

A TRIP TO JAPAN

from the Japanese Committee of Correspondence

The following exchange of correspondence to the PLP International Committee is very instructive in illustrating the kind of contacts, activity and information that can be obtained by international committees of correspondence.

PROSPECTUS OF JAPAN TRIP:

I. Political Background

As of now the Party knows very little about the Japanese movement in general and the TU movement in particular. We have no political contacts in Japan (or political ties of any sort with the proletariat of the world's second largest capitalist state. As a step toward changing this we are sending one comrade to Tokyo for one week.

As economic and imperialist competition between Japan and the U.S. increases, the efforts of the U.S. ruling class to build anti-Japanese racism and "Buy America" national chauvinism grows stronger.

We can safely assume the Japanese ruling class will promote nationalism as the ideological solution to the problems presented by capitalism in Japan (Japan has essentially the same type of corrupt, crime-ridden, polluted, drug-dependent, male chauvinist capitalist environment we have).

There has been a carefully planned media campaign to stereotype Japanese workers as unquestioning robots, each with a non-human capacity for hard work and loyalty to their corporate masters. "Japanese workers are eager to do a better, faster job for less compensation than American workers. That's why Japanese competition is ruining the American economy, etc., etc. We need a wage freeze to be able to compete with Japan, etc., etc."

American workers are kept unaware of the sharp class struggle in Japan. Last month the three million members of the National Railway workers Union, supported by seven million other workers, closed down all rail transport during a three-day strike.

In several ways the Japanese TU movement is more developed than ours. There are about 59,000 unions with about 12 million members (about 36% of the work force -- compared to about 20% in the U.S.). Sohyo, the largest council of TUs with 4.3 million workers, is affiliated with the Socialist Party.

The Japanese people are searching for alternatives to capitalist rule. The JCP, the second largest non-ruling CP in the world, has made recent electoral gains, electing over 10% of the representatives to the Diet and hundreds of municipal officials, including the Mayors of Tokyo and Kyoto.

Also there is a very large anti-imperialist movement -- hundreds of anti-war groups. In 1970 about 750,000 demonstrated on one day against the continuation of the U.S.-Japan security treaty.

II. Immediate goals of the trip.

A) Since the time we can spend there is limited to about one week, we will primarily concentrate on meeting TU activists with the goal of developing political relationships with them, using WAM as the vehicle for this. The optimum goal here would be to meet one or two class-conscious TU members (possible Auto or Rail) who would be willing to attend the WAM convention in September.

The approach to this goal since we don't know anyone beforehand, will be to visit the headquarters of several unions offering to show union leaders and members WAM liter-

ature and materials emphasizing the shorter work week movement. (The shorter work week seems to be an issue over there too. The legal limit of the work week is 48 hours and there is a lot of compulsory over-time .)

We will also try to interview and photograph T. U. members for the WAM newsletter. And we will try to attend union meetings and, of course, any major TU actions. The newsletter could be used as a means to attending meetings and talking with rank-and-filers.

We will also bring clippings and other material which exposes the growing ruling class drive to build anti-Japanese racism and to make Japanese workers scape-goats for the American economic mess.

B) Another goal of the trip would be to meet revolutionaries. However, given the limited time and the myriad number of sectarian groups, this is a secondary goal since a lot of time could be wasted talking to Trots, revisionists, etc.

One independent group, Hansen Seinen Iin-kai, (Anti-Way Youth Committee) a group of anti-war activists also active as militants in TU politics, might be a group worth visiting. A visit with this group might be combined with spending a day on one of the large campuses with PL literature, especially Road to Revolution III.

C) We have one address of an on-going anti-military group of US Marines. Time permitting, a visit with them would be a tertiary goal.

III. Contacts

As we said earlier, PL and WAM have no contacts at all. However, some friends in Hawaii have given us names of individuals in the Japanese movement, and another friend, now in Kentucky, has sent us some names. We also have the name of a Japanese English professor, who was the friend of several people in the SDS movement at SF State.

The Japanese Town Collective from the San Francisco Japanese community have been told about the trip, and the trip could lead to better relations with the Japanese community.

Summary:

The trip will be a success if it leads to ties with the Japanese working class, and if we can win over any trade union members to visit us and attend the WAM convention in San Francisco this September.

However, given the limited resources and time, this trip should be regarded as one short step toward implementing Road to Revolution III. Given the importance of establishing ties with Asian workers, anything we learn at this stage will be well worth the effort.

REPORT TO INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON JAPAN TRIP

Before the visit to Tokyo we had only two names of Japanese movement people whom we could call on -- a Mrs. K., a journalist whom I knew from a joint struggle in which demonstrations were organized in Honolulu and Tokyo in '68 and '69 to demand freedom for a friend imprisoned in Taiwan; and a university professor, Mr. M., who was befriended by some SDS-PLP people and some friends of the party when he was visiting San Francisco in 1971.

Both of these people were very kind and helpful and sympathetic to PLP in a general way. Mrs. K. wrote a letter of introduction for me which helped me arrange a meeting with one of the Socialist Party labor leaders. Mr. M. was helpful in many ways, especially when he put in a good word for PLP when I had managed to meet individuals connected with a small revolutionary working class group.

For the first two days or so I visited with Mrs. K. and travelled around Tokyo talking

to people on the street including rank-and-file postal workers, department store employees, subway workers, and pensioners who were demonstrating for higher pensions which are now at the starvation level. These people were generally pleased to meet an American who spoke some Japanese and was from a group actively interested in building ties with their labor movement. They were very pleased to hear that we wanted to fight against the "Buy America", racist type of politics pushed by AFL-CIO leaders et al. They were generally very concerned about the international stereotype of the subservient Japanese worker gung-ho for his company's profits. It is clear that the Japanese ruling class is also using this stereotype as an ideological weapon-- the media has created an everyday expression in the Japanese language, "economic animal." People are taught to accept this self-image. Several Japanese workers actually told me that the Japanese worker was an "economic animal" meaning the stereotype mentioned above.

I gave away a lot of literature to the workers I talked to including copies of WAM newsletter, PL magazine, 'Canadian Worker', and "Challenge." Later on I gave mainly WAM literature to the labor officials I met with and samples of all our literature to the small revolutionary group. I would like to start several subscriptions for many of these people; I'll send you a list of names and addresses soon. (Of course due to language barrier mass use of Challenge etc. is difficult).

Visits with Union Leaders:

I visited three union offices: the International Section of Sohyo (Sohyo is equivalent of our AFL-CIO, but led by Socialist-revisionist types); the headquarters of the national Railway Workers Union, Kokuro; and the headquarters of the Union of Locomotive Engineers. The officials I met with were very friendly and happy to hear that a potential left force in the United States TU movement exists. The Japanese TU leadership has been generally

systematically insulted by its counterpart in the U.S. More than once the UAW and AFL leadership has told visiting Japanese trade unionists that they were "too busy" to visit with them.

There is a relatively small rightist labor federation in Japan, Domei, which closely resembles the AFL-CIO and does keep in touch with and participates in AFL international formations, conferences etc. The Domei represents about 1.6 million workers including most auto workers, unfortunately. Sohyo represents close to eight million workers and has built the Japan Socialist Party as its political vehicle. The JSP has about 118 representatives elected to the lower house of the Diet (compared with ruling class party's 271 and CP's 38). The Domei's political affiliate, the Social Democratic Party, has 19 of its members elected to this body.

The Sohyo, Kokuro (railway), and Doro (locomotive engineers) staff people I met with were cautiously interested in the possibility of sending someone to the San Francisco WAM convention. We have to carefully decide how to follow up on this situation. It is entirely possible that they would send a representative (probably from their staff) to the convention. They do want to see more informative material about WAM besides the newspaper -- a copy of the WAM constitution, etc. It would also be helpful to collect (for our own use as well as theirs) and send them examples of how the "Buy America" campaign is going and to pinpoint for them exactly who is pushing this campaign the hardest.

One general impression of these officials. They seem glad that PL and WAM are willing to fight the right-wing U.S. TU leaders, but they would be very unhappy to see anyone with our outlook develop into a force within their own unions.

Visit with Revolutionary Group:

I managed to discover a small group of

very principled and dedicated workers and ex-student revolutionaries who were attempting to build a movement among the super-exploited workers who work in "small enterprises," or what we would call sweat-shops. About one-half of Japanese production is produced by sweat-shop labor which is often sub-contracted by the huge monopolies.

I met this group indirectly through a visit to a peace movement headquarters--the office of the "BeiHei Ren", (Vietnam Peace Association). Beiheiren is a non-sectarian peace movement widely respected in Japan. Some high-school and College students in the office agreed to introduce me to an individual active in a large Chemical Workers Union who comes to their meetings regarding the opposition movement to the Jieitai, "Japanese Self-Defense Force. This Chemical Worker in turn introduced me to his friends in the revolutionary group.

This group, "Godo Roso", (roughly) United Workers, probably has around 50 members active in the poorer areas of Tokyo and Kyoto. They are opposed to the JCP, JSP, and the student sectarian and Trotskyite groups. One of their leaders referred to the JCP as the "Japanese Communist Company."

They apparently hope to build an anti-revisionist movement as a counter-force to the revisionist Trade Union leadership. They refer to themselves as communists.

Their main strategy seems to be to organize the unorganized sweatshop employees into a centralized, large union --perhaps a city-wide or district-wide union of small-shop workers.

They also have friends in the large TUs and among the intellectual community. Their publication, "Yumin no Tomo", (People's Friend), focuses on the grievances of the super-exploited workers. Most of the members of this group work in the sweatshops themselves and organize around day-to-day issues

and build a base with these workers. Their attitude toward base-building resembles ours.

During our discussion which lasted about four hours on the night before I had to leave, it seemed that politically this group agreed with most of our line, although their strategy focusing on the unorganized workers is different. They are not organized as a M-L party at this point evidently due to their smallness.

They were very excited at the idea of forming international ties with U.S. revolutionaries such as PLP. However, travel restrictions placed on Japanese foreign travel are much more severe than in the U.S. Also the language barrier is quite a problem since apparently none of their Tokyo members speak English (They were going to send most of the literature I gave them down to Kyoto where evidently some of their members can read English).

Miscellaneous Visits:

I also visited some independent social-critic type intellectuals who are from the Chinese community of Yokohama. One editor of a Chinese community newspaper wanted to use our Watergate editorial in his paper. I also visited and discussed R. R. III with an Asian scholar named Mr. S. who edits a magazine called "Modern Asia." I spent an afternoon at Waseda University watching the extremely violent clashes between the sectarian student revolutionary groups. They were fighting each other with steel pipes and bricks over control of the student government. The masses of students seemed passively sympathetic with various groups (about five different groups--two Trotskyite). I was unable to have any serious discussion with any of these students since they were too busy that day fighting one another and they were quite suspicious of the foreigner with a camera in their midst.

Summary:

We now have a small number of contacts in the staff of Sohyo, the Railway Workers

Union, a Chemical Workers Union, and among this revolutionary group.

We also have made some friends in the intellectual community including the overseas Chinese community. We should be sure to send subscriptions of our literature to these people. I will continue to write to them as often as I can.

We have tentatively decided to follow up the Sohyo contacts and invite them to send representatives to the San Francisco WAM convention. We also plan to invite representatives from the revolutionary group to visit with us.

We can possibly use these visits as part of an internationalist, anti-"Buy America" campaign, to win over workers here to reject the anti-Japanese racism pushed by the TU leaders here.

August 5, 1973

To Progressive Labor Party Comrades:

Please forgive our late reply. On July 29 we also conferred with our Godo Roso comrades from Tokyo and received the PLP literature and materials. Right now these papers and magazines are being translated by a friend.

My Tokyo comrades also told me of what you had to say when you were in Tokyo and of the San Francisco Convention plans.

I regret that we received your letter too late to be able to send a message to your party's third great convention.

My Tokyo comrades reported to me of what you had to say. We felt that you have a broad proletarian internationalist perspective. We feel confident that you have a strong workers' movement in the United States and that you are keeping up a revolutionary struggle.

Now, by all means, I think I would like to participate in your September 29 workers' conference. Please convey to your PLP comrades that a single worker from across the Pacific, from a small island country like Japan will participate in the San Francisco convention. Also, I would be happy to know the details regarding lodging plans and the expenses necessary to participate.

Because I have the will to participate in the convention, I'll organize my friends to solicit necessary expenses for the trip. However, I'm not sure it will be enough.

It would be good, I think, if I were to receive the subjects for discussion at the conference as soon as possible so that I might have a detailed understanding of them. Also I'd like to participate in the conference in a way that would best fit in with the agenda or program. Also could you tell me how long I'll need to stay. I've tentatively scheduled the early part of September until the middle of October for this. My schedule is flexible, though.

We have sent you some literature about our movement, so please refer to it for more information. We've asked a friend to send an explanatory letter in English to go along with the literature. This material should reach you about a week after this letter arrives.

In order to fight our capitalist enemies, we workers who are exploited one by one at each factory, shop, company, etc. must form a union which unites workers from many factories on an area-wide basis.

Godo Roso members take a very critical position against Sohyo and Domei. At my job there are many workers who are very critical of and dissatisfied with the management. We are building a workers' organization and I'm on the standing committee of this group.

We members of Godo Roso -- many of us -- would like to visit with our good friends in PLP, we could learn many things we think. Just as Mr. S. brought materials published in the U. S. to trade unionists in Japan, we would like to present you with our materials. Japanese workers should know more about the U. S. situation and we should tell you about our conditions.

Long Live the Progressive Labor Party!

August 12, 1973

Dear Comrades of P. L. P. and W. A. M.,

I will send you several pamphlets which will convey to you what are our movements, as I have promised in the latest letter.

Here I will report on the status quo of Japanese movements briefly. They began by taking the industrial-union form ("Kigyonai-roso") under which they built one union for one enterprise. After being organized, such a union of union-shop system as was established in a certain enterprise by its whole worker's alliance, has been changed in its character into a workers' union which attaches greater importance to industrial capitalists' benefits rather than to those of workers. And later, going through union and disunion repeatedly in their history, all Japanese unions have been made into the two big national centers, Sohyo and Domei, as they are now. By the way, we fought against the Japan-U. S. Security Treaty ("Am-po") on a popular level, both in 1960 and in 1970. Even in this epoch-making revolutionary situation, however, these two labor centers avoided effectual engagements and gave up fights at their spots of work with all their numbers of laborers. The Japanese Communist Party ("Nihonkyosanto") on the other hand, being wholly immersed in the expansion of its power, devoted itself solely to the then-coming election. While the ready-established left-wings, that is, Sohyo, Domei,

and Kyosanto, abandoned the way to the revolution and only searched for defending their own organizations, a lot of younger workers, students and citizens have made their efforts to create their own organizations and, independent of others' leadership, have grown up on a political level, too.

For the past ten years from 1960 to 1970, we Japanese workers had been obliged, through various fights, to admit the urgent need to find out and create the new way of our fighting and laborers' culture. Although our movement now in 1973 is still frail like a young bird just having left the nest, our disgust and fighting spirit against the national power and capitalists' groups are increasing in intensity day by day.

Below, I will give you a short explanation of each enclosed pamphlet. Please forgive us our inability to translate the whole materials. Now I will go on by following the number I added to each.

- No. 1: The Organization of the Anti-Imperialist Union. This sums up the process of out organizing the joint union ("Godo Roso"). The main, substantial of our maintenance can be found in pp. 1-2 and pp. 78-80. The rest is our discussion concerning the organization.
- No. 2: The Contract of Kyoto Regional Union. This is the contract of our union. The underlined passages are most important.
- No. 3: The News of the Regional Union (No. 37-42). This shows our latest news. Backing up the salesman who were about to be fired by a small civil book-selling company called "HOLP" ("Tosho-geppan") we succeeded in gaining the retraction through over a year's repetition of trials and collective bargainings. We are summarizing the process and the result of this fight.
- No. 4: The Blues for a Dangling Man ("Chubra-

rin No Blues"). --Only in a dream can he soar: His hesitation now means his complete defeat. --

This is the report which was made by the struggle committee, especially by the fired salesman, Osamu Shimada, in the interval of their fight.

No. 5: The Bill Telling Our Victory. Our tactics were right. We could utterly frustrate the capitalists. This news was accepted with goodwilled delight. Through our maintenance of such fights, we would like to see in right perspective the revolution which will decisively threaten the Japanese monopolistic capitalists. (The five pamphlets I have mentioned thus far, are of our Regional Union.)

No. 6: "We Stopped the Belt Conveyers At Last!" This pamphlet describes the process of organizing into a union those seasonal workers who joined a revolt. Although the union worked for a while, the revolt ended in their defeat because of Sohyo's interference and Kyosanto's interruption, and especially of the violent, hostile operations on the part of a union which follows the Domei line. (The union shares interests with the enterprise "Nissan-Shatai".) But not a little was the effect which has been produced upon the

nation-wide workers of the auto-industry.

No. 7: The Quarterly Review of the Laborers' Movements (No. 5). This magazine is the valuable organ which informs you of the nation-wide trends in the movements of our joint union ("Godo-rosu") and of the similar kinds. For the coming three days from August 18 to 20, the men of activity will meet in Tokyo and an assembly of about one thousand people will be held there.

The materials mentioned above are the main ones which survey our movements. Since there are a lot of abbreviations and special terms concerning labor movements in Japan, it may happen that you sometimes find it very difficult to read them. But if you kindly translate No. 1 and 7 at the least, then you may be able to comprehend the general situation in Japan.

From now on, we will make every effort to translate and send you our materials as far as our spare time and capability permit.

Hoping this report on our fights will help my dear comrades in its own way,

P. S. I would like you to send me soon the subjects for the discussion on September 29.

BUILD INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE

Contact W.I.N. for further information.
