

Communism In Japan Believed To Be Hitting Downward Path

By Ernest Hoherecht
United Press Correspondent

Tokyo, Mar. 17—(U.P.)—Communist strength seems to be on the wane in Japan.

Many persons believe that Soviet demands for trial of Emperor Hirohito as a war criminal meant that the Russians are "writing off" Japan as a lost cause.

The demands certainly cost both Russia and the communist party in Japan much of the progress they had made with Japanese masses.

Headed Downhill
Communist-led strikes and several cases of violence attributed to communists have still further alienated the orderly-minded Japanese.

Qualified observers, including many top officials in Gen. Douglas MacArthur's headquarters, believe the Japanese Communist party is headed downhill after attracting some popular support following Japan's surrender.

The party was outlawed and went underground in the 1920s. The government made a determined effort to stamp it out altogether March 15, 1928, when it rounded up and imprisoned more than 1,000 communists. The anniversary of that date was an occasion for party commemoration.

Communists Liberated

With the end of the war, MacArthur liberated the imprisoned communists along with all other political prisoners.

The communist party now has the same rights as any other political party in Japan. It will be permitted to continue its legal existence so long as its members obey the laws of the land.

Premier Shigeru Yoshida on several occasions had indicated a desire to outlaw the communist party. But he has made no formal demand for it and the diet (parliament) has taken no action.

The party claims a membership of about 90,000 in Japan. Well-informed observers believe the true figure is nearer 180,000. Communists hold 35 of the 466 seats in the national house of representatives.

In the last election, communist candidates polled about 2,980,000 votes. About half were believed cast by communist party members or sympathizers. The rest were believed to have been "protest votes" against the government parties.

The party is headed by Kyuchi Tokuda, who was imprisoned in the 1928 round-up and spent 18 years behind bars.

Sanzo Nozaka, the No. 2 communist in Japan, escaped to China at the time of the 1928 affair. He returned to Japan a hero after the war ended.

The cominform recently criticized him for his "go easy" tactics in Japan. He bowed to criticism, but said his behavior had been influenced by "circumstances," obviously the American occupation.

Nozaka addressed a meeting recently marking the 22nd anniversary of the 1928 round-up. More than 2,500 packed the hall to hear him deliver a speech typical of the communist line in Japanese these days.

He accused the United States of plotting World War III and warned Japan against permitting America to colonize the country or keep military bases here after the peace treaty is signed.

United States Not Named

Nozaka was careful never to name the United States as "the aggressor" who threatened Japan's future and world peace, but he told his listeners, "You know who I mean." They obviously did, for he painted a glowing picture of Russia as Japan's best friend.

No police bothered Nozaka as he spoke. As a matter of fact, only a handful of police was present.

MacArthur believes the great masses of Japanese are unmoved by communist propaganda and fully comprehend the threat of the movement. He thinks the Japanese people like democracy and will stand as an effective

bulwark to the advance of communism.

Operating somewhat more quietly than in the past, Japanese communists are concentrating now on what they call "an enlightenment campaign." It includes numerous rallies, lectures and night school courses, in which the Russian language is among the major subjects.

Jobless Assisted

The communists are trying to capitalize on the active assistance they give the unemployed in Japan. They help the jobless to get either relief or government aid.

The Red leaders are said to know their long-range outlook in Japan is not too optimistic. But they are believed to feel that they probably are better off under the occupation than they will be when American troops are withdrawn. They are said to fear they will face strong police action after the occupation is over, just as they did March 15, 1928.

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