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# Betraying Revolution: The Foundations of the Japanese Communist Party

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Betraying Revolution: The Foundations of the Japanese Communist Party

Matthew Crooke  
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## Introduction

The international working class in 2018 faces declining economic and social conditions around the world. Increasingly no longer capable of living in the old manner, the proletariat is searching for political alternatives. Voters in Greece, for example, installed the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) in January 2015 while millions of Americans were galvanized by the 2016 presidential campaign of self-proclaimed democratic-socialist Bernie Sanders with his criticisms of the “billionaire class” in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the purpose of these parties and politicians has been to subordinate the working class to the national demands of their respective bourgeoisies.<sup>2</sup> It is no different in Japan where opposition to Prime Minister Abe Shinzō and remilitarization is widespread.<sup>3</sup> If the working class there is to have a genuine political voice, it must have its own political party, one internationally oriented.

With this growing discontent in Japan, people are casting an examining eye towards the Japanese Communist Party (JCP).<sup>4</sup> However, this party, steeped in decades of Stalinism, is incapable of providing a progressive way forward for the working class and youth in Japan or Asia. Stalinism—which is what most people think of when they hear the word socialism—is in fact a deviation from and perversion of socialism. Contained within this paper is not simply a theoretical exercise that examines the origins of socialism in Japan, but also a warning to

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Kane and Philip Rucker, “An Unlikely Contender, Sanders Takes on ‘Billionaire Class’ in 2016 Bid,” *Washington Post*, April 15, 2015, accessed April 25, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/sanders-takes-on-billionaire-class-in-launching-2016-bid-against-clinton/2015/04/30/4849fe32-ef3a-11e4-a55f-38924fca94f9\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.d1b2f538c86b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/sanders-takes-on-billionaire-class-in-launching-2016-bid-against-clinton/2015/04/30/4849fe32-ef3a-11e4-a55f-38924fca94f9_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d1b2f538c86b).

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Martin, “The Demise of Sander’s ‘Political Revolution,’” *World Socialist Web Site*, April 30, 2016, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/04/30/pers-a30.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Kyodo Staff Report, “Opposition to Abe’s Amendment Quest Hits 55%; Support for Article 9 Rewrite Falls: Survey,” *Japan Times*, January 14, 2018, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/14/national/politics-diplomacy/opposition-revising-constitution-grows-55-kyodo-survey/#.WuJLz7jLcsB>.

<sup>4</sup> Gavin Blair, “Communist Party Makes a Comeback... in Japan,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 5, 2013, accessed April 25, 2018, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2013/0805/Communist-Party-makes-a-comeback-in-Japan>.

workers, youth, students, and left-thinking people. Parties and organizations claiming to be on the left have either completely reneged on election promises (Syriza) or abandoned any orientation to the working class, instead fixating on issues of identity that appeal to the upper middle class layers of society. The end result is the rejection of the so-called left, but still facing the same economic crises, people turn to the far-right.

In 2018, the presidency of Donald Trump in the United States is but one example of this political shift. For the first time since World War II, fascists (Alternative for Germany) sit in the Bundestag in Germany. The far-right Freedom Party in Austria shares power with the conservative People's Party. If the Japanese Communist Party and other Stalinist and pseudo-left parties are allowed to continue masquerading as genuinely socialist organizations, they will further facilitate the rise of the far-right and betray the aspirations of workers and youth. The question may arise then, why not focus on the JCP today and not worry about the past? The changes in the JCP did not take place overnight nor are they the result of individual failings. They are the result of the steady shift to the right over nearly a century. For this reason, the JCP cannot be reformed and this must be shown through a study of its history.

### **Marxism versus Stalinism**

Historians and academics when interpreting communism and the Soviet Union typically accept Stalinism as the natural progression of Marxism. They paint the struggle within the Bolshevik and Russian Communist Party that emerged in 1917 and intensified in the 1920s and 1930s between the Soviet bureaucracy led by Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky's Left Opposition as irrelevant or simply ignore it.<sup>5</sup> This interpretation extends to analyses of Marxism's impact in

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the historian Eric Hobsbawm claimed in relation to the Soviet Union that "History must start from what happened. The rest is speculation." Quoted in, David North, *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century* (Oak Park, MI: Mehring Books, 2014), 70.

Asia and the development of individual parties such as the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). It is in light of this conflict that this paper takes its form.

Historians have sought to place the blame for the political trajectory of the JCP in Moscow and the Communist International (Comintern) without dealing with the differences between Trotskyism, or genuine Marxism, on one hand, and Stalinism on the other. Right-wing academics like Robert Scalapino approached the JCP as a genuinely revolutionary party, accepting Stalinism as Marxism.<sup>6</sup> In a soon to be released book, reflecting the continued relevance of the JCP, Peter Berton refers to the party as the Japanese government's "moral compass,"<sup>7</sup> which necessarily means bourgeois morality. In the best of these interpretations, had Japan's Marxists been left to their own devices, they would have been free to follow a path that took into account the unique conditions in Japan while being unburdened from the demands of Moscow that forced the JCP to apply so-called Russian or European conceptions to their revolutionary struggle.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the JCP should have been left free to pursue a national path to socialism. This is an entirely anti-Marxist conception and demonstrates the theoretical vacuum currently present, specifically in regards to the political fight between Trotsky and Stalin. The national road to socialism was in fact a Stalinist construction. Marx and Engels had insisted that socialism could only be achieved on the international level, which both Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin and Trotsky fought to advance. Marx and Engels wrote in 1850 regarding the revolutions two years prior,

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<sup>6</sup> It is certainly far easier to attack Stalinism than Marxism. Ironically, in order to make the claim that socialism is not feasible, anti-Marxist historians take Stalinist lies as good coin, utilizing them for their own purposes.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Berton, *The Japanese Communist Party: Permanent Opposition, But Moral Compass* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> This is the essential position put forward in Germaine A. Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

While the democratic petty bourgeois want to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible, achieving at most the aims already mentioned, *it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent* until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far—*not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world*—that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers. (emphasis added)<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, this paper will analyze the foundations of the JCP from the position that the party was not wrong to follow the international movement as such but that the Communist International was perverted by Stalinism, causing the JCP to shift to the right and ultimately become a defender of capitalism.

### **The Theoretical Framework**

In order to provide both a theoretical contribution towards an alternative for the Japanese and international working class and to explain what Stalinism is requires an examination of the history of the JCP based upon scientific Marxism. Marx and Engels developed this field of thought on two bases: the first being the discovery of surplus value and the other the dialectical materialist understanding of history, the latter of which I will employ here. Dialectical and historical materialism put simply means that social consciousness comes from social being and not the other way around. One's individual consciousness is therefore derived from their social, or class, being. Engels further explained in 1878 that,

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or estates is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains,

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<sup>9</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," March 1850, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1850-ad1.htm>.

not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to this, Stalin and his supporters fell back on the concept of “socialism in one country” and the “two-stage theory of revolution,” neither of which were original, but had been taken from the social-democrats who had made their final, irreversible break with Marxism in 1914 when World War I broke out. Faced with failed revolutions in Europe and modest improvements in the Soviet Union during the 1920s, the Stalinists argued that socialism could be constructed within a single nation-state in a complete contradiction of Marxism. The “two-stage theory of revolution” had been advocated by the Mensheviks<sup>11</sup> and held that colonial, semi-colonial, and otherwise developing countries first had to pass through the bourgeois, capitalist stage of economic development before even considering socialism. This became the Stalinist rationale for ordering communist parties around the world to collaborate with their bourgeoisies. These capitalist parties would then supposedly carry out progressive agendas, but this did not occur and in many cases had tragic results.

Returning to what Engels wrote on materialism, if the Stalinists based the supposed development of socialism on the nation-state system, the historical vehicle for capitalism, then the modes of production and distribution must compromise and conform to capitalism. Socialism can only be completed internationally, through permanent revolution, as put forward by Marx and Engels in 1850. Trotsky expanded upon this concept in the early 20th century, contributing

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<sup>10</sup> Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring in Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works*, trans. Emile Burns, vol. 25 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), 254.

<sup>11</sup> The Bolsheviks and Mensheviks formed in 1903 following a split in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party. Until 1914, Social-Democracy represented the Marxist movement in Europe and its national parties were organized in the Second International. With the outbreak of World War I, many of these parties voted for war credits, backing their respective bourgeois governments, and breaking irrevocably with their anti-war, Marxist positions. The Mensheviks in Russia followed this path as well. In response, the Bolsheviks and their supporters internationally launched the Third (or Communist) International.

to the victory of the Bolsheviks as a leader of the 1917 October Revolution. With this understanding of Marxism in mind, if the JCP does not challenge the capitalist mode of production, then it becomes a defender of capitalism, whether it intends to or not. With this brief introduction of Marxism and Stalinism, it is time to delve into the foundations of the Japanese Communist Party.

### **The Origins of Marxism in Japan**

The origins of socialism in Japan can be traced back to the 1890s and the formation of academic clubs for the purpose of discussing political reforms as well as early attempts to organize workers into labor unions in response to the rapaciousness of the new Japanese bourgeoisie. The 1868 Meiji Restoration played a key role in the development of Japanese industry and capitalism. However, unlike Western European countries that took centuries to develop, it took Japan only a few decades. This development favored the centralization of resources and capital in the hands of a few wealthy families, which became known as the *zaibatsu*. With government protection and support, which was necessary for Japan to catch up economically with the West, banking capital grew out of proportion to industry, leading to the development of Japanese imperialism.<sup>12</sup> By the 1920s, five banks controlled more than a quarter of the country's bank capital.<sup>13</sup> Domestically, this required much more of a police state to drive this rapid industrialization while internationally Japan was forced to search out new markets and access to resources in order to compete with the existing imperialist powers, leading to war with China (1894-1895) and Russia (1904-1905) and the colonization of Taiwan and Korea by 1910.

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<sup>12</sup> E. Herbert Norman, *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 110-112.

<sup>13</sup> These five were Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Dai'ichi, and Yasuda. Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development*, 7.



Many of those who played a role in founding the JCP during this early period of Japanese socialism were aligned with the Christian socialist or anarcho-syndicalist movements. Christian socialists believed that capitalism could be gradually reformed and did not require a revolution. This perspective was similar to the JCP's today, which claims working class victories can be won in parliament.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, one of the great Marxist revolutionaries Rosa Luxemburg wrote in 1898 in regards to the state's ability to reform itself:

We know that the present State is not "society" representing the "rising working class." It is itself the representative of capitalist society. It is a class state. Therefore its reform measures are not an application of "social control," that is, the control of society working freely in its own labor process. They are forms of control applied by the class organization of Capital to the production of Capital. The so-called social reforms are enacted in the interests of Capital.<sup>15</sup>

Anarcho-syndicalists, on the other hand, placed emphasis on working within trade unions and working towards a general strike to overthrow capitalism rather than building a revolutionary party to lead the working class. Yamakawa Hitoshi and his comrades like Sakai Toshihiko and Arahata Kanson, among the founders of the JCP, were involved in this movement for years. They had been supporters of the anarchist Kōtoku Shūsui, who was murdered by the Japanese state on trumped up charges in 1911.<sup>16</sup> This movement was heavily influenced by the International Workers of the World and leading anarchists like Peter Kropotkin in Russia. The

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<sup>14</sup> "Program of the Japanese Communist Party," Japanese Communist Party, adopted January 17, 2004, accessed April 25, 2018, [http://www.jcp.or.jp/english/23rd\\_congress/program.html](http://www.jcp.or.jp/english/23rd_congress/program.html).

"Socialist transformation will not be carried out in a short period of time; it will be a long process that needs a stage-by-stage progress based on national consensus. Such a transformation begins with forming a consensus among a majority of the people in support of an advance toward socialism/communism; *power aiming for socialism will be established with a backing of a stable parliamentary majority*. Building a national consensus is prerequisite for taking action throughout these stages." (emphasis added)

<sup>15</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution," in *The Essential Rosa Luxemburg: Reform or Revolution and The Mass Strike*, ed. Helen Scott (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 58-59.

<sup>16</sup> The Japanese government at the time hoped to nip the growing international socialist and anti-imperialist movement in the bud following the annexation of Korea in 1910. During the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905, Kōtoku had established himself as a leading opponent of imperialist war. Robert Thomas Tierney, *Monster of the Twentieth Century: Kōtoku Shūsui and Japan's First Anti-imperialist Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 127-129.

right to organize workers to fight for better conditions was an important one, but unions were bargaining tools within capitalism and could not go beyond these bounds no matter how militant. Lenin wrote in his famous 1902 work, *What is to be Done?* that within unions “there could not yet be Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. This consciousness could only be brought to them from without.”<sup>17</sup> This meant a party was needed to politically educate workers on socialism and provide leadership.<sup>18</sup>

The 1917 Russian Revolution, 1918 Rice Riots in Japan, and the overall decline in economic and political conditions, provided the impetus to Japan’s socialists to turn to Marxism.<sup>19</sup> The wartime boom in which Japan found open markets vacated by the warring countries were occupied once more as Great Britain’s, France’s, and the United States’ economies returned to normal. Furthermore, while some historians have tried to paint this period as a boon for democracy under the Taisho emperor, this window dressing served to paper over the actual situation.<sup>20</sup> Only a small, wealthy minority was allowed to vote in parliamentary elections. The two leading parties, the Seiyūkai and Kenseikai, had been formed by and represented the interests of the ruling elites. Even when voting rights were extended to all men over the age of 25 in 1925, the tradeoff came in the form of the Peace Preservation Law that specifically targeted socialists and increased state repression.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Vladimir Lenin, “What is to be done?,” in *Essential Works of Lenin: ‘What is to be done?’ and Other Writings*, ed. Henry M. Christman (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 74.

<sup>18</sup> Though written in 1938, perhaps no sentence better sums up this issue facing workers throughout the 20th century and now the 21st: “The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.” Leon Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Transitional Program* (New York: Labor Publications, 1981), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Rodger Swearingen and Paul Langer, *Red Flag in Japan: International Communism in Action 1919-1951* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 10.

<sup>20</sup> Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Richard H. Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 58.

## Founding the JCP: The Necessity of a Party

It was in this context that different figures who would found the JCP like Katayama Sen and Yamakawa Hitoshi came to Marxism. Katayama Sen, who until this point had been a Christian Socialist, had fled police harassment by moving to the United States in 1914. He played a role in organizing a small group known as the Association of Japanese Socialists in America as well as the American Communist Party. With the aid of Sebald Justin Rutgers, a Dutch acquaintance, Katayama was introduced to key figures in the Marxist movement, including Leon Trotsky and Nikolai Bukharin in New York in 1917. However, Katayama was not heavily swayed by these Russian revolutionaries. International events on the other hand played the key role in influencing Katayama's move towards communism rather than theoretical conviction.<sup>22</sup> In fact Katayama's understanding of Marxist theory would always remain low.<sup>23</sup>

In May 1919, the anarchists Sakai, Yamakawa, and Arahata declared their acceptance of Marxism in an issue of their organ, *New Society*.<sup>24</sup> The establishment of the JCP was on the horizon and with assistance from the Third or Communist International (Comintern), this would become a reality in 1922. The Comintern itself was founded in March 1919 as the world party of socialist revolution, uniting member parties under the banner of international communism. Katayama's group in the United States and the Sakai-Yamakawa-Arahata group in Japan established direct contact that same year through Kondō Eizō, whom Katayama sent to Japan from New York. Katayama also set off for the Soviet Union via Mexico. In 1920, they set up the Socialist League, a collection of communists and anarchists, and as a sign of things to come, the police came down hard on the group, disrupting meetings, and finally ordering it to dissolve in

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<sup>22</sup> Hyman Kublin, *Asian Revolutionary: The Life of Sen Katayama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 241-242.

<sup>23</sup> George M. Beckmann and Genji Okubo, *The Japanese Communist Party 1922-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

May 1921 under the Public Peace Police Law.<sup>25</sup> However, there was a hesitancy to establish a formal communist party, in part due to police harassment but also due to a lack of political clarification and understanding of international socialism.

The Comintern's influence on the JCP played a significant role on the party's development. The Comintern's first four congresses dealt with the international revolution and included discussion on how to found new movements in non-European or developing countries. Responding during debate at the Second Comintern Congress in 1920, Vladimir Lenin stated,

The question was posed as follows: Are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation and among whom a certain advance toward progress is to be seen since the war? We replied in the negative.<sup>26</sup>

He continued:

In addition, the Communist International should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that the backward countries, aided by the proletariat of the advanced countries, can go over to the soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage.<sup>27</sup>

Lenin also emphasized the importance of the political independence of communist parties, stating:

The Communist International should form temporary understandings, even alliances, with the bourgeois democracy of the colonies and backward countries, *but not merge with it*, unconditionally preserving the independence of the proletarian movement, even in its most embryonic form... We, as communists, must and will support bourgeois emancipation in colonial countries only when, in those areas, these movements are really revolutionary, when their representatives will not hinder us in educating and organizing the peasantry and the large masses of the exploited in the revolutionary spirit.<sup>28</sup> (emphasis added)

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>26</sup> *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!: Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920*, ed. John Riddell, vol. 2 (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991), 215.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 28.

The emphasis on the independence of the proletarian movement is crucial to socialism. Completely contradictory to what Lenin had said at the Second Comintern Congress, the Stalinists, who had taken over the Comintern following Lenin's death in January 1924, ordered communist parties in Asia to subordinate themselves to their respective national bourgeoisies, under the claim that in colonial, semi-colonial, and developing countries, the bourgeoisie could be progressive. This had tragic results, notably in China, where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) merged with the Kuomintang, which suppressed the ability of the CCP to fight for Marxism. Stalin infamously claimed in an April 5, 1927 speech, one week before Chiang Kai-shek's massacre of Shanghai communists and workers,<sup>29</sup> that the Chinese bourgeoisie would be "used up and tossed away like a squeezed lemon."<sup>30</sup> For Japan, Andrew Barshay makes the point that the dominance of Stalinist thought in the JCP led to the conception of an "advanced Europe and backwards Asia." Therefore, a distorted understanding of the imperial system and the development of Japanese capitalism emerged.<sup>31</sup> This would have had a disorienting effect on Japan's communists.

However, at the time of these early congresses, the Comintern was still motivated by the concept of internationalism, which can be seen in how the JCP took shape. Kondō, Katayama's envoy from New York, played a role in facilitating contact between the Japanese communists and the Comintern. He briefly worked with Ōsugi Sakae, an anarchist who had been invited to

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<sup>29</sup> Wang Jingwei, the leader of the so-called Left KMT, also abandoned his communist allies by July of the same year.

<sup>30</sup> Leon Trotsky, "First Speech on the Chinese Question," in *On China*, ed. Les Evans and Russell Block (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), 283.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew E. Barshay, *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan: The Marxian and Modernist Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 56.

Shanghai in October 1920 for discussions by Comintern representative, Yi Ch'un-suk.<sup>32</sup> Sakai and Yamakawa were also invited, but turned down the chance. Ōsugi accepted money from the Comintern for publishing his material in exchange for a promise to collaborate with the Japanese communists.<sup>33</sup> His relationship with Kondō, however, was short-lived. They published a magazine called, *Labor Movement*, but Kondō was quickly ready to break with Ōsugi, who intensified his attack on the Soviet Union after their split.<sup>34</sup> At this point, with the Socialist League unable to operate due to police repression and dissent growing between its members, the Comintern sent Yi Chung-rim to Japan in April 1921 to try and once more establish contact with the Japanese communists. He turned to Yamakawa, on the advice of Kondō, as George Beckmann and Okubo Genji suggest, who responded favorably.<sup>35</sup> Yamakawa and Kondō began to work on preparations for a formal communist party and a branch of the Comintern. With Sakai, Arahata, as well as a few others, they formed a small group and then sent Kondō to Shanghai for further discussions and formally broke with Ōsugi and the anarchists. However, uncertainty continued to plague the group, especially after the failure of the Socialist League.<sup>36</sup>

It would be wrong to simply blame these figures for their reluctance and uncertainty and contribute that solely to the early problems of the JCP. In a country with as repressive a regime as Japan, it was certainly difficult for socialists to get a hold of Marxist material, let alone circulate it and discuss it. The police had also learned of intentions to create a formal communist

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<sup>32</sup> Koreans played an important role in facilitating contact between Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Russian communists. Because of the influence of the surrounding countries on Korea, there were often multi-lingual Koreans available to serve as translators.

<sup>33</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Robert A. Scalapino, *The Japanese Communist Movement, 1920-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 12.

<sup>35</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 31.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

party.<sup>37</sup> Kondō, having received money from the Comintern to set up a party, had drawn the suspicion of police when he returned from Shanghai, missed a train to Tokyo at Shimonoseki, and chose to use some of his funds to get drunk and find a prostitute. Police detained him, discovered the money, managed to extract some information from him about his political purposes, but ultimately let him go. Faced with the wavering positions of Sakai, Yamakawa, and Arahata, Kondō attempted to establish a party in August 1921 amongst students at Waseda University, known as the Enlightened People's Communist Party (*Gyōmin Kyōsantō*).<sup>38</sup> However, their activities, which included leafletting at the homes of military personnel taking part in drills around Tokyo that fall, led to the mass arrest of party members, including Kondō.<sup>39</sup> He ultimately faded from influence in the socialist movement at this point.<sup>40</sup>

There were other Japanese figures working overseas in the communist movement, including delegates who attended the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East, held in January-February 1922 in Moscow. One of these was Nosaka Sanzō, who joined the British Communist Party in 1920 and later rose to prominence in the 1930s and in postwar Japan as a party leader. However, he did not have voting rights at that point.<sup>41</sup> Other attendees hailed from China, Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and the United States.<sup>42</sup> Katayama was selected as an honorary chairman, alongside Lenin, Trotsky, Grigory Zinoviev, and Stalin. Reflecting the influence of Japanese imperialism and emphasis on internationalism, Zinoviev, the chairman of the Comintern, told the congress, "The only thing that really can solve the Far

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<sup>37</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Other translations for this party include Men of the Dawn Communist Party (Scalapino) and Dawn's People Communist Party (Swearingen and Langer).

<sup>39</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Swearingen and Langer, *Red Flag in Japan*, 12.

Eastern question is the defeat of the Japanese bourgeois and the final victory of the revolution in Japan... The greater then is the responsibility of the young Japanese proletariat.”<sup>43</sup>

The congress provided a strong impetus for the JCP’s establishment on July 15, 1922. Delegates returning to Japan from Moscow contacted Sakai, Yamakawa, and Arahata and encouraged them to found the party, which they did, though still reluctantly.<sup>44</sup> They began operations on February 23, 1923. Almost immediately after, on June 5, the entire leadership was arrested on charges relating to anti-state activities and the party, in effect, ceased to operate.<sup>45</sup> Following their release the next year, many of the party members questioned whether or not to rebuild the party. A majority at first, following Yamakawa, argued that conditions in Japan were not right for a communist party.<sup>46</sup> Yamakawa, joined by Sakai and Arahata, pushed for conducting work solely within the labor unions instead, similar to their former anarcho-syndicalist position. In 1925, they formed the Labor Union Council of Japan (*Nihon Rōdō Hyōgikai* or simply *Hyōgikai* for short) with 15,000 workers, but it was dissolved by the government in 1928.<sup>47</sup> Over those three years, membership had grown to 23,000.<sup>48</sup> Communists along with non-communists also attempted to form a legal party, the Labor-Farmer Party (*Rōdō Nōmintō*)<sup>49</sup> during this period. This was the beginning of the “united front *with all progressive elements*, (emphasis in original)” which as Scalapino points out, was “a value-laden qualification

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>45</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 18-19.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>48</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 159.

<sup>49</sup> A number of left-leaning parties with similar names existed at this time, including the Labor-Farmer Party, the Japan Labor-Farmer Party, the Japan Farmer Party, and the Social Democratic Party. These parties initially tried to form a united Farmer-Labor Party in December 1925, but the police ordered it to dissolve immediately after its inaugural meeting.



that could be interpreted differently, depending on the occasion.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, it was dependent upon whom the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow chose to align with at any given moment.

The Yamakawa faction, arguing for working solely within labor unions like Hyōgikai or legal parties rather than emphasizing the importance of a communist party, was opposed by a second group led by Fukumoto Kazuo. He rejected cooperation with non-communist parties and organizations, and was subsequently accused of “Trotskyism,” for ignoring the united front and trying to set up a party built solely on intellectuals.<sup>51</sup> By 1926, his influence was rising in the party, particularly among youth.<sup>52</sup> He ridiculed the charges of being a “Trotskyite” as “complete nonsense” in a 1957 interview,<sup>53</sup> and in fact his theories were more of an adaptation to Stalinism. He viewed Japan’s 1889 constitution as the significant moment when Japan entered a distorted bourgeois stage, but had not completed it.

Fukumoto claimed the Meiji Restoration “paved the way for the development of capitalism. This revolution overthrew Japanese feudalism, but since it brought about the rule of autocracy, it was not a bourgeois revolution.”<sup>54</sup> This is fully in line with Stalinism. However, the following is not. According to Fukumoto, after 1889, “the bourgeoisie turned reactionary, compromised and combined with the autocratic forces, and has today developed in itself the germ of fascistic dictatorship.”<sup>55</sup> Fukumoto’s reasoning was similar to Yamakawa’s even if they reached different conclusions. Fukumoto accepted the Stalinist line as far as the bourgeoisie was concerned, but believed that Japan’s own unique conditions meant that the bourgeoisie could not

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<sup>50</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 24-25.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>52</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 28. Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 108.

<sup>53</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 29n42.

<sup>54</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 112.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

carry out Stalin's two-stage theory and that the JCP should not apply those lines to their own struggle. He claimed that only after the supposed 1889 revolution, the year the Meiji Constitution was proclaimed providing limited parliamentary politics, did the capitalist class become reactionary and that it could still be progressive in other cases. Fukumoto was attempting to build the JCP along nationalist lines by rejecting the Comintern's directives. In fact, he believed that he was sidelined for attempting to win more independence for the JCP from Moscow.<sup>56</sup> Fukumoto and Yamakawa both rejected the international aspect of the revolution, just as much as Stalin did.

### **The 1927 Thesis and the United Front**

The struggle between the Yamakawa and Fukumoto factions brought about the 1927 Thesis and both leaders were sidelined as a result. However, this did not mean the end of factional disputes, as a new one emerged. Yamakawa, refused to abandon his line, which led to the formation of the *Rōnō-ha*, or Rōnō Faction (workers and farmers), in opposition to the *Kōza-ha* (feudalist), or the mainstream faction, which rejected both Yamakawa and Fukumoto. The *Kōza-ha* followed the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution. The *Rōnō-ha*, which left the JCP, argued that Japan was indeed a capitalist country, but that the revolution could be carried out through merging with labor unions.<sup>57</sup> They did not discount the two-stage theory, but merely claimed it was incorrect for Japan.

Both factions followed some form of the "united front." A united front in and of itself was not proscribed by genuine socialists, but it certainly carried with it strict conditions. Freedom to criticize other groups in the front, continuing to put forward a Marxist position, remaining independent and not merging into other parties were all basic points. The goal of such

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<sup>56</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 30n42.

<sup>57</sup> Makoto Itoh, *Value and Crisis: Essays on Marxian Economics in Japan* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 23-24.

a front is not to simply achieve short-term goals, but to demonstrate to the working class and its allies amongst farmers/peasants, youth, and progressive layers of intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie that it is the Marxist party alone that stands at the head of the revolutionary movement.

However, with the 1927 Thesis, which was written by the Comintern, it is clear that the lessons of the previous ten years were not taken into consideration by the Stalinists. This document, formally known as “A Resolution to the Problem of Japan,” delivered a rebuke to the Yamakawa and Fukumoto factions who were drifting from the control of the Stalinist Comintern. It was marked by centrism, or the balancing between socialist and bourgeois strategy. One section stated, “The struggle against opportunist and reformist leaders should be conducted in such a way as not to estrange the leftist elements of the trade unions and mass parties; rather, the communists should fight within these organizations by exposing the leaders and winning over the masses from them. Otherwise the communists risk becoming isolated from the mass labor movement.”<sup>58</sup> It further called on the JCP to join with the centrist Japan Labor-Farmer Party. This was similar to the Comintern’s position in China, where the KMT was also considered a worker-peasant party. The Stalinists claimed that since “nine-tenths” of the KMT was comprised of either workers or peasants, they could pressure the party leadership to carry out a socialist agenda.<sup>59</sup> The same idea held true in Japan. Chiang Kai-shek’s and Wang Jingwei’s abandonment of the CCP should have been enough to prove the Stalinist conception of a worker-peasant party wrong. Instead, Moscow refused to allow any discussion on the events in China. The thesis was accordingly approved by the Comintern and its Japanese representatives in July 1927.

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<sup>58</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 306.

<sup>59</sup> Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1996), 242.

It must be pointed out that neither Japan nor China was the first place where the conception of a “worker-peasant party” was demonstrated to be insufficient for socialist revolution. The Bolsheviks had put forward a similar conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry prior to 1917.<sup>60</sup> This meant a union between the property-less working class and the petty bourgeois, landed holding peasantry. The working class would have to be restrained in its demands to accommodate the peasantry. Lenin believed that this union would be able to ameliorate conditions for workers and peasants while the revolution would spark new ones in Western Europe, which could then come to the aid of the Bolsheviks.

When Lenin returned to Russia from Switzerland in April 1917, he recognized that the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was unviable as the peasantry supported the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Both parties were backing the capitalist Provisional Government that had replaced Tsar Nicholas II’s regime. Lenin was then won over to Trotsky’s position of permanent revolution.<sup>61</sup> This meant the following: There no longer existed a progressive national bourgeoisie capable of carrying out democratic reforms like those in 1776 America or 1789 France, prior to the emergence of the working class. Therefore, the proletariat, independently of other classes, would carry through the revolution and begin to implement a socialist program. On this basis, the most politically advanced peasants were also won over. Finally, the revolution would not stop at the national borders, but would continue until completed globally, hence the world permanent.<sup>62</sup>

For the Japanese communists, in order to remain inside such a centrist party, the JCP would have to accommodate itself to that party or any other organization it worked within or

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<sup>60</sup> In Marxist terminology, all states are dictatorships. The conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat is therefore more democratic than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

<sup>61</sup> Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 227-239.

<sup>62</sup> Leon Trotsky, *1905*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 269-272.

attempted to work within, hence the reason the Comintern initially proscribed such unions at its Second Congress in 1920. It would not be able to criticize the centrist party for fear of “estranging the leftist elements” and the JCP would give up its political independence. This is precisely what occurred in China. Following the KMT’s bloody purges in 1927 that left thousands dead, Stalin intensified his campaign against Trotsky in order to solidify his hold on the Soviet bureaucracy and prevent a thorough discussion and understanding of the issues facing the Comintern.<sup>63</sup> For the JCP, remaining with the Comintern necessitated yielding to Stalin’s demands, but with no opportunity to discuss the failed policies or sharp shifts in tactics that went unexplained to Comintern members.<sup>64</sup>

Trotsky warned in December 1927 that Stalinist centrism had begun a “period of decline and not of upsurge. That means short zigzags to the left, longer zigzags to the right.”<sup>65</sup> This meant wild vacillations in policies over the next decade, which again went unexamined. By 1928, the Comintern entered what is known as the Third Period, during which the Stalinists criticized left-leaning, national parties as “social fascists.” Through these means, Moscow and the Comintern covered up its failures, banned discussion, and continued along its rightward trajectory. Trotsky also issued a warning in January 1928 that “without studying the mistakes that were committed—the classic mistakes of opportunism—it is impossible to imagine the future revolutionary preparation of the proletarian parties of Europe and Asia.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Leon Trotsky, “The Classic Mistakes of Opportunism,” in *On China*, ed. Les Evans and Russell Block (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), 346-347.

<sup>64</sup> It led to Trotsky’s expulsion from the Communist Party in November 1927, exile to Alma Ata in present-day Kazakhstan in January 1928, and eventual exile from the Soviet Union in February 1929.

<sup>65</sup> Leon Trotsky, “The Canton Uprising,” in *On China*, ed. Les Evans and Russell Block (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), 344.

<sup>66</sup> Leon Trotsky, “The Classic Mistakes of Opportunism,” 346.

## The Great Depression and More Mass Arrests

Economic growth slowed in many areas of Japan by the end of the 1920s. The 1927 banking crisis and then the Great Depression two years later hit the country particularly hard. Between 1917 and 1931, economic growth averaged only 2.75 percent.<sup>67</sup> This revitalized Japan's leftwing movement<sup>68</sup> and by 1928, the JCP appeared to be on the rise following Diet elections held on February 20. This was the first election since the new 1925 suffrage law increased the electorate from three million to thirteen million<sup>69</sup> and two members of the JCP-affiliated Labor-Farmer Party were elected. The JCP itself was also growing numerically, from only seven members in the spring of 1925 to forty by February 1926.<sup>70</sup> Despite the repression that was soon to follow, the party continued to grow, reaching two hundred members in 1929 and then over four hundred in 1932.<sup>71</sup>

While this growth was taking place, the JCP was still an illegal party as it called for the elimination of the monarchy. The law at the time banned any party calling for the overthrow of Japan's *kokutai*.<sup>72</sup> Fearing the rise of anti-government sentiment in the face of declining economic conditions, the first of a series of mass arrests were conducted on March 15, 1928 of communist party members and supporters. The police disbanded the JCP aligned Labor-Farmer Party as well as the Hyōgikai labor union. The threat of lifelong jail terms or even execution hung over the heads of arrested communists. In order to dull the impact of communism, the Japanese government enacted a policy of *tenkō*, or literally, changing directions. Party members who renounced communism, revealed knowledge of the inner workings of the JCP, and pledged

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<sup>67</sup> Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 33.

<sup>70</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 95.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 176, 235.

<sup>72</sup> *Kokutai* refers to Japan's system of government and rationale for the monarchy in the prewar period.

support for the Japanese government could see their sentences reduced and be reintegrated into mainstream society, authorities hoped, as loyal subjects of the emperor. Young and inexperienced members who had flirted with radicalism were heavily influenced by this policy. However, the most shocking results of *tenkō* came in 1933 when Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika, two leading party members arrested in 1929 and who had organized their trials as an overall defense of the JCP, denounced the party and devoted themselves to the war effort in China. Both served the Japanese government in Beijing during the 1940s.<sup>73</sup> The overall effect was a flood of communists, demoralized by the defections of their leaders, to similarly renounce their commitment to revolution.<sup>74</sup>

The JCP fell into the same cycle as it had after the first mass arrests in 1923. Disputes over whether or not to work within legal unions and parties emerged again, requiring the Comintern to once more step in, which wrote,

Special stress should be laid on the strengthening and improvement of the *illegal apparatus* so as to counteract the measures of the government, which are calculated to destroy the Communist Party, as well as all revolutionary organizations, through police repression and legal prosecution (emphasis in original).<sup>75</sup>

This was easier said than done. Party members returning home from the Soviet Union to assume leadership roles were often quickly arrested. By 1935, much of the JCP leadership in Japan was behind bars and would not see freedom until released by the American Occupation government in October 1945. Organized party activity had largely ceased within Japan.<sup>76</sup>

This, of course, did not mean party activity came to a halt abroad or that the Soviet Union gave up on trying to forge a party to its liking. Members like Katayama were still in Russia and others like Nosaka managed to join him by 1931. Katayama was in a position of great influence,

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<sup>73</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 376, 382.

<sup>74</sup> Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan*, 111.

<sup>75</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 162.

<sup>76</sup> Scalapino, *Japanese Communist Movement*, 43.

yet he seemed content by this point to sit back and allow the younger generation to take over.<sup>77</sup>

In the conflict between the Stalinist bureaucracy and Trotsky's Left Opposition, Katayama, while supposedly initially sympathetic to the latter, went over to the side of Stalin. He found Trotsky egotistical and unyielding while Stalin was more affable and willing to sit down and listen to others,<sup>78</sup> certainly not a quality most today would attribute to the dictator.<sup>79</sup>

### **The 1931 Draft Thesis and the 1932 Thesis**

By this time, other conflicts were emerging in the JCP. A new draft thesis in 1931 was rejected by Moscow under charges of "Trotskyism."<sup>80</sup> It would be correct to say the draft thesis drifted too far to the Rōnō-ha position. Regardless, a new document, the 1932 Thesis was put forward instead, calling for united fronts with non-communist parties and organizations and the continued position that the Japanese monarchy was the principle target of the JCP, not the Japanese bourgeoisie. This was a strengthening of the 1927 Thesis and would be the leading document for the JCP until the late 1940s, playing a role in forging the JCP postwar policy of accommodation to the American Occupation. Comintern documents that would go into forming the 1932 Thesis show the position of the Stalinists. A February 6, 1930 resolution of the West European Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) told the

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<sup>77</sup> Swearingen and Langer, *Red Flag in Japan*, 44.

<sup>78</sup> Kublin, *Asian Revolutionary*, 322.

<sup>79</sup> Trotsky was quite scathing in his own assessment of Katayama, writing, "As fast as the leadership of the International was drained, Katayama became one of its Bolshevik pillars. To tell the truth, Katayama is by nature a complete mistake... His conceptions form a progressivism very lightly colored by Marxism. By his whole make-up, Katayama is incomparably closer to the ideological world of Sun Yat-sen than to that of Lenin. This does not prevent Katayama from expelling the Bolshevik-Leninists from the International, and in general from deciding the destinies of the proletarian revolution by his vote. In return for his services in the struggle against the Opposition, the International supports Katayama's fictitious authority in Japan. The young Japanese Communists look upon him with deference and follow his teachings. Why? It is not for nothing that there is a Japanese proverb: "Even the head of a sardine can be worshipped; the main thing is to have faith." Leon Trotsky, "Who is Leading the Comintern Today?" September 1928, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/03/comintern.htm>.

<sup>80</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 229.



JCP, “The communist party, whose united front tactics are to be operated only from below, must not only refrain from any agreement with the reformists and pseudo-communists, but must carry on an irreconcilable struggle against them.”<sup>81</sup> However, the social-democrats, like the Social Masses Party (SMP), and their supporters were derided as “social fascists.”<sup>82</sup> This term obscured the class differences between the reformists and militarists in Japan, not to mention which groups were acceptable to merge with and which were not, leading to disorientation. The SMP, however, was quickly moving to the right to support Japanese imperialism, backing Tokyo’s claims by the end of the 1930s that Japan was liberating Asia from Western influence, but it was incorrect to call them fascists.<sup>83</sup> Rather than trying to expose the social-democrats and their anti-working class agenda, the JCP merely denounced them while failing to win workers to its banner. This could have been done by explaining the differences between social-democracy and fascism and demanding the former take up a fight against the latter. The social-democrats would have been unable to do this and thus expose themselves as a non-proletarian organization.

In a May 20, 1932 document from the West European Bureau of the ECCI, the Comintern sought to portray the Japanese government as one mired in feudalism. It stated,

The Communist Party of Japan, whose main goal is to establish socialism, must clearly and fully realize that in present Japanese conditions the road to the proletarian dictatorship *must lead through the bourgeois-democratic revolution* (emphasis added), that is, through the overthrow of the monarchy, the expropriation of the landlords, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the workers and peasants.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *The Communist International: 1919-1943 Documents*, ed. Jane Degras, vol. 3, 1929-1943 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1971), 98.

<sup>82</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 348.

<sup>83</sup> Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 196.

<sup>84</sup> *Communist International Documents*, vol. 3, ed. Degras, 197. It is worth reminding the reader once more that the conception of the “dictatorship of the workers and peasants” was abandoned by the Bolsheviks in 1917.

This paragraph was repeated in the 1932 Thesis. For the Stalinists, therefore, the class interests of the workers could be surrendered if it meant the overthrow of the monarchy, a capitulation to Japanese imperialism, which was colonizing Asia and going to war with its neighbors no less than any other imperialist power. With the monarchy and bourgeoisie closely bound together, only the working class could have swept away the emperor system, which would have also required sweeping away the bourgeoisie.

### **The Popular Front**

With the coming to power of Adolf Hitler in Germany, the Comintern, disoriented, implemented a new tactic, clearly at odds with previous pronouncements, and which brought to an end the Third Period. Communist parties around the world were to form “popular fronts” with capitalist parties in the name of fighting fascism. It was no different in Japan. A February 1936 Letter from Nosaka and Yamamoto Kenzo in Moscow to the JCP stated, “The communists and their supporters must join the legal mass organizations of the working people—above all, labor unions and peasant unions. Along with these organizations they must join the Social Masses Party.”<sup>85</sup> There was of course no attempt to explain or clarify why yesterday’s “social-fascists” were now allies. The SMP, as mentioned, actually ended up backing the rise of Japanese militarism, as did most political institutions at the time, regardless of whether or not they considered themselves left or right-wing. The SMP’s support for the government no doubt further disoriented the JCP.

The failure to stop fascism’s rise and the constant shift in policies significantly weakened the Stalinist bureaucracy, leading to the purges of the Comintern. The JCP was certainly not immune from this. The frame-ups of political opponents culminated in the Moscow Trials and the execution of former leading Bolsheviks like Zinoviev and Kamenev. The purges were

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<sup>85</sup> Beckmann and Okubo, *Japanese Communist Party*, 356-357.

designed to remove the remaining vestiges of the adherents to Marxism-Leninism who had taken part in the 1917 revolution. As Leon Sedov, the son of Trotsky and a leading revolutionary in his own right, explained, the purges were a way of cutting off the Soviet Union from its revolutionary past: “Stalin not only bloodily breaks with Bolshevism, with all its traditions and its past, he is trying to drag Bolshevism and the October revolution through the mud. And he is doing it *in the interests of world and domestic reaction* (emphasis in original).”<sup>86</sup> The number of Japanese victims in this purge are still not clear, but with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, documents became available that suggest there were approximately 80 victims of the Stalinist terror, according to Tetsuro Kato.<sup>87</sup> Nosaka played a leading role in the JCP purges after his influence in the Soviet Union increased following the death of Katayama in 1933. Nosaka, while working in the United States, denounced other leading members of the JCP in the Soviet Union, including Yamamoto Kenzo, which led to his arrest in 1937 and execution in 1939.<sup>88</sup>

Nosaka went on to be one of the leading figures of the JCP for most of the 20th century. He became the chairman of the party after the war and held the title of honorary chairman until 1992 when the documents revealing his hand in purging comrades leading to their executions in the 1930s came to light and he himself was purged from the party at the age of 100. He also spent time during World War II in Yan’an, the base of the Maoist Chinese Communist Party. While there, he established contact with American observers in 1944, hoping to win their approval for allowing the JCP to play a role in the so-called democratization of Japan following the end of the war.<sup>89</sup> With the release of party leaders after Japan’s defeat, Nosaka<sup>90</sup> led the party

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<sup>86</sup> Leon Sedov, *The Red Book on the Moscow Trial* (London: New Park Publications, 1980), 6.

<sup>87</sup> Tetsuro Kato, “The Japanese Victims of Stalinist Terror in the USSR,” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 32, no. 1 (2000): 1, accessed October 24, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43294447>.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Swearingen and Langer, *Red Flag in Japan*, 81.

in doing precisely that, preparing a new period of betrayals and turn towards becoming an established bourgeois party in the second half of the 20th century.

## **Conclusion**

The exposure of the Japanese Communist Party is an important task in educating the Japanese and international working class. However, it would be wrong to say the JCP's degeneration was the result of personal failings. Without the ability to discuss the theoretical issues involved, the JCP's attempts to accommodate itself to Japanese capitalism, which became even starker in the postwar period, were responses to the failures suffered by the party and the Comintern. Yet, much of the existing research from historians like Scalapino and Swearingen is from a right-wing perspective, with their investigations conducted in accordance with think-tanks for governmental policy considerations during the Cold War. Their works paint the JCP as a genuinely Marxist party by conflating socialism with Stalinism, providing support for Stalinist falsifications of history and claims that he represented the continuation of the October Revolution. Stalin's betrayals of Marxism led to the degeneration of the first workers' state in history, the Soviet Union. In order to maintain hold on power, the bureaucracy that he led forced parties like the JCP to follow the same reactionary path as that in Russia and preventing the emergence of a genuine working class party in Japan. Today, the JCP holds twelve seats in the lower house and fourteen seats in the upper house of Japan's National Diet. While these numbers may seem small or even insignificant, it continues this habit of merging with or seeking alliances with some faction of the bourgeoisie and the party now backs the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan. The Stalinist JCP may have gained support with their apparent

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<sup>90</sup> Following the war, Nosaka actually backed the emperor system. It has been rumored that he was a government agent but this has not been proven. James Kirkup, "Obituary: Sanzo Nosaka," *Independent*, November 16, 1993, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-sanzo-nosaka-1504671.html>.

denunciations of the Abe government, but just like other phony left and Stalinist parties around the world, it will betray the aspirations of the working class and young people fighting against remilitarization and the attacks on working and living conditions.

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