative work among workers of the same team, dissolving the traditional basis of worker collectivism. In the chemical industry, for example, workers are terribly isolated, watching meters all day long, and having little chance to meet fellow workers.

The Company World

A vulgar version has it that Japanese workers are happy because they are protected by "life-time employment" and "high seniority wages" (under which the salary goes up in accordance with duration of employment), and enjoy such intra-firm benefits as company houses, company housing loans, company gymnasiums and swimming pools.

Aside from the fact that these benefits are "enjoyed" by only one-third of the Japanese working class, i.e. the regular employees of big corporations, it is important to note that these systems, together with other more ideological and starkly coercive devices, are the bricks of what may be called a "company wall" without which the bourgeoisie could hardly transplant inter-company competition into the ranks of the workers and turn it into inter-worker competition. (...)

The internal company benefit systems herd workers into a pen, the "company world," sealed off from the general relationship of class forces, as the arena of inter-worker competition. The "company world" ought to be called "company country," for this partition resembles the division of working people — classes — into separate nation-states, which enables the state to channel the local discontent of working people into an outburst of national chauvinism in the context of nation-to-nation competition. (...)

Sophisticated intra-firm systems have been developed in order to mold workers as "company men." The "seniority wage system" is one of these systems. This system is characterized by complex, often mysterious, job-rating, promotion and work/attitude evaluation schemes.² The present tendency is for the portion of the wage subject to evaluation to expand at the expense of age (employment duration) considerations. Since the 1974-1976 recession, both the systems of "seniority wage" and "life-time employment" are being gradually phased out in favor of increased capacity-loyalty evaluation.

The average wage level and intra-firm benefit level, of course, are influenced by the labor market. When labor was scarce (especially among the young work force) in high growth periods, companies had to engage in competition among themselves to obtain "golden eggs" (as middle school graduates were called). In this competition, companies had to offer higher pay, better intra-firm benefits, better dormitories, etc. Within this framework, Sohyo's annual wage-hike campaigns (Spring Campaigns) could exploit the labor market situation.

But what should be noted is that the absolute level of benefits, which is a function both of labor supply and demand as well as workers' struggles, is not essential to the corporate mechanism. The heart of this mechanism is the corporate microcosm where workers are told to work, compete, and live throughout their service time. Essential to this mechanism is the shaping of business undertakings into particular "company worlds." To build the wall of the "company world", the builder only uses those bricks that are useful. A new gymnasium can be such a brick to lure "golden eggs" during an economic boom; the "life-time employment" system apparently served that purpose for many years. But if they become cumbersome, they can be phased out and the gap filled by more coercive ideological drives. The bricks change but the wall remains.

The "company world" is the key to understanding postwar Japanese capitalism. It is in fact the citadel of the Japanese bourgeoisie. Pushed into the "company world," a large segment of the Japanese working class has taken up inter-company competition as its challenge — without fully believing in it.

The Complementarity Deal

This Shangri-la of pure capitalism, however, was not totally consistent and complete in itself, for it had as its premise the above-mentioned complementarity deal. If this system of domestic rule, resting heavily on the integrating capacity of corporate power is likened to a circle, another larger circle partly overlapped it. The larger circle is the circle of US strategy, with its military prerogatives, drawn in accordance with the requirements of the US empire. People in Japan assumed that the smaller circle was more or less complete, but this view contained more self-deception than perception. The larger circle was the real determinant factor, not just an extension of the smaller circle.

Japanese ruling groups knew better than the ruled that the smaller circle was but a subordinate function of the larger. Knowing this, they never compromised with the people when it came to the military alliance with the United States. Thus, in 1960, Premier Kishi Nobusuke rode roughshod over millions of protesters to ram through the revised Japan-US Security Treaty. In 1969, Premier Sato Eisaku, Kishi's brother, flew to Washington, defying militant mass protests by radical workers, students, and citizens, to reiterate Japan's support for the US in the Vietnam War, and in his joint communique with President Richard Nixon assumed the role of "peace

keeping" in South Korea.

These steps gradually expanded the area of the small circle covered by the large circle, and the point of equilibrium between the two parallel systems accordingly moved visibly to the right. Even so, the division of labor remained basically the same: military functions for the US and economic pursuit for Japan. And so long as this pattern was alive, the parallelism of domestic rule could also survive.

The parallelism generated, and at the same time concealed, an insoluble dilemma of identity for Japanese imperialism. This dilemma became more and more visible with the growth of Japan as an economic power with expanding foreign investments and control of the resources and manpower of other countries. The dilemma concerns, more than anything else, the military forces.

What is the nature of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF)? Palpably unconstitutional in light of Article 9 of the constitution, they have nonetheless existed already for more than three decades, ever expanding and ever better equipped. The fundamental question was whether they were the Japanese armed force or part of the American armed force. The SDF was decreed by General MacArthur as a rear force of the US army fighting in Korea, and in this light it was nothing more than a mercenary army. Has it ceased to be a mercenary force? If so, when? Can it cease to be mercenary while remaining an integral part of the US forces deployed worldwide and thus deprived of the right to independent action or non-action? On the other hand, the SDF is proclaimed to be the force that will defend Japan from invasion. Japanese people should be more defense conscious (so we are told) and support and love the SDF.

Where the small circle and large circle overlap is the twilight zone in which the SDF is located. Depending on how one looks at it, the SDF can be seen belonging to the smaller circle, or it can be seen as part of the larger circle.

To the "genuine" rightists, Emperor Hirohito himself is an ambiguous entity. He is the one who told Japanese youth to go to the battlefield and die for the glory of the nation, but it was he too who was saved from the gallows by yesterday's enemy, and who now says he hates war. He is the one who attends ceremonies in tribute to the war-dead and he is the "symbol of the unity of the nation," the constitution proclaims. What "unity" does he symbolize? The image is totally confusing.

Armed forces being essential to any imperialism (because absolute loyalty is involved), the ambiguity of the nature of the SDF symbolically reflects the ambiguous identity of the postwar Japanese state. For Japanese rightists and the ruling classes in general, this duality of state identity was and is a haunting torment. Mishima Yukio's theatrical putsch attempt followed by suicide reflected precisely the irritation of right-wingers with the embedded dualism of "statehood" and the impossibility of "purifying" Japan of this ambiguity. But this crucial issue could be left more or less dormant as long as the parallel systems based on the complementarity deal worked.

II. World crisis and dilemmas of the Japanese ruling class

In the 1970s, the premises of complementarity collapsed. Two factors contributed to this: 1/ the erosion of US global hegemony and 2/ the end of the long cycle of prosperity of world capitalism of which Japanese prosperity was a part. On the Japanese side, Japanese economic power has outgrown the capacity of the complementarity deal.³

With its economic hegemony eroded and new tensions created with the Soviet Union, the US has categorically told Japan that a division of labor should now exist not between military and economics, but in the military field itself. The US has also made clear that in the economic field Japan had become America's rival. These issues have been linked up — if Japan wants to continue to export, it should share more equally the US global military burden.

The demise of the old complementarity logically calls for the termination of the parallelism of government and, for that matter, the remaking and reorganization of the postwar state and its underlying assumptions: for its means the crumbling of the wall that the old division of labor shielded internal development from the rough external situation. This new situation confronts the Japanese ruling groups with very serious difficulties.

If they stick with the United States in the new setting, they have to share the empire's global military burden. The Japanese Self-Defense Forces, nurtured in the atmosphere of economism, have to be made ready to fight a real war under US Command, and the Japanese people have to be mobilized politically and ideologically to sacrifice for the cause of the "free world."

A call for the "defense of the free world" can hardly appeal to the people, first because the "free world" understood as the US Empire is too abstract, and second because it can easily prove, as the military plans prescribed for Japan show, fatal to the *status quo* whose maintenance is the major concern of an economic people. It should be recalled that Japan's military buildup has been rationalized for many years by an "entertainment cost" theory. This theory, peculiar to postwar Japanese politics, says that defense spending is so much entertainment cost Japan should be prepared to meet in order to "please and satisfy the Americans." Its artless cynicism aside, this "theory" could be maintained as long as Japan's role in counterrevolutionary wars in Asia was confined to verbal and logistical support for the US without committing its own troops in combat. Now a different role has been meted out for Japan. Under the 1978 US-Japan Guidelines for Joint Defense, Japan is required to fight a real war in and around Japan. On what ground, then, can this type of real military involvement be rationalized? Certainly the government cannot tell young SDF soldiers to go to war and kill "to please and satisfy Americans."

Stirring up nationalism and chauvinism would be a classical solution. But when the SDF is obviously part and parcel of global US strategy and practically under US command, mobilization of nationalism would not be easy at all.

Whatever the case, the ruling groups must now deal with the enormous inertia of the pervasive economism which has served their interests well in earlier decades. More than anything else, the Liberal Democratic Party and its style of rule are a product of this postwar economism. Will the LDP qualify to carry out the "great task" of transformation?

III. "Integrated security"

Toward the end of the 1970s, business think tanks (Mitsubishi and Nomura Institutes) and right-wing elitist intellectuals (some of them from the Defense Agency Institute) pooled their efforts to come up with a new program for the new situation. The late Prime Minister Ohira seized upon this new program and made it the central state strategy as he prepared to assume power. Before his death during the 1980 election campaign, Ohira was haunted by the worsening prospects of the capitalist world economy. Although publicly optimistic about Japanese politics (he proclaimed in a speech to business leaders that all political parties in Japan had the same heavy stake in capitalism), he remained preoccupied with how Japan could avoid political turmoil when the world economy went into a downspin. He found the answer in this new program.

The program is called the integrated security program, and what is new in it is precisely the concept of "integrated security."⁴ Ohira emphasized that security could not be considered purely military security, but should be interpreted to encompass national security in the broadest sense. Integrated in this concept are military security, energy security, raw materials security, business security, public peace and family life security. Japan is an insulated, resource-poor country, depending upon distant countries for the supply of materials. Therefore, just trying to defend its raw materials and energy security by military force will not work. Hence, the need for "all dimensional diplomacy" with an emphasis on aid to resource-rich countries as a "sort of insurance" (Foreign Ministry's expression). Nuclear power is essential to keep the Japanese economy going; therefore the anti-nuke movement must be regarded as a national security threat just as rebellion in the army would, and "crushed" (1981 LDP Policy Statement). To live securely in an era of turmoil, public peace is essential; consequently, the riot police and intelligence service must be strengthened and labor disputes regulated. With Japanese society aging, the family tradition should be revived with more filial piety in order to ensure security for the aged with less reliance on the state. Last but not least, the buildup of the SDF and the alliance with America

should be a high priority as they are the ultimate recourse to defend the nation from invaders.

It is clear enough that the whole program rotates around the key word "defense." People are urged to defend: the *family* by protecting the old; the *company* by working hard and preserving industrial peace; *energy* supply by silently accepting nuclear plants; the *national economy* by accepting oil storage projects; *law and order* by supporting the police; and the *nation* by supporting the SDF buildup (and collaborating with the United States).

This program brought the LDP a near landslide victory in the 1980 general elections, during which Ohira died. Suzuki Zenko, picked for prime minister from among second-liners in the interest of intra-party peace, inherited it as his strategic guideline.

Japanese Anxiety

In fact, the integrated security program is a well-formulated program precisely because it addresses the widespread anxiety of the Japanese people about the future. Devoid of bright prospects, they anticipate, if only vaguely, something worse happening in the future. The program, with its call for the maintenance of the *status quo*, deftly capitalizes on this sentiment and "elevates" its step-by-step to the buildup of an authoritarian state, ultimately, to an accelerated military program.

What is actually happening under this program is a move to the right (*ukeika*) in all areas of state and society. The drive for the revision of the constitution (not just for the deletion of Article 9 but curtailment of human rights and labor rights and a change in the Emperor status) is gaining momentum. "State of emergency" systems enabling wartime mobilization of human and material resources are in the making and the Education Ministry has strengthened its censorship to eliminate or tone down textbook references to the evils of prewar Japanese militarism, to the horrors inflicted at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to pollution issues.

The Justice Ministry has drafted a revised Penal Code which would legalize preemptive detention of the "mentally sick" who are considered potential subversives and criminals. The courts are handing down starkly anti-labor rulings in eight out of ten disputed cases. Ideologically important are the recent demonstrative visits of Cabinet ministers to the Yasukuni Shrine where the war dead of the Second World War are enshrined, an obvious gesture to rationalize Japanese motivations in the last war. The program at a glance would look complete and consistent in itself as a strategy reflecting genuinely the Japanese national interests (or the Japanese imperial interests).

But a closer look at the program will show that it is heterogeneous. Though the program's formulations are extremely Japan-centered, the strategy lacks the lynchpin—Japan's military autonomy. The whole program is predicated on a continued and strengthened military alliance with the United States. The people are told that they should be prepared to "defend the nation" if they want to

safeguard their *status quo*.

However, the US never conceals its intentions. The strategic roles doled out to Japan under the Reagan strategy are: strengthen the Japanese navy to improve the Seventh Fleet's anti-submarine operational functions; prepare Japan to assume responsibility for the blockade of the three strategic straits of Soya, Tsugaru and Tsushima (to contain the Vladivostock-based Soviet fleet in the Japan Sea); take responsibility for safeguarding sea lanes over 1000 nautical miles south of Japan; and strengthen the Japanese navy and air force to participate effectively in joint operations with the US in case an "emergency situation" arises in the Far East (particularly South Korea). By securing the participation of Japan in the global US strategy, the United States (it is stated) can safely fight a war in the Middle East or Europe. The present buildup of the SDF is to play this strategic role.

The advocates of the proposed program argue that all this is for Japan's defense.

But it is clear that the strategy which Japan is urged to join (and has joined) is the Reagan-Weinberger strategy designed exclusively to protect US interests. Where is the guarantee that it is also a strategy appropriate to the interests of Japan as an imperialist power? There is none. On the contrary, this strategy presupposes the sacrifice of Japan on the front line of a future war with the Soviet Union.

The blockade of the three strategic straits, for instance, would be highly provocative, and if it were done, Japan would have to be prepared for an all-out attack from the Soviet Union. As all strategists agree, Japan could not hold out for many days should the Russians attempt to destroy Japan's war capabilities. The commitment to this strategy obviously has nothing to do with the defense of Japanese imperialism, let alone Japan as such.

Absurdity comes to a head when strategists argue that by collaborating with the US, Japan's energy security will be safeguarded. Could Japan expect the US fleet to convoy tankers all the way from the Persian Gulf when Japan's supply line is threatened? The program promoters carefully conceal from the public the established lesson of the 1973 oil crunch when the US exploited the situation to weaken its Japanese and West European rivals.

All told, this program is intended as a moratorium, an effort by the Japanese bourgeoisie to buy time by artificially extending the practically dead system of complementarity by telling half-truths to the people. In this sense, it adheres to the assumption of parallelism when the basis for "parallelism" has already been abandoned. Its success is therefore limited to the domestic sphere. It assists in mobilizing the security concerns of the Japanese people while leaving intact their economism. If this is still a way of politicization, it is *politicized economism*: one based on a half-truth at that. The discrepancy between false assumptions and reality will inevitably widen, and though this gap is now barely bridged by the rhetoric of integrated security, the Japanese ruling class, and the people, as far as they follow this rhetoric, will

be forced to settle the account in hard currency in the future.

IV. Erosion of workers' power

The unions have been selected by the Japanese bourgeoisie as the basis for the authoritarian state.⁵ Whatever the future political choice may be, the bourgeoisie reasons, Japanese capitalism would be secure if the state is sufficiently authoritarian and labor-management relations are under control. Sakurada Takeshi, the leader of the Employers' Association (Nikkeiren), declared in a public statement widely acclaimed by the entire bourgeoisie that Japan will not be shaken (regardless of what happens at the highest levels of political leadership) provided the bureaucracy, the courts, and the police are sound and the labor-management relationship remains a "zone of stability" in society. He made this statement in 1975 when Japanese politics was shaken by the Lockheed bribery scandal which led to the arrest of former Prime Minister Tanaka.

The "unification of labor fronts" promoted energetically at the initiative of right-wing labor leaders is precisely an effort to strengthen and solidify this "zone of stability" as the optimum social base for the integrated security program. The scheme concerns not just labor, but the entire structure of Japanese society in the 1980s.

Body Slimming"

But before looking into the present phase, it may be necessary to see (albeit briefly) what happened to labor from 1974 to 1978, years of recession in Japan as well as other countries.

No major confrontation erupted between labor and capital when the Japanese bourgeoisie initiated what it called a "body slimming" rationalization to survive the slump. Body-slimming included dismissals, layoffs, scrapping entire factories, transfer of parent firm workers to subcontractors, annexation of bankrupt small firms by big ones, fictitious bankruptcies of small firms where unions were strong, purging activists, violence against dissidents, and innumerable other corporate "rationalization" stratagems. Workers tried to resist, and they fought back wherever there was strong union leadership. Saeki shipbuilding workers, for instance, put up mass resistance, mobilizing the whole township against the parent company Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries, and metal workers in South Osaka countered bankruptcies and shop closures with the occupation of factories and self-management. But the big unions in the strategic industries not only did nothing on behalf of their workers, but on the contrary, volunteered for the dirty work of kicking workers out of jobs for the "defense of the company." Hypocritically, dismissal was called "voluntary retirement." It happens like this: one day, an elderly worker is tapped on the shoulder and told by his

foreman/union officer that he had better retire. If he resists, harassment starts and continues until he resigns. Thus, from 1973 through 1979, the number of Japanese industrial workers decreased by one million. In the shipbuilding industry, a cartel was formed by all the major companies under the guidance of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI), under which Japanese shipbuilding capacity was reduced by 40%. Accordingly, the shipbuilding industry's workforce dropped from 274 000 to 179 000 in the four years after 1974. The government designated 12 industrial branches (including shipbuilding, aluminum refining, textiles and fertilizer) as "recession-vulnerable" and poured in state funds to accelerate rationalization. With this help and with the annexation of smaller firms, most of the "vulnerable" sectors came out with "slimmer," healthy bodies from the recession. Or else, overseas relocation of plants was carried out as in the case of the aluminum industry. In the years of recession, the increase of Japanese companies' employees overseas about matched the decrease of their employees in Japan.

The auto industry fully utilized this opportunity for rationalization in all fields. The subcontract prices for parts were cut by an average of 10%, seasonal workers dismissed, and conveyor speed increased. The auto manufacturers thus increased exports by an average of 20% annually from 1975 through 1978, chalking up record profits of 14 billion yen in 1977.

Regular employees in factories with 30 or more employees all over the country diminished 5.9% from 1975 through 1979, and labor days declined 6.4% but their output grew 33.1%, a labor productivity growth of 42.8% (taking 1970 as 100, the labor productivity index in Japan's manufacturing industry in 1980 stood at 159.2 compared with 127.3 for the United States and 139.8 for West Germany).⁶

Industrial accidents also increased year after year. The victims of industrial accidents claiming the lives of workers or requiring absence for four days or more climbed from 318 000 in 1975 to 334 000 in 1977, 348 826 in 1978, the overwhelming majority of the victims being subcontract workers.

"Body slimming" was characteristically carried out

at the expense of the "life-time employment" system. In order to economize on wage costs, management preferentially fired relatively highly paid workers. Already they were feeling that these workers were cumbersome as production processes were computerized and work simplified and standardized. Economic activities were reinvigorated from 1979, but the old system did not return as management preferred hiring part-time workers, many of them women, to do the same jobs that regular full-time workers had done before.

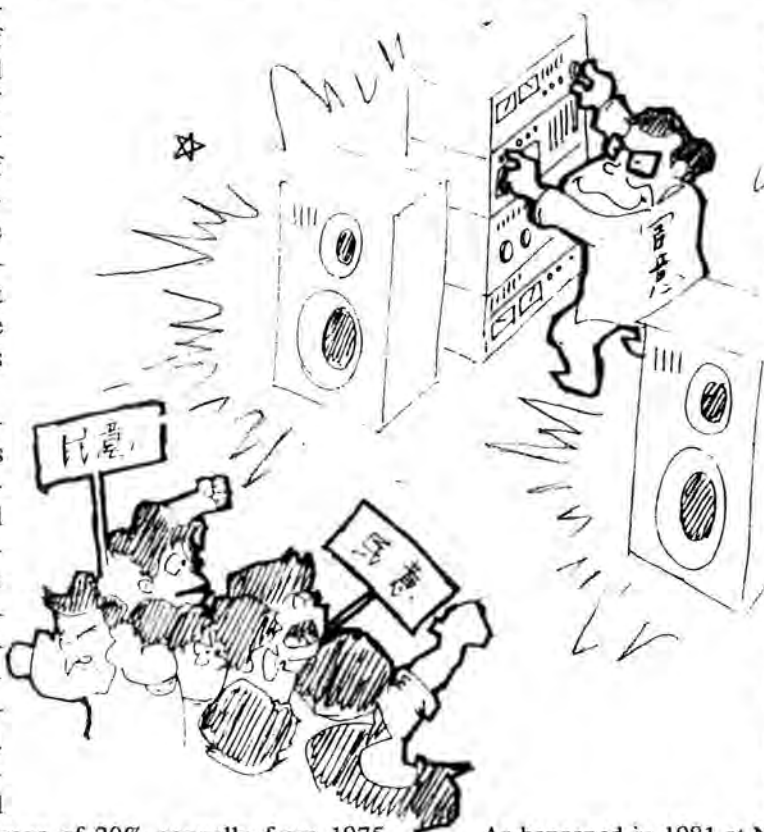
Labor Rationalization

Inside big factories, labor rationalization was carried out through stepped up QC drives. Scenes of QC drives are often crazy and horrifying. Take Nippon Steel's Kimizu steel mill where workers gather in a "self-

management" rally to listen to their colleagues' proposals for higher productivity. The speaker on the stage first flashes a V-sign, and shouts, "Are you alright? Are you doing what you should?" The whole crowd must shout back in unison, "Yes, we are alright. We are doing it." This is called workers' participation in the work process, hence self-management. A bad joke? In the course of "body-slimming," workers who remained at major corporations were fully integrated in the "company world" through compulsion to voluntarily participate.

As happened in 1981 at Nissan's Kawaguchi auto plant, dissidents are met ultimately with physical violence such as beatings wielded (in this case) every day over weeks. It is as though the "company world" were immune from the law of the state. And it is natural that in this "company world," workers, petrified with horror, their free thinking frozen, keep their mouths shut. Fear of freedom, in Paulo Freire's words, is deeply embedded in the workers. If they were earlier lured by benefits to internalize inter-company competition, they are now compelled (morally, physically, and institutionally), to make their own Capital's fear as it faces worldwide crisis.

For this type of labor control to become pervasive in key industries, thorough "brainwashing" of a segment of workers is required. The brainwashers are so-called "informal groups" (company-organized groups) including professional union busters. The brainwashing takes a va-



riety of forms —paramilitary training at a training school coupled with moral teachings, sado-masochistic criticism/self-criticism sessions outside their company, and pseudo-psychological conditioning. Soul-searching type moral teachings are combined with inculcation of anti-Communist ideology to produce the ideological foundations for the company's private army. These people are then posted to major workshops and most become union officers with the backing and recommendation of management.

Politically, this labor control system is connected with the Democratic Socialist Party. Tempered in the day-to-day class struggle against workers as front-line officers of management, the Democratic Socialist Party has come to occupy the extreme right position in the Japanese political spectrum. Die-hards in fighting "communism," loyal to management, and abhorrent of the very concept of class struggle, the party even criticizes the LDP for being "too liberal," as it did, for instance, in connection with the "illegal" strike waged by workers of the Japan National Railways to regain the right to strike which they had been denied. The Liberal Democratic Party includes diverse tendencies from ultra-right to liberal, and it must collect votes from broad constituencies who are more interested in the protection of their economic interests than in the anti-Communist cause itself. Not so for the Democratic Socialists who are anti-communist crusaders.

Can this intra-firm totalitarian rule now consolidated in key industries be extended to form a universal polity for all Japan? If so, Japan will emerge once again as a totalitarian state, this time on the basis of a corporate constituency rather than the poor peasant constituency on whom fascist Young Turks of prewar Japan relied. Though this possibility cannot be categorically denied, a large gap remains between the current intra-corporate totalitarianism and totalitarianism as a universal polity.

The Democratic Socialists are strong in as much as they are protected by the watertight fabric of the labor management system which cannot easily extend beyond interests of individual corporations (though it should be noted that big corporations are now trying to extend their influence over the whole community and have succeeded in some industrial cities, most typically Toyota and Hitachi and the nuclear park in Fukushima). More importantly, the support which the SDP does receive is not always full and spontaneous. As the general constituency is politically passive and supports the LDP program

only out of fear for the future, so the same is true of workers in big companies despite the seeming enthusiasm they must manifest during campaigns of company chauvinism.

Corporate power is a product of the era of parallelism and still bears its imprint. Chauvinism for the company, institutionalized so as to maximize corporate profits, cannot be shifted immediately to a *national* chauvinism. To become the social basis for a totalitarian political regime, corporate power will have to make a death leap, the same leap which confronts the ruling political elites in the context of the new reality.

[As of now, the corporations cannot provide the necessary political impetus. That is why the various right-wing trade unions will be called upon to supply a social base for the "integrated security" program. To this end, the traditional anti-Communist social-democratic trade unions of Domei, the independents of Churitsu Roren, the new converts to business unionism in Sohyo and the unaffiliated must first unite and then absorb the Sohyo majority which is still hesitant about abandoning the class struggle completely. For the Sohyo steel union chairperson, a right-winger, the goals of the unification are clear: 1) eliminate Marxist influence and the very concept of class struggle from the Japan Socialist Party and make it like the German Social-Democratic Party; 2) promote nuclear power; 3) abandon the struggle against the new program of industrial rationalization (which would allow Japan to focus on high-tech industries while exporting processing and assembly work); 4) renovate the railroads and other public corporations showing a deficit. Note that most large right-wing unions have grown up in the sector of the working class that was part of the giant export-oriented multinational firms. By December 1982, these right-wing trade-unions and Sohyo had already set up a preparatory committee.

Three elements of the labor movement are resisting this unification plan: certain socialist trade-unionists in Sohyo who remain attached to the militant tradition of Spring offensives of their confederation; elements influenced by the Communist Party; and the radical tendency of the labor movement, a wing of which publishes the bulletin *Rodo Joho* (Workers' News)?

Whether a rebirth of the popular movement on two fronts — military buildup and labor — can be achieved hitting at the weakest joints of the whole structure is still to be seen.

As of now, the whole situation is yet to unravel.

1. Kamata Satoshi, *Japan in the Passing Lane*, New York: Pantheon, 1982.

2. The mystery of the "seniority wage" system can be illustrated with the case of Nissan Motor. The "regular wage" (which excludes incentive bonus, special work allowance, and overtime) has the following components: basic wage (13.5%), special allowance (72.9%), qualification allowance (2.4%) and family allowance (4.5%), which altogether account for 93.3% of the "regular wage." Note the exorbitant weight of the "special allowance." This part of the wage is largely subject to evaluation, based on job rating and capacity rating. (The figures are for 1978.)

3. This essay does not detail the overseas expansion of Japanese capital and increasingly visible imperialistic activities of the Japanese state. It should be noted that the private industrial branches with the right-wing unions mentioned in this essay are also most aggressive in overseas expansion. Shipbuilder Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries (a citadel of IMF-JC) is operating shipyards in Brazil and Singapore, and 32% of the firm's total employees are workers in those two countries. Electrical firms were operating 407 factories overseas in 1978, which employed 180 000 workers. Tokyo Shibaura Electric (Toshiba) had 40.1% of its workforce overseas. The comparable rates were 20.6% for Mitsubishi Electric, and 11.1% for Hitachi Electric. The Miti, in its "Trade and Industrial Policy Vision for the 1980s" is encouraging relocation of traditional industrial branches overseas so as to allow Japan to concentrate on aircraft, space, nuclear, electronic and other technology-intensive businesses yielding high value added. Japanese overseas investments in 1980 exceeded \$30 billion (placing fourth in the world following the US, UK and West Germany).

4. The integrated security program is connected with the Ohira-proposed "Pacific Com-

munity" program, a proposal for a Pacific-Asia economic zone connecting Australian and Canadian resources, Japanese capital and technology, and labor force in Southeast and East Asia. But this program is still vague, and it is still difficult for the Japanese government to obtain the consent of the countries involved.

5. This essay does not refer to one of the most important aspects of the "labor unification" scheme — the Administrative Reform. The reform is aimed not only at slashing the state budget in the face of serious fiscal crisis (due to the deficit budgeting over the years) but also, and mainly, at totally revamping the labor situation of public corporations. The central idea is that the public corporations, some of which suffer from deficits (National Railways in the main), should be rationalized and organized on the same competitive principle as private companies. Uneconomical corporations are to be transferred to the private sector in whole or in part. In our context, it is important to note that workers' power is still strong in these corporations because the mechanism of translating inter-firm competition has not been developed there. The public sector thus remains Sohyo's (and the Socialists') main constituency. By introducing the principle of competition, the government is attempting to demolish this remaining "workers' world."

6. These figures are taken from Mukai et al., eds., *Kyodai Kojo to Rodosha Kaikyu* (Big Factories and the Working Class), Tokyo: Shinjitsu Shuppan, 1980.

7. Rodo Joho has already started an active international exchange program under which the Philippine activists were invited to Japan in 1979, Detroit autoworkers in 1981, and a Malaysian worker in 1982. In 1981, it inaugurated the English version of *Rodo Joho* (monthly). (Available from 5-13-13 Shimbashi, Minatoku, Tokyo, Japan. Bi-monthly, \$10 per year.)

Class Struggle in Postwar Japan Its Past, Present and Future

Muto Ichiyo

NSR

N°5

Current Phase: Right-wing Swing

Japan is in a process of reactionary transformation.* Like a moth maturing inside a cocoon, a new political formation, with the value system and institutions of totalitarianism, is growing up inside the thin husk of the "Peace" Constitution. This progress has been observable throughout the 1970s following the worldwide crisis of capitalism triggered by the first oil crunch, but has gathered momentum in the last couple of years. At least in appearance, the trend in Japan corroborates the pessimist thesis that the current crisis of capitalism leads to the emergence of right-wing regimes rather than to revolutionary upsurges in imperial centers.

In the current march to the right, the Liberal Democrats, big business, and the ideologists and politicians of the right are fast losing their inhibitions in advocating that Japan rid itself of the norms of "postwar democracy" — a historically specific political system that combines the ideals of democracy and peace — and reform the state into a crisis management system. True, the government still must pay lip service to the "peace clause" of the constitution when, for instance, it assures Southeast Asian countries with long memories that Japan won't become a "big military power." But these words are made emptier each year, by the steady, cumulative process of defying and undermining, step by step, the postwar achievement of democracy, a process in which each step, scandalous at the beginning, quickly turns into a *fait accompli*, and becomes the starting point for the next.

Central to the cumulative breakthrough is the military question, for it is here that the government's actual policy (the actual maintenance of the seventh largest military force in the world and the military alliance with the US) have most obviously contravened the constitution. Thus, the earlier slogan of "defensive defense" (meaning that Japanese military forces will fight only for self-defense and only on the Japanese territory) has evolved step by step into the new concept of the defense of the "free world," thus enabling Japan to take military

action to "keep peace" in the Far East under the command of the United States.

In parallel with this, the government is seeking to institutionalize a "state of emergency" system that will give it the power to order wartime mobilization of human and material resources. School textbooks are being rewritten ideologically (...) to eliminate even criticisms of obviously criminal corporate behavior such as pouring mercury-laden waste into the sea and causing Minamata disease. Cabinet ministers now openly visit the Yasukuni Shrine. (...) The notion of "integrated security" has become the central state strategy.(...)

The swing to the right itself is not unique to Japan in a world where Reagan, Thatcher and Schmidt are in power. Japan, however, is distinct from the United States, Britain and West Germany in that its reactionary drive is led by the Cabinet of Suzuki Zenko who, unlike his summit colleagues, won his post through his mediocrity. Neither charismatic nor theatrical, he capitalizes on his slogan, "harmony."

A more important difference is that here the process which is fortifying right-wing forces is at the same time incapacitating the traditional opposition forces including the parties. In his reckless crusade against welfare and the Soviet Union, Reagan has provoked a big demonstration of half a million workers and Thatcher has caused the radicalization of the Labour Party. Schmidt's nuclear power and Pershing II-favoring programs have been countered by mobilization of hundreds of thousands of protesters while in France fascist-leaning Giscard d'Estaing has been toppled by the center-left coalition. But in Japan, the major opposition party, the Socialist Party, is on the verge of disintegration, and the Democratic Socialist Party judges this is the right time to show its true colors by championing militarization, nuclear power and anticommunism. The Buddhist Kohmei (clean government) Party which until a few years ago had been proclaiming its opposition to the military alliance with the US and the buildup of the Self-Defense Forces, has made an about-face and dropped its opposition in an attempt to join the mainstream political trend. The Japan Communist Party, which from many years back has taken a reformist position, alone stands where it was, but in total isolation.

This picture is completed by the scheme now being promoted for "labor front unification," which is an attempt to place industrial labor under the complete control of an alliance of right-wing unions and strategic industries, the same ones which are behind the whole

* This article was originally published in *AMPO/Japan-Asia Quarterly*, Vol. 13, Number 4, 1981, Vol. 14, Numbers 1 and 3 (Pacific-Asia Resources Center, PO Box 5250, Tokyo Int.). Some information drawn from a later 1984 article entitled "Class Struggle on the Shopfloor—The Japanese Case (1945-84)," particularly on the steel industry and trade-union unity, has been integrated in the relevant places. This is indicated by brackets followed by 1984 in a parenthesis: ([] ('84). Editor's note, NSR.

right-wing strategy.

This sketch, gloomy indeed from the standpoint of anti-imperialist and anticapitalist struggle, nevertheless does not justify pessimism and its offspring capitulationism. On the contrary, we are with Lenin in affirming that there is no situation from which there is no way out. And in order to find a way out we first need to recognize the nature of the situation and study its origin and development. The present situation in Japan is the product of the whole history, and especially the postwar history, of Japanese capitalism, in which its specific exter-

nal relationships are integrated with its internal class and political relationships and this superstructural setup is wedded to its base. What we have today in Japan is the legacy of the past shaken and mangled by new factors injected by the crisis of capitalism.

In order to reverse the reactionary tide, we need to study its nature and limits. We also need to study the subjective weaknesses of the popular movement which have roots in history as the premise for overcoming them.

I. Prelude to Postwar Democracy

The present is ruled by the past, and the immediate past that rules Japan today is the whole era of what we call Postwar Democracy. This is not a term referring to Japanese bourgeois democracy in general, but a specific historical period and concept, comparable to "Weimar Democracy", which describes Post-World War One Germany. Postwar Democracy does not include the turbulent years immediately after the war.

The immediate postwar period was characterized by the omnipotence of the US occupation authorities as well as by a potentially revolutionary upsurge of the Japanese working class and people. In an attempt to disarm Imperial Japan as its imperialist enemy in the Pacific, the United States occupation authorities carried out a series of "**democratization**" measures including encouragement of trade unionism, land reform and dissolution of Zaibatsu combines. The Japanese bourgeoisie was in disarray and the old state apparatus was temporarily paralyzed.

Taking advantage of this situation and partly deluded by the democratic posture of the US, all prewar political forces, repressed for so long, sprang up anew -- among them, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party.

Sanbetsu

The workers movement spread like wildfire; the fastest growth was that of the Communist-led Confederation of Industrial Unions (*Sanbetsu*), which grew from nothing in 1945, to a 1.6 million member organization by the end of 1946. A remarkable characteristic of this early postwar labor upsurge was workers control of production based on spontaneous shop committees. These committees coalesced on a regional level and finally on a national level to form *Sanbetsu*.*

Aside from economic demands to protect themselves from starvation and hyper-inflation, workers demanded the democratization of factories, including the abolition of discrimination against blue-collar workers and the rectification of wartime abuses. Factory owners and managers, who had hoarded huge stockpiles of materials whose

prices soared daily, often refused to operate their plants. In such factories, workers took over and resumed production themselves, placing management under their control. Even where factories were not taken over, workers created intra-firm situations that might easily lead to control of production. Outside the factories, people's control of food and food-rationing systems at the community level spread rapidly. Strikes were carried out all over the country, often leading to occupation and self-management of the factories by workers. Fighting against starvation and demanding punishment of war criminals, hundreds of thousands of workers would gather in front of the Imperial Palace in political demonstrations.

The Japanese government, with the backing of the occupation (the US occupation basically operated through the old Japanese bureaucratic structure), soon took a tough attitude towards this popular upsurge, declaring control of production illegal. Labor then took the offensive, launching waves of industrial strikes. The ranks of organized labor, having reached close to five million, closed and prepared a general strike explicitly political in nature for February 1, 1947. If carried out, the strike would have created a national crisis affecting the regime itself.

This period of labor upsurge lasted only two or three years. With the Cold War declared and the Chinese People's Liberation Army rolling over the continent, the US occupation government put its policy into reverse gear in order to utilize Japan and Japanese capitalism as an advanced base in the anti-Communist and counter-revolutionary crusade in Asia. The generally accepted landmark for this change in period was the **abortive general strike planned for February 1, 1947**. The general strike, planned by workers in both the public and private sectors, was expected to overthrow the reactionary Yoshida Cabinet and hopefully lead to the establishment of a people's government.

The occupation did not permit this to happen. On the eve of the strike, General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP), issued a harsh statement banning it.

* Part of the history of the 1945-50 period is taken from the 1984 article. NSR.

Socialists in Government

The workers economic situation became desperate, and industrial unions continued their struggle despite inadequate Communist and Socialist leadership, braving US intervention and Japanese police repression. This struggle found expression in the **electoral victory of the Socialist Party in 1947, which led to a coalition government with a Socialist Prime Minister.**

Capital accumulation in this phase was facilitated by the government's "slanted production" program, under which funds raised by floating bonds (discounted by the Bank of Japan) were funneled into monopoly enterprises in the coal, steel, fertilizer, and shipping industries.

The Socialist government even streamlined "slanted production," aiding and strengthening monopolies by plundering the masses through inflation while trying to curb strikes. Thus, the next coalition cabinet with Socialists collapsed in the face of a massive labor offensive. The disillusionment of the masses in the ensuing election gave the Communists three million votes and 35 seats in the National Diet, a quantum leap from its pre-election five seats.

Following the 1947 ban and with the onset of the Cold War, the occupation authorities stepped up their anti-Communist and anti-labor program, as a result of which the Japanese reactionaries began to regain self-confidence and strength. The occupation authorities carried out a "red purge" of tens of thousands of Communists and their sympathizers from factories and newspapers. Public workers' strikes were banned by special legislation. And on the eve of the Korean War, that broke out in June 1950, the Communist Party was practically outlawed and freedom of speech and assembly suppressed. It was in this repressive atmosphere that the Korean War was unleashed.

The second phase opened in 1949 with the imposition of an extreme austerity program by the US government. This program, called the Dodge plan, provided for a balanced state budget, a drastic tax increase, compulsory rice delivery by farmers, and the buildup of US-designated key industries. The general deflationary policy caused a surge of bankruptcies and unemployment, and monopolies closed down their inefficient plants to get rid of surplus employees. But fiscal austerity was complemented by extremely lax private financing: the Bank of Japan offered generous credits to city banks, and city banks in turn liberally extended loans to selected monopolies.

Layoffs of workers provoked a furious counteroffensive by labor, especially in the public sector where budget cuts led straight to mass dismissals. The occupation used its strong arm to suppress the striking workers. Finally, in 1949, at the height of the national railway workers' struggle against the discharge of 100 000 employees, three major frame-up plots were hatched (the mysterious death of the president of the Japan National Railway and two successive derailment cases), creating a catastrophic anti-Communist atmosphere and sending the workers movement into disarray. Sanbetsu was bogged down. It was given an additional blow in the form of the "red purge" instigated by the occupation and the rise within its own ranks of "Mindō (Democratization League), a socialist force that capitalized on the expulsion of its Communist rivals from the shopfloor.

Korean War

The Korean war broke out in June 1950, preceded by a de facto ban on the Communist Party, which subsequently went underground. Then Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, a royalist conservative who served as prime minister for most of the occupation period, later recalled that the Korean War came like a stroke of "divine help" for Japanese capitalism. The US began lavish military spending in Japan, amounting eventually to \$23 billion. The occupation forces ordered weapons factories which had been closed a few years earlier, put back into full operation. Bases at Sasebo, in Kyushu, Yokosuka, near Tokyo, and all other military bases were fully remobilized for the dirty war in Korea. The labor movement was suppressed, and workers at major munitions plants made to work under direct US military supervision. Members of the antiwar movement were arrested and even given military trials. As soon as the war started, General Ma-



Arthur ordered the creation of a **new Japanese army of 75 000 men**, (called at first the National Police Reserve Force), in direct violation of the new war-renouncing constitution he himself had almost dictated to the unwilling Japanese ruling class a few years before. The purge of militarist businessmen and politicians was lifted by the occupation authorities, and the US military recruited major war criminals such as the former Japanese army bacteriological warfare staff and members of the intelligence service to participate in the war against the Korean people. Japanese capitalism, previously cornered by the upsurge of the class struggle, was given a

new life, nourished by the blood of two million Koreans killed in their own country.

This period of prelude to Postwar Democracy had given rise to a movement that was political in the sense that it came into confrontation with the political power of the US occupation and its Japanese adjunct, which exploited thoroughly the US anti-Communist posture. From the beginning however, this movement was characterized by the strong shopfloor spontaneity of workers. Shopfloor power was not siphoned off by political parties or substituted by political campaigns. The propelling force was destitution, and the immediate workers demands were for rice and jobs. As a whole, the struggle in this period had revolutionary potential: it encompassed economic, social, and political dimensions and linked shopfloor, industrial and national struggles.

For the Japanese bourgeoisie, this was its first full-scale confrontation with their proletariat. This virginal experience was a nightmare, which the bourgeoisie described succinctly as "loss of power in our own factories." The motto that directed bourgeois strategies after independence in 1952 was thus "retrieval of the right to manage." Loss of power on the shopfloor, together with the horrific memory of "people's courts," became the obsession of the Japanese bourgeoisie, an obsession that would later be revealed in its labor control policies.

Outlines of the settlement

Some of the factors that would later make up Postwar Democracy emerged in this period : (1) the San Francisco Peace Treaty, inseparably coupled with the Japan-US Security Treaty, (2) Sohyo with its antiwar slogans and connection to the left-wing Socialists, (3) the Peace Constitution coexisting with a revived Japanese military of largely mercenary nature, and (4) reinvigoration of Japanese capitalism.

Sohyo has a twisted origin. It was born in July 1950, 16 days after the Korean War started, prodded on by the occupation authorities. Already during the pre-Korean War repression of Communists, the non-Communists and anti-Communists in Sanbetsu, had fought against the JCP's monopoly and bureaucratic control over the Sanbetsu leadership, and formed a "Democratization League" (Mindō) which had begun to undermine Sanbetsu from within. The extensive "red purge" in 1949, as well as the dismissal of 100 000 workers from the National Railways, greatly weakened the militant Sanbetsu, its membership plummeting from more than one million to some 300 000. The Mindō factions in Sanbetsu, the anti- and non-Communist unions in Sodomei (Confederation of Labor) and other anti-Communist unions began to act in concert as soon as the Korean War was launched. They founded a new labor confederation, Sohyo, based on the principles of "free trade unionism", supporting the "United Nations" forces (virtually the US forces) fighting in Korea, backing the ICFTU, and sharing the ICFTU analysis of the world situation. By 1951, Sanbetsu was virtually dead, its membership reduced to a bare 50 000.

From this unsavory origin, however, Sohyo quickly became something else. Only one year after its founding, Sohyo came out with a program opposing the US war strategy and upholding a class struggle line. This reflected the fact that conditions of Japanese workers had become so unbearable as a result of the vindictive capitalist class carrying the day, that collaboration between labor and management could no longer be accepted. The Korean War, coming only five years after the devastating experience of World War II, also spurred antiwar sentiment among the public, despite harsh repression. Finally, the Sohyo leadership comprised not only anti-Communists but also Marxists, including Secretary General Takano Minoru, who had participated in a trend of the prewar Japanese communist movement. In 1951, Sohyo's second convention adopted what came to be called the four principles of peace: (1) a complete Peace Treaty with all allied powers (as opposed to the US scheme which excluded the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and other Asian countries), (2) Japan's neutrality in the Korean war and in the Cold War in general, (3) refusal to let military bases in Japan be used by the United States, and (4) opposition to Japan's rearmament.

The semi-underground **Communist Party** adopted a new program of armed struggle for a national democratic revolution only to find this costly strategy impossible to implement. But fishermen's and farmers' communities, affected by the US military operations, put up courageous resistance helped by students and Sohyo workers. The four principles embodied the general antiwar and pacifist sentiments shared by a broad segment of the public.

In the meantime, the Peace Treaty became a matter of national concern. John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State and the promoter of the Cold War, was the architect of the scheme to have Japan make peace only with pro-American countries and to turn the country into a US strategic outpost in the Far East. In the midst of popular uproar and criticism, the **Peace Treaty and the US-Japan Security Treaty** were signed in a package, a strategic step that was to affect the whole subsequent development of Japan. The two treaties, taken together, provided for (1) the free use of Japanese military bases by US troops, (2) separation of Okinawa from Japan to be placed under the exclusive rule of the US (Okinawa as the "stepping stone" of the US strategy), (3) the end of the occupation. Premier Yoshida, who signed these treaties, sent a separate letter to Dulles promising that Japan would regard the Kuomintang in Taiwan as the sole legitimate representative of the Chinese people.

As of April 28, 1952, Japan regained independence on these conditions. Three days later, 100 000 workers and students in Tokyo, during the year's Labor Day demonstration, clashed with the riot police in front of the Imperial Palace, burning American cars to express their indignation at the ominous course of development imposed by the US and Yoshida.

II. Postwar Democracy The Complementarity Deal

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The two decades of Postwar Democracy evolved out of this. After Antonio Gramsci, we may term Postwar Democracy a "historical bloc" combining the base and its superstructure into an organic whole in a specific manner. Making up this "historical bloc" were the following three basic factors: (1) the unusually rapid and sustained growth of the economy; (2) the military and political relationship with the United States; and (3) the pattern of domestic rule and class relationships as determined by the above two factors. These are all specific historical factors which have their beginnings and therefore their ends. Postwar Democracy with all its traits can not be dissolved into any suprahistorical concept such as "Japanese culture," or "culture consensus," which racist western critics tend to favor.

Central to this historical formation was the alliance of the Japanese ruling class with the United States.

When Japanese imperialism was defeated, the Japanese ruling classes, bourgeoisie in the main, faced a difficult task — reconstructing a capitalist Japan from the ashes and debris. How could they do this? The forces of production were devastated and all former colonies were taken away. And after this traumatic material and ideological experience, the Japanese people were no longer willing to die for the Emperor, nor for the sake of the state. Where to begin?

This was an entirely new situation for the Japanese bourgeoisie which had developed from the time of the Meiji revolution in 1868 under the protection of the powerful superstructural support of the Emperor system, in which military might and the cult of the Emperor were coupled with chauvinism.

Stripped of most of this superstructural support, and facing the determination of the US not to allow Japan to emerge again as its imperialist rival, the Japanese bourgeoisie could not start rebuilding a powerful imperialist superstructure of its own immediately. Faced by this situation, **the strategic choice of the Japanese bourgeoisie was to conclude a military and political alliance with the United States** so that Japanese capitalism could develop economically, laying the economic base of imperialism, without being burdened too much with the venturesome undertaking of beginning to build an imperialist structure of its own. The fact of US military, political and economic control of the vast area of the capitalist world, especially of Asia, as the policeman of the world, thus was to serve as a factor filling in the superstructural lacunae of Japanese capitalism. These superstructural lacunae of Japanese capitalism were filled in large part by US military, economic and political control of a vast part of the world, especially Asia. In other words, Japanese capitalism, as its economic base grew with increasingly imperialist motivations, could expect the US to complement its defective superstructure. We may therefore call this a superstructural complementation strategy of postwar Japanese imperialism.

As for the United States, this strategy, at least in the

early postwar years, prevented Japan from becoming an independent imperial rival again. It was also in the interest of the United States to have a prosperous capitalist economy on the periphery of the revolutionary Asian continent. As far back as 1947 US Secretary of Defense Royal declared that the US was determined to establish in Japan a liberal democracy that was strong and stable and could serve as a hindrance to "a new totalitarianism that may arise in Asia." Economically, a flourishing capitalist economy on the Japanese archipelago would be a vast market for US goods — agricultural products and oil major-controlled petroleum as well as manufactured goods. Moreover, the United States, in exchange for its assumption of the role of bulwark, firmly established its right to use Japan militarily in the Cold War. Thanks to the Security Treaty, the US today has been able to freely use the Japanese industrial capacity, military bases, quality services of Japanese workers, Japan's convenient geographical location, and to a lesser degree, the newly created Japanese military for its own purposes. Okinawa, whose administration reverted to Japan in 1972, continues to be the largest US military base abroad, pivotal to the Pentagon's Far Eastern strategy.

Despite the recent uproar among US policymakers about Japan's "free ride" on US military efforts, this arrangement was a bilateral complementation deal beneficial to the imperialist ruling groups of the two countries during a specific period of postwar history.

This peculiar deal determined the formation of Japanese politics. With the country's external functions largely relegated to the US, Japanese diplomacy for a long time was little more than the parroting of the US State Department. The Japanese Self-Defense Forces, impressive as they became in numbers and equipment, essentially remained US mercenaries operable only as part of the US military operations.

But thanks to this delegation of important superstructural functions, **the Japanese ruling class could be largely relieved of the dangerous domestic tensions** that would have arisen if it had been Japan that had, for instance, to carry out the counterrevolutionary wars in Korea and Vietnam. In other words, the Japanese ruling class could claim, thanks to this "complementarity", that Japan was a "peaceful country" and a "constitutional democracy" in a region of the world where revolutions and counterrevolutions were wrestling in full force.

The complementation deal, however, meant that this "peaceful development" and "constitutional democracy" were never genuine. Their immediate premise was the military alliance with the US at a time when the US war machine was rampaging in Asia. At no time since its inception has this "constitutional democracy" operated on its own as something separate from the US war machine. At the same time that complementarity created the illusion of peaceful development in the progressive camp, it produced a chronic crisis of identity among the ruling class. We shall return to this later.

III. Postwar Democracy Progressives versus Conservatives

1955: the beginning

It is generally acknowledged that Japan's Postwar Democracy as a stable system of political rule finally emerged in 1955, the year in which several significant events converged to announce the arrival of a new era.

These were:

- (1) the recovery of the Japanese economy to its pre-war peak level;
- (2) the merger of the two conservative parties (the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party) into a single conservative Liberal-Democratic Party, which became Japan's permanent ruling party. In the intervening years, it has never handed political power to, or shared it with, another party;
- (3) the unification of both the left and right Socialist parties to form the Japan Socialist Party, which became the main opposition to the LDP government;
- (4) the unification of the Communist Party through a compromise reached among its feuding factions, entailing the party's choice of a parliamentary course;
- (5) the establishment of the Japan Productivity Center to promote thorough-going rationalization drives in all industries;
- (6) the launching of an annual Spring Campaign (*shunto*) for higher wages by Sohyo's new leadership, which replaced that of Takano Minoru;
- (7) the emergence of a broad popular movement against nuclear weapons based on the Hiroshima and Nagasaki experience and triggered by the 1954 US hydrogen bomb experiment in the Pacific, which victimized Japanese fishermen.

These events are important indicators because they represented the socio-political factors whose specific combination would characterize the coming decades.

Politically, the pattern of confrontation that emerged pitted the LDP, as the ruling party with a majority of seats in the Diet, against the Socialist Party, allied with Sohyo and in unstable coalition with the Communist Party, a combination which came to constitute the bulk of the LDP's opposition force. The Socialists, Communists, and Sohyo, joined by progressive intellectuals, formed the so-called "progressive camp." The LDP with its vast pool of rural and urban clients formed the "conservative camp."

The issues that divided the two camps politically centered around the question of **peace and democracy**. The conservatives favored alliance with the US while the progressives opposed it on grounds that the military alliance and presence of US military bases might at some points involve Japan in another war. The conservatives advocated strengthening the Self-Defense Forces, asserting that Japan should possess the means to defend itself, while the progressives warned that a Japanese military was unconstitutional and could give rise once again to militarism. The conservatives did not like the democratic rights and peace clauses of the Constitution, nor for that

matter were they happy with the postwar Constitution itself. The progressives, however, were pledged to defend both democratic rights and the Constitution itself. The JSP slogan was "unarmed neutrality" whereas the LDP claimed that peace was bought at a price: Japan-US military alliance backed up by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. The JCP took a somewhat different view of the Constitution. It accepted in principle the notion of national self-defense and for this reason did not support the Article 9 of the Constitution as such. The party also stood opposed to the Emperor system preserved in the Constitution, albeit in a benign form. However, the party consistently sided with the JSP in resisting LDP attempts to revise the Constitution. The conservatives sought to enhance the role of the Emperor on every occasion, and the progressive interpreted each new ploy in this direction as further proof of the LDP's intention of setting the clock back to the prewar days.

Since each of these issues was fundamental, the gap between the two camps appeared unbridgeable. When blatantly bellicose and anti-democratic measures were taken by the government, as for example in 1960, the progressive camp was able to mobilize millions of people to deliver LDP designs a serious blow.

But the decisive factor shaping this period of Postwar Democracy was the **continued, rapid growth of capitalism**, which secreted and rapidly diffused the myth of well-being through high industrial growth and economic progress. As this myth established its grip on the minds of workers, labor was induced to think that they had better be content with sharing the fruits of growth with capital in the form of higher wages. This gradually disarmed the working class and weakened its determination and ability to resist incessant rationalization drives.

In fact, the prevailing atmosphere of the early period of Postwar Democracy was one of general buoyancy and great expectations. People looked back with bitterness on the starvation, homelessness, unemployment, rampant inflation and the cruelty of the war itself they had experienced a few years earlier. This atmosphere sustained the JSP's pacifist slogans but at the same time heightened expectations that better days lay ahead if only economic growth could be maintained.

The antagonism between the "progressives" and "conservatives" gave to the period of Postwar Democracy its distinctive coloring. To grasp the underlying influences that shaped this period, then, we must examine each of the two camps in its turn and attempt to understand how they were able to attain equilibrium. This equilibrium was dynamic, characterized by frictions and punctuated by occasional explosions and hostility. Here, however, for purposes of clarity, we will highlight only the major trends in an effort to sum up and dramatize the specificity of the years between 1955 and 1973.

Intermezzo

Sohyo's Spring Labor Offensive, first launched in 1955, is the single most important element in appraising the quality of the class struggle in the Postwar Democracy period. But in order to understand how the Spring Campaign came to be organized, a quick look at the preliminary showdown between labor and capital that occurred at the outset of the era of rapid economic growth is necessary.

As the Japanese bourgeoisie, emboldened by the infusion of US dollars and state funds and active SCAP support, set out to rebuild their power bases by beating down the labor movement on the shop floor, Japanese workers responded with widespread and tenacious resistance. **Sohyo's first five years under the Takano leadership represented this resistance.** The period from 1952 to 1954 in fact saw a succession of major industrial disputes.

The struggle of 7600 Nissan (Datsun) workers was a fierce contest of power between labor and capital. The Nissan Workers' Union was the citadel of the National Automobile Workers' Union (Zenji). Using powerful workshop committees with strong roots in the rank-and-file, the Nissan workers refused to allow management to step up the line speeds, order workers to perform overtime, or transfer personnel without their union's consent. The Nissan management, however, set out to choke this shop floor power of workers in order to carry out their first round of rationalization in 1953. Backed by the already revived big business associations, Nissan management attacked their workers, using lockouts, arrests, litigation, physical threats, violence by thugs and bribes, to split the workers' ranks and break their organization.

The splinter yellow union and its storm troopers were led by Shioji Ichiro, one of the champions of today's reactionary union reorganization drive. The militant union resisted bravely but finally succumbed to overwhelming odds, and the powerful Zenji itself was subsequently dissolved.

The Electric Power Workers' Union (Densan) and the Coal Miners' Union (Tanro) also engaged in protracted battles with management. Densan workers staged strikes including power stoppages over many months but were ultimately defeated. The coal miners' union staged a 113-day strike to oppose the dismissal of 12 per cent of its members, survived this ordeal and succeeded in hanging on to and protecting its influence in the mines.

In the post-Korean war recession, the rationalization drive went into full swing. In the steel industry, Nippon Steel (Nikko) attempted to dismiss 1000 workers, and was met with the sustained resistance not only of the unionists but also of their families and the entire community of Muroran, Hokkaido (where the factory was located) as well. But here too, the management finally succeeded in splitting the union and dismantling the strike.

The Takano leadership countered capital's offensive by organizing entire communities surrounding strategic factories into effective forces capable of defeating dismissal attempts. This tactic was a tactic known as

"whole township and whole family struggle."

The Takano leadership also established the model on which subsequent "peace and democracy" political struggles were patterned; When in 1952, the government attempted to ram through the Anti-Subversive Activities Law (designed to suppress mass action), Sohyo, backed by students and intellectuals, initiated a series of general strikes and nearly succeeded in killing the bill.

During this brief intermezzo of postwar class struggle, the Japanese working class failed to deliver a lasting blow to the resurgent bourgeoisie. Defeated at the fifth Sohyo convention, Takano had to go, handing the Sohyo leadership to **Ohta Kaoru** and **Iwai Akira**. Ohta of the Synthetic Chemical Workers' Unions assumed chairmanship, and Iwai of the National Railway Workers' Union secretary generalship

Sohyo and Spring Struggle Campaign

The new leadership accepted the fact of defeat in the Takano era. Instead of concentrating on recovering the ground lost by workers' power on the shop floor, they switched to a line of least resistance. "**United industrial struggle**" was the new policy line and the **annual Spring Campaign** for higher wages labor's new strategy. The "united industrial struggle" meant that workers belonging to industrial union federations would take concerted action to obtain better working conditions, mainly higher wages. The Spring Campaign indicated that these industrial actions would be coordinated and conducted simultaneously at a specific time of year (from March to May) so that the working class, the theory went, would emerge as a visible united social force. United industrial action did not mean however that wage increases were to be negotiated with industrial employers' associations. Since most of Sohyo unions were organized on an enterprise basis and the industrial union federations were nothing more than coordinating bodies of the enterprise-based unions, the unions were to engage in collective bargaining with their respective company managements. The success of the offensive as a whole therefore largely depended on the coordinating skill of the Sohyo leadership.

Unions which were strong enough to enforce favorable wage settlements with management were chosen as the pace setters for the offensive. As a rule, the leadership of individual unions worked out their demands within the scope of the general guidelines laid down by the Sohyo leadership (later by the Spring Struggle Committee including other unions). Before presentation of these demands, the union members were asked to vote in favor of strike action in case the demands were turned down. Collective bargaining began backed up by the threat of a strike, and strikes, in the early years of *shunto*, were staged and repeated until management came up with a satisfactory offer. Once the pioneer sector had won a satisfactory wage increase, the other unions would use this gain as a precedent in their own negotiations.

The government employees and public corporation workers, who constituted the majority of Sohyo work-

ers, however, had no right to strike. Slowdown tactics, and later illegal strikes, were engaged in by National Railway workers, postal workers and school teachers belonging to the Japan Teachers' Union. By joining the Spring Campaign, however, they were able to share in the gains obtained by workers in the private sector.

This formula proved its great pragmatic value and the participation of industrial workers grew each year.

However, as Sohyo readily admits, the effectiveness of the Spring Campaign in fact owed much to the labor market mechanism. Japanese industry was expanding rapidly, and by the mid-1960s its rural reserves of labor had begun to dry up, creating serious lack of labor. As big companies almost monopolized the young recruits emerging onto the labor market every year, many small and medium enterprises suffered from particularly keen labor shortages. Competing to hire young workers, even small firms were forced to raise their wage levels after each successful bid by *shunto* to wrest an increase from big business.

The success of *shunto* strengthened Sohyo's position and raised its prestige in society in general. The Employers' Association of Japan (Nikkeiren), the big business organization with the express purpose of countering labor offensives, would devise and implement annually a counter-*shunto* strategy with varying "theoretical" justifications. Despite the enterprise-based structure of the Japanese labor movement, *shunto* succeeded in creating a clear-cut confrontation between labor and capital.

It should be added however that, objectively speaking, Japan's economic growth helped make *shunto* effective weapons of labor. Despite Nikkeiren's high-handed maneuvering, the real wages of Japanese workers continued to rise throughout the 1960s.

Ironically, however, the rising wages of Japanese workers increased pressures for the rapid renovation of industrial equipment and general rationalization. Capital found itself constrained to switch from the exploitation of absolute to relative surplus value, and it built new facilities, reorganized labor processes, introduced new machinery and this increased labor productivity. In fact, the labor productivity index throughout the 1960s rose more rapidly than the real wage index. In this context, the wage-centered *shunto* served as the impetus strengthening the competitiveness of Japanese capitalism.

The Ohta-Iwai leadership and their successors were more economic and less oriented to political struggle than the Takano leadership. Ohta and Iwai came from the leftwing Mindo (Democratization League) movement while Takano came from the leftwing of Sodomei.

The leftwing Mindo, a unique product of Postwar Democracy, was clearly distinguished from the right-wing social democratic trend. By the time of the first *shunto*, the latter had left Sohyo, forming its own wing of the labor movement.

When Sohyo was founded in 1950, the Mindo-dominated unions in Sanbetsu and Sodomei as a whole came together. But as early as 1951, the right-wing factions of Sodomei, allied with the right-wing Socialist

Party, refused to dissolve their organizations and pulled out of Sohyo. Later, after the defeat of the electric power workers (Densan), four other right-wing unions, including the Textile Workers' Union (Zensen) and the All-Japan Seamen's Union, walked out. In 1954, these unions set up an independent liaison center (Zenro), which later developed into the Japan Congress of Labor (Domei). Closely allied with the Democratic Socialist Party, a right-wing split-off from the JSP, and backed by management, Domei openly worked to create pro-company unions by splitting Sohyo-affiliated unions.

The left Mindo in alliance with the JSP did not share the Domei-Democratic Socialist coalition's anti-Communist world view. The JSP included diverse ideological trends ranging from Fabianism to Marxism, but the JSP and the Sohyo leadership generally sympathized with the existing socialist camp. This partly stemmed from the need to confront US Cold War strategy. It was also in part a reflection of the fact that this wing of Japanese social democracy had ramified in the early days of the Comintern from the Communist movement whereas in Europe, Communists broke away from well-established social democratic parties. Against this ideological background, Sohyo declared its neutrality on the international labor scene (although some Sohyo unions remained members of the ICFTU and a few were affiliated with WFTU) and cultivated ties with Socialist countries. Because of their unique stance, the JSP and Sohyo were long considered by the international union movement and the Socialist International to be a leftwing force.

Socialist Party and Progressive Camp

The Japan Socialist Party, the recognized spokesman of the progressive camp, had two sources of support. Organizationally, the JSP relied upon Sohyo, and it enjoyed the moral and political backing of those tens of millions of unorganized Japanese who held peace dear after the bitter war experience and wanted to safeguard democracy from the resurgence of fascism or militarism. These people, who at one time accounted for about one third of the population, were the grassroots support of the progressive camp. Progressive intellectuals, who thought along similar lines, also influenced these people, issuing statements on crucial political occasions about the direction the nation should take.

But because Sohyo itself functioned as a semi-independent political network and the grassroots by and large remained unorganized, the JSP has never succeeded in building an effective organization of its own. In sharp contrast to the more than 10 million votes it formerly obtained in elections, the JSP membership has never exceeded 50 000.

The history of the Japan Communist Party requires special scrutiny, but the party's general evolution since the period of high economic growth has been towards parliamentarism (coupled with a sectarian attitude with respect to other groups on the left). The party in

the course of this evolution began increasingly to shy away from mass movements for fear that they might become uncontrollable and frighten away potential voters. In later years, the JSP displayed outright hostility towards, for instance, the student revolt in the 1960s or the struggle of Sanrizuka farmers against the Narita airport. The party's 1961 program (which created a sizable element of dissent in the party and led to the formation of many splinter groups), denied the resurgence of impe-

the JSP constituency, which was not maintained by day-to-day activities and increased its votes from one million to roughly five million. The JCP and JSP-Sohyo bloc nevertheless maintained an unbroken, if precarious, alliance.

The progressive camp so constituted therefore was alien to a revolutionary goal and practice as Prof. Shimizu once characterized it in his book *Postwar Progressive Forces*. Insulated from the turbulent postwar experience and accepting the basic premises of capitalist development (although the JSP superficially upheld the socialist cause), the progressive camp as a historical formation could react to the political situation only defensively when and where it felt the values of peace and democracy were jeopardized.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Progressive Camp

The progressive camp and its philosophy nonetheless exerted a positive influence on the pattern of postwar politics. It was in defense of these values that the historic mass struggle against the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty erupted in 1960. From 1959 through the first half of 1960, millions of Japanese took to the streets, chanting "Down with the Kishi Cabinet! Down with the Treaty!" Sohyo workers staged political strikes; students of the Zengakuren played a vanguard role in street fights; shopkeepers closed their businesses in protest; and TV viewers, watching police brutalities, rushed to the scene of the fighting to help the injured. It was the largest, most sustained, and best organized mass political struggle of the postwar era. It forced the LDP cabinet of Kishi Nobuke to resign and prevented President Dwight Eisenhower from making a scheduled state visit to Japan.

To millions of Japanese, Kishi was a veritable nightmare. Minister of Commerce in the Tojo Cabinet which started the Pacific War in 1941, he was arrested after the war as a class-A war criminal. He was released following the execution of his senior ministers sentenced to death by the Tokyo Tribunal. After the turnabout in the US policy, he made a comeback as a politician, and rapidly rose in the LDP ranks to the position of prime minister—a sufficient warning that the dark prewar days may be coming back. And this tainted politician was about to sign a new military treaty with the US which was likely to involve Japan in another war. People scented war and fascism in the air.

In early June 1960, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators began to gather almost every day around the national Diet building in Tokyo. The metropolitan police were unable to control the overwhelming crowds, and Kishi asked the Defense Agency to mobilize Self-Defense Forces soldiers to fight the demonstrators, but it refused. On June 15 as the mass confrontations reached a climax, a female student was killed by the police. Public anger welled throughout the country. The police told Kishi that they would not be able to guarantee the safety of Eisenhower if he should insist on coming, and Kishi



rialism in Japan or the need to struggle for the overthrow of capitalism as such. The JCP, however, is the only political party in Japan to have built up a large effective, and independent organizational base among the people. Starting from a meager 20 000 or so members during the Korean war, it had developed an impressive 200 000-strong party network by the late 1960s. With this organizational backing, the JCP gradually ate into

was forced to cable **cancellation of his invitation to the US President** who was then waiting in Manila for a flight to Tokyo.

Witnessing the anti-treaty demonstrations, a reporter from the French Communist Party newspaper *L'Humanité* remarked that had this been France, a revolution would have ensued. But it was not a revolution. The radical wing of the movement, led primarily by students under the leadership of the Communist League (Bund) created in 1958, dreamed of transforming the mass upsurge into a genuinely revolutionary struggle through radicalizing street action, but it failed. After the Treaty had been rammed through the parliament and **Kishi forced to resign**, the masses vanished almost immediately from Tokyo streets. Disillusionment and disappointment set in fast. The capitalist economy, already prosperous, gained further momentum and rolled ahead.

The 1960 anti-Treaty struggle represented the culmination of postwar democratic political struggles. In it, however, the intrinsic weaknesses of the ideology of Postwar Democracy itself had already become apparent.

The movement in 1960 evolved based on the **assumption that there existed already a complete, if not perfect, system of peace and democracy** which had to be defended from outside encroachments. With this assumption, people lost sight of the complementary arrangements whereby "peaceful and constitutional" development inside Japan was organically linked with the external system of repression, violence, military control, and economic domination imposed mainly by the US on the Third World. Opposition to the military Treaty was directed objectively at the heart of this arrangement, but its underlying assumptions of a peaceful Japan complete in itself weakened the movement. During the anti-Pact campaign, an incident occurred to open the public's eyes to the stark reality of Japan's military subordination to the US. A U2 spy plane engaging in intelligence flights over China and the Soviet Union was discovered stationed at the Atsugi Naval Air Base outside Tokyo. Socialist interpellators took the government to task on this issue, but in doing so, they demanded that the plane be moved from Japan proper to Okinawa. No one at that time clearly pointed out the fallacy of this request. If the plane represented a danger to people in Japan proper, then why not to the people of Okinawa as well? Was the solution merely to pass the danger on to Okinawans, Koreans or Filipinos? In April of the same year, South Korean students rose up heroically, and at the sacrifice of many young lives, toppled the Syngman Rhee dictatorship. Obviously, South Korea was another stronghold of the US war machine. But the Japanese anti-Treaty movement failed to react to this historic event which was occurring in the nearest neighbor country, or to express solidarity with the Korean people. This "Japan alone" attitude and the lack of internationalism it betrayed prevented the people from coming face to face with global realities, and Asian reality in particular.

This ideological weakness was deeply rooted in the

early history of postwar Japan. In spite of the vigorous class struggle that was waged in the immediate postwar years, the Japanese working masses failed to crystallize their costly wartime experience into a clear perception of the cause of the war, and thus could not settle the question of war responsibility for themselves. It was not the Japanese people who arrested and tried the war criminals but the victors, and when the US pardoned the majority of the war criminals to utilize them for its own purposes, most Japanese accepted them back into the fold. In the same vein, the Emperor system and Emperor Hirohito to himself survived although the system was modified. This lack of a decisive settlement of accounts with history blurred the public political perceptions and lowered the level of historical awareness. Thus, when "peace and democracy" were raised and discussed as ideals, the reference was the bitter Japanese experience of war and fascism and **not** the far crueller fate Japanese imperialism had visited upon other Asian peoples. Similarly, in both official and popular evaluations of the war, Japan looked only to the United States and not to the hundreds of millions of Chinese, Koreans and Southeast Asians who carried out determined resistance against Japanese imperialism.

The ideology of Postwar Democracy was imbued with this weakness. And later it would be fully exploited by a resurgent bourgeoisie who had learned a valuable lesson from the threatening exploitation of the mass energies in 1960. As early as 1963, the Public Security Agency (Japan's CIA) could conclude in a report that "the failure of the anti-Treaty struggle ... put an end to the postwar peace ideologies and movement" and "the general expectations of rising living standards are now overwhelming and diffusing the progressive political movements."

Liberal Democratic Party and Conservative Camp

At the other end of this political spectrum was the "conservative camp" with the Liberal Democratic Party as its political center. This camp represented the majority of the Japanese people, and the LDP held a majority of seats in the Diet.

It should be noted that the LDP is not just an ordinary political party. **In power for 26 consecutive years**, it has fused so completely with the ruling structure that identifying it as an independent political entity sometimes appears difficult. As a singular product of Postwar Democracy, the party until recently had only 50 000 members as compared with the tens of millions of votes it received in elections. If the Republicans and Democrats in the United States were to form a single party, say, the Democratic Republican Party, the US would then have a version of the LDP.

The class nature of the LDP is unmistakable. It is the party representing the interests of the entire bourgeoisie organized around monopolies. But politically the LDP is based on a class alliance between the bourgeoisie and the farming population. Also under its influence is

fairly large urban segment composed of self-employed persons, petty bourgeois elements, and unorganized workers. The party is financed overwhelmingly by monopoly enterprises, but unlike the US, big business leaders themselves rarely assume LDP or government posts. They feel secure as long as the LDP works on behalf of their interests.

Instead of depending on a refined party organization, the LDP operates through **millions of informal ties established with the masses at all levels**—local community groups, business associations, professional organizations, right-wing religious bodies, farmers' cooperatives, PTAs, rural women's associations, and support groups for individual Diet members. Many of these are specific interest-oriented groups which expect material benefits and special favors from the public funds at the government's disposal.

It is true that when election time comes around, the LDP and its various factions obtain sizable donations from steel makers, construction companies, electric power companies, banks and other monopoly enterprises, and the colossal sums of money it is able to generate are spent to "lubricate" its very expensive election machines. Vote buying is not uncommon, especially in rural areas.

But this is not the principal means by which the LDP attracts and organizes its constituency. The power the LDP is able to exert over its clients stems primarily from its ability as the government party to devise national development programs, organize local development projects, appropriate budgets for these works, and weight them in favor of particular communities or groups. In a sense, the party is able to use the public coffer as a partisan political fund.

Sometimes the favors the party bestows are small, such as paving a road through an LDP client community earlier than other areas. But if the politician involved is a big one with an inside track in the national decision-making process, then the stakes can be high indeed—such as building a major bridge connecting Shikoku and Honshu islands. In this particular case, a whole city petitioned the politicians. However, four cities on the coast of Shikoku each with their respective LDP patrons, vied to have the bridge built in their areas. The competition was fierce and the dispute was not easily resolved. The government ultimately decided that four bridges, each considerably larger than the Golden Gate Bridge, should be built to satisfy all the cities involved.

Thus, building a hierarchy of linkages extending from township to prefecture and to national government, the LDP has woven a vast network of material interests through its monopoly over decision-making and budgeting functions. Tanaka Kakuei, Prime Minister from 1972 to 1976, to cite one example, enjoys the solid support of his constituency in the remote and snow-bound Niigata prefecture because they believe that it was through his effort that Niigata was able to develop. Tanaka was arrested in 1976 for receiving 500 million yen in bribes from the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, but the zealots of his native prefecture have never wavered in

their support of him.

Scandals such as the Lockheed cases involving LDP leaders are only occasionally exposed, but the whole system of LDP rule is essentially one of **vast network of institutionalized corruption**—a type of corruption unique to that stage of capitalist development in which the state functions as the supreme economic entity in society.

But if individual LDP politicians are thus motivated by particular interests of their constituencies or client groups, how can the bourgeoisie as a class expect its common interests to be distilled into government policies and programs? Here the role of the central bureaucracy is paramount, for it is more directly concerned with coordinating the general interests of big industries as a whole.

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) thus represents the general interests of the industrial bourgeoisie (especially their export sector when export promotion was the booster for the entire economy) and the Construction Ministry those of the construction industry. In each ministry, the subdivisions and sections each reflect the business interests of the companies falling in their respective jurisdictions. The Banking Bureau of the Finance Ministry functions as the spokesperson for the banks, and the Securities Bureau for the big securities firms. In the Transport Ministry, the Land Transport Bureau acts in the interests of taxi and truck operators, the Shipping Bureau promotes the interests of shipping companies, and the Ships Bureau boosts those of the giant shipbuilders. In the Welfare Ministry, the Pharmaceuticals Bureau was so totally loyal to drug manufacturers that it deliberately refrained from prohibiting the sale of "Thalidomide" in Japan long after its devastating effect on fetuses had been proven in other countries. Incidentally, this relationship may be seen to extend as far as the Foreign Ministry which for many years served as the mouthpiece for US diplomatic interests.

When different industries have conflicts of interests, as they often do, the resulting inter-industry squabbles are translated into bureaucratic infighting. The ministries, bureaus, sections, and LDP politicians concerned fight each other, sometimes openly, attempt to find the best solution and reach compromises. In this way, state policy ultimately conforms to the general interests of the bourgeoisie. This process is lively and dynamic, and stands in sharp contrast to the tedious, perfunctory exchange of questions and answers between interpellators and government officials during sessions of the national Diet. Though bourgeois parliaments everywhere tend to be ornamental, the Postwar Democratic system of Japan provides a classic case of a shadow parliament composed of bureaucrats, big businesses, LDP bosses and assorted scholars serving on special advisory councils— an effective arena in which individual and frequently conflicting bourgeois interests are distilled into a universal class will.

Although the much publicized concept of "Japan Incorporated" usually projects an image of an aggressive

government patronizing private business, Japan Incorporated really means that the bureaucracy identifies its interests with those of big business, facilitates the maximum development of the latter, and translates individual business interests into the common language of Japanese capitalism.

The LDP, state bureaucracy, and corporate interests collaborating in this manner together constituted the core of the "conservative camp" into which a majority of the Japanese people were coopted. A characteristic feature of this camp, therefore, is that it is held together primarily by economic and not explicitly political ties. Here, economics played a highly political role.

Of course, the LDP as a political party has its political and ideological programs and slogans — constitutional revision, military alliance with the US, strengthening the Japanese military, reviving a more authoritarian style of education by strangling the Japan Teachers' Union (which the LDP accuses of "biasing education in the direction of class struggle"), curtailing labor and other democratic rights, enhancing the status of the Emperor, promoting patriotism and collectivism in the place of individualism, recovering the "northern territories" (Kurile Islands) from the Soviet Union, justifying the Japanese role in the last war, and promoting anti-Communism as a world view. Not that these policies and slogans were mere ornaments. In fact, the Hatoyama Cabinet in 1956 very nearly undertook to revise the Constitution. Kishi in 1960 rode roughshod over the anti-Treaty forces to impose the new military pact. The Japanese military in the meantime was systematically strengthened and the interpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution which prohibits the maintenance of military forces has been changed to mean that even the possession of nuclear weapons is not unconstitutional.

Even so, the primary cement holding the "conservative camp" together was economic. The LDP

succeeded in turning the fact of economic growth itself into its political assets and a majority of Japanese became enmeshed in the web of economic favors woven by the LDP although they did not necessarily support the party's political platform. But once coopted, they tended to assimilate the pervading reactionary, anti-labor, anti-Communist, and pro-Emperor ideology.

The LDP thus tended to avoid making major political questions election issues. During the Vietnam war for instance, LDP candidates did not talk about the war, knowing that their supporters were either indifferent or critical of the US war effort. Although South Korean presidential candidate Kim Dae Jung was kidnapped from a Tokyo hotel in 1973, the LDP kept silent on this crucial issue in the following elections. Big political issues are usually shunned because, as they say, "they don't get votes."

We said earlier that the political antagonism between the "progressive" and "conservative" camps was intractable. Affirming this once again, we would still point out that **economism undermined the political will of both the ruling and the ruled.** Like two triangles possessing a common base line but separate apexes, the two camps shared economism at the base while preserving political differences at the top. It is true that class interests clashed in the economic arena but there, the "progressive camp," and its labor wing in particular, became increasingly oriented toward the idea of obtaining a larger piece of a bigger pie. The success of the LDP in turning economic accomplishments of capitalism into a political asset ironically led to the atrophy of its ability to rule politically. The consequence was that political thinking became enfeebled on both sides and political ambiguity prevailed. The "complementary deal" which allowed this to occur took a heavy toll on the strength of the body politic of postwar Japan.

Corporate supremacy prevailed at the cost of political clarity.



IV. Postwar Democracy The Erosion of Workers Power

N°5

In most Japanese writing on the subject, right or left, the era of Postwar Democracy is generally referred to as a period of ultra-rapid economic growth and a period of heavy and chemical industrialization. It is rare for a nation to define an entire period of its history in such economic clichés. That the Japanese do so points to the special role of economic factors during that period. Hitherto, historical eras had been demarcated by the wars Japan fought, but the character of the new era could only be expressed by giving it an economic name. It may be that in this period of Japanese history, capitalism and its immanent fetishism —undistorted by any extra-economic factors such as a "crusade for freedom" or "Imperial Japan's sacred mission"— found the purest expression it has achieved anywhere in the world. This purified spirit of capitalism could flourish, as we saw already, thanks to the "complementarity arrangement" with the United States.

In this sense, economic growth was a myth as well as a fact. And this myth, or ideology, helped accelerate the pace of growth of capitalist production, while the fact of growth in turn strengthened the myth. But of course it was the objective side of reality that was the main factor.

Some macro-figures can show the unusual degree of economic expansion. **Between 1951 and 1973, the Japanese GNP grew 5.3 times**, compared with 2.4 times for all "market economy" countries, 2.1 times for North America, and 2.6 times for the EEC countries. During the 1960s, the peak of the economic growth era, Japan's average annual growth rate was 11.1 per cent, compared with 5.8 per cent for France, 4.8 per cent for West Germany, 2.8 per cent for the United Kingdom, and 4.1 per cent for the United States. As early as 1976, Japan ascended to the position of the second largest economic power in the "free world," and in the same decade, with an average annual production increase rate of 14.1 per cent, came to first place in shipbuilding and second in steel, electric power, oil refining, synthetic chemicals, aluminum, electric goods, and plastics.

The keystone to this process was the aggrandizement of corporate power, and its driving force was the hectic level of equipment investment, both in the technological renovation of factories and in the creation of entirely new industries. In 1970 the ratio of equipment investment to gross national expenditure was 37.6 per cent as compared with 13.8 per cent for the US, 18.4 per cent for the UK, and 26.4 per cent for West Germany. In the ten years from 1961 to 1971, the top ten private firms in Japan increased their total assets 4.8 times (from 1824 billion yen to 8749 billion yen) and their net prof-

it three times. In the same period the nominal wages of workers increased three times, but real wages only 1.8 times, despite organized labor's concentration on the wage hike struggle. And though an illusion was created of a welfare state, in fact Japan's social security benefit index even at the end of the decade of prosperity, stood at a meager 17 as against 100 for the US and 133 for West Germany, according to economist Hayashi Naomichi.

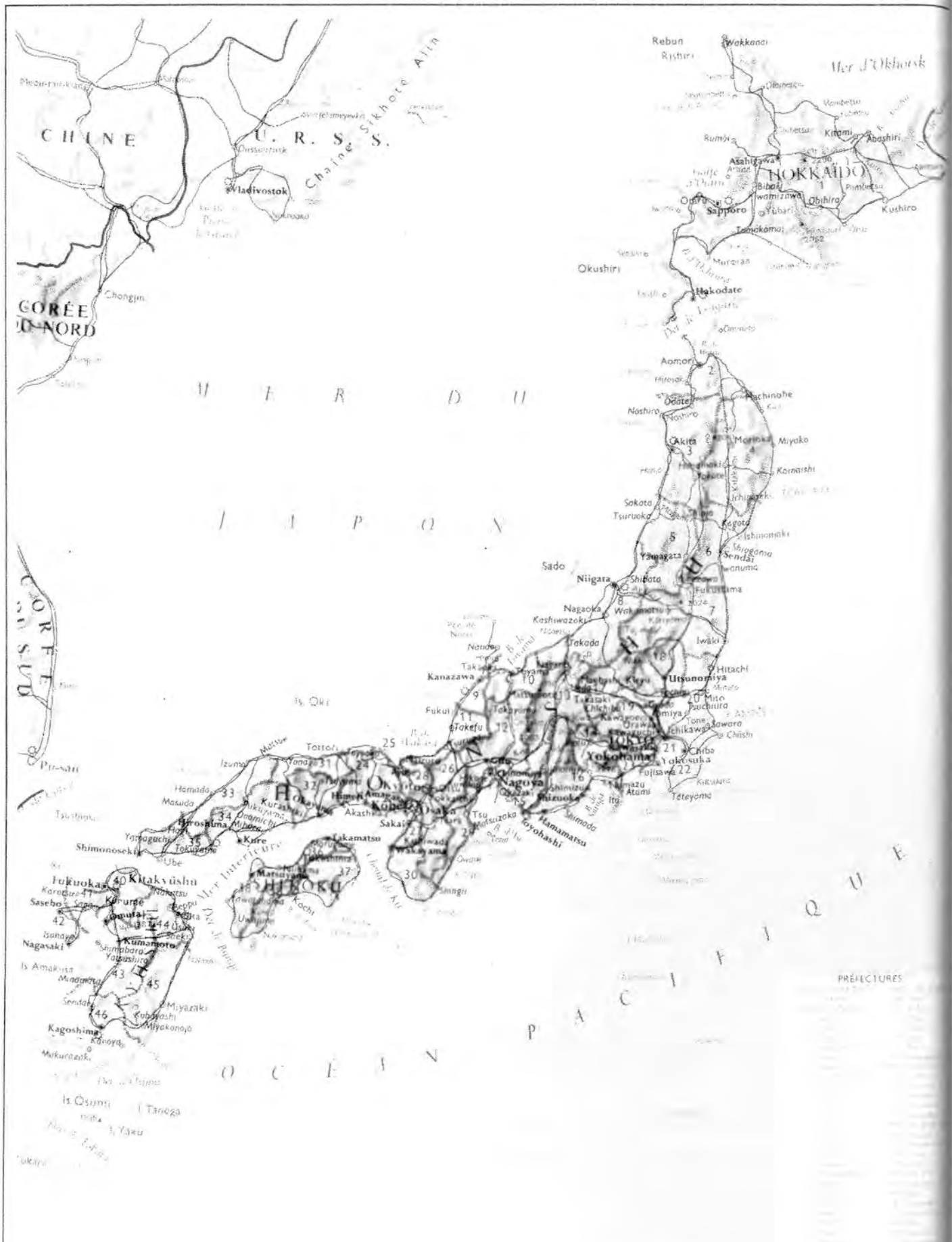
Hyper economic growth meant capital accumulation. How could this occur? To answer this question, we must move again to the scene of the class struggle.

[From the 1950s, capital launched concentrated attacks of the strongholds of workers shopfloor power. As stated by management and business bodies in this "island-by-island" campaign, the goal was "recovery of the right to manage." Their strategy was to mobilize all resources in each individual dispute and effectively wipe out militant unions at target enterprises. Thus, major showdowns occurred in the electric power industry (1952), at Nissan Motor (1953), at Nippon Steel Mfg. (1953), in the public schools where an evaluation system was introduced (1958), and at the Mitsui-Miike coal mine (1960). Each of these disputes saw nationwide mobilization of capital and labor, but capital was always overwhelmingly powerful, and the isolated citadels of labor were eliminated one after another in this early period of economic growth.

After 1960, no major prolonged dispute dividing public opinion into antagonistic camps was recorded. During the spring offensive period, capital shifted its strategy to splitting Sohyo unions. Whenever industrial federations carried out militant strikes during the spring campaign, the right-wing Domei (Confederation of Labor), with the backing of management, would intervene in the key companies, organize pro-company elements and split the Sohyo union to create a collaborationist "second union." The second union in due time would become the majority union in the firm. This happened to one key industry after another.

Thus, throughout the economic growth period, Sohyo gradually lost private-sector members to Domei and other right-wing unions. Domei, beginning with one million in the early 1960s, doubled its membership in the subsequent decade by recruiting in the private sector. Sohyo's overall size did not decline. It still ranked first numerically, but its membership soon became lopsidedly strong in the public sector (2.8 out of 4.5 million). Domei still could not touch effectively the public sector.

Where splits did not occur, once militant unions metamorphosed into a new type of company union as shop-



Map of Japan

floor power was eroded through rationalization drives. The Federation of Steel Workers' Unions (Tekko Roren) is a typical case.

The changed relationship of forces on the shopfloor, working to the disadvantage of labor, gradually undermined the spring campaign's bargaining power, and from 1967 on, the annual wage offensive, in inverse relation to its numerical growth, saw its bargaining power wane.

Under the influence of Tekko Roren, the campaign became less and less successful in attaining wage goals, and major strikes became increasingly rare during the campaign period.] ('84)

[Two cases provide a good illustration of the the two stages of the employers' offensive: the 1959-60 coal miners' battle, and the collapse of class-struggle unionism in the steel industry under the blows of rationalization in the 1960s.]

Miike Coal Miners' Struggle and "Energy Revolution"

In 1960, simultaneously with the anti-Treaty struggle, a major labor struggle of strategic importance was under way at the Miike coal mines in Kyushu, owned by Mitsui Mining Co. In fact, the 1960 popular upsurge was the combination of the mass mobilization in the metropolis over the military alliance issue and the mass struggle of workers at Miike, which included hundreds of thousands of supporters from all over the country. The whole movement that year had the structure of an oval with these two centers.

The postwar Japanese economy in its reconstruction phase depended mainly on coal as its energy source. Coal mining was encouraged as the supplier of "the food for the whole of industry," and as the key to industrial reconstruction, and low interest loans were generously poured into it by the government's Reconstruction Fund. But soon, US oil majors, whose oil production in the Middle East was then rapidly increasing, began to press Japanese industries to buy low-priced oil. Under the pressure of the oil majors who, under the Occupation, had the monopoly of the Japanese market, oil imports were liberalized in 1952, and, as the oil price was relatively low, Japanese industrialists were attracted to the idea of shifting to oil as their basic energy material. Here the interests of US business and Japanese industries coincided. (...) An "energy revolution" was thus placed on the agenda, a strategic choice by Japanese industrialists to base their ambitious future economic program on the use of cheap oil.

This "revolution" required total revamping of the coal mining industry. Inefficient mines were to be closed and vast numbers of coal miners dismissed. The fight against coal mining and especially against the coal miners' movement had strategic significance for the Japanese bourgeoisie in two senses. Firstly, on the outcome of this fight rested the whole future orientation of Japanese industrial development (oil-based and oil-oriented growth). Secondly, and even more importantly, the fight against coal was also a fight to eliminate the main stronghold of the labor movement and clear the ground for the untrammelled implementation of the "heavy and chemical industrialization" program.

Small Workers' Kingdom

The Japan Coal Miners' Union (Tanro) had survived the severe ordeal of the first wave of rationalization in the earliest years of Sohyo and was known as the strongest and most solidly united wing of the working class. Their struggle style and formation were considered exemplary. Especially at the mines of Mitsui Mining Co. at Miike as well as at other mines in Kyushu and Hokkaido, the Tanro workers had almost total control both in the workplace and in their residential areas.

They had developed what was known as "workplace struggle" (*shokuba toso*) as an effective means of maintaining workers' power at the workplace. "Workers as the master of the workplace" and "workers control of production" were the basic guidelines, and in order to implement these guidelines, Tanro delegated the powers of negotiation, and the power of calling strikes, and settling disputes down to the lowest echelon units of the union. It is recalled that such workers' power on the workshop floor had been wiped out at many major enterprises as the result of successive defeats in the 1950s, beginning with the decimation of the Nissan union in 1952. After these defeats, workers' power at the workplace was steadily replaced by centralized control by national union officials so that even where unions existed, their presence was hardly felt by rank-and-file workers down at the workshop. But Tanro had not only maintained the workers' power at the workplace but had developed it in a systematic manner, especially at the Miike collieries.

These decentralized union rights were fully exercised by Miike workers. By conducting day-to-day mass struggles, negotiating for improvement of working conditions, and discrediting arrogant foremen in public, they were eroding, at the very bottom of the mines, the management system of control and exploitation. Coal mining is hard and dangerous work, and the workers naturally gave first consideration to safety. At each workshop, a safety committee was set up, with a chairman elected by the workers. Formerly, the foreman had automatically been the chairman, but now no foreman was elected unless he had the trust of the workers. Since these safety committees were vested with great powers over working conditions, no production methods of management

orders could be enforced unless the safety committees and the workshop union units approved them, and all violations of this practice were met by mass mobilization of workers. In the residential area, the miners' wives were thoroughly organized, often displaying more militancy than their husbands. Thanks to this workshop system always kept alive by mass mobilization, the workshop was democratized. Though there was a great deal of unevenness of development from mine to mine (and this unevenness would later prove fatal to Tanro's struggle), Tanro continued to be the most militant union in Sohyo. At Miike, all workshop units were coalesced to form a network of workers, turning the whole area into a kind of small workers' kingdom.

This style of workers' control of workshops was strengthened by ideological efforts. Activists at the Miike mines were educated by a Marxian group headed by Prof. Sakisaka Itsuro, a famous ideologist of the non-JCP communist movement. Sakisaka had belonged to the prewar Rono (worker-farmer) school which had dissented from the main current of the JCP. This school of thought still has substantial influence today in the Japan Socialist Party, and though this trend, with its simplistic and dogmatic application of Marx to the complex reality, plays a more negative than positive function in the struggle of today, in the early days of Postwar Democracy it still could provide motivation to militants to think and act beyond the day-to-day workshop issues. Inspired by Sakisaka's teachings, Tanro activists who were mostly JSP members were convinced that their struggle to establish workers' power at the workshop would someday lead to workers power throughout the country, or socialist revolution. Visitors to the Miike mines in those days were surprised to find rugged miners reading *Das Kapital* (which Sakisaka had himself translated) in groups and discussing its contents at a sophisticated level.

In 1956, the Miike coal miners' union adopted a new tactic of "emulating the most advanced achievements." Whenever a particular trade-union unit obtained a new gain, the other units were encouraged to wrest the same gain from management, so any victory of a single workshop would be generalized to all. This tactic was coupled with another effective tactic of calling partial strikes, paralyzing small but vital parts of the production processes. The combination of these tactics would produce a maximum effect with a minimum of sacrifice.

In the same years, Tanro at its convention decided to spread this advanced Miike-style struggle throughout the coal mining industry during that year's spring campaign. This horrified the leaders of the capitalist class who were then starting their "energy revolution."

Confrontation

Confrontation began in 1959 when Mitsui Mining Co. took the negotiating position that 6000 Mitsui miners be dismissed, wages be cut drastically, and foremen's power reestablished. Tanro fought back but could not get the program retracted. Nor was the Mitsui management able to impose the program on the union.

The second attack, launched in August the same year was a full-scale onslaught by capital. The second rationalization program then declared provided for dismissal of 100 000 coal miners across the country, and Mitsui management spearheaded this campaign by announcing dismissal of 4580 workers, 2210 of them Miike miners. The Mitsui management not only wanted to slash the labor force but first and foremost was determined to crack the backbone of the Miike union movement. For the first time in Japanese labor history, the word "production saboteurs" were used to describe activists named on the dismissal list. This harsh branding of union activists as subversives and enemies of the company (and society) has since become a deadly weapon of the capitalist class in eliminating genuine and militant unions from workshops. In the case of Miike, most of the activists called "saboteurs" were Socialists and some were Communists.

The coal mining management hoped to overwhelm the strong Tanro with the drastic dismissal program, well aware that Tanro was suffering from unevenness in organizational tightness and consciousness among its member unions. Moreover, the Tanro national convention held to decide struggle policies failed to clearly understand the strategic significance of the offensive in the context of the "energy revolution," and despite the Miike union's advocacy of an uncompromising struggle, Tanro as a whole failed to declare a frontal counterattack against this offensive. The Miike workers had to make up their minds to beat the attack back even though support for them was insufficient.

The Mitsui management cracked down in January 1960 by declaring a total lockout at all its mines, to which the Miike miners immediately countered by calling an indefinite strike. Letters of dismissal were sent to the named activists, but Miike miners and their wives, in tens of thousands, took to the streets to demonstrate their refusal to accept dismissals. The management had to know that this dispute would be protracted, and began maneuvers to secretly organize a splinter union at Miike. Professional union splitters, including notorious renegades from the Communist movement, were hired, and the right-wing Zenro (later Domei) unions were called to the scene to destroy the militant union. Alerted by this move, the Miike union and the wives' association mobilized themselves to discover the management agents penetrating their residential area and to drive them out. But the overriding propaganda against "revolutionaries" and "production saboteurs" coupled with the menacing mobilization of the police caused vacillations among the weakest sector of the Miike miners. Having been secretly organized by management, 3600 miners broke away in March 1960 and formed a splinter union pledged to collaborate with management for resumption of production.

Tanro was vacillating all through this period. When the Miike struggle was started, it decided to back the Miike union and to collect funds for it. But later, weaker Tanro member unions, especially the five Mitsui mine

unions other than Miike, dropped out, and Tanro opted for a policy change in favor of negotiated settlement. Despite this disadvantageous situation, the Miike union refused to retreat.

By that time, the Miike area in Ohmuta city had been turned into a veritable battleground. The management's goal was to resume production by smuggling the splinter union members into the mine as scabs. Unable to get them in through normal gates picketed by strikers, the management, with the help of the Maritime Security Agency, tried to carry them in by sea. Physical battles and skirmishes occurred every day as management-hired gangsters bearing knives attacked the picketers with clubs and steel pipes. The police openly sided with the gangsters in attacking the workers. By that time, the Miike miners had been joined by thousands of supporting workers and students, as well as progressive people from the area. More than 1000 were injured on the fighting workers' side, but they did not yield. In order to prevent scabs from being brought into the mines by the sea, the workers organized a "people's fleet." Fierce sea battles were fought between the fleets of small boats sent out by the management and the union. The confrontation came to a height when, on March 29, a unionist on the picket line was stabbed to death by ultra-rightist gangsters.

The resistance continued, but the company succeeded in getting some hundreds of scabs into some mines and production was partially resumed. These scabs were captives of the management. Once they entered the mines, they were not allowed to come out.

Battle of the Hopper

Despite Tanro's capitulationist tendency, the heightening confrontation at Miike mobilized vast numbers of Japanese workers.

The Sohyo leadership too was vacillating, but was more on the side of the Miike workers than was the Tanro leadership. It carried out an extensive fund raising campaign and organized hundreds of workers to go to Miike to help the miners. With the struggle in Tokyo against the Kishi Cabinet and the Treaty mounting, the whole nation boiled with struggle enthusiasm for some months. Trains every night would carry hundreds, and soon thousands of supporters to Miike, who joined picket lines, fought with thugs and police and slept in a vast tent village. The Miike miners and the supporting workers were organized into fighting units, underwent training in hand-to-hand combat (ex-noncommissioned officers from the battlefields were the trainers) in preparation for the coming decisive confrontation. Miike support associations in the meantime were organized across the country, supplying people and funds to the miners.

After production was resumed by smuggled scabs, the focus of the struggle moved to a confrontation over a hopper, a storage tank, which the management had to

use to bring out coal. The workers were determined to defend this structure by heavily picketing it with paramilitary organized units. Thousands of picketers stayed around the hopper day and night, and thousands of police were also stationed there, poised to launch an assault. On May 4, the court issued a provisional order for the removal of "obstacles" to the use of the hopper. A final showdown and bloodshed were considered unavoidable.

In Tokyo, the anti-Pact struggle culminated on June 15 and came to an abrupt end as the Treaty, after bloody street fights and strikes by six million workers, took effect on June 19. The LDP wanted social peace and appointed career Finance Ministry bureaucrat Ikeda Hayato as Prime Minister replacing the badly bruised Kishi. In order to erase the grotesque image of the dirty, war criminal, fascist Kishi, Ikeda adopted as his slogan, "Patience and Tolerance." Demonstrations quickly disappeared from downtown Tokyo.

But the tension over the hopper was still heightening in Miike. Supporters were still arriving to reinforce the workers' ranks, while 10 000 more policemen were mobilized from all parts of Western Japan to carry out their final campaign. Sohyo convened a **big rally of 100 000 workers in front of the hopper** on July 17 and declared that it should be defended to the last man. The picket line around the hopper was now reinforced by more than 20 000 picketers prepared to fight with shovels, pickaxes, clubs and whatever was available for the purpose.

The Ikeda Cabinet was afraid of bloodshed at a time when the LDP keenly needed relaxation of social tensions after so many months of acrimonious political confrontation. On the other hand, the Sohyo leadership, despite its strong words, was not actually prepared to fight it out. It wanted to carry the confrontation to the final stage in order to force the government to intervene and bring about a more or less favorable settlement to the dispute. But the Miike union and supporting workers were prepared to shed their blood.

Ikeda, calculating quickly, asked the Central Labor Relations Commission to arbitrate, and both the management and Sohyo-Tanro leadership to give the commission *carte blanche*. They gave it.

The commission on August 10 announced its arbitration plan, which totally supported management. Activists were to be dismissed as management had proposed (though they were to be called voluntary retirees). The method of "workshop struggle" of the Miike union was condemned as alien to normal union practice. It was an ultimatum for unconditional surrender of the Miike workers.

The Miike union immediately and unanimously decided to reject this ultimatum, but neither Sohyo nor Tanro had a mind to follow suit. They had already demobilized themselves. **The historic Miike struggle had suffered a shattering defeat.**

Realignment to the Right

Though Postwar Democracy started in 1955, the supergrowth period proper began in 1960 with the defeat of the two major struggles and with the announcement by the Ikeda Cabinet of the "Income-Doubling Program." The "energy revolution" in fact began to gallop from the year its major obstacle, Tanro, was smashed. Taking only a quantitative indicator, Japan's oil consumption grew from 1 in 1959 to 1.65 in 1960, then bounced to 17.19 in 1970 and further to 23.45 in 1975 (in calory equivalent).

Oil imports thus soared year after year, catering to the burgeoning gluttonous industries, and leading to the creation of huge coastal megalopolises with mushrooming industrial complexes, reckless reclamation of the sea, construction of highways crisscrossing the country, motorization, mass production, mass consumption and mass communication, **opening up a vista of wonderland to the Japanese people**, proletarians and bourgeoisie alike.

Ikeda's "Income-Doubling Program" which was a promise to double Japan's GNP in 10 years, was merely the caption he gave to this process of corporate supremacy and corporate initiative in shaping the country after the corporate image. Though the role of the state in facilitating the supergrowth process should not be ignored, growth was not created by the government program, nor was it planned by the central bureaucracy.

The defeat of the two major struggles in 1960 therefore was a strategic defeat, entailing capitulation, abrupt or gradual, of a large segment of the forces that ideologically supported class struggle in Japan. In the new social atmosphere generated under the Income-Doubling Program, the radical left became demoralized, and the hero of the 1960 anti-Treaty struggle, the Communist League, swiftly disintegrated and practically disappeared. The lack of leadership and the timid attitude of the JCP during the

anti-Treaty struggle caused widespread disappointment with the self-styled "vanguard party," and though the disillusionment was legitimate, it enabled some of the best known critics of the party from a left position, the brilliant stylist Prof. Shimizu Ikutaro among others, to leap without qualms to the other camp, admiring what they had been vilifying a few years before.

The Japan Socialist Party gained an impressive electoral success in the general elections following the anti-Pact struggle, partly owing to the assassination of Chairman Asanuma by a fascist boy, which shocked the people who fought alongside him. But under new chairman Eda, the party quickly began to modify its position to conform to the emerging reality of capitalist prosperity. **A gradualist new look strategy of "structural reform"** allegedly borrowed from the Italian Communist Party was thus introduced to replace the "outmoded Marxist dogma."

The Communist Party leadership under Secretary General Miyamoto, called the defeat a "victory," and concentrated on its own organizational buildup, campaign to increase its newspaper circulation, and electoral politics.

Sohyo's spring campaign, which had a dual character of a nation-wide industrial campaign for higher wages and struggle at workshops (including the Miike-type struggle) year by year lost its edge as the emphasis shifted to purely economic demands under the new slogan "the same wage level as in Western Europe." The spring campaign continued and grew in size, and political struggles for peace and democracy were continued, but all the struggles in the labor front in the 1960s, some of them militant, were battles fought in retreat, and no political campaign in the first half of the decade could approach the height attained by the 1960 struggle against the Treaty.

Steel Giant and Labor

The fate of the **Federation of Iron & Steel Workers' Union (Tekko Roren)**, which became one of the worst right-wing unions inside Sohyo was central to the process. How did this once militant union degenerate into what it is today? A brief review of the postwar steel industry and its union will show the link between production increase through rationalization and management's conquest of the genuine labor movement — a law that governed not only steel but also other major industries.

The Japanese steel industry during the Pacific war had a maximum capacity of 7 500 000 tons of steel a year. After the war, the capacity of the industry, because of

war damage and shortage of materials, plummeted far below one million tons. In 1960, the Iron & Steel Federation announced an ambitious plan to increase crude steel output to 57 million tons in 10 years. At that time, the plan sounded so ambitious that few believed its feasibility. By 1970, however, the steel industry was producing 120 million tons a year, operating nine of the 10 largest, most advanced blast furnaces in the world. The Japanese blast furnaces in that year were each producing 2723 tons of steel per day. The yield was exceedingly high in comparison with 627 tons for France, 845 tons for the United Kingdom, 1039 tons for West Germany, 1465 tons for the United States and 1644 tons for the

Technological innovation and workers power on the shopfloor

The trajectory of the postwar Japanese labor movement parallels up to a certain point Giovanni Arrighi's account of the Italian labor movement: it went through a political phase and then passed on to a long period of agitation for economic demands. But the parallel ends there; a social labor movement, or using Arrighi's expression, the "unruliness of labor on the shopfloor," did not follow. The third and current stage is marked by the rise of a corporatist labor movement.

Arrighi argues elsewhere that "in general terms, the very transformations in industrial organization and labor process (typically, the growing technical division of labor and mechanization) that undermine the marketplace bargaining power of labor (as embodied in the skills of the craft workers) simultaneously enhance labor's "workplace bargaining power." He concedes that the working of his general rule is mitigated partly by capital emigration, labor immigration and the pressure of peasants and workers. Even so, the general rule, according to Arrighi, is that a growing technical division of labor and mechanization work towards strengthening workers' shopfloor bargaining power.

This "rule" simply does not apply to Japan. In light of the sophisticated, preemptive system of labor management (*gorika* rationalization) that has emerged in Japan, I conclude that the objective possibility of shopfloor militancy, which under different circumstances might have obtained, has been preempted by Japanese management using what may be termed a **post-Taylorist organic approach**, whose objective is to eliminate, not contain, workers' shopfloor power.

Chief among the various factors at work in the decline of shopfloor bargaining power is the class struggle. The introduction of new technological processes to enhance capital's organic composition should be

seen as a consequence of the class struggle waged by capital against labor (over and above the inter-capitalist competition for special surplus value); i.e., it is capital's counter-strategy to the high wages obtained by workers in preceding periods. To the extent that new technical processes and the concomitant transformation of the division of labor provoke workers' resistance, capital introduces with new processes, as in the case of Japan, a new type of labor control designed to circumvent such resistance.

The new technical process raises class struggle to a higher level where the renewed power, wisdom, and organizational ability of capital and labor are tested. It is only through the medium of this heightened class struggle that we can argue about the general relationship between the marketplace and shopfloor bargaining power, or about bargaining power in general. In other words, mechanization and the new technical division of labor do not in and of themselves (i.e., without the medium of the class struggle) lead straight to stronger shopfloor power of workers, just as they do not lead automatically to the loss of shopfloor bargaining power. **The new technical processes only renew the terms of the class struggle; the side that first masters the new art of struggle necessitated by these new terms will win.**

This is the approach used in the essays presented here on the dynamics of postwar capital-labor relations in Japan, particularly in the case of the steel industry.

1. Giovanni Arrighi, "Politics and Anti-Politics in the Remaking of Italian Labor" (manuscript).
2. Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver, "Labor Movements and Capital Migration: the US and Western Europe in World-Historical Perspective" (manuscript).

USSR. These figures of course reflected the technologically advanced quality of Japanese blast furnaces acquired by that time. But if we take the labor cost, the other aspect comes through. The labor cost fraction per ton of crude steel was a meager \$17 for Japan while that for the US was \$103. The low labor cost reflects not only the advantage of scale and advanced technique but also the new labor system that made this low labor cost possible.

Technological innovation in the steel industry in Japan began with the outbreak of the Korean War. [The industry underwent four waves of rationalization in the form of successive plans. The first three covered the 1950-1970 period, with a turning point in 1965.] [Recession in 1965 ended the period of accumulation by horizontal expansion. Capital had to step up efforts to enhance organic composition. The package administered

to achieve this goal included the following measures: (1) intense rationalization in pursuit of economies of scale and higher organic composition as well as intensification of labor; (2) more centralization through the merger of giant corporations; (3) continued inflationary policies by deficit budgeting; and (4) the export of capital.

In this package, rationalization was essential. Rationalization, as discussed here, is the translation of the Japanese word *gorika*, which in turn is the translation of the English rationalization. Though *gorika* and rationalization and essentially identical concepts, *gorika*, the Japanese version, has special features. It is characterized by the thoroughness, intensity, and refinement whereby the buildup of new production capacities, the application of new technological methods, the modification of the organization of labor, and the enforcement of new kinds of labor control designed to preempt and decimate workers

power are linked organically.

The first plan (1951-1955) centered on the modernization of the rolling section. This was the planning stage for the subsequent full-scale *gorika* offensive.

The second *gorika* plan (1956-1960) involved renovation of all areas of steel production. Five times the investment of the first plan, or 625 billion yen, was put into equipment replacements and the construction of new, large-capacity, advanced integrated steel mills.] ('84) The program concentrated on the construction of brand new integrated and automated steel mills built around giant, highly efficient blast furnaces. Kawasaki Steel Corp., until then not one of the majors, pioneered the integrated steel mill concept by acquiring a vast reclaimed area in Chiba City (with ample help from the Chiba municipality) for the construction of a giant integrated steel mill with blast furnaces, which was completed in 1958. Other steel firms followed suit.

Yawata Iron & Steel Co. established a more advanced steel mill at Tobata with two 1500 ton-per-day blast furnaces, a specialized ore carrier berth, and a 60-ton capacity oxygen converter. (Yawata I & S and Fuji I & S Companies came from the wartime Nippon Steel Co., a state-owned corporation. NSC was ordered in 1950 to divide into the two separate companies but in 1970 its two offshoots fused and became the world's largest steel company).

The third *gorika* plan was divided into two phases. In the first phase (1961-1965), about double the second plan investments were committed to the building of yet larger and more automated mills. In the second phase (1966-1970), new mills were commissioned one after another. By the end of this plan, Japan's steel capacity had reached 114 million tons, 2.5 times the 1965 level.

The fourth plan (1971-1975) centered on the partial renovation of existing equipment. This period coincided with the worldwide crisis of capitalism, but even so, the steel industry invested a staggering 4.258 trillion yen in new equipment, including energy-conserving systems.

The progress of these *gorika* plans closely paralleled the gradual waning of steel workers' strength. Workers' strength seems not to have been seriously affected during the first plan. In 1951, the Federation of Steel Workers' Unions (Tekko Roren), considered a militant wing of Sohyo, staged a united strike for wage increases. In 1952, the steel workers joined forces with other Sohyo unions in waves of political strikes against a repressive anti-subversive activities law.

The situation began to change under the second *gorika* plan. The turning point was the successive failures of the steel strikes in 1958 and 1959. In 1958, the steel workers participated in Sohyo's spring campaign (they normally conducted their annual wage struggle in autumn), and workers at Fuji and Yawata I&S carried out 49-hour strikes but could not obtain their wage demands. It was at that time that steel management started to resort to what later came to be known as the "one-shot reply" formula: management replies to the union's demand only once and refuses to negotiate further. This is a kind of ultimatum, a show of force, whose purpose is to dem-

onstrate that wage increases are given at the discretion of management and not because of worker pressure. By that time, the actual relationship of forces inside the steel industry had become so disadvantageous to labor that management felt confident enough to take this threatening attitude.

The last steel strike on record was waged in 1967 but again failed to break the "one-shot reply." The following year, the union's strike proposal was voted down by the workers themselves.

The decline of shopfloor militancy also reflects the rise of right-wing union leadership, which replaced the liberal-left Socialist leadership. In 1966, Tekko Roren, after inter-factional skirmishes and compromises, joined the IMF-JC, a new corporatist national labor coalition which would later become the mainstream of private sector unionism.] ('84)

The New Yawata I & S Mill at Tobata

It was at this new Tobata steel mill that reorganization of labor control systems was coupled consciously with renewal of production technology.

During the first rationalization drive, the Yawata management had already started a careful study of standardization of work and labor control rationalization. On the basis of this initial study, Yawata I&S in 1955 sent a survey team to the United States, through the newly organized Japan Productivity Center, to learn US "industrial engineering" technique. Like other Japanese companies, the Yawata management was quick to adapt American technique, with proper modification, to Japanese reality. The result was introduction of what is known as the "line and staff" system, which was to have far-reaching implications for Japanese labor.

The new system, imposed upon the new Tobata mill, separated "line," or the workforce engaging exclusively in production, from "staff" who provide technical services and engage in planning. At Japanese steel mill (as well as at other factories), the work on the workshop floor had been under the control of a foreman who was a skilled worker well versed in the work. The foreman carried great prestige. He would supervise the work, divide the tasks among his men, make plans for the workshop, take care of his fellow workers, and if necessary channel the grievances of his work team to the management. Under him, the workshop team had to depend upon such workshop leaders for the implementation of the production program. **This formation was the basis of workers' power on the workshop floor, and the experienced skilled workers were often workshop union leaders.**

The separation of "line" and "staff" was intended precisely to destroy this system and thus disintegrate workers' solidarity and power at the basic level of production. Mechanization, partial automation, and centralized control of production processes served this purpose as the new system would make skill and expertise, acquired over years and embodied in the persons of skilled workers, increasingly unnecessary. Of the many functions the

foremen had been carrying out, the labor control functions alone were retained with them. The other functions, especially those pertaining to command of production, were taken away to be performed by the "staff" who were directly connected with the management. Instead of the traditional foreman, a new type of foreman called "*sagyochō*" (literally meaning the work leader) was appointed as the workshop-level agent of management. While the traditional foreman had had a dual character as the lowest echelon agent of management and as the commander of production on the strength of his expertise and experience, the "*sagyochō*" foreman had only one function — to control the workers under him on behalf of the management in such a way as to raise productivity and lower production costs. His task was to keep watch and to keep the workers under him always "cost-conscious" and loyal to the management-made production plan. "Human relations" was the vogue work as the new foreman was expected to organize his workers' "voluntary contributions" to cost reduction.

The leading factor in this transformational process was **technological innovation**, but this was from the beginning **deftly oriented toward undermining workers' potential power at the workshop**. And in the buoyant atmosphere of economic growth in which the workers movement was easily trapped by the myth of technological progress, the change in work systems did not trigger the appropriate alert. **The Yawata Workers' Union welcomed this modern system**, probably not knowing at the initial phase that the prototype of a new labor practice facilitating usurpation of workers' power by management was in the making. This reorganization was completed at Tobata by 1958.

The Final Touch to Gorika

The third rationalization program of the steel industry in the early half of the 1960s generalized this labor control system across the industry. NSC's Kimizu steel mill, completed under the third program, is commanded almost totally by the NSC head-office at which the mill was connected to on-line computer. Autonomy has been taken not only from the workshop, but also from the mill itself. There, the automated production processes isolate each worker from his fellows. Workers, strewn over the vast premises of the factory without even the chance to talk with one another, suffer from deadly isolation. Tekko Roren continued, in fact prospered as a big union, but the union as the cement of worker solidarity no longer existed at the workshop.

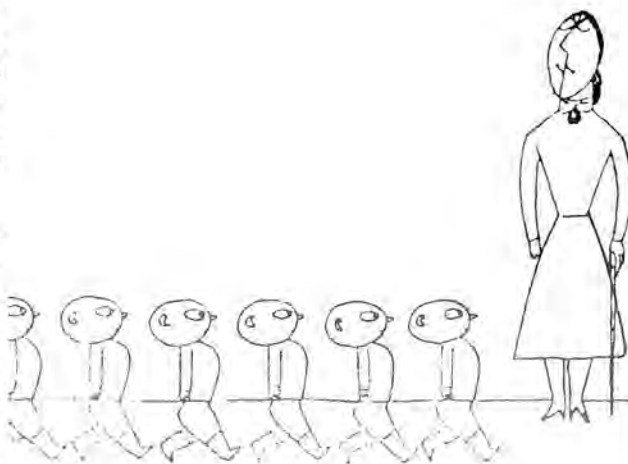
The final touches were put on *gorika* rationalization in the second period (the post-1965 recession period) in the form of QC (quality control) campaigns. Taylorism as it was adapted in Japan via *gorika* evolved fully on the new soil, at last transforming itself into something that its founder would never have imagined — **the application of Taylorism by the workers themselves**. At this stage, worker col-

lectivism is seemingly revived, but as a zombie. Webster gives an excellent definition of zombie: "a supernatural power through which a corpse may be brought to a state of trancelike animation and made to obey the commands of the person exercising the power; or a corpse so animated." The vulgar, widespread stereotype of management-loyal, work-oriented Japanese workers derives from the zombie-like state of labor.

In the steel industry, the first QC drive was launched at the Yawata I&S mill in 1964. Kawasaki Steel followed suit the same year, and Fuji I&S in 1966. Interestingly, the steel industry dubbed these campaigns *ji-shu-kanri*, or "JK" drives (meaning self-management or *autogestion*). JK drives swept all the mills. Promoted in stormy waves in the late 1960s and through the 1970s, it became a built-in feature of Japanese factory life. It was reported that by 1966, 76 percent of the employees of 29 steel firms were involved; this figure grew to 83 percent in 1975 for 45 steel firms.

Before this process started, Tekko Roren under the leftwing Mindo leadership had been able to put up vigorous resistance to capital. In 1957, the steel workers carried out 11 successive 24-hour strikes for higher wages. During the 1960 anti-Treaty struggle, workers at Nippon Kokan Kaisha spearheaded the bold action against Eisenhower's visit to Japan by taking his press secretary captive for several hours in his stranded car. But the undermining of the workers' power at the workshop rapidly changed the union and gave rise to a new type of pro-management leadership headed by Miyata Yoshizo who in 1959 became a national leader of Tekko Roren.

The new right-wing trend headed by Miyata and his group should be distinguished from the traditional right-wing unionism represented by Domei. Both were equally anti-Communist and pro-management, but while the Domei-type unions had their identity as union movements, which from their ideology chose to collaborate with management, the new trend is toward unions which are not labor unions at all but direct agents of management. This new trend, later to be known as the IMF-JC trend, is the product of the total control of the workshop by management established in the first half of the 1960s.



V. Corporate Power

What happened in the steel industry in the 1960s also happened in other industries in the private sector, and although the degree and form of the transformation differed from industry to industry, the general effect was that workers' power on the shop floor was eroded. Sohyo was still considered strong and effective, especially in organizing increasing numbers of workers into its annual Spring wage increase campaigns. In the early 1960s, such existing industries as steel and auto expanded rapidly and petrochemical, electronic and other new industries were created, sharpening competition among giant enterprises on the one hand, and making the labor supply tight on the other. This latter factor offered a favorable environment for Sohyo's wage increase campaign, although in most years, the annual wage increase rates lagged behind productivity growth rates. Sohyo and the Socialist Party, in loose alliance with the Communists, still were pledged to the cause of peace and democracy, and at times did mobilize the masses in political campaigns on the issues of military bases, the military buildup and various reactionary measures. However, beneath the facade of successes in the wage struggle and the occasional political mobilizations, lay the stark reality of Sohyo's loss of one private sector union after another and to the right-wing collaborationist Domei. The gap between Sohyo's apparent strength in terms of mobilization and its receding influence on the shop floor in key private industries continued to widen throughout the decade.

The massive accumulation of capital during this period was largely due to this overthrow of workers' power on the shop floor. To the degree that management succeeded in preempting workers' resistance in the plants, they could feel free to implement technological innovations, expand the scale of production, and thus obtain special surplus value for reinvestment. And conversely, this technological innovation and work system rationalization tended to further disintegrate working class solidarity.

Disintegration of the workshop team and the company world

Central to the understanding of this process of atomization of the working class is the formation of what may be termed the "company world," a phenomenon which is the key to an understanding of postwar Japanese capitalism.

The "company world" is an institutional-cum-ideological device used to translate inter-enterprise competition (which was always sharp) into inter-worker competition. The big company is structured into a world within which the workers are coerced into sharing the fate of the company. Once workers are integrated into this "world," they are forced to compete with one another to achieve the goals set by the company. While many Western observers ascribe Japanese workers' "loyalty" toward management to what they call traditional Japanese

"submissiveness" to authority or to traditions or "collectivism," the truth is that this apparent "loyalty" is the result of highly individualistic competition based on economic motivation and has little to do with cultural traditions or "collectivism." On the contrary, the "loyalty" has emerged from the debris of the worker collectivism which Japanese labor forcefully displayed in the struggles of the postwar era. In fact, it took violent repression from the Occupation authorities and the Japanese government to conquer this worker collectivism.

The concept of the "company world" requires some explanation. Inter-company competition, which was very intense during the period of resurgence of capitalism in postwar Japan, is one kind of competition, and depends mainly on the commodity market situation. Inter-worker competition is of course another kind of competition, but here the determinants are labor market factors. The Japanese bourgeoisie has managed to combine these two different kinds of competition by herding workers into pens sealed off from the general labor market situation as well as the general relationship of class forces, in which they are motivated to fight each other to attain the company goal.

In order to hold the workers in this secluded "world" the company needs a wall to demarcate the arena within which this interworker competition takes place. The well-known "seniority wage" system coupled with the "life-time employment" system served this purpose well. The latter applies only to the regular employees of big companies, who account for less than a third of the Japanese industrial labor force, and has the effect of distinguishing between the privileged citizens of the "company world," its lesser-status inhabitants and outsiders. Moreover, "life-time employment" is a misnomer, for it has never meant "life-time" employment but rather compulsory retirement at the age of 55 or otherwise. In fact, as we will see later, hundreds of thousands of workers assumed to be protected under this system were kicked out, the older ones first, when the capitalist crisis of the 1970s arrived. This system nonetheless served its purpose as a fence surrounding the "company world."

The various "intrafirm benefits" such as company houses, company loans, company gyms or company sponsored "cultural circles" were so many bricks of the "company wall." The wage systems which became increasingly complicated were also made to serve the purpose of making the "company wall" sturdier. Instead of being a simple seniority wage system under which the wage rises with the age of the worker, the actual wage systems made the wage more and more subject to the capacity of the worker and evaluation by management. The wage scale is peculiar to a given company and there is no industry-wide scale. Individual workers have very little idea how much they will get even after a wage increase is agreed upon, because so much of their pay

based on evaluation according to various standards of which they are kept ignorant.

The standardization of the work process is also carried out in a fashion peculiar to the enterprise, thus depriving the worker of the universal applicability of his/her skill, another factor that keeps the worker inside the "company world."

These and other systems, created artificially, worked effectively to maintain the big company "enclosure." Watanabe Ben, a left labor leader of the Sohyo-affiliated General Workers' Union, has said that the company home-loan system alone would be enough to destroy the militancy of Japanese big enterprise workers. "An employee of a big private company can borrow money from the company to buy a tiny house on the condition that he repay it with his severance pay at the age of 55 when he has to retire. This agreement ties his fate to that of the company. If he should resign prematurely, his severance pay would be much less than his debt to the company. For a worker, being hired by a big company is like mortgaging his whole life; also the company housing loan is usually not enough to enable a worker to buy a house, and so he borrows from other sources as well. If the company should go bankrupt, he also goes bankrupt, as he cannot repay his debt to the private housing company, and his house will be confiscated."

The "seniority wage system" works the same way. If a worker is in continuous service with the same company for 20 years, his salary goes up, and his life style and local status improve accordingly. But if his company goes bankrupt, he can hardly get a new job at a comparable salary, and maintain the same living standards. For one thing, his skill has been shaped in accordance with the particularized systems of his company and often has little universal value. (Formerly, mechanics were mechanics wherever they went). Even if his skill has a universal value, his social value does not.

The "company world" is thus a world held together by means of intimidation and this intimidation is substantiated by real and objective systems enmeshing all aspects of a worker's life. Once a worker is trapped in this "world," he or she (mainly he) begins to compete with his fellow workers in order to survive and to climb the ladder of intra-firm status and wage promotion. The "company world" might better be called a "company country," for the partition by the "company wall" resembles the division of the world's working class into separate nation-states, which enables the state to channel the discontent of local working people into outbursts of national chauvinism in the context of nation-to-nation competition.

The "company world" is the key to the understanding of postwar Japanese capitalism, with its peculiar hyper-accumulation. It is in fact the citadel of the Japanese bourgeoisie. Pushed into this "world," a large (privileged) segment of the Japanese working class has taken up inter-company competition as their challenge without, however, fully believing in it.

The "Spring Struggle" tactic, for example, was never in a position to challenge the root

problem of workers in the "company world," for it pursued only raises of the absolute level of wages, and intra-firm welfare. The absolute level could be, and in fact was, raised when the big enterprises were expanding and prospering, but the acquisition of a higher absolute level of wages and welfare, when purchased at the cost of permitting unrestricted technological and management system rationalization, only helped to strengthen the "company wall." This development eventually placed limits even on Sohyo's capacity to win higher wages.

QC Drive and Small Groups

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the period of the formation of the "company world," the major struggle inside big companies was over the question of **which side would organize the workers** — management by contaminating them with its own ideology, or the workers themselves, on the basis of their independence from management. Among the diverse methods used by management to organize workers on its own terms, the "small group" formation, coupled with "quality control," emerged as the most effective institution for cooptation.

The concept of "quality control" originated in the United States but was brought to Japan in the late 1950s by the Japan Productivity Center. There it was wedded to the "small group" concept, and by the early 1960s, raised to the status of the main pillar of integrating labor and controlling the production process. The Zero Defect (ZD) drive, begun in the US missile industry to eliminate defective components, was first applied in Japan by the Nippon Electric Corp. in the early 1960s, and underwent similar modifications. These models were incorporated into the "small group" activities, or "workers' self-management," as it is called at Nippon Steel Corp.

Under this system, workers at big enterprises are "voluntarily" organized into small groups called QC circles. Here they study the work process, invent new work methods or develop improvements for the existing ones, and propose them to management in order to promote higher product quality and productivity.

Each workshop is supposed to have at least one such QC circle, and the group meets usually once or twice a month, or more frequently in some enterprises. These meetings are held after the day's work is finished, and in most cases the participants are not paid overtime for participation. Often, these "circles" are structured horizontally at the factory level, and then at the company level. The main organizers are foremen or superintendents, and the circles discuss a wide variety of work-related subjects. Each individual and each group is encouraged to make proposals, and if management finds a proposal excellent, the proposer is given a prize. The prize winners have the privilege of attending a higher level QC presentation session, where the best proposer is rewarded with, for instance, a trip to the US.

Participation in these circles is assumed to be "voluntary," but actually it is hard for workers not to participate, since their pay and promotion depend on evaluation by management and participation or

non-participation in the QC drive is considered an important factor in evaluation.

According to a 1976 survey by the Japan Productivity Center, 71.1 per cent of Japanese enterprises had these QC circles. Among big enterprises with 10 000 or more employees, the figure was 91.3 per cent. Take the steel industry for instance. Nippon Kokan Kaisha (Kawasaki Mill) and Kobe Steel Mfg (Takasago Mill) implemented QC drives as early as 1963, and Nippon Steel Corp. (then Yawata Iron and Steel Co.) followed suit in 1966. Now 30 000 QC circles are operating at 169 mills, factories and offices in the steel industry, involving 230 000 workers, or 83 per cent of the total steel work force.

"To give workers something to live for" was the formulation of the QC campaign's purpose at Yawata I&S when it began. "One of the most serious problems facing modern industry is how the prosperity of the company and human satisfaction of the workers can be made compatible. These seemingly contradictory requirements — higher efficiency and regained humanity, must be met simultaneously. The solution is to create a system that links together the hearts and minds of workers as human beings and helps them to display their respective capacity and creativity to the fullest." This high-sounding pronouncement was more realistically expressed by Nikkeiren (Japan Federation of Employers' Associations), which said, "The sense of belonging to a small group will give workers more satisfaction and lead to higher efficiency."

Though QC drives take diverse forms they generally have the same basic purposes: (1) making the workers think on behalf of management, or penetrating the inner world of individual workers with management ideology, thus preventing them from having their respective independent inner worlds beyond the world of the workplace; (2) alleviating the sense of isolation workers suffer in the wake of technological innovations; (3) spurring competition among the workers to emulate achievements of others; (4) placing workers under minute and constant control with regard to their ideology and behavior; and (5) improving efficiency and raising the level of product quality.

In many cases, the primary emphasis of the drive is on the first goal. In the "company world," the workers are no longer allowed to do just what they are told to do, but are supposed to contribute positively to the company out of a feeling of "voluntary participation." But participation is not in fact voluntary since the demand for it comes from the top. At NSC, the management in 1978 declared that the company should be totally structured so that it could **operate without suffering a loss even if the operation rate of the mills should drop to the 70 per cent level for an extended period.** This grand strategy was conveyed to each QC circle, which was then urged to help concretize it. The group's duties were (1) to select a specific area for making of contributions to the company, (2) to analyze the situation, (3) to set a target, (4) to effect improvements for achievement of that target, (5) to confirm the effects

of these improvements, (6) to standardize the results of the improvements so that other workshops could implement them and (7) to draft reports about the whole process. NSC claims that through these efforts, 17 000 proposals made by QC circles were implemented to solve problems of energy conservation and cost reduction, resulting in a 35.6 per cent cut in NSC's oil consumption by 1980.

This process shows an incredibly high degree of organization of workers by management. Workers have to work during their regular hours, put in overtime, and then contribute to productivity and efficiency by studying the work process, gathering data and writing reports. Even if there is a genuine union on the workshop, **there is no room left for union activity to intervene since all available time and energy of workers are absorbed by the company.** Quoting a socialist worker who was once secretary general of the union at the Hirohata Mill of NSC, Watanabe Eiki writes that management's success in organizing the vitality and energy of the workers has eroded what had once been considered the union's proper function. "Nowadays, young workers know how to speak in public because they have to attend so many QC sessions and report on their activities. Formerly, workers used to become good speakers through union activities. QC circles have usurped the role of workers' activism from the union [Watanabe Eiki et al., *Rodoshu no Sabaku* (The Descent of the Working Class), Tokyo: Tsuge Shobo, 1982.]

After the Yawata and Fuji iron and steel companies merged in 1970 to become the world's largest steel giant, Nippon Steel Corp., the management gave the process an ironic new name — workers' self-management" (*Jishu Kanri*) campaign or "JK" campaign.

Do workers self-manage? Do they participate in decision making? The most tragic aspect of this JK campaign is that it resembles self-management and participation as closely as a glove turned inside out resembles the original glove. For in nine out of ten cases, their work intensity is increased and exploitation strengthened at the cost of workers' interests as the result of their "self-management."

Toyota

Prof. Kumazawa Makoto, a labor researcher who divides QCites into "doves" and "hawks" (the doves tending to take up subjects not leading to direct intensification of work), cites a case of "hawk" QC elites at the Toyota Motor Kariya plant. [Kumazawa Makoto, *Nihon no Rodoshazo* (A Look at Japanese Workers), Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1982.]

The QC circle in question consists of 14 workers who perform the final painting of car bodies. They are said to have done an "exemplary" job of "improving" the work process. According to their report, the purpose of the improvement is reduction in worker-days required for the blacking-out process. "Our purpose was to concretize the policy of our section to fight increases in manning

and material costs."

"When we proposed reducing two men to one," the report reads, "complaints were heard that cutting personnel in half would be too much and that it would result in intensification of work. People also asked us where the surplus men would be transferred."

"But we persuaded these dissidents, saying that by studying industrial engineering methods we would find ways to hold down our work load even if our personnel were cut by 50 per cent. We also pointed out that Mr. H., who is a seasonal worker, is resigning soon."

"Our member U, who had undergone training at another firm recently, came back and reported that there they were doing twice as much work as we do here."

Thus, the group studied industrial engineering methods thoroughly and reviewed all the operations so that one man could do the work now done by two. The target was to reduce the required work time from 302 DM (deciminutes) to 160 DM. The "improvement" finally reduced the work time to 155 DM.

Prof. Kumazawa, analysing the improvements thus made, points out that not only was one out of two workers phased out as if by magic but also that any remaining relaxation time during work was completely eliminated because of the "improvements." **All waiting time and time to change tools were cut,** and the workers now have to chase the car body as it moves past them, instead of waiting for it to reach them.



Sony

How coercive this type of "small group" control can be was dramatically shown at Sony, now known around the world as Japan's archtypical electrical manufacturer. Despite the shining image it carries, the Sony world is unlivable for workers.

In the early 1960s, when this upstart company was becoming a major TV set manufacturer, its founder and president Ibuka Dai hired Kobayashi Shigeru, a semi-professional union buster to crush the Sony union, which was becoming militant. The management declared that all its employees would soon be made submissive

and those who refused to surrender would be eliminated. This promise was kept. Union activists were physically attacked, general secretaries of union branches fired, union executives given punitive transfers, and many members given disciplinary wage cuts. A company union was created in the spring of 1961, causing the original union to lose more than half its members in a few months.

It was in this belligerent atmosphere that Kobayashi was appointed director of the Sony Atsugi factory, then the company's brand new main plant making transistor radio sets and integrated circuits. The overwhelming majority of the workers at the plant were **very young girls** just out of junior high school who came from farming families in northeastern Japan. It is upon these 15-16 year-olds that Kobayashi imposed his "small group" system. In his well-known book of self-praise, *Sony Makes Humanity*, he later explained this system as one of giving a sense of purpose and meaning of life to workers. Strangely, he chooses to take his terminology from the Communist vocabulary, so that the small groups he organized were called "cells," and the factory became a "workers' school."

Sony Atsugi in fact had a school, "Sony Gakuen High School" integrated with the factory. The factory, the school and the dormitories were in the same compound located in a newly-opened industrial area 50 kilometers west of Tokyo still surrounded by farm land. All the young workers had to live in the dormitories, and benevolent Sony granted them the opportunity to continue their studies.

The workers-students got up at 4:45 am and started work at 5:30 am. After working for one hour and 45 minutes, they had breakfast from 7:10 to 7:35 am and then resumed work which lasted until 1:15 pm. After lunch, they went to school and studied from 2:20 pm to 5:30 pm. They then returned to the dormitory. This was for the morning shift. The evening shift workers would go to school in the morning and begin to work at 1:10 pm and work until 9:55 pm.

They were organized into "cells" each consisting of five to eight members with a "leader" and a "subleader." The leaders were "sisters" who had been with the company for more than four years. They would "take care" of the young girls, intervening in every aspect of their personal life. Love affairs had to be confessed to the "leaders" and if they had any complaints, they had to tell them first to the "leaders?" But the main purpose of the "cell" was to make the young girls work harder. The "cell" met twice or three times a week, and each member had to report to her colleagues her renewed work target. If she failed to achieve it, she would be humiliated in front of her colleagues. Think of naive helpless young girls from villages, who had been removed into this strange environment. They had no alternative but to accept what they were told. **Competition within this framework, established by the company but ostensibly created by the workers themselves, escalated without limits.** According to Saito Shigeru who recounted the stories of these isolated girls [Saito Shigeo, *Kozui yo Waga-ato-ni Kitare* ("Après moi

le déluge"), Tokyo: Gendaishi Shuppan, 1974] in these years, most of the workers would arrive at the factory at 5:00 am, half an hour earlier than the official starting time and begin to work. Otherwise, they could not fulfill the targets they had set themselves. The girls had to submit their self-critical personal reports (about what they did and thought) to the "leader" and the "leader" would check them and criticize them if necessary. The targets were thus "voluntarily" raised gradually, and those who attained the target were given a plastic OK mark which was tagged to their work tables.

Nor were they free from company control after they returned to their dormitory rooms. Four to six workers were packed into a room with double bunks, and TV sets were prohibited. From 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm, the residents had to observe a "silent time." They were supposed to meditate, criticizing themselves for their weaknesses that might have caused the company trouble.

For three months after they joined the company, they were prohibited from having any visitors, even their parents. The dormitory had its "mother" who would tell the girls, "If your parents come and see you, others whose parents could not come would be hurt." The "mother" is the almighty supervisor. She would come into the room any time and check the books on the shelf, all for the sake of "protection."

But the "protection" turns to stark repression the moment workers assert themselves. Electronics work is highly injurious to the eyes, the organic solvent used in the process is often lethal, and the ever increasing speed of the assembly line often caused chronic or acute troubles in the workers' hands and arms. The Sony management is unresponsive to complaints about industrial diseases, and without union support, workers who want to protect themselves have to fight individually or in small groups. The Sony "world" has its hospitals and clinics where doctors conceal the real causes of industrial troubles, and protests are met with job transfers and, ultimately, violence.

In this tightly organized pen, resistance required a great deal of personal courage and spirit — which some brave Sony workers in fact displayed, as the following story of the struggle of three women workers on behalf of their co-workers as well as themselves, illustrates. Hired in 1969 by Sony's Shibaura plant, they soon saw the speed-up of the line causing physical troubles for many of their colleagues. They themselves soon began to feel acute pains in the arms and hands, and so they decided to demand that the conveyor speed be slowed down. This was an outrageous demand, coming from ordinary workers. Management immediately started to harass them, but they did not yield. Management ultimately ordered them transferred to other lighter jobs, but they took the principled position that transfer would not solve the problem and refused. Wearing slogan jackets, they stayed in their original workshop and continued to work. A violent confrontation developed and security guards were finally mobilized to beat them up and throw them out.

Better known is the case of Naganami Inakichi, a temporary worker at Sony's Shioyama plant. Forced to

inhale a toxic organic solvent on the job, he developed complex liver troubles and died in 1974. The company denied responsibility from the beginning despite a clear relationship between his symptoms and the toxic vapors. He died cursing Sony on his death bed. His bereaved family and his supporters have continued his struggle suing Sony.

Competition --- Wage and Status

The type of labor control used at Sony's Atsugi plant in the early 1960s of course cannot be seen as typical of all of industry, since the inner worlds of big corporations differ from one to another. However, there are some striking basic similarities among all major private companies: (1) thorough organization of the employees into company interest-oriented groups; (2) hierarchical structuring of the workers designed to divide them by giving a sort of sense of privilege to one group of workers over another; (3) artificially organized competition among individual workers; (4) quasi-collectivism, a distorted copy of worker collectivism; (5) intimidation and ostracism, and ultimately the exercise of physical violence against dissidents (either by company guards, union goons or the police); and (7) a "union" which serves as the most effective, and, often, the most violent, protector of the whole system. Of these, competition is the core around which all other institutions have been organized.

The wage system coupled with the "ability evaluation" concept is the main means by which workers are divided and made to compete with one another. The "ability-ist" (*Noryoku-shugi-teki*) labor control principle was proclaimed by Nikkeiren in 1969 in a 60-page handbook written on the basis of a 1965 Nikkeiren resolution. The guideline set out in this policy paper reflected a process that had already been under way for years, a shift from the traditional form of the "seniority wage" system, under which age was the most important wage determinant, to a modified system, which used the workers' ability as the primary consideration. It also recommended a shift to an elitist labor force rather than a mass labor force.

Under the traditional "seniority wage system," the employees were divided into two major categories according to education — workers and officers. Workers could be promoted to supervisory jobs, but not to officers' positions, as they accumulated seniority and their skill increased accordingly. There was general correspondence between age, skill and wage levels. This traditional system started to erode due to the postwar super-growth of the economy. As has already been described, the factor of skill was the first to be undermined. The formation of work-teams around older, skilled and relatively highly paid workers, was eliminated as part of the process of technological innovation and work standardization. Instead of age and skill, "ability" — i.e., each individual's contribution to the company's interests — became the major factor in determining wages and promotions. The wage

and promotion systems were rapidly reorganized in the 1960s and 1970s in accordance with these "ability-ist" principle.

Or take again the Nippon Steel Corp.'s Hirohata mill. There, a "hierarchical job duties" system was introduced in 1967, dividing workers into five — later seven — categories with sizable wage disparities between them. Once workers were promoted out of the bottom rank, they entered the realm of high-status titles: "deputy secretary," "secretary," "deputy councillor," and "councillor." These people are all blue-collar workers and not officers. In effect, they are industrial non-commissioned officers who are above ordinary workers, or soldiers. The "soldiers" were also subdivided into several status/wage groups. The "basic wages" are linked to these categories, and when the average basic wage is raised, the higher status workers or officers are given larger increments.

Moreover, the wages for workers in the same status are not the same, as a large part of their pay is subject to evaluation by management. When the wage is increased, 20-40 per cent of the wage increment is determined by how the worker's work is evaluated by management. At Sumitomo Metal Industries, for instance, the evaluation-development portion is 45 per cent. At NSC, while the average wage increase in 1980 was 3000 yen, those workers who got the highest evaluations obtained 6600 yen raises and those with the lowest, 2500 yen. Those who were "highly evaluated" and promoted to "secretary" were paid around 2 million yen more per year than their colleagues of the same age and with the same period of service, who had failed to be promoted.

A more extreme case of arbitrary evaluation is seen at Nissan Motor, where only 13.5 per cent of the wage is the "basic wage" and 72.9 per cent is a "special allowance" largely determined by management's evaluation.

Though evaluation is supposed to be based on "ability," **in actual fact loyalty to management is the most important criterion.** In interviews with applicants for a higher status, the examiner asks few questions about their jobs. According to Watanabe Eiki who interviewed NSC workers, the most frequent questions asked are "Do you know the difference between Sohyo and Domei?", "What do you think of strikes?" and "What do you think about trade unions?"

At Nippon Kokan Kaisha, promotion is based on regular exams. There are four statuses among blue-collar workers in the company, and the exam leading from the first to the second status is extremely difficult, according to Watanabe. "Workers are not allowed to take the exam without the permission of their superintendent. The results of the evaluation are secret and not disclosed to the workers involved. The exams are graded according to such general and vague criteria as collaborative spirit.

Under these circumstances, favorably impressing superior officers naturally becomes the shortcut to promotion. The easiest way is flattery; the next easiest to display extra dedication and enthusiasm. An NKK worker told Watanabe: "(Work intensification is) tremendous. You know overtime is regulated, and the company man-

agement highly values those who can finish their work quota within the stipulated overtime. So, workers would not apply for overtime pay even when they work beyond the limited time... This is because they want to be considered specially capable."

Hierarchy ---- Subcontract workers

The "company world" is the summit of Japanese society where the power of the bourgeoisie is concentrated. Each "universe" thus stands at the top of a pyramid consisting of vast numbers of medium, small and tiny enterprises. In some extreme cases, **giant companies** like Toyota Motor, Hitachi Ltd., Kawasaki Steel Corp., or Chisso Co. **subjugate the whole towns in which their main plants are located.** In such company towns, the majority of municipal assembly representatives are spokespersons for, or agents of, their corporate masters, and they manipulate city politics in the latter's self-interests. Since the whole town feels that it is dependent upon the company, dissidents are threatened with ostracism. The magnitude of the company power can be measured by the fact that the Toyota family, which started textile machinery business at the turn of this century in Omoro City, succeeded in getting the name of the city changed to Toyota after Toyota Motor became one of the world's largest auto manufacturers. Kawasaki Steel is the master of Chiba City. There, dissident citizens fighting against pollution from KSC's steel mill are harassed and threatened. Likewise, Minamata in Kumamoto Prefecture, Kyushu, is known as Chisso's town, and challenging Chisso's authority is almost a blasphemy. This is why this murderous company could keep killing and maiming thousands of fisherpeople in Minamata Bay for more than 10 years with organic mercury pollutant. Chisso knew that the mercury it was discharging into the sea was the cause of Minamata disease but suppressed this information and denied responsibility by using its mafia-like power over the local administration, hospitals, and communities.

But company towns are not the only form of corporate domination. **All major companies subjugate a vast number of subcontract firms** which exist to supply parts and/or components, or to render services for the main companies. Though the subcontract firms maintain formal independence, they are virtually branches of the giant firms. One big company often vassalizes hundreds of such smaller firms, telling them what to make, unilaterally deciding the prices of products they deliver, demanding highly punctual delivery, imposing high quality requirements, and dictating precise technological innovations at the latter's cost. The subcontracting firms are not all the same either. Smaller ones are subjugated by larger ones, and in many cases, the actual manufacturing is **contracted out to poor families where housewives do the assembly work at incredibly low piece rates.** Typical of this kind of structure is the automobile industry. The nine main car manufacturing firms which are assemblers outsource 75 per cent of their work to these primary, secondary and

tertiary subcontractors. The comparable outsourcing ratio in the United States is 50 per cent. Thus, the eight major car manufacturers, directly employ only 200 000 out of 600 000 auto workers. As the table below shows, the wage and other working conditions decrease towards the bottom of the pyramid. Note that the wage level for tiny subcontract firms with 1-3 employees each was an incredible 19.7 as opposed to 100 for relatively large subcontract firms making auto parts. The table also indicates that the wage gap between the top and bottom was widening year by year.

Even inside the "company world" itself, there are second and third class citizens along with "full members," i.e., the regular employees. They are discriminated against both in wages, and other working conditions, and are denied the benefits given the regular employees. They include the so-called "outside workers" or "collaborating workers," who are employed by subcontract firms, but work inside the main company. In some cases, they are assigned the "dirty jobs" or subordinate jobs which regular workers don't do. In still other cases, they work under the supervision of their "subcontracted" employers, rendering such services as plant cleaning, disposal of wastes, maintenance, or transportation inside the plant.

Subcontractors are often mere hiring agents with a small office, a telephone, and a clerk. They recruit workers on the day-labor market, send them into the main company and take 30 per cent or so of the wages paid in a lump sum by the main company. In extreme cases, like the "labor dormitories" of northern Kyushu, gangsters are involved to keep the workers from running away. In any event, the "outside workers" are hired not by the main company but by subcontractors, and so the management of the main company refuses to negotiate on their working conditions.

Other categories of workers discriminated against in the "company world" are temporary workers who can be fired at will, seasonal workers, or farmers who come to urban areas to work for a certain period of the year, and "part-time" workers — overwhelmingly women, mainly elderly housewives, — who, despite the label, often work for eight hours a day.

The major industries, such as steel, shipbuilding, automobile, and construction, rely heavily on these underprivileged workers. For that matter, the larger the enterprises, the more heavily they depend upon these categories of workers. According to statistics, approximately 12 per cent of the workforce employed by large companies with 500 or more employees were workers in this category, while at enterprises with 30-99 employees, the figure was only 2-3 per cent. [Tsuda Masumi, *Nihon no Romukanri* (Labor Management in Japan, Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1970, p. 151)]

The rate of dependence on outside workers is incredibly high for the steel industry. The five major steel firms in 1973 had as many as 154 999 outside workers in their employ (46.9 per cent) as compared with 175 675 regular employees. The percentage rose to 58.9 per cent in 1976. Shipbuilders are next in their degree of

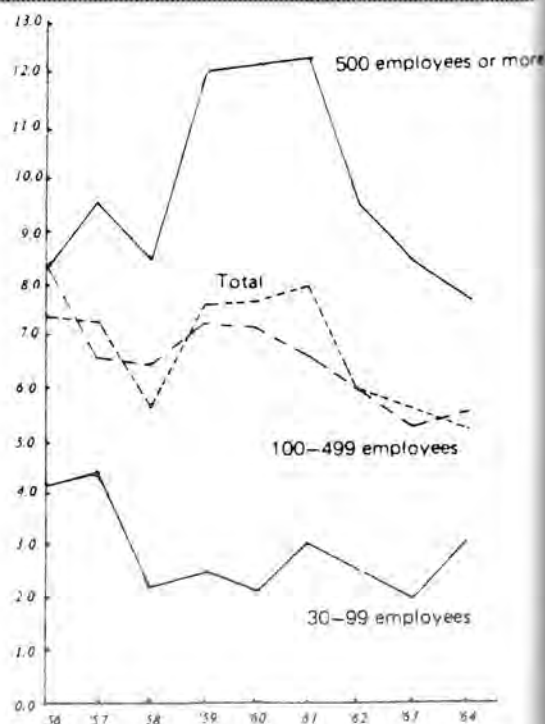
Wage Gaps Among Auto Assembly and Auto Parts Making Firms

(Indices as against 100 for enterprises with 1000 or more employees)

| Year | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Size of enterprise | | | | |
| 1-3 workers | 43,3 | 39,9 | 18,5 | 19,7 |
| 4-9 | 64,2 | 60,6 | 57,8 | 59,0 |
| 10-19 | 68,8 | 66,2 | 60,5 | 60,9 |
| 20-29 | 70,2 | 65,7 | 63,9 | 63,3 |
| 30-49 | 71,8 | 69,2 | 67,8 | 67,7 |
| 50-99 | 78,3 | 77,6 | 74,8 | 74,9 |
| 100-199 | 81,5 | 80,7 | 78,5 | 80,9 |
| 200-299 | 86,6 | 84,2 | 84,4 | 87,0 |
| 300-499 | 90,8 | 88,5 | 87,6 | 90,5 |
| 500-999 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 |
| 1000 ou plus | | | | |

Source: "Survey on International Competitive Capacities of Machinery Manufacturing Subcontracting Firms", Machinery Industry Promotion Association, 1980.

Ratio of Temporary (subcontract) Employees to Constantly Employed Workers (by the Size of Enterprise)



Source: "Employment Trends Survey", Labor Ministry

reliance on outside workers (though many of them were laid off during the 1974-76 shipbuilding slump), while the auto industry leans toward seasonal workers and outsourcing.

A survey of the Kimizu steel mill of NSC shows the highest paid of the outside workers, those doing the same jobs as regular workers, were paid approximately 70 per cent of the regular workers' wages. [Mukogasa Ryoichi, *Kyodai Kajo to Rodosha Kaikyū* (Big Factories and Working Class), Tokyo: Shin-Nihon Shuppan-sha, 1980, p.205] They are also supervised by regular workers, often a humiliating experience. **Regular workers behave in a superior and authoritarian way toward the lower-status workers**, thus reproducing in this relationship exactly the relationship they have with their own superintendents. This is a well-developed divide-and-rule policy that creates for the lowest echelon regular workers a still-lower status of people to look down upon.

Controlling a labor force organized into such a hierarchy is easy for management. When subcontract workers are organized into a genuine union, management can

discontinue the contract with their firm. Threatening to do so is enough to deter subcontract workers. This happened at the Tokyo No. 2 factory of Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries with 50 subcontract firms. Subcontract workers employed by one of the subcontracting firms in 1972 organized themselves, trying to establish their right to negotiate with the IHHI management, which is practically their direct employer. The subcontract with the hiring agent was terminated. Similarly, when a bus company providing transport services for NSC's Tobata mill was organized, the bus company itself was kicked out.

Discrimination and competition are the two principles governing this pyramid. Subcontracting firms compete with each other, and their workers, in order not to lose their jobs, have to compete to keep their company in the big firm's good graces.

It should be noted that this system of dividing the working class by stratum and setting one segment against another assumes a horrendous dimension when Japanese big companies go abroad, especially into Third World countries with dictatorial governments.

VI. Labor Front Realignment on the Right

Having taken this brief look at the formation of the "company world" and the general structure built around it, let us return to the question of class struggle again.

The world of labor unions is now boiling, not with workers' struggles, but with maneuvers, secret talks, and speculations among labor bosses, and formation and dissolution of coalitions and generally deepening confusion among the lower echelon union officers and activists. The issue is "unification of labor fronts" promoted by right-wing unions.

At this stage, the drive is to bind together major private industrial unions from different and so far antagonistic national trade union federations to form a **new union center, around a hard core formed by the big unions in the strategic industries** — steel, automobile, shipbuilding and electrical.

This federation, initially of private sector unions, is intended eventually to annex public sector unions — government employees and government corporation workers.

The schedule for unification has already been set — the preparatory committee of the envisioned national private industrial "preparatory council" (a looser form than a federation) is to be set up on December 14, 1981 and the preparatory council is to develop into a council sometime in May 1982. The council will develop either into a federation of private industry unions only, or accept the affiliation of public sector unions.

[In December 1982, this front, recruiting more members from private-sector Sohyo unions, officially founded the National Private Sector Unions Council (Zenmin Rokyo), embracing five million members. Although the Zenmin Rokyo unions are still members of Sohyo and

other original federations, the establishment of this new council has virtually robbed Sohyo of its power in the private sector.] ('84)

Trade-union Unity and Class Struggle

To those who naively think that all workers should unite, this strategy may sound innocent. But in the actual context, the emergence of this new unified federation would begin a new, third, stage of the postwar Japanese labor movement in which trade unions will cease to be a progressive factor and become instead the most powerful and conscious organized force to support the capitalist regime in its time of crisis.

The most immediate result of this unification, if achieved as its promoters intend, would be the disappearance, sooner or later, of the 4.5 million-strong General Council of Trade Unions (Sohyo), the largest union federation known as a progressive organization. Of course, if final unification is achieved, all of the participating federations will be integrated into the new body and so cease to exist as such, but **Sohyo will be the only federation that will lose its identity** and have to accept the others' principles of class collaboration.

[The origin of this corporatist unionism is in the IMF-JC organized in 1964 as a national liaison center of unions affiliated with the International Metalworkers' Federation, a trade international of the ICFTU. The IMF-JC, drawing its members from both sides of the antagonistic camps of labor, Sohyo and Domei, gradually grew into a front for *gorika*-oriented big private industrial unions.] ('84)

The move for unification is now officially being pro-

moted by a six-man committee, which includes a Sohyo representative. In June 1981, the committee finally worked out a "guideline", which it declared final and not revisable and to be accepted unconditionally by all prospective participants. The guideline proudly said that the Japanese economy had succeeded in overcoming the two oil crises and was able to continue to grow on a stable basis "thanks mainly to the qualitatively superior and quantitatively abundant labor force in this country" as well as to "the (correct) attitude assumed by the union movement." This statement could easily be used as is by a big business association like Keidanren (Federation of Economic Organizations). The statement says nothing about how millions of Japanese workers were expelled, overworked, transferred to irrelevant jobs, humiliated and thrown into despair by the rationalization drives used by Japanese capitalism to "overcome the two oil crises."

But more ominous than the general guideline statement (which was drafter to gloss over contradictions) are the official policies of the major industrial unions which are to be the core of the unification program. Mr. Nakamura Takuhiko, Chairman of the 400 000-strong Federation of Iron and Steel Workers' Unions (Tekko Roren), explained the goal of the unification as: (1) eliminating Marxist influence and the concept of class struggle from the Japan Socialist Party and turning the party into the Japanese counterpart of the West German Social Democratic Party, (2) promotion of nuclear power generation to save the nation from the energy crisis, (3) abandonment of the struggle against rationalization and the "industrial structural transformation" program (the government-business plan to relocate industries overseas), and (4) revamping the National Railways (the state-run railway corporation which is suffering from deficits) and other unprofitable public corporations through administrative reforms (meaning dismissal of tens of thousands of workers). Tekko Roren still is a member of Sohyo, a Trojan horse effectively disarming it from within. In fact, it is one of the unions most powerfully promoting the rightist line.

Similarly, the Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Workers' Unions (Zosenjuki), in December 1977 sent an "urgent recommendation" to the government that domestic production of weapons, especially warships and aircraft, be increased and speeded up. In the same year, the Matsushita Electric Union (National), the key union of the Federation of Electrical Workers' Unions (Denki Roren), came out with a more explicit political program calling for a strengthened military alliance with the United States, faster buildup of nuclear power generation, and closer collaboration with the dictatorial Park Chung Hee regime, then in power in South Korea. The Confederation of Labor (Domei), the traditional right-wing union center, and its political arm the Democratic Socialist Party, have fought against Sohyo for decades, and together they are known as the most consistent champions of anticommunist drives in this country. Domei President Usami, when the historic uprising of Kwangju citizens in South Korea was suppressed by the Chun Doo Hwan junta, praised Chun as "great states-

man" and went so far as to parrot Chun, saying that behind the Kwangju incident were the "notorious Urban Rural Mission (of the Christian Church) and Kim Il Sung." These unions are the ones dictating the terms of unification.

It is important to note that the most active promoters of this unification business are the unions known as IMF-JC unions. They are affiliates of the International Metal Workers' Federation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) who formed their Japan Committee (now called the Council of Metal Workers' Unions and 1 870 000-strong). The status of IMF-JC is unique in that it draws member unions from different existing federations. The 600 000-member Federation of Auto Workers' Unions (Jidosha Soren), led by Shioji Ichiro of Nissan, is an independent union unaffiliated with either Domei or Sohyo. But the 540 000-member Federation of Electrical Workers' Unions (Denki Roren) belongs to the Federation of Independent Unions (Churitsu Roren) while the 230 000-member Tekko Roren is a Sohyo union. The 170 000 -member Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Workers' Unions (Zosenjuki) belongs to Domei. [See "New map of labor field, August 1983," on page 43.] Note that **all these unions represent the export sector of Japanese private industry** whose overseas activities—exports, imports and capital exports—are a determining factor in the world economy today. (...)

Roughly speaking, IMF-JC represents the business interests of the strategic export industries while Domei is a traditional right-wing union representing its own interests. Sohyo with private industrial sector eroded and lost to Domei and IMF-JC is being forced into embrace with IMF-JC.

Hesitation and resistance

Another controversial issue raised in the context of the proposed merger is that of affiliation with the ICFTU. The assumption of the unification promoters is that the new, unified labor federation should as a whole be affiliated with the ICFTU. Conscious of the delicate nature of this issue, the six-man committee made only a roundabout reference to it in its guideline, saying that the Japanese labor movement should be united with its counterparts in the West where the labor movement is in a similar situation as in Japan. But the implication of this goes beyond mere labor union solidarity. Mr. Shimizu Shinzo, a leftwing labor theoretician long working with Sohyo, explained that this emphasis on joining ICFTU reflects the need of Japanese governmental and big business diplomacy to be complemented by a parallel labor diplomacy to ease international economic frictions. The burgeoning export industries of Japan have caused, as is well know, serious friction with their West European and US counterparts, especially in the areas of automobiles, ships, and electrical goods, and this, plus the generally sharpening contradictions among imperial powers are now only barely eased by occasional summit meetings. But the Japanese government feels uneasy

New Map of Labor Field (August 1983)

Sohyo (General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) (50 unions, 4,550)

Public sector unions (20 unions, 3,059)

| | |
|--|-------|
| All Japan Prefectural & Municipal Wkrs U. | 1,276 |
| Japan Teachers U. | 678 |
| Japan Federation of National Service U. | 93 |
| All Japan Municipal Transport Wkrs U. | 50 |
| Japan Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry Wkrs U. | 41 |
| Japan Telecommunications Wkrs U. | 290 |
| National Railway Wkrs U. | 238 |
| Japan Postal Wkrs U. | 184 |
| National Forest Wkrs U. of Japan | 44 |
| Nihon National Railway Motive Power U. | 43 |

Private sector unions (30 unions, 1,517)

| | |
|--|-----|
| Japan Council of Medical Wkrs U. | 132 |
| All Japan Transport and General Workers U. | 19 |
| Japan Federation of Newspaper Wkrs U. | 43 |
| N'all Federation of Printing and Publishing Industry Wkrs U. | 14 |
| National Federation of General Wkrs U. | 122 |
| Zennichijiro Kensetsuippan | 74 |
| All Japan Harbour Wkrs U. | 24 |
| Council of Governmental Special Corp. Employees | 23 |

| | |
|---|------|
| All Japan Federation of Hotel Wkrs U. | 11 |
| Japan Coal Miners U. | 15 |
| All Japan Shipbuilding and Machine Wkrs U. 7 | |
| General Federation of Private Railway Wkrs U. of Japan | 201 |
| National Federation of Automobile Transport Wkrs U. | 58 |
| Japan Broadcasting Labour U. | 13 |
| National Federation of Marine Transport Wkrs U. | 8 |
| Japanese Federation of Iron and Steel Wkrs U. | 225 |
| All Japan Express Wkrs U. | 54 |
| Japanese Metalmine Wkrs U. | 17 |
| National Trade U. of Metal and Engineering Wkrs | 163 |
| Japanese Federation of Paper Pulp Wkrs Unions | 29 |
| Japan Federation Textile and Clothing Wkrs U. | 9 |
| N'all Conference Electric Meter Readers & Bill Collectors U. | 119 |
| Japan Federation of Synthetic Chemistry Wkrs U. | 50 |
| Federation of Telecommunications, Electric Information and Allied Workers | (43) |

16 unions, 978

Shinsanbetsu (National Federation of Industrial Organizations) (4 unions, 64)

| | |
|--|----|
| National Machinery & Metal Wkrs U. | 34 |
| National Organization of All Chemical Wkrs | 11 |
| National Organization of Drivers | 7 |
| Kyoto-Shiga-block Workers Federation | 11 |

4 unions, 63

8 unions, 1,100

| | |
|---|-----|
| Japanese Federation of Electrical Machine Wkrs U. | 574 |
| National Federation of Life Insurance Wkrs U. | 340 |
| All Japan Federation of Food Industries Wkrs U. | 71 |
| All Japan Electric Wire Labor U. | 41 |
| National Federation of Ceramic Industry Wkrs U. | 26 |
| National Council of Petroleum Industry Wkrs U. | 26 |
| National Council of Gas Supply Wkrs U. | 26 |
| National Federation of Cement Wkrs U. of Japan | 19 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| National Federation of Construction Wkrs U. | 309 |
| National Federation of Cinema and Theater Wkrs U. | 3 |

Churitsu Roren (Federation of Independent Unions of Japan) (10 unions, 1,438)

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Number of employees | 41 020 000 |
| Total number of union members | 12 525 000 |
| Estimated rate of unionization | 30.5% |

From: Yokoyama Yoshio, "The Japanese Labor Movement—Gasping for Refreshment," *AMPO*, Vol. 17, no. 2, 1985

Genuine Independent Unions (4,277)

Public sector unions (285)

| | |
|--|----|
| Japan Senior Hi' School Teachers U. (Hitotsubashi) | 31 |
| Japan Senior Hi' School Teachers U. (Koojimachi) | 17 |
| All Japan Public Employees U. | 3 |

Private sector unions (3,972)

| | |
|--|-----|
| Federation of City Bank Employees U. | 171 |
| N'all Federation of Agricultural Mutual Aid Societies Employees U. | 94 |
| All Japan Non-Life Insurance Labour U. | 33 |
| Japan Federation Travel and Aircargo Agency Wkrs U. | 28 |
| Federation of Non-Life Insurance Wkrs U. of Japan | 24 |
| Japan Federation of Publishing Wkrs U. | 13 |
| All Japan Automobile Transport Wkrs U. | 32 |
| Japan Federation of Commercial Broadcast Wkrs U. | 10 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Confederation of Japan Automobile Wkrs U. | 616 |
| Confederation of Electric Power-related Industry Wkrs U. of Japan | 211 |
| Japan Federation of Commercial Wkrs U. | 93 |
| Council of All Japan Transport Wkrs U. | 77 |
| | (131) |
| Japanese Federation of Rubber Wkrs U. | 50 |
| All Japan Federative Council Mutual Bank Labour U. | 29 |
| National Federation of Municipal Contracted Wkrs U. | 6 |

7 unions, 1,038

Zenmin Rokyo (All Japan Private Enterprise Labor Unions Council) (52 unions, 4,755)

17 unions, 1,531 (21 unions, 1,917)

Private sector unions (23 unions, 2,032)

| | |
|---|------|
| Japanese Federation of Textile, Garment, Chemical, Distributive and Allied Industry Wkrs U. | 470 |
| (Federation of Japan Automobile Wkrs U. | 220) |
| All Japan Seamen's U. | 143 |
| National Federation of General Wkrs U. | 111 |
| National Federation of Chemical and General Trade U. | 100 |
| Japanese Federation of Paper Pulp Wkrs U. | 26 |
| Japanese Confederation of Aviation Labour | 17 |
| Japanese Federation of Construction Industry Wkrs U. | 9 |
| Toppan Printing Labour U. | 6 |
| Social Insurance Fee Payment Fund Labour U. | 5 |
| Japanese Federation of Harbour Wkrs U. | 3 |
| (Federation of Electric Wkrs U. in Alliance with Domei | 23) |
| (N'all Conference of Electric Meter Readers and Bill Collectors U. | 13) |
| Federation of Japanese Metal Resource Wkrs U. | |
| National Union of Coal Mine Wkrs | 5 |
| Japan Confederation of Petroleum Industry Wkrs U. | 3 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| National Democratic Union of Casual Workers | 8 |
| Directly Affiliated with Regional Branch of Domei | 105 |
| National Cinema and Theater Wkrs U. | 1 |

Public sector unions (8 unions, 150)

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| All Japan Postal Labor U. | 61 |
| Japan Railway Wkrs U. | 43 |

Domei (Japanese Confederation of Labor)
(31 Unions, 2,196)

about the future as the trade war intensifies. They thus want the **new labor federation**, controlled by the big unions which serve the strategic export industries, **to conduct its own "labor diplomacy" with big Western unions to mitigate friction.** The right-wing unions, eager to collaborate with their respective industries, are only too glad to play this function.

The right-wing unions are very strict about these conditions of unification, and are **not at all interested in getting all unions to come together** in their new federation. Their goal will be attained if the main labor front in Japan is reorganized around them and they are averse to the idea of having to work together with the Communist-influenced or any viable leftwing unions unless they have effectively disarmed in advance. Despite important opposition and resistance among Sohyo unions, the unification schedule set by the right-wingers is likely to be carried through, leaving Sohyo in a shambles.

[One of the tests will be in the public sector where the government is now engaged in a concentrated assault on public-sector unionism, which, under Sohyo, has managed to retain shopfloor militancy until recently. In its administrative reform program, the government has chosen the National Railways as its target and deprived its shopfloor units of their power to negotiate and settle on working conditions. Threatening to cut the railway corporation up into a few private firms, it has successfully forced the workers into a drive to "save" the company, which competes with private businesses doing similar jobs. This tactic is being employed against other public-corporation workers, thus setting postal workers against private parcel delivery services and generally forcing public workers to match the efficiency of private industrial workers. Sohyo-affiliated public workers' unions, believed to be strong, have failed to formulate an effective counter-attack and are being driven along the same path toward corporatist unionism.] ('84)

However, in the dialectical process of history things are often turned into their opposites, and a triumphant right-wing push, shaking the traditional set up of labor bureaucracy and creating a new dynamic, could be the beginning of a positive process — the emergence of a new, radical and anti-imperialist labor movement. The Communist Party-influenced Sohyo unions (the Day-Laborers' Union and several other national unions), criticizing the unification plan as class-collaborationist, have formed their own semi-independent liaison center called Toitsu Rosokon. They declared that they won't go along with any unification that follows the announced guideline.

Sohyo's top leaders, especially are desperately maneuvering to talk all members into the merger line, but a few major unions other than Toitsu Rosokon, too, have begun to express either doubts or opposition. Sohyo's extraordinary convention held in early October to coopt these opponents ended in confusion as the majority including the teachers' union withheld support for a compromise plan the leadership expected them to swallow. [Many middle-echelon officers suddenly realized the dan-

ger of the great conspiracy and began to rally to block this scheme.

Three different labor forces, sometimes collaborating but also developing sharp differences, presently resist the unification scheme.

1. Those socialist union leaders and the unions and groups under their influence who, sensing that what is underway is the total negation of the Sohyo-Socialist tradition of labor militancy (especially the tradition of the Sohyo-sponsored Spring Campaign), oppose the scheme and advocate that all efforts concentrate on strengthening Sohyo.

2. Communist Party-influenced national and local unions and chapters, in accord with party policy, denounce the unification as the negation of class struggle and of the democratic labor movement. They have declared that they will set up their own national federation in the event that unification is carried out. (These unions have already formed their own liaison council, which claims a membership of 1 100 000).

3. The radical labor trend attracts a growing number of rank-and-file members of Sohyo unions as part of it, or as its allies, and maintains close ties with workers' groups in the IMF-JC and Domei unions. The core of this group came from the radical workers' movement rallied around the Anti-War Youth Committee, which in the late 1960s and early 1970s mobilized tens of thousands of workers from all sectors of industry and engaged in street fights over the Vietnam War issue. Though the committee as such disintegrated, its members, joined by student radicals who chose to work among the working class, have struck roots across the country and industry.

A wing of this trend allied with the former Takano faction of the Sohyo movement, Rodo Joho organized the first national workers' assembly in Osaka in 1976 that drew 1000 representatives of militant unions and workers' groups. It has since sponsored annual national assemblies of workers. The 1982 assembly, attended by 1500 representatives and addressed by two former Sohyo chairmen and former secretary-general, adopted a new policy line envisioning the total reorganization of the Japanese labor movement into a new front cutting across corporate barriers and based on the participation of alienated masses. As a transitional step toward the formation of such a front, the radical wing will help form a coalition of "genuine unions" (including the militant wing of the National Metal Workers' Union and the dockworkers' union as well as of public workers' unions which are resisting the "unification" line). This is a new strategy based on a critical assessment of the weaknesses of Sohyo's Spring Campaigns (which after all could not break the corporate walls). Also, this radical wing's anti-imperialist stance makes possible solidarity with workers' movements in the Third World (especially in Asia) where Japanese multinational corporations are directly exploiting local labor. The radical wing of labor is also active in the anti-nuke and Korea solidarity movements and has close working relationships with community-based movements and struggles including the Narita farmers' 17-year struggle against land confiscation.] ('84)

Japan Chronology 1945-1987

International Relations Military Affairs

- 1945 August: atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; September 2: Japan capitulates
- 1946 Article 9 of the Constitution forever renounces war, the threat or use of force as a means of settling international conflicts, and the maintenance of land, sea or air forces or any other war potential
- 1946-49 civil war in China
- 1950 June: Korean War; August: a national 75 000-strong police reserve force replaces US troops sent to Korea
- 1951 September 8: Peace Treaty of San Francisco signed by 48 countries; Japan-US Security Treaty
- 1952 April: end of US occupation
- 1956 Japan-Soviet relations normalized; Japan admitted to United Nations
- 1960 mutual cooperation and security treaty with the USA; the police reserve force is renamed National Self-Defense Forces
- 1965 March: US troops land in Danang, Vietnam
- 1965-1973 Vietnam War
- 1972 US returns Okinawa to Japan but keeps military bases; diplomatic relations with People's China restored; Marcos imposes martial law in Philippines
- 1973 January: Paris Peace Accords on Vietnam
- 1977 Fukuda promises \$1 billion in aid to Southeast Asian countries in Kuala Lumpur
- 1979 Kwangju insurrection in South Korea
- 1979-80 Japanese exports take off
- 1984 September: South Korean president Chun Doo Hwan visits Japan
- 1986 Fujio, education minister, fired for anti-Korean remarks; imperialist summit in Tokyo: Japan to join research for Star Wars; joint US-Japanese naval maneuvers off Hokkaido

Domestic politics

- 1945 September: US occupation begins; November: Shinto no longer state religion; Trade Union Law takes effect
- 1946 April: general elections, Shigeru Yoshida Prime Minister (PM); October: land reform; November: Constitution adopted
- 1947 May: coalition government under Socialist Tetsu Katayama; women's suffrage adopted; November: Tojo, Hirota and other war criminals executed
- 1948 October: Yoshida returns to power
- 1949-50 first rationalization campaigns in industry
- 1955 November: a fusion creates Liberal Democratic Party; second *gorika* plan begins in steel industry (integrated plants moved to sea shore)
- 1955-73 rural exodus
- 1957 February: Nobosuke Kishi PM
- 1960 June: Kishi resigns; his successor Hayato Ikeda extols future economic growth
- 1960-70 third *gorika* plan in steel industry (QC circles)
- 1964 first motorway Nagoya to Kobe; Eisaku Sato PM
- 1972 Kakuei Tanaka PM
- 1973 full employment peaks
- 1974 Takeo Miki replaces Tanaka, implicated in Lockheed scandal, as PM
- 1974-78 "oil shock," economic recession and first waves of "body slimming" in private sector
- 1976 Takeo Fukuda PM; Tanaka arrested in Lockheed scandal
- 1978 Masayoshi Ohira PM
- 1980 Masayoshi Ito, then Senko Suzuki PM
- 1982 November: Yasuhiro Nakasone elected PM
- 1985 April: privatization of Nippon Telephone and Telegraph
- 1986 July: elections to Diet, Nakasone reelected PM; yen is revalued
- 1987 privatization of JNR railways; unemployment hits 3%

People's Movements

- 1945 November: foundation of Japan Socialist Party; trade-unions create Sanbetsu, which has CP leadership
- 1946 January: Nosaka Sanzo, Japanese Communist Party leader, returns from exile
- 1947 February: general strike banned by MacArthur
- 1949 Trade Union Law amended and "red purges" initiated
- 1950 foundation of Sohyo under SP leadership
- 1952 CP loses all seats in Diet
- 1955 first *shunto*; Ohta and Iwai take Sohyo leadership
- 1960 Miike miners strike; May-June: Zengakuren and Sohyo demonstrations against Security Treaty with US
- 1960-1975 golden age of *shuntos*; SP vote grows; CP conquers municipalities
- 1964 right-wing metalworkers' union found the IMF-JC
- 1968 student revolt in Tokyo
- 1969 January: police recaptures occupied Tokyo University
- 1971-72 radicalization of young postal and railroad workers
- 1975 November-December: as railroad and other public sector workers strike, Sohyo backs down when Miki declares the strike "illegal"
- 1977 Rodo Joho launched
- 1978 May: big demonstration against the inauguration of Narita airport (4 dead)
- 1981 right-wing unions call for "unification of labor front"
- 1982 December: Zenmin Rokyō, right-wing private sector trade union center, formed
- 1983 General and Harbour Workers Unions refuse to join Zenmin Rokyō

Population: 123.7 million
including 830 000 foreigners (674 600 Koreans)
and 3 million Burakumin outcasts

Active population (1982)
total labor force: 57.74 million
overall participation rate: 72.3%
male participation rate: 89%
female participation rate: 55.9%

distribution by activity

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| agriculture | 0.7% |
| mining & quarrying | 0.2% |
| manufacturing | 23.1% |
| electr, gas, water | 0.6% |
| construction | 9.4% |
| wholesale/retail/restaurants/hotels | 22.3% |
| transport, storage, communication | 6.1% |
| finance, insurance, real estate, etc | 3.5% |
| community, social, personal svcs | 21.5% |
| unemployed | 2.5% |

status of people employed outside agriculture

employers: 1.86 million (female (F): 0.30)
self-employed: 5.13 million (F:2.02)
family workers: 3.56 million (F: 2.87)
wage earners: 40.08 million (F: 13.82),
incl. 2.61 million casual workers (F: 1.88)
1.20 million day laborers (F: 0.60)
and 2.55 million part-timers (F: 2.41) (1981)

The private sector

◊ There are 6.3 million non-agricultural private establishments; 99.4% have less than 100 employees and employ 77.2% of workforce. 10.55 million wage earners work in establishments of over 100 employees.

◊ The main financial groups are (with turnover):
Mitsubishi: \$52 billion
Mitsui: \$48 billion
Dai-Ichi Kangyo, incl. C. Itoh: \$12 billion, and Kane-matsu-Gosho: \$12 billion
Fuji bank: 29 coporations incl. Marubeni: \$36 billion
Sumitomo: \$25 billion
Sanwa: 39 corporations, incl. Nisso-Ihwai: \$25 billion
(Sources: *Quid 1987*, Paris 1987; *Japanese Working Life Profiles*, Tokyo 1984)

Parties

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP): main bourgeois party since Liberal and Democratic Parties fused in 1955; ruled uninterruptedly since; cliques vie for chair of party which confers post of Prime Minister. 1987 chair: Yasuhiro Nakasone.

Socialist Party: founded November 1945, supported by Sohyo; 71 000 members; in 1987, its president, Masashi Ishibashi was blamed for poor election results and replaced by Takako Doi, first woman to head a major party in Japan.

Communist Party: founded July 1922, legalized in 1945; 480 000 members; president: Kenji Miyamoto.

Komeito Party (clean government): founded in 1964, inspired by Buddhist Sokagakkai sect.

Democratic Socialist Party: founded January 1960 by right split from SP; supported by Domei.

Output/Trade (1985)

Main industries

steel: 105.5 million tons
vehicles: 13.3 units
color TVs and videos: 45.4 million units
electronic equipment: \$45.2 billion
industrial machinery and equipment: \$39.4 billion

Agriculture, fisheries, forests

fisheries: 6.6 million tons
rice: 11.7 million tons
beef and pork: 2.1 million tons
wood: 28.4 million cubic meters
vegetables: 16.2 million tons

Energy

oil: 625 000 kl
gas: 2.2 billion cubic meters
coal: 16.4 million tons
nuclear: 33 000 MW

Main imports

oil: \$40.6 billion
food and fodder: \$15.5 billion
machinery/equipment: \$12.3 billion
fish/shellfish: \$4.6 billion
coal: \$5.2 billion
wood: \$3.7 billion

Main exports

machinery/equipment: \$126.6 billion
vehicles: \$34.4 billion
steel: \$13.6 billion
chemicals: \$7.7 billion
ships: \$5.9 billion
textile: \$6.3 billion

Armed forces: regular: 243 000

reserves: army 43 000, navy 600

(Source: *Far Eastern Economic Review*,
Asia 1987 Yearbook)

Exchange rates (September 1987)

100 yens = 4.24 French francs

144 yens = US\$ 1.00

July 1986 Results of Elections to the Diet (Lower House: 512 seats)

(in parentheses: 1983 results)

Voting in country as a whole: 71.4% (67%)

Voting in major cities: about 50%

| Party | Seats | % vote |
|---------|-----------|---------------|
| LDP | 304 (250) | 49.4% (45.7%) |
| SP | 86 (111) | |
| Komeito | 57 (59) | |
| DSP | 26 (37) | |
| CP | 27 (27) | 10% |
| Others | 12 (16) | |

(Source: *Le Monde*, 8/7/86; *FEER* 17/7/86)

Trade unions

General Confederations

Sohyo: General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, founded in 1950, close to Socialist Party, main union in public sector (rail, local government, education, post, health); it includes a minority of pro-CP unions, and substantial right-wing currents notably in the private sector; 4.55.

Churitsuroren: Federation of Independent Unions of Japan, around the electrical machinery union; linked to SP right; 1.48.

Shinsanbetsu: National Federation of Industrial Organizations, founded in 1945, declined after 1949; 0.06.

Domei: Japanese Confederation of Labor, the old anti-communist trade unions linked to DSP, strong in shipbuilding, textile, auto, merchant marine; 2.19.

Unions outside general confederations

There are 4277 genuinely independent trade unions, totalling 4.22 million members, including those of the Confederation of Japan Automobile Workers Unions (0.61).

New right-wing trade union centers

Zenmin Rokyo: Japanese Private Sector Trade Union Council, founded December 1982; brings together right-wing unions inside and outside various confederations; 4.84.

Kinzoku Rokyo/IMF-JC (International Metalworkers Federation-Japan Council, an affiliate of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

(Union membership figures in million members; based on Ministry of Labour, *Basic Survey on Trade Unions*. See also p. 43)

Further reading

We have selected a few books about Japan in general:

Kamata, Satoshi. *Japan in the Passing Lane*. New York: Pantheon, 1982. 211 pp. Trans. Tatsuhiro Akimoto. Intr. Ronald Dore. A country boy become journalist's experience as a "seasonal worker" in a Toyota plant. Good eyewitness.

Lehmann, Jean-Pierre *The Roots of Modern Japan*. London: MacMillan, 1982. Considered one of the best on the subject.

Livingston, Jon, Joe Moore and Felicia Oldfather, eds. *The Japan Reader, Vol. 1: Imperial Japan 1800-1945, Vol. 2: Postwar Japan 1945 to the Present*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976. 517 and 600 pp. Documents and essays collected by Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars members.

Halliday, Jon and Gavan McCormack. *Japanese Imperialism Today*. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1973. 279 pp. Dated, but a classic on Japanese imperialism.

☛ Selected articles from **AMPO** (PO Box 5250, Tokyo Int., Japan) on Japanese trade unions and industrial relations: *Volume 18, no. 2-3, 1986*

Kaji, Etsuko. Herded into the Labor Market

Kajima, Keiko. Microelectronics: For Women the Technology of Oppression

Tagaki, Sumiko. Women on the labor front.

Nakajima, Makoto. Nakasone's blow to railway workers

Volume 18, no. 4, 1986

[...] Nissan-Maverick Union Takes on Management Plant Closure

Volume 17, no. 4, 1985

Inoue, Reiko. Sanya: Another Man Murdered amidst Laborers' Continued Struggle

Watanabe, Ben. New Labor Dispatch Law

Volume 17, no. 3, 1985

Sono, Haruo. Privatizing the Japan National Railways

Volume 17, no. 2, 1985

Sono, Haruo. Nissan Plant Closure Dumps Workers and Families
Yokoyama, Yoshio. The Japanese Labor Movement Gasping for Refreshment

Volume 16, no. 4, 1984

Watanabe, Ben (Vice-chairman, N'al U. of G'al Wkrs, Tokyo South District Division). (Interview) Resurrecting the Labor Movement among Workers Drifting Like Grains of Sand

Muto, Ichiyo. Class Struggle on the Shopfloor, The Japanese Case (1945-1984)

Saitama Women Against War, Japan's Unequal "Equal" Employment Opportunity Bill

Volume 16, no. 1-2, 1984

Yokoyama, Yoshio. Japanese Workers: Suffering, in Distrust of Unions

Volume 15, no. 2, 1983

Committee for the Protection of Women in the Computer World. Computerization and Women in Japan

Nakajima, Keiko. Women Organize to Tackle the World of New

Technology

Volume 14, no. 3, 1982

Higuchi, Tokuzo. (Editor *Rodo Joho-Labor Information*).

(Interview) Japanese Workers and the Right-Wing Offensive
Muto, Ichiyo. Class Struggle in Postwar Japan (3)

Volume 14, no. 1, 1982

Muto, Ichiyo. Class Struggle in Postwar Japan (2)

Volume 13, no. 4, 1981

Muto, Ichiyo. Class Struggle in Postwar Japan (1)

Sasahara, Kyoko. Labor Unity and Militancy in South Osaka

Volume 13, no. 2, 1981

Azuma, Yoshiji. Nissan Worker's Diary

Kayama, Masao. (Interview) Nissan Diesel: Breaching a Hole in Big Capital

☛ **Rodo Joho** (4-52-7 Shinbashi, Minatoku, Tokyo, Japan).

This left trade-union current has published documents and one bulletin in English.

☛ From the **Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars** (BCAS, PO Box R, Berthoud, CO 80513, USA), quarterly review, in vol. 17, no. 4, Oct-Dec 1985:

Moore, Joe. Production Control: Workers' Control in Early Postwar Japan

Bix, Hebert P. The "Japanese Challenge": US-Japan Relations at Mid-Decade

☛ From **International Viewpoint** (2 rue Richard-Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France), fortnightly:

Kaji, Etsuko. Hard Time for Women Workers. No. 115, 9/3/87.*

Saitama Women Against War. Women Denounce Fake Equal Employment Opportunity Law. No. 70, 25/2/85.*

Konno, Motomu (a leader JRCL-Japanese section of the Fourth International). (Interview) The tragedy of the far-left. No. 68, 28/1/85.

Muto, Ichiyo (Editor *AMPO*). (Interview) Problems and Debates in the Anti-Imperialist Movement. No. 66, 24/12/84

Yokoyama, Yoshio (of the journal *Kikan Rodo Undo* and Sohyo union in General Sekiku KK oil company). (Interview) Reconstitution of the Trade-Union Movement. No. 62, 29/10/84.

_____. The Workers Movement and the Capitalist Offensive. No. 62, 29/10/84.*

International Viewpoint. Stop Sectarian Violence in the Workers Movement. No. 49, 26/3/82.

Sakai, Yohichi. Against the Right-Wing Offensive in Japanese Labor Movement. No. 7, 24/5/82.

_____. Toward a Class-Struggle Current in the Japanese Unions. No. 5, 26/4/82.

_____. Victories of Japanese Capitalists Lead Down a Blind Alley. No. 4, 12/4/82.

* Originally published in *AMPO*.

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Muto Ichiyo

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Free enterprise ideologues often present Japan as a model of social harmony and economic dynamism. The essays included in this notebook describe the real situation of Japanese workers and unravel the mechanisms of this apparent consensus, in many cases akin to totalitarian suppression of independent thinking. The author explains how the strategic options of the labor movement in the 1950s and 1960s laid the basis for the current rightward shift. In the framework of a Marxist analysis, he deals in original and dialectical fashion with the changing relations between US and Japanese imperialisms, the links between the Liberal Democratic Party and the masses, and the effects of Japanese-style rationalization (*gorika*) on workers power on the shopfloor.

Muto Ichiyo is a collaborator of the English-language periodical *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly*. As both a participant and witness of the rise, decline and crisis of the Japanese "new left," he has written many articles on the situation in Japan: the politics of the regime, the various people's struggles and the labor movement. He is presently preparing a fundamental history of the Japanese "new left."

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