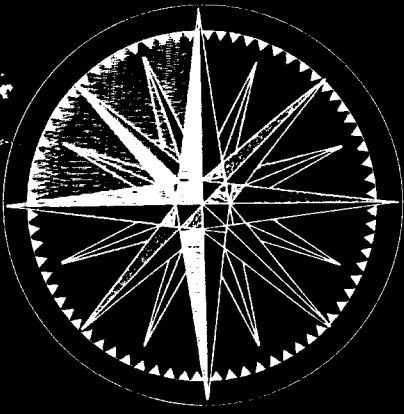


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7 June 1963



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# SPECIAL REPORT

## OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

JAPANESE LABOR'S TREND TOWARD MODERATION

# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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7 June 1963

## JAPANESE LABOR'S TREND TOWARD MODERATION

During the past three years the federation representing the largest segment of Japanese organized workers, the General Council of Trade Unions (Sohyo), has gradually shifted toward a more moderate course than that followed in its first decade. While its leaders continue to use doctrinaire Marxist terminology and its fundamental policies have not been formally revised, Sohyo activities have been taking an increasingly pragmatic approach concentrated on economic problems. This trend shows signs of developing into a permanent transformation.

### Background

Founded in 1950 with US encouragement to fight Communism in the Japanese labor movement, Sohyo was rapidly infiltrated by Communists who soon achieved a considerable measure of control. The secretary general during the early 1950s, pro-Communist Minoru Takano, argued that Communist China and the USSR were the great "forces for peace" with which Japan should work.

Sohyo tended to accept the Communist claim that the Japanese worker faced two enemies, monopoly capitalism and American imperialism. It leaned strongly toward the World Federation of Trade Unions, and worked closely with the Communist Party as well as with the Socialist parties on inflammatory popular issues. Sohyo regularly coupled the annual spring drive for wage increases with political demands, and frequently seemed preoccupied with political struggles unrelated to the workers' day-to-day problems.

Moderate elements won their first significant victory in 1955 when socialist Akira Iwai ousted Takano from the secretary generalship by a narrow electoral margin. Sohyo moderates nevertheless continued to go along with Communist tactics of pressing a militant political line, and during the next five years the pro-Communists exploited popular issues such as the Japanese-US security treaty in efforts to regain a dominant position. Over-all, however, economic considerations became increasingly influential--a shift which favored the moderates.

Two events in 1960 pushed the trend definitely against the militant pro-Communists. The excesses of the 1960 campaign against the security treaty touched off an adverse public reaction, and awakened labor's rank and file to the adverse consequences of extremist political activity. A prolonged and unsuccessful

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strike against modernization in the coal industry also cast doubt on the wisdom of fighting for fruitless causes and inclined the leadership toward actions that had some prospect of winning practical benefits. In November 1960 Sohyo's moderate leadership repudiated the previous policy of united action with the Communist Party.

Move to the Right

After 1960 the consolidation of moderate control was registered in elections in both constituent unions and in the parent body. In 1962, for example, a body of fence sitters in the National Railway Workers Union joined moderates to give them an unprecedented three-fourths majority at their convention. This year the moderates in the teachers' union--Sohyo's largest affiliate--received support of over 75 percent of the delegates at an extraordinary convention. Since 1961 the moderates have held 20 of the 25 seats on Sohyo's Central Executive Committee, and five of the six bureau chiefs elected in 1962 are of the same group.

Beginning in 1961 political issues were soft-pedaled--a shift formally acknowledged in Sohyo's annual policy document, "Basic Guidelines for Action." At the same time Sohyo sought to differentiate its approach from that of the Communists, and moved closer to the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). During this period it has followed the majority of its component unions



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in endorsing the JSP alone. Secretary General Iwai and many of the other leaders support the JSP's view that through "structural reform," rather than revolution, Japanese capitalist society can be adjusted more to the benefit of the workers.

The Coal Miners Union, which experienced the disastrous 1960 strike, has advanced the idea that workers can improve their lot within capitalism by pressing the government to pursue pro-labor policies. This now has ripened into a set of long-range "labor plans" to deal with the growing problem of modernization of industry, automation, and the resultant layoffs. In addition to the coal miners, the postal, telecommunications, and railway workers' unions have begun to draw up such plans. This approach is assuming greater significance for Japanese labor than the continued lip service paid to the traditional concept of class struggle.

Foreign Policy

Parallel shifts have occurred in foreign policy positions. In discarding Takano's old theories, Sohyo has adopted chairman Ota's "third force" concept which calls for Japan to follow "positive neutrality" in the cold war and to support a bloc of nonaligned countries working for peace. The shock caused by the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing in September 1961 aided this shift, and the Sino-Soviet dispute has also aroused doubts that the Communist countries possess the perfect formula for peace and progress.

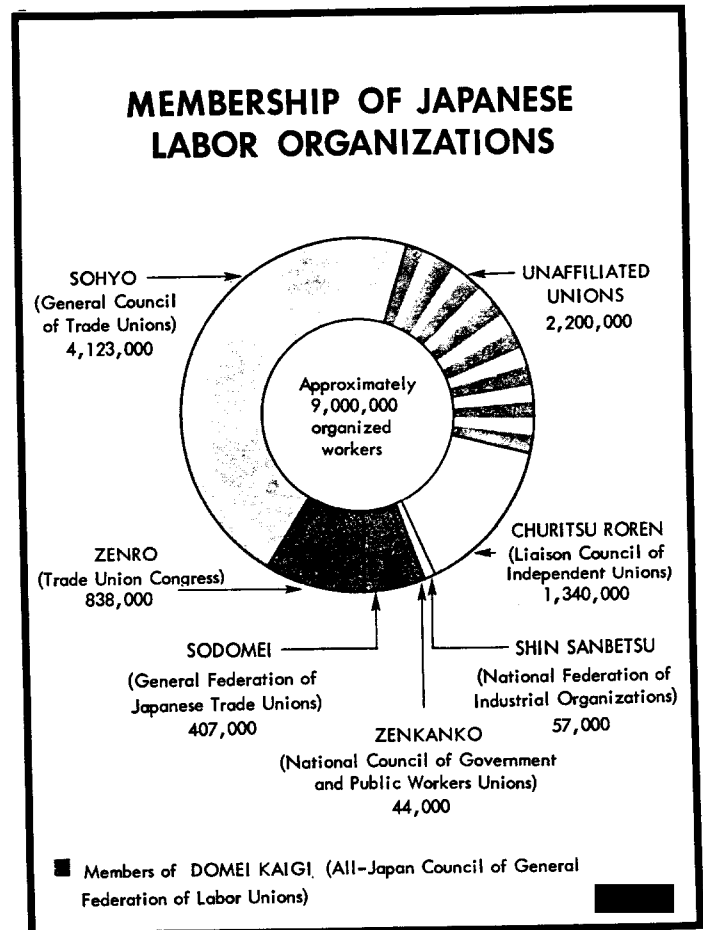
Sohyo's relations with Communist China, in particular, have cooled considerably. In 1961 a program of labor exchanges with Communist China was suspended, and a visit there by Iwai--first proposed for early 1962--has been repeatedly postponed. Ota has spoken out against linking China and Japan as common foes of US "imperialism." Top leaders frankly indicate their preference for the Kremlin's "peaceful coexistence" line over the bellicose threats from Peiping.

Although visits to the bloc are still popular, Sohyo has shown increasing interest in ties with the free world, and the number of delegations visiting the United States alone is almost as large as those going to the bloc. A few years ago they were four to one in favor of the bloc. While still theoretically committed to neutral-

ity between the WFTU and the anti-Communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Sohyo has in practice moved closer to the latter. In 1962 Sohyo broke with the Communist-dominated Japan Council for the Prohibition of Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo) and is striving to reconstruct the antinuclear movement without allowing the Communists to run the show.

Rival Influences

One factor encouraging moderation has been the growth of distinct groups within Sohyo demanding less militant policies. Most recently, the formation of a movement labeled the



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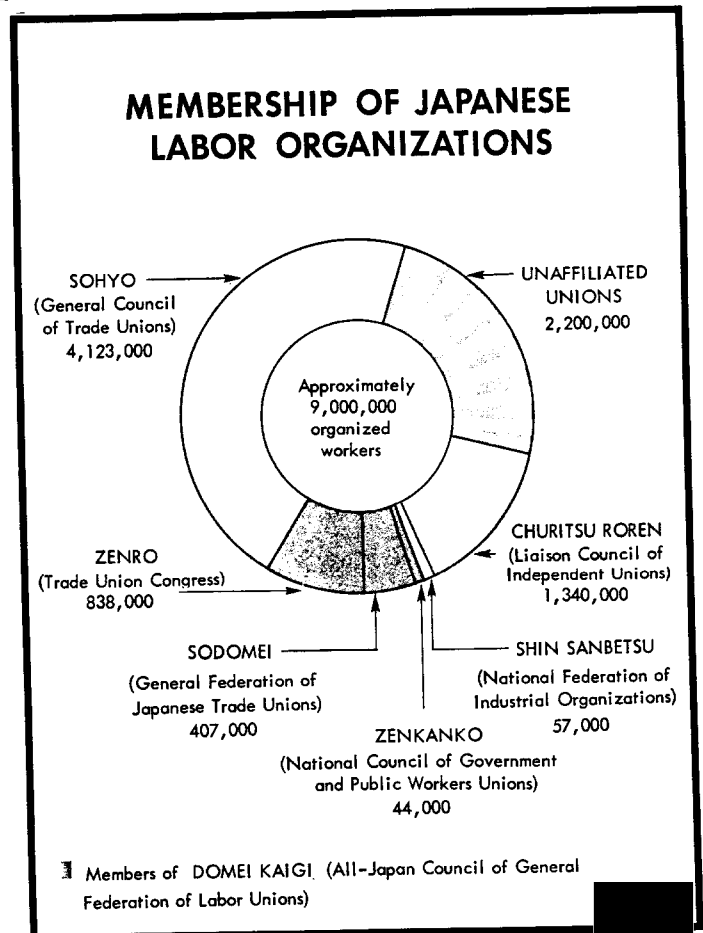
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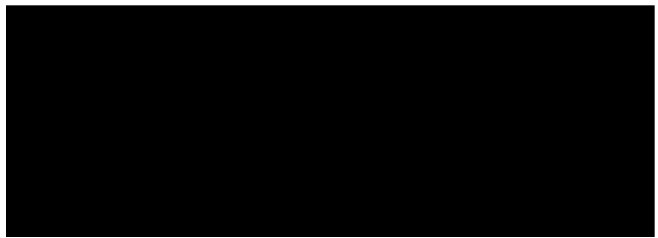
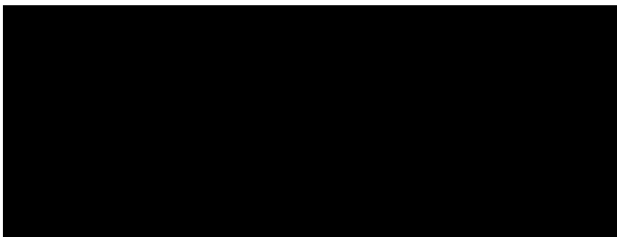


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National Democratization Liaison Council, made up of unions both inside and outside of Sohyo, has placed the federation's leadership under growing pressure to speed the trend to the right or risk significant defections.

Nevertheless, a pro-Communist minority remains active, and Sohyo's leadership still finds it expedient to cooperate with the Communist Party on an ad hoc basis. It avoids openly taking issue with the WFTU because of the continued desirability of appearing neutral and to avoid evoking protests from the extreme leftists.

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Assessment

Sohyo's weak rivals, particularly Zenro in the right-wing trade union grouping, Domei Kaigi, charge that the apparent drift to the right is nothing more than a tactic to undercut competition, and represents no real change. This argument is supported by Sohyo's ambiguity on many points, and the fact that its official dogma retains a basic substratum of uncompromising Marxism.

Nevertheless, there is much to indicate that what began as merely a defensive tactical shift to the right in 1960-61 is now being consolidated as a fundamental policy change along lines followed by labor movements in Western Europe. Barring a serious recession, widespread dismissals, or a grave international crisis that threatens to plunge Japan into war, Sohyo has taken so many different steps in the direction of moderation, and has found so much support for its rightward swing, that it would find it difficult to reverse its course. ~~(CONFIDENTIAL)~~