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SWISS VIEW OF THE CRISIS IN JAPANESE DEMOCRACY

Following is an unsigned article in the German-language Swiss newspaper Neue Zuercher Zeitung (New Zuerich Newspaper), morning edition June 23, 1960, No. 2150, page 1.7

By its policy of force during the years from 1930 - 1945 Japan had gambled away almost all its friendships in the world and all prestige among civilized nations. The fact that Japanese conduct of the war was marked by unspeakable brutality and boundless atrocities against the populations of the conquered countries contributed considerably to this loss of prestige. By submitting unresistingly to the victor, by active repentance of the militaristic past, and by turning eagerly to the study of rules for democratic and liberal co-existence within the state and with its neighbors, Japan effected a quick and unprecedented rise of prestige in the eyes of the world after the military defeat. Unlike any other country Japan has made friendships, and unlike any other people the Japanese have won friends since the end of the war. All its violations were leniently forgiven and were kindly explained as being intrinsically Japanese. The American schoolmasters could feel satisfied with their foster child; already in 1951 they released him, with a generous peace treaty, from their tutelage.

And now the events of the last weeks, which ended with the withdrawal of the invitation to President Eisenhower for a visit of Japan, have shaken the new structure of Japanese democracy in its foundation. Japan has lost much more of respect and affection than it seems to realize. From the Communist instigators of the unfortunate development who are in Moscow and Peking, Japan will reap not sympathy but disdain for its weakness. And in the free world, the trust in the will and the ability of the Japanese for a genuine democratic life has been shaken. It may take the Japanese years to repair the damage which they have inflicted upon themselves -- if a repair will be forthcoming at all.

What are the reasons and the background for this surprising descent? They lie in the phase of historical development which Japan has reached just now, in the "democratization" effort of the Americans, and in the wave of nationalism which is sweeping Asia and Africa.

With their efforts, partly clever but also partly schematic and pedantic, to "re-educate" the Japanese nation, the Americans admittedly have routed militarism. But they have also destroyed many ties, they have crudely interfered in the functioning of the Japanese social body, which is based on complicated traditions. The intrinsic substance of the Japanese, in whose depth is hidden a considerable

remainder of savagery, which is being held within bounds only by custom, upbringing, and the remnants of the Feudal System, has not changed. By dissolving ties whose historical death knell probably had sounded anyway but was unduly hastened by "democratization," the Americans have freed ancient anarchistic forces which become effective today.

Seriously implicated is the Japanese press. It was created hundred years ago to demand and foster liberal reforms. It is therefore traditionally a critic of the government. The well-meaning and weak cabinets after the First World War, which tried to create modern democratic institutions, were weakened in public esteem by the press, which thereby unwittingly prepared the way for authoritarian and reactionary currents. Since the last war, the large newspapers, which are outstandingly organized and technically excellent, and whose extensive information apparatus is not matched with corresponding political insight and maturity, have failed again. Leftist personnel has been forced upon them [the newspapers] by occupation authorities. And thus they have since then -- through unrestrained criticism of government and parliament -- weakened trust in the young democracy and also alienated many loyal minds.

Thus a situation has developed in which no voice is raised in the defense of democratic institutions when they are attacked by a small minority of extremists and by instigators who were influenced by foreign propaganda. The people, the majority of whom is unpolitical, show only indifference. Besides, civic-mindedness and civil courage are unknown in Asia. Most people want nothing to do with politics. They feel neither anti nor pro-American and could not have cared less about the Security Treaty had it not been presented to them by an irresponsible propaganda as an instrument of oppression. And many Japanese will respond to such an argument at this time of emancipation of all people of Asia and Africa, even though Japan has never lived under colonial rule.

Among the millions of Tokyo, as in any other oriental metropolis, a few thousand gangsters can be recruited for money at any time, who will be joined by a few thousand idle onlookers, and with whom one can start any kind of disturbance. As at one time in France, a thoroughly Communist-infested body of teachers in secondary schools and in universities has given youth a twisted picture of the world and of their own situation. Undisturbed Communist agents could establish their cells and infiltrate student organizations at universities. In this way it has become possible for Moscow and Peking to carry their fight against America to Japan. The government, undecided and deprived by American-initiated measures of the competent execution of effective state protection, has let its enemies carry on undisturbedly. A determined step in defense of the freely elected government by the powerful newspapers, an indication of leadership by an influential politician, an awakening

of public opinion and its stand against the terroristic minority, would soon bring to an end the spook of the strikes and student demonstrations.

The Socialist Party has never understood the role of a constitutional opposition. By its refusal to recognize the decisions of the majority and by its attempt to paralyze the government with sabotage of parliamentary procedures and mobilization of the street it merely undermines the democratic state as such. In its Socialist Party's defense it must be admitted however, that the Liberal Democratic Majority Party and the government formed by it has often manifested a lack of understanding of the rules of the democratic game by its inflexible and often hard to understand attitude.

It must be called downright tragic that the crisis which the young Japanese system of government is undergoing has been sparked by the Security Treaty with the United State of America. Kishi, who saw a good campaign issue in it, had promised and attempted a revision of the treaty, although the old Security Treaty of 1951 had hardly ever been criticized. The United States gave in to Kishi's wishes and granted innumerable concessions to the Japanese intermediaries so that the new treaty appears to be considerably more favorable for Japan than the previous one. The opposition, however, feeds almost exclusively on neutralistic and anti-militaristic arguments, supplied to the Japanese during the period of "re-education" by the Americans themselves.

Through passivism of Japan's public opinion it now has become possible that a treaty which improves considerably Japan's position in relation to its allies is rejected and is being made to cause for undermining the democratic state. Aim of the Peking and Moscow-directed agitation is clearly the separation of Japan from the side of the only power that is able to protect Japan's exposed position. By the subterfuge of neutrality the island empire is to be pulled into the Communist camp. The desire of the Japanese to shake off all commitments and the history-dictated tendency to stay close to China is cleverly being exploited by Communist agitators. Even the threats hurled constantly against Japan by Moscow, the endless chicanery by which Moscow impedes the vitally important Japanese fishery, do not seem to make clear to a people naive in foreign affairs who its friends and who its enemies are.

Democracy is undergoing a serious crisis in Japan. Yet, one must keep in mind that actively it has been caused by an infinitesimally small minority which would have been put in its place immediately in another country. A parallel of the Japanese situation with student movements in Korea and Turkey which become the basis for the fall of government cannot be drawn, since in Japan the government is supported by a majority which has emerged out of a properly conducted election. Even though this government lacked determination and political wisdom, it has never trespassed the boundaries set to a lawful state. When passivism, which, after

all, only makes the terrorism of a minority possible, will have been overcome by the overwhelming majority of the people, then there is room for hope, that Japan can continue to ascend the road to progress and freedom which it had entered once already with success.

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