

# TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

## Decline and Rise Of Japan's Communists

THE SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST victory in the Japanese elections was not only a triumph for labor unity. It was not only a severe setback for the attempt to remilitarize Japan. It was not only a spur to the improvement of Japan's peaceful and trade relations with China and the Soviet Union.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of this election was that it vindicated the brilliant first secretary of the Japanese Communist Party, Sanzo Nosako.

Nosako was elected to the upper chamber himself. But that's not the measure of his triumph.

Nosako was the man most responsible, from 1945 to 1950, for the growth and success of the Japanese Communist Party. From 1945 to 1950 the Japanese Communist Party became a major factor in the life of the country. It had mass membership and following. Its newspapers had large circulation. Its vote rose phenomenally. It was a leading factor in the trade union movement.

ALL THIS was accomplished in the face of great difficulties resulting from General MacArthur's occupation. But Nosako's policies were successful because they were based on securing the closest ties, and common ground with, the Socialists. Nosako promoted the broadest policy of alliances and coalitions. Furthermore, Nosako based himself on the fundamental Marxist premise that each country must find its own national path to socialism.

In his 1947 report to a Com-

munist Party conference Nosako spoke of the "naturalization of Marxism-Leninism on Japanese soil." He was among those Marxists, in other words who realized that Lenin's writings on 1902 were not a blueprint for different times and different climes. Just as Lenin succeeded because he took into account Russia's peculiar features and history so Nosako was successful in applying Marxism to his native soil.

A vital contribution made by Nosako to the development of Japanese Marxism was his emphasis on the possibility of the peaceful transition to socialism.

"The possibility has arisen," Nosako wrote, at that time, "that proletarian parties, by winning a majority in Parliament, might be able to form their own government and take political power into their hands by destroying the bureaucratic apparatus and its forces.

"In other words, the possibility has arisen of winning power by parliamentary democratic means."

BUT IN THE early part of 1950 the Japanese Communists suffered a severe setback. It occurred in part because Nosako's views came under sharp attack within his own Party. And then a crowning blow was an article appearing in the Jan. 6, 1950, issue of the Communist Information Bureau Bulletin.

Misquoting entirely Nosako's position—which was of course based on class struggle and a consistent anti-imperialist policy—the Cominform journal said Nosako's views were a "Japa-

nese variation of the anti-Marxist, and anti-Socialist theory of the peaceful growing over of reaction to democracy, of imperialism into socialism. . . ."

A sharp debate took place within the Japanese Party, and Nosako's position was defeated. Nosako bowed to his Party's discipline, but within the Party he continued to support a broader policy, to whatever degree was possible.

But the damage of a Leftist, adventurist line soon produced its ugly fruits. Party membership declined sharply; its vote was decimated; its influence in the unions was nearly wiped out; its relations with the Socialists were strained and were soon dissolved.

NOSAKO continued, as much as possible, to advance policies which would save the Party from the almost complete debacle to which it was heading. And almost at the low point of its influence the Japanese Party once more broke with the disastrous "Leftist" policies.

Nosako's postwar views were once again supported in the Party. Slowly the C.P. came out of its isolation. Over the past three years or so, most of the old ties and connections—above all unity with the Socialists—were re-established. The Japanese path to socialism again became known as the basis of Marxism in their country. The emphasis on the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism was again resumed. . . . And the wonderful fruits can again be seen.

Once more the trade unionists look up to the Communists. And the election victory is the latest but not the last step in this progress.