

Explosive Rise of Sanbetsu Kaigi (Congress of Industrial Unions of Japan) and the Failure of February-1947 General Strike — The US Occupation and the Militant Mass Workers Movement immediately after the Japanese Defeat

Thursday 8 September 2011, by [SAKAI Yohichi](#) (Date first published: June 2007).

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Introduction

This article covers the period from the August-1945 surrender of the Imperial Japan to the massive striving for the February-1 general strike of 1947 and its failure. The period was characterized by the explosive rise of Zennihon Sangyobetsu Rodokumiai Kaigi (Sanbetsu Kaigi: Congress of Industrial Unions of Japan), Japanese militant mass workers movement immediately after the defeat of former Japanese imperialism at the East-Asia and Pacific war. Sanbetsu Kaigi was founded by 21 industrial unions and federations, with the total membership of 1.69 million workers, in August 1946, and it was largely dominated by the communist trade-unionists.

1 Japanese Surrender and the Potential Elements of Social Explosion

1.1 Surrender of Imperial Japan and the U.S. Occupation

The Japanese imperialist and colonialist war, waged against China since 1931 and expanded in South East Asia and the Pacific region in 1941, was brought to its final end, not forcibly by any popular revolt or uprising by Japanese workers or soldiers, but by Emperor Hirohito's pronouncement of Japanese surrender and acceptance of the Potsdam Ultimatum issued by the United States, United Kingdom, China, and Soviet Union, on August 15, 1945. The U.S. military occupation began at the end of August, and the instrument of Japanese surrender was signed at the beginning of September.

On accepting the Potsdam Ultimatum, the Imperial Japan automatically renounced Taiwan, Korea,

Southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, the South Pacific Islands, and all other occupying areas, and the new Japanese territory was to be composed of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu, and small outlying islands. Okinawa Main Island was conquered through fierce battles by the U.S. armed forces in April-June 1945 before the Japanese surrender, and Ryukyu Islands were to be dominated as a military colony by the U.S. armed forces, separately from the Japanese main islands.

The domination of Japan by the General Headquarters (GHQ) under the Allied Occupation supreme commander, Douglas MacArthur, started as an indirect rule, the GHQ directing and controlling the Japanese governmental administrative machinery, including the Emperor. In the mid-September, the GHQ ordered the arrests of major political and military figures as war criminals, including the former prime minister at the outbreak of the Pacific War against the US. The Imperial Army and Navy were dissolved, and the soldiers that numbered in more than 7 millions at the end of the war were demobilized in two months. The GHQ also established its sweeping control over the circulation of information and expression in general through the censorship of the press, broadcasting, publishing, movie/theater, mail and telephone/telegram from October 1945 to January 1946.

1.2 Potential Elements of the Social Explosion after the Japanese Surrender

When the Imperial Japan surrendered, there were two major sources of massive social explosion, the urban working masses and the rural peasants under the landlord-tenant system, though their responses to the new situation were not immediate.

The Japanese economy had realized the initial stage of its heavy industrialization all through the 1930s (see Table 1 and 2), though the whole economy was severely exhausted under the war efforts in 1943-44, and damaged heavily by the massive U.S. air-raids of 1945 (see Table 5). The metal, machinery, and chemical workers became more numerous than the textile workers in 1938 (see Table 4), and there were 5.748-million factory, mining, and transport workers in 1941 (see Table 3), the employed, occupied and total populations being 13.508 million, 32.483 million, and 72.540 million respectively in 1940.

Table 1: Component Ratio of Heavy and Chemical Industries: 1930-42 (unit: percent)

	1930	1935	1937	1941	1942
Metals	8.7	17.2	21.3	18.9	20.0
Machinery & appliances	10.3	12.0	13.6	26.3	28.7
Chemicals	15.5	17.8	19.2	17.3	17.2
Subtotal	34.6	47.1	54.1	62.5	65.9
Total Manufacturing	100	100	100	100	100
(unit: million yens)	5,955	10,790	16,274	30,454	32,130

Source: H. Yamamoto, T. Teratani, and F. Nakura. *Kindai Nihon Keizaisi* (History of Modern Japanese Economy). Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1980.

Table 2: Shares of Production by the Some Capitalist Countries in the Capitalist World (unit: percent)

	US	France	W. Germany	Italy	UK	Japan
Mining & Manufacturing						

1938	37.0	5.4	11.1	3.7	13.8	3.5
1948	53.8	3.9	3.8	2.6	11.2	1.0
1953	51.2	3.7	7.2	3.0	10.2	2.1
Manufacturing						
1938	36.3	5.7	11.5	4.1	13.8	3.6
1948	53.4	4.1	3.7	2.8	11.4	0.9
1953	51.5	3.8	7.4	3.3	10.4	2.1

Source: S. Miyazaki, S. Okumura, and K. Morita, ed. *Kindai Kokusaikeizai Youran* (Handbook on the Modern International Economy). Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1981.

Table 3: Number of Workers by Industries (unit: thousand)

	Total	Factories	Mining	Transport	Day laborers
1931	4,670	2,026	196	504	1,942
1937	6,422	3,407	366	549	2,099
1941	7,317	4,686	545	517	1,569
1943	8,470	5,688	594	566	1,628

Note: White-collars were not included.

Source: K. Mori. *Rodosha no Seikatsu* (Life of the Workers). Tokyo: Iwanamishoten, 1963.

Table 4: Composition of Factory Workers by Industries (unit: percent)

	Textile	Metal	Machinery	Chemicals
1931	51.1	5.7	12.1	7.1
1935	41.6	9.0	16.0	9.5
1938	30.4	11.7	26.7	10.0
1942	18.1	11.5	44.1	11.0

Source: K. Mori. *ibid.*

Table 5: Production Indices: 1941-45 (1937 = 100)

	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Rice	95.1	100.6	94.8	88.2	59.3
Mining	120.2	117.4	118.5	107.8	56.9
Manufacturing	123.1	119.6	121.0	124.2	52.7
Steel	132.0	139.5	156.1	145.8	51.8
Nonferrous Metal	111.4	126.1	153.2	170.2	63.2
Machinery	188.2	195.4	214.3	252.3	107.2
Chemicals	120.3	100.3	87.1	80.0	33.2
Textile	60.4	47.7	31.3	16.6	6.4

	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Foods	78.1	69.4	57.6	47.4	31.6

Source: T. Nakamura. *Nihon Keizai: sono seicho to kozo* (The Japanese Economy: its Growth and Structure). Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1993.

These rather rapidly formed industrial workers had had no experience of generalized mass activities under the despotic and repressive regime of Imperial Japan in 1930s. The peak unionization rate was 7.9 percent, out of 4.67 million workers, in 1931, and the highest number of workers that participated labor-dispute actions was 123 thousands out of 6 million workers in 1937, the unionization rate being 6.9 percent in the same year.

Furthermore, the left-wing currents of workers movement were severely repressed by the state, and meaningful union activities were eliminated from the large-scale enterprises and establishments in 1930s. The pro-communist union movement was virtually destroyed by the state repression in the mid-1930s, and the non-communist left-wing union federation was banned by the state in 1937. The remaining right-wing organization, *Nihon Rodo Sodomei* (Labor Confederation of Japan), was dissolved in 1940, and the state-controlled totalitarian structure, *Sangyo Hokoku Kai* (Industrial Patriotic Federation), and its unit organizations, were set up among the workers in 1941. Any stratum of workers activists, as a natural result of mass workers movement, was very much thin, and not-so-numerous left-wing political activists were imprisoned or forced to be silenced under the repression. Thus, the subjective condition of the workers movement was rather difficult, but the mass of workers had a profound capacity of militant explosion and far-reaching aspiration as was shown from late 1945 to early 1947.

The Japanese rural agriculture was marked by a specific landlord-tenant system. In 1940, there were 1.468 million tenant farmers (27.1 percent) and 2.308 million owner-cum-tenant farmers (42.1 percent) out of 5.583 million farm households as a whole; the total cultivated area was 6.078 million cho (cho = 0.99 hectare) and the tenanted area was 2.767 million cho (45.5 percent). It is estimated that there were 386 thousand landlords, and that 1.284-million cho and 1.119-million cho of the tenant land were owned respectively by 99 thousand landlords, holding 1-5 cho of tenanted land, and 287 thousand landlords, holding more than 5 cho, 220 thousands of them being non-cultivating, "parasitic" landlords, in 1940. The average tenant rent was 50.6 percent of the harvest in the case of rice paddy in the same year.

About 300 thousand or more farmers were organized into their unions from the mid-1920s to 1933, and more than 200 thousand farmers were organized until 1939. The right-wing and reformist currents were the majority in the trade union movement from the mid-1920s to the 1930s, and the trade unions were dissolved and the totalitarian organizations were set up among the workers during the Pacific War. But the left-wing currents were the majority in the peasant unions from the mid-1920s to the 1930s, and the peasant movement was more resistive under the totalitarian regime during the Pacific War. Thus, the peasant movement seemed to be positioned better than that of the workers movement at the time of Japanese defeat.

Due to the surrender of the Imperial Japan, and under the horrible situation of devastated economy and hyperinflation, the whole ruling system and institutions were to lose their legitimacy and credibility and to be brought to their deep crises, and the bourgeoisie and business managements were to be thrown into evident disarray with the U.S. Occupation and the GHQ's policies toward Japan. Under the circumstances, the potentials of workers and peasants were to be confronted with and tested by the U.S. Occupation and its policy implementation from 1946 to 1947.

2 U.S. Occupation of Japan

2.1 U. S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan

It can be said that the Pacific War between Imperial Japan and the US was basically an inter-imperialist war over China and her huge market potential, and the U.S. war objective was to eliminate Japan as a definite obstacle to the U.S. exertion of influence over China. In this context, the strategic aim and ambitious project of the U.S. occupation of Japan was expressed clearly and precisely in the document of "U. S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan", dated September 21, 1945 [1].

It defined the "ultimate objectives" of the U.S. occupation of Japan as ensuring that "Japan will not again become a menace to the United States" and as bringing about "the eventual establishment of a peaceful and responsible government ... which will support the objectives of the United States as reflected in the ideals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

In order to achieve these strategic objectives, the U.S. document stated,

- Japan was to "be completely disarmed and demilitarized" and "not to have an army, navy, airforce, secret police organization, or any civil aviation,"
- "the existing economic basis of Japanese military strength" had to "be destroyed and not be permitted to revive" and "the size and character of Japan's heavy industries" were to be limited only to fulfilling of "its future peaceful requirements,"
- reparations for the aggression were to be made through "the transfer ... of Japanese property ... outside of the (new Japanese) territories" and through "the transfer of such goods or existing capital equipment and facilities as are not necessary for a peaceful Japanese economy or the supplying of the occupying forces," and
- the Japanese government should implement "a program for the dissolution of the large industrial and banking combinations which have exercised control of a great part of Japan's trade and industry."

Along the lines with the central objective to ensure that Japan would never become "a menace to the United States", the U.S. document directed the Occupation GHQ to encourage the democratization of Japan. The "Japanese people" were to "be encouraged to develop a desire for individual liberties and respect for fundamental human rights," "the development of organizations in labor, industry, and agriculture, organized on a democratic basis" was to be encouraged, and "(t)hose forms of economic activity, organization and leadership" that were likely "to make it difficult to command or direct economic activity in support of military ends" were to be favored.

"Democratic political parties, with rights of assembly and public discussion," were to "be encouraged, subject to the necessity for maintaining the security of the occupying forces." Furthermore, much interestingly, "(c)hanges in the form of Government ... in the direction of modifying its feudal and authoritarian tendencies" were "to be permitted and favored," and "(i)n the event that the effectuation of such changes involves the use of force by the Japanese people or government ... the Supreme Commander should intervene only where necessary to ensure the security of his forces and the attainment of all other objectives of the occupation." That is, the democratization processes were to be favored within the limits of global U.S. interests, and allowed surely under the supervision and control of the GHQ.

Thus, the U.S. strategic project of the Japanese occupation was to realize a structural institutionalization of the complete demilitarization and definite economic and political weakening of Japan, and, in order to achieve the aim, to carry out somehow thorough democratic transformation against the whole political regime and social system of the Imperial Japan. This was a kind of “bourgeois democratic revolution”, not taken on by the workers and other popular masses, but carried out by the formidable U.S. power at the onset of the postwar period of late imperialism. Ironically, this U.S. project had some resemblance to the initial democratic stage of the Japanese revolution envisaged by the Communist Party’s 1932 program, except that the Occupation GHQ was to be the ultimate power to enforce execution of the democratic tasks, and that the GHQ intended to retain the Japanese Emperor system of some sort.

2.2 GHQ’s Policy Implementation and the New Constitution of Japan

The U.S. strategic project was implemented through the GHQ activities and policies. As mentioned above, it arrested the leading political and military figures during the war in September 1945, and the whole Japanese army and navy were dissolved until the middle of October. The GHQ established its comprehensive media censorship over newspapers, periodicals, books, movies, broadcasts, letters, and telegraphs in September, too.

On October 4, the GHQ ordered the Japanese government to release the political prisoners, to repeal the repressive laws and regulations, to abolish the special political police and other repressive machinery, and to dismiss the interior minister and top-level officers of the police and special political police. At this point, there was a change of the government from the Higashikuni cabinet that represented a direct continuation of the regime and that advocated the Japanese national polity of Emperor system, to the Sidehara cabinet that was to accommodate itself to the GHQ policy implementation.

On October 11, Occupation supreme commander demanded the liberalization of the Japanese constitution, and instructed the Japanese government to uphold the women’s suffrage, to encourage the formation of trade unions, to liberalize the school education, to abolish the secret police and terrorizing machinery, and to democratize economic structure and break down the oligopolistic industrial structure of zaibatsu domination.

By the GHQ order to the Japanese government, the 2,465 political prisoners were released, and the notorious Maintenance of Public Order Law was repealed in October. The GHQ issued its memorandum on the dissolution of the zaibatsu (Japanese oligopolistic financial-industrial conglomerates) and the directive to restrict the business activities of those zaibatsu in November. It also issued another memorandum on the agrarian land reform in the same month. The Lower House election law was amended to realize the women’s suffrage in December. In the same month, the machinery of police was excluded from the administration of labor affairs, and a new Trade Union Law was enacted, which upheld the right of the private- and public-sector employees to form trade unions and their rights of collective bargaining and industrial action. The Labor Standard Law was enacted in April 1947.

Further, under the GHQ’s October-1945 memorandum on teachers and education, the Japanese government removed about 7,000 carrier military men or “militarists” from education, in May 1946. It also issued the memorandum on the removal of “undesirable persons” from the public offices in January 1946, and more than 210,000 persons, including about 163,000 military men and about 35,000 professional politicians, were ousted from the public offices, managements of the large enterprises, business organizations, and mass media from 1946 to the end of the U.S. occupation in 1952.

The GHQ made out its draft of a new Japanese constitution, which was the prototype of the current constitution, and handed it to the Japanese government in February 1946. The latter's final draft constitution was enacted with some amendments in November, and the new constitution was put into effect in May 1947. In this constitution, the Emperor became the "symbol of the State and the unity of the people", and the "renunciation of war" was declared at the article 9.

3 Socialist Party and Problems of the Communist Party

3.1 The Socialist Party and the Communist Party

The Japan Socialist Party (the official English name was "Social Democratic Party of Japan") was founded as an amalgamation of three major currents of the Japanese social democracy during 1930s, in November 1945. The three currents were the right-wingers (Shamin: straightly anticommunist right-wingers, but kept some distance from the military during the war), centrists (Nichiro: pro-military and semifascist-like during the war), and left-wingers (Rono: noncommunist Marxists), and the right-wing group around Suehiro Nishio got hold of the party leadership. This party with the right-wing leadership was quite compatible with the U.S. occupation and the GHQ domination.

About 3,000 delegates attended the party's founding congress, and it had 17 members at the lower house of the Imperial Diet, out of which 10 members were purged under the GHQ scheme to remove the extreme militarist and nationalist figures from the public offices in January 1946. At the first postwar general election of April 1946 under the amended election law, which introduced the women's suffrage, the party got the 93 seats out of the total seats of 464, becoming the third largest party at the lower house, and its number of votes was 9.924 million (11.34 percent). The Socialist Party became the parliamentary majority of the working class, and it was to keep this position from 1946 through the 1980s.

The Japan Communist Party did not exist due to the severe repression under the despotic political regime from the mid-1930s, and there were about 300 intransigent and uncompromising communists as political prisoners at the time of the Japanese surrender, Kyuichi Tokuda and Yoshio Shiga being imprisoned for 18 years from 1928. Those communists were released in October 1945, and they organized the congress to found the postwar party in early December. About 500 communists gathered at the congress, there were 1,083 party members at the time, the leadership body was elected, and K. Tokuda became the general secretary.

The Communist Party got 5 seats at the April-1946 general election, polling 2.135 million votes (3.5 percent), and it was to become the party of the militant and left-wing layer of worker-activists and the active majority of trade-union movement from 1946 to 1948.

3.2 The Communist-Party Orientation and its Problems

When K. Tokuda, Y. Shiga and other 9 communists were released from a Tokyo suburban prison on October 10, they issued the "Appeal to the People" as their programmatic policy pronouncement.

The Appeal stated: "we express our deep gratitude for the fact that the allied armed forces for the worldwide liberation from the Fascism and the militarism have brought about the beginning of the democratic revolution in Japan," "we support the peace policy of the US, UK and other allied nations positively," and "our objective is to overthrow the Emperor system and to establish the popular republican government based on the collective will of the people." The "Emperor system", according to the Appeal, was "the combination of the Emperor and his court, military, state bureaucracy, nobility, parasitic landowners, and monopoly capitalists."

It asserted the appropriation of parasitically owned lands and their free distribution to the peasants, and "abolition of the control for the military-clique bureaucracy and monopoly capitalists, and realization of the control for the workers and employees, peasants, and all other oppressed population". Much interestingly, however, the Appeal did not say anything about possible project to nationalize the enterprises and establishments of the zaibatsu or "monopoly capitalists" and to establish workers' and popular control over them.

Thus, the Appeal had two outstanding features.

First, it called for a democratic revolution to overthrow the "Emperor system" and its whole social and political structure and machinery, to establish a popular republican government, and to eradicate the militarism and implement broad and radical democratic transformation of the political and social structure, and this popular task was projected definitely within a framework of 'pure democracy' or 'bourgeois democracy'.

The action program, adopted by the December-1945 party congress, stood for "(w)orkers' control over the major enterprises and the popular and republican government's regulation of those enterprises." This action program was confirmed with minor changes by the party congress held in February 1946. However, the same congress adopted its manifesto, and its opening paragraph stated: "(t)he Japan Communist Party sets the accomplishment of the ongoing bourgeois democratic revolution of our country through the peaceful and democratic methods as our immediate and fundamental objective. The party does not assert the immediate abolition of capitalist system as a whole and realization of socialist system." This manifesto specified on the "nationalization of war-criminals' properties and dissolution of the monopoly capital" as follows: "implementation of the people's government's forceful control over large-scale capital, management of industries through the management-council system in which the workers are to participate, and complete unification of financial institutions under the people's government's control."

Thereby, potential anti-capitalist dynamics were rejected by the Appeal and the Communist Party congress.

Second, the Appeal projected the 'popular democratic revolution' and the 'overthrow of the Emperor system' as a process that would be compatible with and go on under the U.S. occupation of Japan. At the November-1945 preparatory conference for the December congress, Y. Shiga, one of the top leaders of the communists under the political custody, stated that the Japanese "popular republican government" would have "fundamental similarities more to the U.S. democracy" than to the Soviet Union, but there were no objection to his position at the conference. Furthermore, Sanzo Nosaka, a veteran communist, who was in the Soviet Union and China since 1931, came back to Japan in January 1946, and he systematized the theory of "peaceful revolution under the occupation" at the party congress in February 1946. He asserted that it would be possible to accomplish the democratic revolution and, after that, to realize the socialist revolution peacefully through the parliament and under the occupation. This position of "peaceful revolution under the occupation" was confirmed as the party's strategic orientation by the congress.

In this regard, the U.S. policy program was definitely realistic. As mentioned before, the "U. S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan" specified that, when some eventual change of the government might involve "the use of force by the Japanese people or government", the Occupation supreme commander should intervene "only where necessary to ensure the security of his forces and the attainment of all other objectives of the occupation". That is, any really democratic and popular movement of the working masses and their militant aspiration to establish their own government would have no choice but to be prepared for a head-on confrontation with the GHQ power of the Occupation.

The second feature seems to have been interrelated with the first one, and those two features were in line with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union at the time. In any case, this moderate and docile stance of the Communist Party was eventually to become an important cause of the final defeat of militant trade union movement and the serious retreat of working masses in 1947-50.

Furthermore, the general secretary, K. Tokuda, happened to become dominant in the party leadership and to develop his paternalistic and bureaucratic handling of policy matters and internal management of the party. And Tokuda exhibited a combination of certain political ultimatism and sectarianism of the Comintern's "Third-Period" type and a sort of political opportunism, and he did not follow the method and tactics of the working-class united-front politics. These features of his politics and organizational behavior had also negative effects on the party and the workers movement as a whole.

4 Economy and Rising of Working Masses

4.1 The Economy and the Bourgeoisie

At the start of the Pacific War, the whole economy and its workforce had been already under the heavy strain, and the mining and manufacturing production marked its peak in 1939-41, stagnated in 1943-44, and damaged heavily by the massive U.S. air raids of 1945, the first B-29 raids of North Kyushu and Tokyo being respectively in June and November 1944 (see Table 5).

Both cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were wiped out by the U.S. A-bombs, and other 117 cities were burned and destroyed extensively by the U.S. air raids. More than 2 million houses were burned, the number of houses being 14 million before the air raids, and about 9 million people lost their dwelling.

Due to the closure of military plants, paralysis of the general production, and massive demobilization of the Imperial Army and repatriation of the overseas soldiers and civilians, it was estimated that there were about 13 million unemployed, the total population and the working population being respectively about 72 millions and about 30 millions. The working population of the agriculture and forestry increased from 13.686 million in 1944 to 17.520 million in December 1945, but the question of unemployment remained to be serious.

The fertilizer and cement production had been sacrificed for the war production, as had been the case for the textile industry (see Table 8), and the flood control and forest conservation were neglected. Under the circumstances, the agricultural production dropped to 60 percent of the 1934-36 average in 1945, and it was at 79 and 76 percent of the average respectively in 1946 and 1947. Japan had been importing rice and other food stuff from Taiwan and Korea, and that import came to a halt. Food shortage became much acute especially among the urban population. The governmental stipulation of cereal ration for an adult was 1,110 and 1,290 calories a day respectively in fiscal 1946 and 1947 in terms of calorie counting. Even these extremely poor rations were not necessarily fulfilled, and arrears of the rations were 84, 49, 41, 37, 18, 24, and 30 days respectively in prefectures of Hokkaido, Iwate, Miyagi, Aomori, Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka at the end of September 1946.

One fourth of the national wealth of assets and 34 percent of the value of industrial machinery were lost due to the war (see Table 6). And, during the war, the coal mining was heavily dependent on the forced labor of Koreans and Chinese, who accounted for one fourth of the coal-mining workforce, and the maintenance of the mines worsened very much. Thus, the production of coal dropped sharply immediately after the Japanese surrender, and the consequent shortage of the major source

of energy became the serious bottleneck for the whole economy. In 1946, the steel production dropped to 10 percent of the 1934-36 average, the mining and manufacturing output decreased to 31 percent of the same average (see Table 7). Just after the war, the import of industrial raw materials was stopped, and the production was sustained by the stock of raw materials, which was left over from the war economy. Under the circumstances, the stock of materials was getting scarce in the fall of 1946, and an outlook of regressive reproduction was feared much for the springtime next year.

A hyperinflationary situation exploded following the surrender, and wholesale and consumer prices of Tokyo were respectively 16 and 50 times of the 1934-36 averages in 1946 (see Table 7). The government implemented the measures to freeze bank deposit, to switch over to the new bank notes, and to limit cash holdings of all the wage earners and households in February 1946. The government's fiscal policy remained to be inflationary, with the added burden to finance the GHQ's procurement of goods and services in Japan, and the situation continued to exist basically until 1949 (see Table 9).

As for the initial posture of the Occupation GHQ, the U.S. initial policy document stated, "(t)he plight of Japan - great economic destruction and ... the prospect of economic difficulty and suffering - is the direct outcome of its own behavior, and the Allies will not undertake the burden of repairing the damage."□The obligation of economic reparation for the Japanese aggression was looming, and Edwin Pauley, the U.S. mission on the reparation, recommended a harsh plan to cut down the Japanese industrial capacity to the 1926-30 level, in December 1945.

The GHQ dissolved the zaibatsu, purged considerable number of top-level enterprise managers, and liberalized the trade-union activities. The Japanese foreign trade was monopolized completely by the GHQ, and the Japanese businesses were prohibited from engaging themselves in the international commerce. When the war came to the end, the Japanese government owed business enterprises about 96 billion yen, about a fifth of the 1947 GNE, and the GHQ ordered the government to nullify the obligation in the middle of 1946, and the result was extremely wide-scale and radical financial restructuring of the enterprises and financial institutions. Under the circumstances, the bourgeoisie was in deep disarray without any definite orientation or clear perspective on the possible future of economy, and the workers and other toiling masses were neglected and abandoned by the government and the bourgeoisie.

Table 6: Damages of the National Wealth by the War (actual cash value at the end of war) (unit: 100 million yen)

	Damages (100 million yen)	Rate of damages (percent)	Survival wealth (100 million yen)
National wealth/assets	658	25	1,889
Active capital goods	198	25	597
Industrial machinery and appliances	80	34	154
Electricity & gas supplying facilities	16	11	133
Consumption goods	348	26	1,059
Furniture & home equipment	175	21	634
Transportation goods	96	29	233
Shipping	74	81	18
Buildings	222	25	682

Dwelling houses & store buildings			103
Forest land, roadway, Historic sites, etc.			10
War vessel, aircraft, etc.	404	100	
Total	1,057	36	1,889

Source: T. Uchino. *Sengo Nihon Keizaisi* (History of the Postwar Japanese Economy). Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973.

Table 7: GNP, Consumer Spending, Production, and Inflation 1945-47 (1934-36 average = 100)

	1945	1946	1947
Net GNP	...	62	65
Consumer spending per capita	...	57	60
Mining & Manufacturing Production	60	31	37
<i>Coal</i>	78	53	71
<i>Steel</i>	24	10	15
<i>Textile</i>	7	7	10
Agricultural production	60	79	76
Wholesale price (Tokyo)	350	1,630	4,820
Consumer price (Tokyo)	...	5,000	10,910
Bank of Japan notes issued	1,805	5,488	12,889

Source: T. Uchino. *Sengo Nihon Keizaisi* (History of the Postwar Japanese Economy). Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973.

Table 8: Production capacity of textile, fertilizer, and cement

	Production capacity 1937 (A)	Production capacity 1945 (B)	B/A
Cotton spinning (thousand spindles)	12,165	2,367	0.19
Cotton fabric (number of machine)	362,604	113,752	0.31
Ammonium sulfate (thousand tons)	1,460	1,243	0.85
Super phosphate (thousand tons)	2,980	1,721	0.58

Cement (thousand tons)	12,894	6,109	0.47
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Source: J. Hashimoto, S. Hasegawa, and H. Miyajima, "Gendai Nihon-Keizai (The Contemporary Japanese Economy)". Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1998.

Table 9: Postwar Hyperinflation

	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950
Wholesale price	100	464	1,375	3,651	5,951	7,045
Black-market price/ official price ratio	—	7.2	5.3	2.9	1.7	1.2

Source: J. Hashimoto. *Sengo no Nihon Keizai* (Postwar Japanese Economy). Tokyo: Iwanamishoten, 1995.

4.2 Risings of the Korean and Chinese Forced Laborers

Responses of the urban working masses and the rural landless peasants were not immediate to the defeat of Imperial Japan. Those people that rose up first after the defeat, were the Chinese and Koreans under forced labor at the Japanese mines.

About one million Koreans and about 40,000 Chinese were forcibly brought to Japan for forced labor during the Pacific War. The major industry for the forced-labor was the coal mining. At the time of August 1945, the total coal-mining workforce was about 400,000, and the number included 124,712 carted-off Koreans, 9,025 Chinese POWs, and 9,719 non-Asian POWs as forced laborers.

The Korean and Chinese forced laborers were most numerous in Hokkaido region, the northern island of Japan. At the Mitsubishi coal mine of Bibai area, Hokkaido, the Chinese laborers stopped their work immediately after the Hirohito's radio pronouncement of surrender. The U.S. POWs were repatriated, but the Chinese were forced to remain at the coal-mine internment camps. The Mitsubishi Bibai Chinese laborers organized themselves at the site and mobilized their colleagues of other mines and establishments at the local area in September.

The Koreans were forced to continue the mining work after the Japanese defeat. At Joban coal-mine area of Fukushima and Ibaragi prefectures in north-eastern Honshu, the main island of Japan, the Korean laborers set up their own association in September, and they clashed with the managements, the local police, and even the U.S. military police. At the Yubari coal mine of Hokkaido, about 7,000 Koreans set up their trade union and went on two-day strike in the early October. They demanded "early repatriation", "improvement of foods and their control by themselves", and "compensation for the wage difference between Koreans and Japanese", and the Koreans got paid 50,000 yens per head.

Following the Bibai, Joban, and Yubari uprisings, the Korean and Chinese forced laborers rose up at more than 40 coal mines in September and October, and the participants numbered in about 90,000.

Already in 1940 there were about one million and 220,000 Korean residents in Japan. Immediately after the Japanese defeat, numerous local Korean groups and associations were formed among the residents, and the Federation of Korean Residents in Japan was founded based upon those local organizations in October. The Joban Korean laborers got active supports from the Federation.

Korean residents also played an active role in the campaign for release of Korean and Japanese political prisoners, and a campaign group was organized among the Korean residents.

4.3 Explosion of Workers' Struggles and Formation of Trade Unions

Due to the extinction of war production, about 4 million workers were dismissed from their factories, and there were only few organized opposition to the massive dismissal. The Imperial Army and Navy were dissolved immediately, but the repressive political structure of the Japanese ancient regime remained to exist under the Higasikuni cabinet until early October. Generally, only after the GHQ policy implementation to "democratize" the ancient regime and to bring about broad reforms in the early October, the working masses began to explode into their massive struggles, and the formation of trade unions developed very rapidly.

In the case of the coal mines in Hokkaido region, the unionization movement was set in motion among the miners under the influence of the Chinese and Korean laborers' uprisings, and they began to go on strikes in early October. At the end of 1945, about 66,000 coal miners were organized into their 40 unions in Hokkaido, and about 141,000 miners were organized into the 96 unions all over Japan, the rate of unionization being respectively 74.7 percent and 35.4 percent.

Late in October, the journalists and workers of the Yomiuri Newspaper Company, one of the three major nationwide daily-newspaper firms, decided to form their union and demanded resignation of the firm's president and all other members of top-management due to their war responsibility, democratic reform of the management structure, and improvement of working conditions. However, the demands were rejected and five representative figures of the journalists and workers were dismissed instantly by the company president, and about 2,000 journalists and workers of the firm declared and implemented their direct control over editing and publication of the daily newspaper on October 25. Naturally, the contents of the daily became much progressive and popular. When the GHQ ordered the Japanese government to arrest war-criminal suspects on December 2, Yomiuri's president himself was on the list, and the dispute came to an end as a total victory for the journalists and workers after nearly 50-days control of the newspaper. The Yomiuri labor dispute and the journalist and workers control of the daily had a big impact on the broader working masses, and it set the exemplary pattern for the following workers' struggles.

Initiated by the coal miners and the Yomiuri journalists and workers, the rising of working masses and their unionization developed explosively from November 1945 through the first half of the next year, as is clear from the Table 10 and 11. The number of unionized workers increased from one thousand at the end of September to more than 450 thousand at end of the year, the latter surpassing the pre-Pacific-War peak of 420-thousand unionized workers in 1936 (Table 10's number of the unionized workers in 1945 does not include the count of more than 60 thousand maritime workers of the All Seamen's Union, the first postwar nationwide union, set up in early October). In 1946, about half a million workers were unionized anew each month in January, February, April, and May, and the newly unionized workers numbered one million in March. Thus, total number of unionized workers in June and December 1946 was 3.681 million and 4.849 million respectively.

Table 10: Trade unions and unionized workers (at the end of each month)

	Number of unit unions	Unionized workers (thousand)	Estimated rate of unionization
1945			
<i>November</i>	75	67	
<i>December</i>	509	385	

1946			39.5
<i>January</i>	1,517	902	
<i>February</i>	3,243	1,537	
<i>March</i>	6,538	2,568	
<i>April</i>	8,531	3,023	
<i>May</i>	10,541	3,414	
<i>June</i>	12,007	3,681	
<i>July</i>	12,923	3,814	
<i>August</i>	13,341	3,875	
<i>September</i>	14,341	4,122	
<i>October</i>	15,172	4,168	
<i>November</i>	16,171	4,296	
<i>December</i>	17,266	4,849	
1947			45.3
<i>January</i>	17,972	4,922	
<i>February</i>	18,929	5,030	
<i>June</i>	23,323	5,692	
1948			53.0
<i>June</i>	33,926	6,677	
1949			55.8
<i>June</i>	34,688	6,655	
1950			46.2
<i>June</i>	29,144	5,774	

Source: Monogatari Sengo-rodo-undoshi Henshu-iinkai ed. "Monogatari Sengo-rodo-undoshi (History of Postwar Labor Movement) I". Tokyo: Kyoikubunkakyokai, 1997.

Table 11a: Labor disputes and work-days lost

	Labor disputes		Strikes		Workers' control		Work-days lost	
	Cases	Participants	Cases	Participants	Cases	Participants		
1945								
<i>Jan.-July</i>	13	382	9	313				
<i>August</i>	1	128						
<i>September</i>	3	913	2	818				
<i>October</i>	32	17,292	16	9,406	1	2,000		
<i>November</i>	66	36,363	21	11,558				
<i>December</i>	141	109,509	33	9,595	4	6,674		
1946								

<i>January</i>	74	42,749	27	6,142	13	29,029	21,527
<i>February</i>	81	35,153	23	6,523	20	15,806	45,021
<i>March</i>	103	83,141	32	48,521	39	20,029	280,455
<i>April</i>	109	60,917	30	14,762	53	34,815	117,885
<i>May</i>	132	58,978	42	9,047	56	38,847	69,198
<i>June</i>	104	33,554	29	6,735	44	18,058	38,799
<i>July</i>	111	37,233	48	14,721	25	2,478	59,840
<i>August</i>	130	591,162	61	24,054	28	23,245	179,243
<i>September</i>	148	655,148	39	81,368	37	22,390	913,852
<i>October</i>	176	293,459	104	188,958	35	9,138	2,412,072
<i>November</i>	145	176,319	89	76,663	24	7,663	1,507,957
<i>December</i>	135	1,616,582	65	61,361	26	8,566	266,458
1947							
<i>January</i>	113	1,972,300	35	20,020	34	9,039	42,173
<i>February</i>	143	2,113,926	58	21,743	29	7,228	939,765

Source: Monogatari Sengo-rodo-undoshi Henshu-iinkai ed. "Monogatari Sengo-rodo-undoshi (History of the Postwar Labor Movement) I". Tokyo: Kyoiku-bunka-kyokai, 1997. Ichiro Saito, a member of the secretariat of Sanbetsu Kaigi from 1946 to 1949, indicated that these statistics reflected the unions which entered the production control, but that the statistics did not reflect the prolonged production control exceeding one month nor counted the total man-months of production control, and that the actual cases and total amount of man-months of production control could be said to be several times larger than these official records (Ichiro Saito "2.1 Suto Zengo (Before and after the February 1 General Strike)", Tokyo: Shakai-Hyoron sha, 1972; originally published by Aoki Shoten in 1956).

Table 11b: Labor disputes

	Labor disputes	
	Cases	Participants
1946		
<i>January</i>	236	229,104
<i>February</i>	195	122,819
<i>March</i>	137	117,056
<i>April</i>	133	112,325
<i>May</i>	107	170,291
<i>June</i>	125	141,552

The statistics of this table were taken from a survey bulletin published by the Communist Party in January 1947. *Source:* Hiroshi Hasegawa. "2-1 Suto zengo to Nihon Kyosanto (Before and After the February-1 Strike and the Japanese Communist Party". Tokyo: San-ichi-shobo, 1976)

4.4 Formation of Two National Federations

The explosive rising and unionization of working masses was basically spontaneous, and, at the same time, the process was lead and organized largely by the Communist Party and in a lesser degree by the pro-Socialist-Party group of right-wing and left-wing veteran trade-unionists who had been active in the 1930s.

The broad layer of newly-formed militant activists, who represented the explosive spontaneity of working masses, flowed into the Communist Party. The party membership grew from "1,083" at the December-1945 congress to "6,847" at the February-1946 congress. It was reported to the December-1947 congress that the party membership was more than 100,000, and the membership was said to be more than 200,000 in 1949, according to Tokuda's article of 1952. Thus, the CP became a powerful and spearheading left-wing force of the working class.

The CP's initial organizational policy toward the working masses was for setting-up of blue-collar-and-white-collar-embracing factory committees and their regional assembling, and promotion of industrial unions based upon the principle of one-union-at-one-factory/establishment and their national federation. The CP's organizational policy was somehow fitted for the radically fermenting and rapidly evolving situation among the working masses, and regional assembling of unions and national formation of industrial unions based on the factory/establishment unions progressed rapidly from December 1945 through the springtime of 1946.

The preparatory caucus for a new federation of industrial unions was set up by major industrial and regional groupings of unions in February, and the Zennihon Sangyobetsu Rodokumiai Kaigi (Sanbetsu Kaigi: Congress of Industrial Unions of Japan) was founded by 21 industrial unions, with the membership of 1.621 million workers, representing 43 percent of all the unionized workers, in August 1946. When it was founded, Sanbetsu Kaigi was already the driving active-majority of the whole workers movement and it was gripped tightly by the militant CP trade-unionists.

Concurrently with the CP's activities among the working masses, the pro-SP group of veteran trade-unionists worked for their own trade-union federation. In October 1945, an organizing group of the Central Preparatory Committee for Trade Union Organization was set up by right-wing trade-unionists around Komakichi Matsuoka, the president of the Nihon Rodo Sodomei (Labor Confederation of Japan) at the time of its dissolution in 1940, and left-wing activists around Minoru Takano, a leading member of the Nihon Rodokumiai Zenkoku-Hyogikai (National Council of Trade Unions of Japan) banned in 1937, and other pro-SP trade-unionists. Eventually, the group founded the Nihon Rodokumiai Sodomei (Sodomei: Japan Confederation of Trade Unions) with the membership of about 650 thousand workers in early August 1946, and its leadership body was dominated by the right-wing figures around K. Matsuoka, its new president.

In contrast to Sanbetsu Kaigi as a federation of major national industrial unions, the Sodomei was structured as a centralized organization primarily based on its regional components of prefectural federations, although it included several national and regional industrial unions. Sanbetsu Kaigi defended the production/business-operation control by the workers and employees, but K. Matsuoka and his right-wing group were against the method of production control and his group's orientation was straightly anti-communist and class-collaborationist. However, there was a minority group of non-communist left-wingers around M. Takano, member of the Sodomei's central standing body. His group stood for unification of all trade-union organizations, and was in favor for collaboration with Sanbetsu Kaigi. This group also endorsed the production control as a means of labor dispute, and M. Takano himself asserted the "campaign for industrial rehabilitation" of Japan to be one of the strategic tasks of the trade-union movement.

4.5 Blue-Collar-and-White-Collar-Inclusive Unions and their Demands

In the period from the late 1945 through the spring 1946, each base union was set up generally as blue-collar-and-white-collar-mixed organization that included and represented the whole employees, who were not members of the management, at a particular enterprise or its factory or business establishment, the marked exception being those of the mining industries.

The unions were formed much like blue-and-white-collar-inclusive struggle-committees of individual factories or business establishments, and white-collar activists played quite an important role in the unions' general activities. When an enterprise had several factories or business-operation sites, those base unions developed their enterprise-wide federation. The industrial unions, which founded Sanbetsu Kaigi (Congress of Industrial Unions), were generally industrial federations of those factory-or-operational-site-based unions or enterprise-wide federations of the base unions. Later in 1950s and 1960s, this particular characteristic of the base-union structure would become the much specific Japanese system of enterprise-based union or intra-enterprise union.

Also in this period, formation of a union was for workers and employees to rise up against a particular enterprise or management. When a union was set up, the union put forward its demands and it instantly jumped into its industrial action.

The common demands of the unions were the recognition of newly formed union and its rights of collective bargaining and industrial action, a steep pay-increase, such as 3-times or 5-times wage hike, under the hyperinflation, and the eight-hour labor. There were also demands to press for radical reforms of the management structure, removal of high-handed management-personnel, abolition of blue-collar and white-collar discriminations, revocation of dismissal, prior agreement by concerned employees and unions on the matter of personnel changes and working conditions, and so on.

Desperate fight for the life of physical existence under the horrible and hyperinflationary economic situation and the explosion of democratic anger and indignation against the working masses' own situation and the system in general were the common features of their movement.

4.6 Peasants Movement and the Agrarian Land Reform

After the surrender of Japan, the peasants' rice delivery to the government dropped sharply with the delivery-fulfillment rates of 23 percent at the end of 1945 and 51 percent at the end of February 1946, the harvesting season being the autumn. The government made the rice delivery compulsory in February 1946, and the peasants' campaign for their voluntary delivery developed widely against the government compulsory scheme. In combination with this campaign against the compulsory delivery, peasants' campaigns developed for fair and democratic allocation of delivery quotas and popular democratization of village administrative bodies and agriculture organizations. On the other hand, the rural landowners tended to recover tenant lands with imminent outlook of a radical agricultural land reform, and tenant peasants fought against the attempts and for the decrease of tenant rents and the cash payment of them.

Under the circumstances, organization of peasants proceeded rapidly, and Nihon Nomin Kumiai (Nichino: Japan Peasant Union) was set up as a unified organization of the pro-SP and pro-CP currents, with more than 100 thousand peasants, in February 1946, and its membership increased to 1.290 million and the number of all the unionized peasants was 3.134 million, more than half of the 5.702 million farming households, in 1947 (see Table 12).

The Japan Peasant Union was basically a tenant-peasant organization, and the peasant union had not conceived any radical land reform as the immediate task. The GHQ project of Japanese land reform, based on deliberation of the Allied Council for Japan, an advisory body to the Allied Occupation

supreme commander, composed of the U.S., U.K., Chinese and U.S.S.R. representatives, was more radical than the immediate perspective held by the ongoing movement of peasants. The Allied Occupation supreme commander praised the new land-reform law as the most secure foundation for building of the sound democracy and the most reliable barrier against the pressure of extremist ideas, upon its passage at the parliament in October 1946, and the GHQ-initiated land reform set the general course of the peasant activities thereafter. Thus, the peasant masses came under the GHQ's hegemony of democratization, and the potential for alliance of workers and tenant-peasants disappeared accordingly.

The agrarian land reform was one of the GHQ's major economic reforms, the others being the breaking-up of zaibatsu, introduction of basic labor rights and institutionalization of labor movement, etc.

An amendment of the Agricultural Land Adjustment Law was enacted, as the initial attempt of land reform by the Japanese government, in December 1945. But this Japanese attempt was not satisfactory for the GHQ, and the latter issued its land-reform memorandum after its consultation with the Allied Council for Japan. Accordingly, the new Land Reform Law was enacted in October 1946. The new law set the upper limit of land holding by the resident but non-cultivating landowner at one cho (5 cho in Hokkaido), and it provided that all the tenant land owned by the absentee landowners were to be bought up by the government and be sold to the tenant peasants.

Thus, from 1947 to 1950, 1.74 million cho of farm land were bought from the landowners and 1.93 million cho were sold to the peasants, and the proportion of the tenant land out of the total farm land decreased from 45.9 percent of 1945 to 10.1 percent of 1950, and the proportion of the landowning farmers increased from 32.8 percent of 1946 to 61.9 percent of 1950, that of tenant farmers decreasing from 28.7 percent to 5.1 percent (see Table 13). An important characteristics of the period from 1945 to 1950 was the hyperinflation (see Table 9), and this inflationary situation favored the tenant peasants much at the sacrifice of the landlords.

Table 12: Number of unionized peasants

	Japan Peasant Union	Other unions	Total
1946/Apr.	239,329		
1947/Feb.	1,250,000		
<i>Jun.</i>	1,290,583	1,843,518	3,134,101
<i>Dec.</i>	1,195,662	1,126,348	2,322,010
1948/Dec.	1,203,595	1,342,231	2,545,826
1949/Dec.	1,007,556	1,009,374	2,106,930
1950	753,914	845,406	1,599,320
1951	407,599	592,676	1,000,278
1952	325,486	459,454	784,940

From April 1946 to February 1947: Keiichiro Aoki. *Nihon Nomin-undoshi* (History of the Japanese Peasant Movement). Tokyo: Minshuhyoron-sha, 1948.

From June 1947 to 1952: Yoshiaki Nishida. *Kindainihon Nominundoshi Kenkyu* (Study on the History of Modern Japanese Peasant Movement). Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1997.

Table 13: Composition of farming households before and after the land reform

	1941	1946	1950
Landowning farmers	31.1%	32.8%	61.9%
Landowning and part-tenant farmers	20.7	19.8	25.6
Tenant and part-landowning farmers	20.0	18.6	6.7
Tenant farmers	27.8	28.7	5.1
Total farming households (million)	5.499	5.698	6.176

Source: Rekisigaku Kenkyukai ed. *Sengo Nihonshi* (Postwar Japanese History). Tokyo: Aokishoten, 1961.

5 Workers' Production Control and its Potential

5.1 Workers and Employees' Production Control as a Means of Labor Dispute

As for the industrial actions by the unions in this period, workers and employees' control of the production or business-operation played quite an important role, and the cases of production control were more numerous than those of the strikes from March to June 1946, as is clear from Table 11.

Following the Yomiuri journalists and workers' control of newspaper production from late October to mid-December 1945, about 2,500 workers of Keisei Dentetsu, a local electric-railway company at the Greater Metropolitan area, set up their union, and the union took over the control of whole railway operation on December 11, and the transport service was made charge-free for four days. The union demanded recognition of the right of collective bargaining, 5-times wage increase, shorter working hours, resignation of the top-management officers, and setting-up of a joint management council, and the workers' control of the railway operation came to an end with the union's complete victory on December 29.

2,000 employees of the Nihon-Kokan Tsurumi-Ironworks took control of the plant from January 10 to 29 next year, and their management committee decided to produce new steel goods for rebuilding of war-damaged houses and for railway usage, placed the firm's sheet-steel contracts with builders and other customers, implemented the eight-hour labor practice, and eliminated the management's upper hierarchy from the shop floors.

There were the large-scale cases of production or business-operation control: Tokyo Shibaura Engineering Works (14,000 employees, Jan. 12-29, 1946), Kanto Power Distribution (16,000 employees, Jan. 16-26), Toho Eiga (a movie firm: 6,000 employees, Mar. 23-Apr. 6), Hokkaido Colliery & Steamship's coal mines (19,700 miners, Apr. 2-Jun. 7), Tohoku Power Distribution (50,000 employees, May 4-26), and the traffic, waterworks, construction and other departments of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (41,000 employees, Jun. 21-30).

In the case of Toyo-Gosei's Niigata Factory, a chemical manufacturing establishment, 180 workers opposed its closure and took over the factory on March 13, they eliminated the management hierarchy, established their control over the production and whole business operation, and opened new business relations with the other factory-workers group of production control, local peasants unions and coal miners. The workers' control and management was conducted until August 27.

At the Takahagi Coal Mines of the Joban coal-mining area, the 1,800 miners set up their union and the union established its control over coal mining and the firm's business operation on April 6. The miners got much positive support from the employees union of the Nihon Sekitan Kaisha, a firm that

handled the distribution of coal, which forced the payment for coal to be made to the production-controlling union, against the will of the coal-mining regulation authority. The Takahagi miners' production control was carried on until June 14.

In all those cases, the workers and employees control of production and business operation was adopted and carried out as a means of labor dispute, somehow, in order to force the continuation of the production or public service against the management's will and under the hyperinflationary economic situation. This method of struggle was a self-defensive reflex action of the angry and desperate working masses under the horrible economic conditions and in face of high-handedness or irresponsibility of the existing managements.

5.2 Workers' Production Control and Perspective for Working-Class Government

However, the production and business control by the workers and employees was a definite denial of the power and function of capitalistic management to command and direct the production and business operation at a given enterprise or corporation, or any organization, and thereby this method of struggle had strong destabilizing effects on the social and political situation. Hence, the method of struggle had definite potential of anti-capitalistic revolutionary dynamics.

In this regard, Hiroshi Hasegawa, Communist-Party Political Bureau member in charge of trade-union activities from August 1946 through 1948, in his "2-1-Suto-zengo to Nihon-Kyosanto (Before and After the February-1 General Strike and the Japan Communist Party)" (Tokyo: San'ichi-shobo, 1976), retrospectively argued that, through the production-control struggles, workers got the right of veto on the management's decisions about dismissal, hiring, redeployment, and matters of working condition, and the right to intervene in the management decision-making in general, and that, these gains of workers being to restrain the prerogative right of management retained by the capitalist businesses, the struggles of production control signified the beginning of working-class struggle toward the socialist revolution.

But the anti-capitalistic revolutionary perspective of the production and business control was not defended and promoted positively, nor was the awareness of this anti-capitalist potential propagated actively among the worker activists and broader working masses.

In this regard, too, Kenta Kaneko, general secretary of a machinery workers industrial union founded in 1946 and a member of Sanbetsu Kaigi's national bureau in 1948, in his "Sanbetsu Kaigi's Activities in its Early Period" of 1970, retrospectively wrote: "the production-control struggles are not liable to be carried through successfully under the capitalist system, except that those struggles are combined with ... the working-class struggle for its political power. Workers' production-control struggles would be supported even by peasants and be carried through successfully, if those struggles are combined with the struggle for the political power, based on the united front and the workers and peasants alliance" (ibid.).

Indeed, the production-control struggles required the broader perspective of nationalization of major industries and generalized workers control of production and the working-class struggle for its own government. The pressing necessity of the general perspective for a working-class government would be also confirmed by the later development of workers struggles from the summertime of 1946 to February 1 of 1947.

But the Communist Party's orientation upheld the moderate framework of "democratic revolution", and there was no room for anti-capitalist elements in its strategic program. As for Sanbetsu Kaigi, which was gripped tightly by the CP activists, its platform adopted by the August-1946 founding congress was fundamentally "democratic", too. While those unions that fought the production-

control struggles mostly joined the industrial federations which set up Sanbetsu Kaigi, and though the latter defended the method of production-and-business-operation-control struggles earnestly, its platform had nothing about the nationalization of major industries and the workers control of production. Instead the platform stood only for workers' elaboration of the transformation and reconstruction plans for all the industries and their implementation by the government.

6 GHQ's Policy Shift

6.1 GHQ's New Containment Stance toward the Mass Workers Movement

Simultaneously with the explosive processes of massive unionization, strike actions and production-control struggles, popular mass activities developed extensively also as street demonstrations, mass rallies, and various campaigns for securing of foodstuff supply and distribution or in defense of production control from late 1945 through the 1946 springtime. Though spontaneous and much embryonic, elements of dual-power situation were emerging sporadically at the workplaces and in the streets, the Japanese machinery of state and government being thrown into a deep crisis, with the military force of Imperial Army dismantled and without effective policing forces to maintain the bourgeois law and order.

On April 10, there was the first general election for the lower house after the Japanese defeat. The bourgeois conservative forces got more than 300 seats and the SP, CP and other progressives got 102 seats, the total number being 464 seats. The Shidehara government resigned on April 22, but a new government was not formed based upon the newly elected lower house and its pro-capitalist conservative majority, under the shadow of the exploding mass activities of workers at their workplaces and the streets. The chaotic situation of political crisis unfolded into May.

On May 1, the first May Day after the Japanese surrender, 500,000 people rallied at the Imperial Palace Plaza in Tokyo, and there were two million participants nationwide. The street activities of working masses developed much, and the popular mobilization came to its peak at the "Foodstuffs May Day" on May 19, and 250,000 people gathered at the Imperial Palace Plaza, demanding the sufficient supply of foods, popular control over all the foodstuffs, and formation of a 'democratic government by the SP and CP, based upon the democratic front of trade-unions, peasants organizations and cultural associations'. The Prime Minister's residence was guarded by the U.S. military police against potential threats from the popular demonstrators.

The rising tide of massive workers struggles entered the critical phase where the workers movement was inescapably to confront and collide head-on with the GHQ and its global policy: the interrelation between the unfolding workers movement and the GHQ's policy implementation became irreconcilable definitely. The GHQ's orientation was a government system of parliament democracy with the social order of capitalist economy, and the workers struggles of production-control and the popular street mobilization were becoming the serious threat to the GHQ's global policy socially and politically.

Thus, the Communist Party's docile program of "democratic revolution" and its nonsensical project of "peaceful revolution under the occupation" revealed their political bankruptcy. The global perspective that was required for the workers movement was a definite working-class struggle for its own political power under general anti-capitalist and socialistic demands, with determined readiness to have head-on confrontation with the GHQ, regardless whether the whole struggle would reach its successful conclusion or not.

The GHQ's political project was to introduce a moderate system of parliamentary democracy upon

dismantling the highly oppressive ancient regime of Imperial Japan. The GHQ had handed its own draft of the new constitution to the Japanese government in February, and the April-1946 general election was an important step toward the new Japanese regime of parliamentary democracy. The GHQ could not allow the mass activities of working people to disturb the realization of the new parliamentary democracy and the formation of a government based on the newly elected lower house. The moment had just come, when the GHQ was to act where necessary to ensure the attainment of its objectives in the event that changes in the form of government were to involve "the use of force by the Japanese people." The democracy that the GHQ could permit for the Japanese people was neither unconditional nor unlimited, and the mass activities of working masses and the workers movement in general should be subject to the U.S. objectives and be contained within the limits of parliamentary democracy or bourgeois democracy.

Under the circumstances, George Acheson, U.S. member of the Allied Council for Japan, an advisory body to the Allied Occupation supreme commander, denounced the CP activities and made the GHQ's anticommunist stance clear at the Allied Council meeting of May 14. On May 20, one day after the "Foodstuffs May Day", the Occupation supreme commander, D. MacArthur, denounced the popular mobilization under the CP leadership as the major threat to the 'orderly government' and 'future evolution of Japan', as well as to the objectives of the Occupation, and he made it clear that the GHQ were ready to take necessary actions in order to control the situation. G. Acheson made his anticommunist statement again at the Allied Council meeting on May 29, and this statement was broadcasted by radio repeatedly for one week.

The GHQ's tolerant policy toward the Japanese workers movement since October 1945 came to an end, and this marked the beginning of a new period of confrontation between the bloc of the GHQ and the Japanese government and bourgeoisie on the one hand and the CP-led militant wing of the mass workers movement under Sanbetsu Kaigi on the other. And, the Communist Party under the Tokuda leadership would try to evade a head-on confrontation with the GHQ, whenever this possibility would arise. The June-11 issue of the Communist Party's paper asserted: "Don't let's be fooled by the reactionaries' false rumor. The occupation army is the democratic forces' ally."

6.2 Formation of the Yoshida Government and the Second Yomiuri Dispute

The GHQ's policy shift to its new containment stance on the radicalizing workers movement was the key factor to solve the prolonged political crises, and a new Liberal-Party and Progressive-Party government under the premiership of Shigeru Yoshida was set up on May 22. This government was to strive for restraining and pushing-back of the rising workers struggles and for getting some initial gains for capitalist economic reconstruction, with the GHQ's active backing.

Under the Yoshida government, an imperial ordinance on the punishment of violations of the Occupation's objectives was issued on June 12, and the government made its "maintenance of social order" statement and denied the production control as a rightful means of industrial dispute the next day.

On June 20, the Imperial Diet began its session with the newly elected lower house, and the new draft constitution and the new Land Reform Law were brought under its deliberation, both of which were essential elements of the GHQ project of Japanese democratization. Other bills relevant to the capitalist economic reconstruction were deliberated on and passed.

The Labor Relations Adjustment Law was passed by the diet, too, at the end of September. The new law restricted the labor right of dispute action in the public-service sectors such as transport, post and telecommunication, water, electricity and gas supply, and medical care and public health, and it deprived non-blue-color governmental employees of the right of any dispute action. The enactment

of this law was a preventive measure against the rising workers struggles, and the government applied this law against the electricity-workers struggles in October.

Concurrently in June, the GHQ raised an objection on the content of the "Yomiuri" newspaper. This was the GHQ's operation to suppress the progressive editorial policy of the newspaper, and the GHQ had introduced its censorship over the Japanese media immediately after the occupation, as mentioned earlier. In mid-June, the firm demanded 6 leading members of the October-December struggle of newspaper-production control to quit the firm, and the union rejected the demand. The journalists and workers divided between those who were opposed to the dismissal and the pro-firm group. The firm mobilized their goon squad and the police intervened forcibly in the dispute. In July, the firm issued its relocation orders to 17 journalists, and the union took control over the printing facilities and went into strike. Publication of the paper was suspended for four days, and the factory was taken by the firm and the pro-firm group, protected by the GHQ military police and the Japanese policemen. Thus, the GHQ succeeded in eliminating the progressive contents from the daily newspaper through the second Yomiuri dispute. However, about 500 union members continued their fight with the broad supports from the newspaper, news-service and broadcasting workers industrial union and other unions, and the union reached a settlement with the firm in mid-October.

Also in June, the GHQ intervened in Hokkaido-shinbun (Hokkaido Newspaper). The firm dismissed two members from the board of directors, forced the managing editor to resign, dismissed 28 workers, and ordered 28 workers to suspend their works, and those victimized union members formed their disputing-workers group and continued the fight.

7 Workers' Responses and the Sanbetsu-Kaigi October Campaign

7.1 Railway Workers and Seamen against the Mass Dismissals

After the "Foodstuff May Day" and the following denouncement of the popular mobilization by the Occupation supreme commander, the mass workers movement underwent slight ebb in June and July, and the incidence of the production-control struggle decreased markedly especially in July. However, the rising tide of workers struggles kept its upswing momentum. A joint struggle conference of 14 industrial unions, which were working for the foundation of Sanbetsu Kaigi, agreed to uphold the production-control struggles in opposition to the government's negative position, and about 40,000 employees of the Tokyo metropolitan government took over the control of official business operation, demanding an emergency pay against starvation, from June 21 to 29.

As mentioned before, formation of industrial federations and unions proceeded rapidly in this period, and Sanbetsu Kaigi was founded as a kind of 'joint-struggle' federation of industrial unions and federations in August. It was composed of the industrial unions and federations of newspaper, news-service and broadcasting, coal mining, printing and publishing, machinery, movies and theater, teachers, post and telecommunication, forwarding, electricity, National Railways (Tokyo division), healthcare, seafood, life insurance, chemicals, electric machinery, steel, international telecommunication, U.S.-occupation-forces employees, dockworkers, and rolling-stock factories.

While workers' actions were generally based on the working sites or individual enterprises from the late 1945 to the middle of 1946, their actions and struggles became more organized, industrial and nationwide in the latter half of the year, and, concurrently, strike actions became more numerous and common than the production-control struggles, though the latter remained to be an important form of industrial action all through 1947.

Workers of the Japan National Railways (JNR) and the seamen fought against respective mass-

dismissal plans in September. Sanbetsu Kaigi supported the JNR workers and seamen's struggles, and several Sanbetsu Kaigi unions set up a joint struggle committee together with the JNR workers and the seamen.

The transport ministry planned to dismiss 129,000 JNR workers, and notified Kokutetsu Soren (General Federation of National Railways Workers Unions) of the first dismissal of 75,000 workers, mostly youth and females, in July. In August, opposing the mass dismissal, Kokutetsu Soren decided to go on strike on September 15, but there was a fierce internal conflict between the unyielding militant current and the pro-management current. However, the former intransigent current built up its readiness for September-15 railway strike, and joint activities with the Sanbetsu Kaigi unions developed simultaneously. Finally the transport ministry withdrew its whole dismissal plan on the eve of the strike action.

The shipping industry was damaged most severely due to the Pacific war, the aggregate shipping tonnage having decreased to 1.526 million ton in August 1945 from 6.384 million ton in December 1941, and dismissal of 43,000 seamen was planned by the shipowners. As mentioned before, the All Japan Seamen's Union was set up as the first postwar industrial union in early October 1945, and the moderate right-wing current was the majority at the national headquarters.

But there were strong pro-Sanbetsu-Kaigi activities and influence among the rank and file, and an emergency structure of central and local struggle committees was built up to confronted with the looming mass dismissal. This ad hoc structure took over the seamen's movement against the shipowners, joined the joint struggle committee of the Sanbetsu Kaigi unions, and organized the strike from 10th to 20th of September. 80 percent of large-size vessels and 90 percent of smaller boats were stopped by the strike, and the seamen got their complete victory over the shipowners.

7.2 October Campaign of the Sanbetsu Kaigi Unions

The Yoshida government and the big businesses were seeking to enforce a fixed ceiling on wages under the hyperinflation and to carry out structural rationalization of major industries with mass dismissal of workers, in order to achieve an initial breakthrough for the capitalist reconstruction of economy. In confrontation with the government and the businesses, following the JNR workers' and seamen's struggles, Sanbetsu Kaigi and its component unions and federations waged vigorous offensive campaign in October. The October campaign's joint demands were: 'No dismissal and full employment,' 'Minimum wage system based on actual living expenses', 'Abolish the wage ceiling of 500 yen a month,' 'Portal-to-portal eight-hour system (six-hour for pit work)', 'Eliminate discrimination against women', 'Industry-wide collective agreements,' 'Abolish the earned-income tax', 'Repeal the Labor Relation Adjustment Law,' 'Establish the unemployment insurance law and the social security law,' 'Rebuilding of production by the hands of the people,' 'Against strikebreaking by the goons and the police,' and 'Down with the Yoshida government.'

First of all, more than 45,000 electric-machinery-and-appliance workers of the Toshiba trade-union federation went on strike, demanding withdrawal of the management's dismissal plan, realization of a minimum-wage system based on the actual living expenses, and setting-up of democratically instituted whole-enterprise conference for reviving of production, on October 1. There were the GHQ's interventions, and they were rebuffed by the striking workers. The struggle was protracted and not easy, and 10 constituent unions out of the federation's 53 striking unions dropped out of the battle. The strike lasted more than 50 days, and the Toshiba federation barely managed to block the dismissal and to enforce some wage increase.

On October 5, Zen-Nihon Shinbun-Tsusin-Hoso Rodokumiai (Shinbun-Tsusin-Hoso: All Japan Newspaper, News-Service and Broadcasting Workers Union) was to go on strike, demanding

withdrawal of the Yomiuri and Hokkaido-Shinbun dismissals of workers, conclusion of the industry-wide collective agreement, wage increase and others. Due to the GHQ intervention and the government's campaign against the mass-media strike, the branch unions of major nationwide newspapers could not join the national action, and branch unions of regional and specialist newspapers and NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) went on the strike. The NHK union carried out the strike for 22 days, in confrontation with the government's direct control of broadcasting, and the union got the collective agreement and realized other economic demands.

More than 30,000 coal miners of Kyushu region went on strike on October 1, and about 60,000 coal miners of Hokkaido region went on strike on October 10-15. In the middle of the month, the electricity workers of Densan (Council of Electric Power Workers of Japan) entered their struggle. Further, unions of steel, electric machinery and appliance, machinery and tool, chemicals, cinema and theater, printing and publishing industries waged respective struggles. The October campaign of Sanbetsu Kaigi influenced and mobilized numerous Sodomei unions, too. According to Sanbetsu Kaigi's survey based on its component unions, about 560,000 workers participated in the labor disputes of October, about 320,000 workers participated in strike actions, and the total number of man-days spent for strike and production control being 2.91 million man-days in the month (See Table 14).

Table 14: Workers in industrial actions in October 1946

Date	Number of workers in industrial actions	Date	Number of workers in industrial actions
Oct. 1	82,197	Oct. 16	70,141
— 2	68,191	— 17	67,769
— 3	41,611	— 18	78,252
— 4	49,611	— 19	168,704
— 5	59,330	— 20	168,704
— 6	55,951	— 21	168,704
— 7	61,715	— 22	168,704
— 8	61,715	— 23	168,704
— 9	61,715	— 24	168,704
— 10	101,727	— 25	80,985
— 11	101,727	— 26	75,131
— 12	101,727	— 27	72,831
— 13	101,727	— 28	73,088
— 14	101,727	— 29	64,696
— 15	146,784	— 30	64,696
		— 31	65,077
Total			2,913,326

Ichiro Saito. "2.1 Suto Zengo (Before and after the February 1 General Strike)" Tokyo: Shakai-Hyoron sha, 1972; originally published by Aoki Shoten, 1956.

In spite of the defeat of the Yomiuri journalists and workers and a difficult end of the Hokkaido-

Shinbun workers' fight, the Sanbetsu Kaigi October campaign was successful overall: the working masses blocked the businesses' attempts of mass dismissal and the workers' job security was improved; the governmental scheme of 500-yen wage-ceiling was broken down, and the monthly wage rose to the level of 1,000 yen; the workers got better working conditions such as the eight-hour labor system; and their rights of trade-union activities were secured better. Enterprise managements were obliged to be defensive in face of the rising mass militancy of workers, and the working masses and their unions had built up an organized position of confrontational power relationship against the big businesses and the government.

7.3 Electricity Workers' Struggle in October and November

One of exemplary struggles waged as part of the Sanbetsu-Kaigi campaign was Densan's struggle from October to the end of November. Densan at the time was an industrial federation of the unions of a nationwide electricity-generating-and-transmitting company and 9 regional power-distributing companies, and the total membership was about 95,000. The unions were composed of almost all employees except a thin top layer of management hierarchies of those companies.

Densan demanded radical democratization of whole electricity business operation and uniform consolidation of the 10 companies, realization of a new wage system, and improvement of retirement-pay system. The wage demand was an attempt to introduce a totally new and industry-wide uniform wage-scale system, worked out by the federation itself based on the actual cost of living, which would be fair, nondiscriminatory and egalitarian for the employees, and which would leave no room for the managements to manipulate and divide employees through their intentional differentiation of wage and the consequent intra-competition among the employees. Under the new system, the minimum wage would be 500 yen for 17-year-old worker, and the basic part of wage for ordinary workers would be composed of aged-linked pay, dependent family allowance and ability-linked pay.

The collective-bargaining talks came to a deadlock between Densan and the group of 10 companies' presidents in October 8, and the government moved up the enforcement of the Labor Relations Adjustment Law, intending to restrict Densan's dispute actions, on October 13. Thereby, Densan went on its industrial actions, and the form of the actions was primarily the federation's control of the switchboards of local power-distribution stations and its time-area-user-selective power cuts or blackouts.

At first, the federation went on nationwide 'five minutes' blackout on October 19, and the power cut was general and had its effects on the occupation forces' facilities, too. The GHQ intervened, and Densan's national, regional and local activists were threatened even at gunpoint. In spite of the GHQ's intervention and the government's threats of criminal-law punishment, Densan also went on 'four-hour power cut for major factories' on October 23 and 24. Again, talks began between the federation and the bloc of the ten companies and the government on October 25.

But the talks were protracted, and the federation decided to go on a nationwide four-hour power cut from the noon every day beginning December 2, on November 23. When the Densan leadership made this decision, it envisaged the government's forcible repression. It decided on the emergency measures that should be taken in case of such a repression, and the regional leadership committees set up alternative executive bodies against the possible repression.

Only after this decision of a new nationwide power-cut action by Densan, the ten-company group and the government came to the final agreement with the federation, and the latter's central demand of a new, nationwide uniform wage system was accepted by the ten companies' managements. After the victory of Densan, the new wage system became a de-facto-standard model as the "Densan-type

wage system” for other unions when they would formulate their demands on the wage.

8 Workers’ Demand for Rebuilding of Production and the Democratic Maze of Sanbetsu Kaigi

H. Hasegawa, then CP politburo member in charge of trade-union matters, in his 1976 book, indicated that “the struggles against dismissal and for various rights of the workers” were tightly connected with “the workers’ fundamental demand for rebuilding[/revitalization/revival/reconstruction] of production” at the Sanbetsu-Kaigi October campaign, as could be seen in the examples such as the Toshiba trade-union federation’s demand of no dismissal and its other demand of “setting-up of democratically instituted whole-enterprise conference for reviving of production,” and the Densan’s demands of “radical democratization of whole electricity business operation” and “uniform consolidation” of the electricity industry.

In this context, Sangyo-fukko Sekitan Kaigi (Industrial Reconstruction Conference for Coal) had been set up by the unions of coal mining and distribution, JNR, shipping, electricity, steel, chemical, forwarding, and newspaper and broadcasting workers in July 1946. The conference denounced the coal-mining businesses’ neglect and abandonment of production and their concealment and black-marketing, and it demanded establishment of a nationwide managing body, ‘based on the popular toiling masses’, which would take over the management of the whole industry and promote the coal production.

However, at the August-1946 founding congress of Sanbetsu Kaigi, which adopted its platform that included a plank for ‘workers’ elaboration of the transformation and reconstruction plans for all the industries and their implementation by the government,’ as mentioned before, a policy document was endorsed on the reconstruction of industries, based on a report by the general secretary of the coal miners union, and the document included an item stipulating that the industrial reconstruction would be carried out by the reconstruction committee based on equal representation of labor and capital. Furthermore, in the midst of the October campaign, Sangyo-fukko Kaigi (Industrial Reconstruction Conference) was set up by 30 unions and other progressive organizations, including some Sodomei unions, and its governing-body meeting of November adopted a position paper to the effect that any decision had to be made on the equal footing of labor and capital at the industrial reconstruction project, and that the labor-and-capital joint management councils were to be the implementation bodies of the reconstruction movement at various levels.

This position of labor-and-capital parity or equal-footing and the scheme of labor-and-capital joint management committee or council were nothing other than outright denial of the workers’ control of production or business operation. Based on this very stand, in November, Sanbetsu Kaigi was invited to participate in the formation of Keizai-fukko Kaigi (Council for Economic Rehabilitation), the original initiator of which was M. Takano of Sodomei, and the preparatory works for which had been initiated jointly by Sodomei and Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives: neo-capitalistic grouping of business executives, founded in April 1946). After the joint confirmation of the rights of management and the rights of labor together with Keizai Doyukai, Sanbetsu Kaigi decided to join the Keizai-fukko Kaigi in December. The economy-rehabilitation council was inaugurated jointly by major business organizations, Sanbetsu Kaigi, Sodomei and major industrial unions on February 6, just after the aborted attempt of February-1 general strike by the Sanbetsu-Kaigi unions. S. Nosaka, CP representative at the inauguration meeting, endorsed the rehabilitation council, saying, “we consider that this council is meaningful as an effort for reform ... under the current objective situation.”

Here, the natural and justifiable aspiration of workers for rebuilding of industrial production was channeled into the class-collaborationist scheme, because “the Sanbetsu-Kaigi industrial-reconstruction campaign,” retrospectively wrote I. Saito, then chief of the CP-member group at the federation’s headquarters, “was not combined with the tactics of production control with an outlook of its generalization” (I. Saito, 1972). The then CP politburo member in charge of trade-union matters, retrospectively, too, wrote in the effect that, thereby, the CP-projected “democratic revolution” was reduced to nothing more than a “labor-and-capital-parity-based democracy” or “resolution of class conflicts by means of consultation” (H. Hasegawa, 1976). The workers aspiration had to be opposed diametrically against the capitalist scheme of economic reconstruction. Precisely for that reason, that is, for the class independence of working masses, the anti-capitalist orientation of nationalization of major industries and generalized workers control of production and the working-class struggle for its own government were required pressingly.

9 Climax of Class Conflict: Striving for February-1 General Strike and its Abortion

9.1 Formation of the Government-and-Public-Sector Unions’ Common Front

The Sanbetsu-Kaigi October campaign was waged mostly by the private-sector unions, and the unions got considerable wage rises, 33 percent and 17 percent increases respectively from the levels of July and September in 1946. However, the wages of government and public workers and employees were pegged at the level of July under the hyperinflationary situation, and their wages were roughly less than half of the private-sector wages in November. Thus, the workers and employees of government and public sector began to move, and they became the main forces of battle in a direct confrontation with the government from December to January following year, opening the way for an attempt of February-1 general strike, a climax of class conflict in the period immediate after the surrender of Japan.

In the middle of October, 8,000 delegates, representing 320 thousands primary-and-middle-school teachers, held their national convention of teachers unions (Zenkyoso), and the convention decided on the demands to be presented to the government and set up their national struggle committee. At the end of October, Zenteisin Rodokumiai (Zentei:Japan Postal and Telecommunication Workers Union) held its national congress, and it decided on the demands, which were submitted to the government in November. In the same month, Kokutetsu Rodokumiai Sorengokai (Kokutetsu Soren: Federation of National Railway Workers Unions) had its national congress, the congress decided on the demands, and it agreed to wage the campaign against the government jointly with Zenkyoso and Zentei. In the same month, too, Zenkoku Kanko Shokuin-Rodokumiai Kyogikai (Zenkankorokyo: National Conference of Government and Public Employees and Workers Unions) and Zenkoku Kokyodantai Shokuin-Rodokumiai Rengokai (Zenkoren: National Federation of Public Bodies Employees and Workers Unions) submitted their respective demands to the government, and the government’s replies were extremely poor.

Finally, Zenkankocho Kyodotoso-iinkai (Zenkankocho Kyoto: Joint Struggle Committee of All Government-and-Public-Sector Unions) was set up by those national unions and federations at the end of November, and Zenkankocho Kyoto’s joint demands were: minimum wage of 650 yen; payment of the year-end allowance; cash payment of all the wages and allowances; abolition of income tax on wages; raising exemption point of consolidated income tax to 30,000 yen; abolition of Labor Relations Adjustment Law; elimination of discriminatory treatments; conclusion of collective bargaining agreements; payment of “cold zone” allowance; no wrongful discharges; and so on. Zenkankocho Kyoto was composed of Kokutetsu Soren (533,000 national railway workers), Zentei

(380,000 postal and telecommunication workers), Zenkyoso (328,000 teachers), Zenkankorokyo (83,000 government and public workers), Zenkoren (230,000 public bodies workers), and other 8 unions and federations of the government and public sector, and there were about 1.8 million workers and employees as a whole under those unions, when the joint struggle committee issued the declaration for its general strike from February 1, in mid-January 1947.

9.2 Working-Class Common Front for the February-1 General Strike

Although Sodomei, the reformist national federation, took an opposing stance toward the October campaign of Sanbetsu-Kaigi unions initially, 250-thousand-membership Zenkoku Kinzoku-sangyo Rodokumiai-domei (Zenkoku Kinzoku: National Federation of Metalworking Unions), Sodomei's major industrial federation under the left-wing Takano group, instructed its component unions to wage their struggles in late October. Sodomei itself was forced to go on its winter campaign in November, and its political stance was hardened against the government.

Under the circumstances, based upon an agreement between the bloc of the Socialist Party's left-wing group and Sodomei's Takano group on the one hand and the Communist Party and the Sanbetsu Kaigi leadership, Zenkoku Rodokumiai-kondankai (Zenrokon: National Roundtable Conference of Unions) was set up as a consultative body of Sanbetsu Kaigi, Sodomei, Nichiro Kaigi (the third trade-union federation, founded in October 1946, linked with the SP left-wing group, and the membership being about 150 thousand), Zentei (post and telecommunication), Kokutetsu Soren (national railway), Densan (electricity), Zenkoku Kinzoku (metalworking), and other Sanbetsu-Kaigi and Sodomei unions, at the end of November. Together with Nihon Nomin Kumiai (Nichino: Japan Peasant Union), Zenrokon organized antigovernment mass rallies across the country on December 17, and the participants numbered in half a million at the Imperial-Palace-Plaza rally in Tokyo.

The rally's slogans included "Rehabilitation of production by the people, for the people," "Funds and materials for smaller businesses," "Secure supply of the foodstuffs, fuels and housing," "More government budget and financial liability for education, and thoroughgoing democratization of education," "Fertilizers and agricultural implements for farmers," "Against the compulsory rice-delivery system," besides those demands directly relevant to wage-earning masses, and the culminating slogans were "Down with the Yoshida national-decay government" and "Establish the democratic government centering on the Socialist Party," while the joint demands of Zenkankocho Kyoto (Joint Struggle Committee of All Government-and-Public-Sector Unions) were all directly relevant to the government-and-public-sector wage earners as such. The implication was clear, and the setting up of Zenrokon meant to turn Zenkankocho Kyoto's joint campaign of government-and-public-sector unions into a more general and broader movement of the whole working class to topple the Yoshida Liberal-Party government and try to install a popular government of some sort.

Immediately after the December-17 rallies, Naikaku-dato Jikko-iinkai (Tokaku Iinkai: Committee for Toppling the Cabinet) was set up, composed of representatives of Sanbetsu Kaigi, Sodomei, Nichiro Kaigi, Kokutetsu Soren, the Socialist Party (left-wing group) and the Communist Party. Concurrently, a preparatory body was set up for Zenkoku Rodokumiai Kyodotoso-iinkai (Zento: National Joint Struggle Committee of Trade Unions) as a joint-campaign organization, encompassing Zenkankocho-Kyoto unions of government and public sector, and Sanbetsu-Kaigi, Sodomei and Nichiro-Kaigi, and other industrial unions, at the end of December.

9.3 Heading toward a Showdown Confrontation

As indicated before at the subsection of "the economy and the bourgeoisie," the economy was in an extremely bad shape, and the industrial production had been sustained only by the stock of raw materials, left over from the war economy, in 1946. The economy was cut off from the international

commerce, there was no cyclic process of enlarged reproduction, and exhaustion of the material stocks was imminent. The industrial production was 30.4 and 27.7 percent of the 1934-36 average respectively in September and December, the output of coal was about half of the pre-Pacific-war average, and the steel production of 1946 was less than 10 percent of the same average. The hyperinflationary situation deteriorated again from October onward, under the much inflationary fiscal policy of the government. A restrictive regime of no daytime electricity supply every other day was introduced in Kanto region around Tokyo in late December. The economy immediately after the Japanese surrender was approaching its dead end.

It was that horrible situation, from which Zenrokon (National Round-Table Conference of Trade Unions) strove to get away, through its campaign for toppling of the 'national-decay' government and installing of a popular government of some sort, with the aspiration for 'rehabilitation of production by the people, for the people.'

The Communist Party, the major political force of the campaign for general strike, had its special conference on January 6-8. The conference pronouncement stated that the general strike by the government-and-public-sector unions of the Zenkankocho-Kyoto was to open the way for general popular struggles to topple the Yoshida 'national-decay' government and to establish a democratic government of the people, and it appealed to the broader masses to support the general strike and to join the struggle for the people's government. Inexplicably, or in consistency with the CP strategy of "peaceful revolution under the occupation," there was no reference to any GHQ possibility to intervene against the general strike, in the CP general secretary's two reports to the conference.

As for the Yoshida Liberal-Party government, under the ominous outlook of regressive reproduction of the economy, it decided to adopt an emergency policy of "priority production system" to get through the dead-ending situation, at the end of 1946. The policy system was to prioritize the production of steel and coal by the policy method of controlled economy, and it presupposed further sacrifices of the living standard of toiling masses. Counting on the GHQ intervention, the government took a high-handed attitude to the massive campaign of workers for their subsistence living, and Prime Minister Yoshida referred to active trade-unionists of the campaign as "disobedient lot of people" in his new-year message over the radio, which had much provocative effects on the broader working masses.

From the end of December to January, the prime minister also worked earnestly on the right-wing majority of the Socialist Party and its left-wing minority respectively to get into a governmental coalition with the Liberal Party, in order to split up the working-class common front and throw the striving for the general strike into a failure, and thereby to get out of the ongoing political crisis.

Zenkankocho-Kyoto of the government-and-public-sector unions fixed the date of general strike for February 1, on January 9, and it presented its second list of joint demands to the government on the 11th of the month.

On the 13th, Zenrokon (National Roundtable of Unions) and Tokaku Iinkai (Cabinet Toppling Committee) had a joint meeting, and the meeting adopted its statement that stood for a 'government based on all the opposition parties centering around the Socialist Party, and the organizations of workers, peasants and citizens,' and that opposed any governmental coalition with conservative forces such as the Liberal Party and Progressive Party. At the joint meeting, its pro-CP participants proposed an alternative formulation of a 'government by all the opposition parties centering around the Socialist Party and Communist Party, and the organizations of workers, peasants and citizens,' but this pro-CP formulation was not accepted due to the pro-SP participants' opposition. On the 14th, the managing board of Sanbetsu Kaigi agreed and confirmed that the campaign by the government and public unions was to become a decisive battle of showdown with the government, and that the

ultimate purpose was to establish a popular and democratic government.

On the 15th, Zento (National Joint Struggle Committee of Trade Unions) was founded formally, encompassing Zenkankocho-Kyoto unions of government and public sector, three national federations of Sanbetsu-Kaigi, Sodomei and Nichiro-Kaigi, and industrial unions of the private sector, and it represented about 4 million workers, virtually all the unionized wage earners at the time, in confrontation with the Yoshida Liberal-Party government. On the 18th, Zenkankocho-Kyoto made its final decision to go on the general strike from February 1, and issued its declaration for the general strike. Concurrently, especially Sanbetsu-Kaigi private-sector unions of Zento decided to go on strike on or from February 1 with their particular demands.

The mounting momentum for the general strike among the ranks of the Zenkankocho-Kyoto unions and the Zento unions brought restraining pressure on the Socialist Party. The prime minister's coalitionist maneuvers did not succeed at the moment, and the maneuvers came to the end with regard to the left-wing minority group of the party on the 14th and to its right-wing majority on the 17th. However, the SP right-wing majority kept its distance from the massive striving for the general strike and never gave up its coalitionist stance in itself.

Thus the general framework of a showdown confrontation became clearer between the organized working class and the Yoshida bourgeois government of the Liberal Party around January 20, and the GHQ stepped in to the situation against the attempt of February-1 general strike, precisely at this moment.

9.4 The GHQ's Intervention and the Final Process toward February 1

The Occupation forces and GHQ were the ultimate power of the state in Japan at the time, and the GHQ's basic political orientation was to maintain the newly introduced parliamentary democracy based on the social system of capitalist production and to keep it to operate, which was clear from the Occupation supreme commander's denouncement of the "Foodstuff May Day" popular mobilization in the previous spring.

On January 22, the GHQ labor division summoned the representatives of Zenkankocho-Kyoto and its component unions of government and public sector, and it notified them of the GHQ's position against the general strike and demanded them to present their answers until January 25. The GHQ notice paper indicated: (1) the rights of trade unions were established by the approval of the occupation supreme commander, and those rights were not unrestricted, (2) the February-1 general strike would be destructive to the whole population and the national reconstruction of Japan, and the occupation supreme commander would take any necessary actions in order to secure the implementation of GHQ policies and the orderly evolution of the Japanese society, (3) the Japanese government agreed to take certain measures to cope with the economic hardship of the workers, and the labor organizations should negotiate with the government: the labor organizations' general stoppage of works which were to promote the national calamity would not be allowed.

On the same day, under the direction of the GHQ, the government took some measures in regard to the wages of government and public employees, and it made a new proposal to the unions (see Table 15). The government proposal was simply out of the question for the Zenkankocho-Kyoto unions, and the unions agreed to go on the general strike unless their demands would not be met, and this attitude was notified to the GHQ on January 25.

There were several talks between the GHQ labor division and the representatives of Zenkankocho Kyoto and Zento unions on January 25 and 26, and the GHQ staff members basically repeated its position that the unions should pursue their demands within the existing framework of legal

channels, that any change of the government should be sought through the general elections, and that the attempt to change the government by the general strike run counter to the occupation purpose of the GHQ and would not be allowed and be dealt with accordingly.

On January 26, Zento (National Joint Struggle Committee of Trade Unions) endorsed Zenkankocho Kyoto's positions, and it held the 'Toppling of Yoshida Government and Getting out of Crisis' mass rally in support of the February-1 general strike at the Imperial Palace Plaza, with half a million participants, on January 28. However, the Socialist Party took a position for averting of the February-1 general strike and decided to pursue coalition negotiations with the Liberal and Progressive Parties on January 23. As for Sodomei, it decided to accept the GHQ notification and withdraw from the common front for the general strike, on the 25th.

At the same time, Sanbetsu Kaigi, Zenkankocho Kyoto and their unions set up their alternative organizational structures as basic precautionary measures against imminent possibility of the GHQ and government crackdowns. Meanwhile, much mysteriously, the Communist Party excluded any possibility of the GHQ crackdown on the attempt of general strike, and, with this fictional position, the party agitated energetically for the general strike until January 30.

On January 28, the national arbitration body of Central Labor Relations Committee made the last-minute intervention, and it proposed its mediation plan on the wage increase [see Table 15). The proposal was rejected initially even by the government. The next day, the government eventually accepted the mediation proposal in effect, but the Zenkankocho Kyoto unions refused the both proposals. The new coalition negotiations between the Liberal and Progressive Parties and the Socialist Party came to an end in failure, too, on the same day, and a sign of government crisis came out in the open on the morning of January 30, 6 ministers calling for the collective resignation of the cabinet.

Thereupon, the GHQ summoned the representatives of the Zenkankocho Kyoto unions and ordered them to call off the general-strike on January 30. Still, the Zenkankocho Kyoto unions refused the GHQ cancellation order: the central struggle committee of Zentei (post and telecommunication) and Kokutetsu Soren (national railway) confirmed to go ahead with the February-1 general action, respectively with 56 yes votes and 16 no votes and with 24 yes votes and 12 no votes. The Communist Party kept its affirmative stand for the general strike, with the made-up position that the GHQ wouldn't suppress the general action, and the left-wing minority group of the Socialist Party eventually withdrew itself from the battle front for the general strike on the 30th. [The Central Labor Relations Committee's mediation came to an end in failure in the very early morning of the next day.

Table 15: Wage hike of government and public employees

	monthly wage (yen, average)	necessary budget (billion yen)
then current	600	
unions' demand (Jan. 11)	2,050	36.7
government reply (Jan. 22)	870	7.8
mediation plan* (Jan. 28)	1200	18
Government reply (Jan. 29)	roughly equal to the mediation plan	18

* mediation plan by the Central Labor Relations Commission

Fuhito Kanda. *Senryo to Minshushugi* (Occupation and Democracy). Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1983.

Hiroshi Hasegawa. *2-1-Suto-zengo to Nihon-Kyosanto* (Before and After the February-1 General Strike and the Japan Communist Party). Tokyo: San'ichi-shobo, 1976.

9.5 The Occupation Supreme Commander's Cancellation Order and the Collapse of February-1 General Strike

Finally, on January 31, the occupation supreme commander's cancellation order of the February-1 general strike was issued at 2:30 p.m., and it was broadcast on radio just before 5:00 p.m. At the same time, the representatives of Zenkankocho Kyoto and its unions were summoned to the GHQ, and the cancellation order was delivered to them.

Confronted with the occupation supreme commander's order, the national secretariat of Sanbetsu Kaigi was rather inclined to defy the order and to go ahead with the general strike. However, the political bureau of the Communist Party, which had been denying the GHQ possibility of crackdown on the general strike until the last moment, issued its statement at 6:30 p.m., and it pronounced that the supreme commander's order was "to notify that the general strike should be called off," that it did not mean "to restrict those actions for attaining of legal purposes," and that the "individual unions" were entitled to go through with their strike actions as planned, in order to pursue their respective demands. Thus, the CP instantly accepted the Occupation's ban on the general strike.

According to the then CP politburo member, H. Hasegawa, the political bureau statement represented a new CP policy to dissolve the organizational structure for the "combined general strike" and to pursue strike actions by the individual unions, and the party moved actually for cancellation of strikes in the nighttime after it realized that even individual strike actions were difficult (ibid.). In any case, the Communist Party revealed the very same pattern of behavior as had been seen at the time of "Foodstuff May Day" in 1946.

As for the trade unions, the central struggle committee of Kokutetsu Soren (national railway) decided to call off the strike with 29(28) affirmative votes and one negative vote around 7:00 p.m. As to Zentei (postal and telecommunication), the other major union of Zenkankocho Kyoto, opposition to the cancellation order was strong at its central struggle committee, but the committee was obliged to accept the cancellation of the strike, too. Finally, the Zenkankocho Kyoto chairman and the Kokutetsu Soren and Zentei presidents were forced to broadcast their respective calling-off announcements of the general strike on radio from 9:20 to 10:00 p.m. Following their radio broadcasting, Zenkankocho Kyoto and Zento (National Joint Struggle Committee of Trade Unions) decided to dissolve themselves, along the lines of the CP policy, around midnight.

Thus, Zenkankocho Kyoto's general strike of the government and public workers fell through, and numerous unions of the private industries went on strike on February 1 and after. As for the specific dispute between the Zenkankocho Kyoto unions and the government about the wage increase, the government presented a new proposal (monthly wage of 1300 yen in average), which was slightly better than its January-22 reply, on January 29, and the dispute was settled through the mediation of the Central Labor Relations Commission, and the unions got their respective collective agreements.

As for Sanbetsu Kaigi, it joined the inauguration of Keizai-fukko Kaigi (Council for Economic Rehabilitation) on February 6, which was nothing other than a nationwide scheme of industrial class-collaboration, as indicated before (see [A] Workers' Demand for Rebuilding of Production and the Democratic Maze of Sanbetsu Kaigi).

9.6 Duality of the Campaign for the February-1 General Strike and the Communist Party

There had been a certain duality as to the campaign for the February-1 general strike. Zenkankocho

Kyoto was an ad hoc joint-struggle committee of the government and public employees' unions for pursuing their particular demands with the government as their direct bargaining counterpart. Zenkankocho Kyoto's list of demands clearly reflected the character of joint body as such. However, due to the fact that its bargaining counterpart was the government itself, and owing to the latter's high-handed attitude toward the Zenkankocho Kyoto unions and the objective economic and social background, the dispute became politicized much, and it assumed a character of major showdown between the government and the broad mass of workers in the government and public sector. Thus Zenkankocho Kyoto union's attempt of the general strike acquired the potential to create a grave political crisis. It was relying on this actual possibility as a major lever that the campaign for toppling of the Liberal Party government and establishment of some popular and democratic government was projected and waged through Zenrokon (National Roundtable Conference of Unions) and Tokaku Iinkai (Committee for Toppling the Cabinet), and Zenkoku Rodokumiai Kyodotso-iinkai (Zento: National Joint Struggle Committee of Trade Unions) was set up with that view, too. However, Zenkankocho Kyoto itself remained a joint-struggle body for pursuing the component unions' particular demands until its dissolution at the midnight of January 31.

Zenrokon (National Roundtable Conference of Unions) and Tokaku Iinkai (Committee for Toppling the Cabinet) represented a political block of the pro-SP-left-wing forces and the pro-CP forces. The left-wing minority group of the Socialist Party relied on and utilized the mounting momentum toward the general strike, in its factional rivalry with the SP right-wing majority. The Communist Party, however, was the major political element in the whole campaign for the February-1 general strike, and the party got involved in all the major processes of the campaign, especially through the CP membership group at the level of unions' national bodies.

The Communist Party held its special conference for the general strike on January 6-8, and there were two reports by K. Tokuda (general secretary) and another report on trade unions by a politburo member. The conference approved the campaign policy for toppling the Liberal Party government with the Zenkankocho Kyoto general strike as the central knockdown power and for generalized popular mobilization for the people's democratic government.

K. Tokuda's general report to the conference, in effect, envisioned an actual beginning of the 'popular democratic revolution' which had been envisaged in the "Appeal to the People" of October 1945. The other special report by the general secretary on the reconstruction of economy, entitled "Rehabilitation by the People", presented a kind of wild and violent prospect of popular seizure of power through generalized popular uprising and dual-power situation, a vision which seems to have definitely deviated from the official party project of "peaceful revolution under the occupation" (see [B] The Communist Party Orientation and its Problems, [A] Socialist Party and Problems of the Communist Party). But this special report seemed to be beyond the comprehension of trade-unionist participants of the conference. Anyway, despite the fact that the CP's prospect was apparently contradictory to the US occupation of Japan and the GHQ policy implementation, the three reports to the conference did not make any reference to the possible GHQ intervention against the striving for the general strike, as mentioned before. This phenomenon might be consistent with the official CP line of 'peaceful revolution under the occupation' or the international policy of Moscow immediately after the World War II, but it was utterly irrational, inexplicable and criminal in practice.

The January-29 issue of the CP journal "Akahata (Red Flag)" carried an article on the possibility of the GHQ intervention against the general strike, and it argued: "if the anti-democratic Yoshida government is toppled through the general strike and a democratic government will be established", "the allied nations' trust in the democratic Japan will be much stronger, the conclusion of peace will become nearer, and the economic aids will be increased." On the same 29th, there was a meeting of the CP group of union officers and activists with the attendance of S. Nosaka and another politburo member in charge of trade union affairs, and the both politburo members assured those participants

categorically that the US occupation army would not suppress the February-1 general strike.

At this January-29 meeting, the CP trade unionists agreed on going ahead with the general strike whatever might happen as to the circumstances. According H. Hasegawa, who attended the meeting as a politburo member in charge of trade union affairs, the common position of those CP trade unionists was that they would go ahead with the general action as much as possible even if there would be any suppression, relying on the working masses' determination and the actual organizational preparedness (H. Hasegawa, 1976).

The Communist Party agitated the Zenkankocho Kyoto and Zento unions for the February-1 general strike with the made-up prospect of no GHQ suppression. While the battle front of the Zenkankocho Kyoto unions had a weak spot: that is, a potential of right-wing split at the Kokutetsu Soren (national railway) under threat of the GHQ's suppression, the central flaw in the whole campaign for the general strike, however, lay in the very fact that the Communist Party's political bureau itself had definitely no intention or preparedness to get involved in any head-on confrontation with the GHQ and US occupation army. "The most fundamental problem of the Communist Party leadership," H. Hasegawa wrote in his 1976 book, existed as the fact "it did not have established a policy to confront the occupation army" "as the power of enemy class."

If Zenkankocho Kyoto carried through the general strike, defying the calling-off order of the occupation supreme commander, the whole situation might have been thrown into a grave political crisis, and the workers movement would have entered a new situation of generalized confrontation with the US occupation army and its GHQ, which might have some similarity to the one in which the South Korean workers movement was situated at the time. This was the prospect that the Communist Party leadership did not want in the least, somehow in order to 'coexist' with the US occupation, or owing to the CP strategy of "revolution under the occupation." Confronted with the occupation supreme commander's order, the Communist Party subserviently accepted the ban on the general strike, instantly abandoning its central political project to overthrow the Liberal Party government through the general strike and, thereby, to create a generalized political crisis in which the party might be able to wage its struggle for a "democratic government of the people." This was none other than the CP's suicidal denial of its own central political orientation, and this was also an outright political deception of the working masses and their unions by the Communist Party or its politburo.

9.7 Conclusion

The striving for the February-1 general strike was the highest and centralizing peak of mass workers struggles in the period immediate after the Japanese surrender. The collapse of the February-1 general strike had a definitely negative effect on the centralizing momentum of the mass workers movement, which had been seen all through 1946. Since then, features of decentralization and centrifugal trend became evident at the workers movement, while the spontaneous mass militancy of workers remained unaffected in general.

And finally, the Sanbetsu Kaigi, which represented the explosive rise of workers militancy immediate after the Japanese surrender to the US, was defeated decisively by the US occupation army and its General Headquarters (GHQ) and the Japanese government and bourgeoisie in 1949-51, and it dissolved at its eighth congress in February 1958.

Yohichi Sakai, June 2007

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/022shoshi.html>