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September 14, 1965

Dear Com. Yukiama:

Irrespective of what any other grouping, Trotskyist or otherwise, does about arranging discussions for me in December in Japan, it is me who must fully understand all the ramifications, on a world scale, of such a confrontation of Eastern and Western Marxist-Humanists. It is therefore important that a dialogue begin between us.

First, we must consider, single out, what experiences in the post-war world in Europe and America have relevance for the Japan of today. Two periods seem especially appropriate: 1) the 1947 situation in the USA which prompted ~~the state-capitalist tendency to return to the Trotskyist party~~; and 2) the 1958 situation in France which led to a further differentiation within those outside of the Communists and the Trotskyists and opposing both and yet failing to recognize that this Marxist group, too, must take responsibility for DeGaulle's coming to power because they had not succeeded in unfurling a total philosophy that could become a polarizing force.

In the case of 1947, I now consider it wrong for us to have re-entered the Fourth International. It is true that, compared to our weakness, they forced to be, almost, a mass party that, moreover, was speaking seriously about the "American revolution" at a time when the post-war strikes signified a new subjective, as well as, objective situation. It is equally true, however, that a Revolution in any one country cannot be torn out of the world context where Trotskyism had absolutely nothing new, deeply philosophic and fully aware of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, to offer. The only basic reason I can see for that move on part of the state-capitalist tendency is that itself was incomplete insofar as it had worked out the economic but not the philosophic implications of this transformation into opposite of a workers' state. We had found the early Humanist essays that far back, but to work them out for our age by going both backward to Hegel and find a new universal, as Lenin had found one with the dialectical principle of "transformation into opposite", but for our epoch, that we had not done. Perhaps it was impossible to have found it before the death of Stalin and the East German revolt, which in the year (1953) I finally did make a philosophic breakthrough on the Absolute Idea -- and that led not only to break from Trotskyism, but from that section of the state-capitalist tendency that had stopped with economic analysis.

Now, it seems to me, that Japan too has this type of sudden growth of Trotskyism as we had in 1947, and that illusions about "winning" it over are extant. You know the Japanese situation better than I possibly can, and you may think I'm wrong in drawing a parallel. All I'm trying to do, however, is to cast what illumination our experience can cast and, above all, to make sure that Marxist-Humanists do not get diverted from what are specifically, originally and profoundly their tasks.

Take the 1958 situation in France and you'll see better what I mean. We had tried to establish international relations not only between all state-capitalist tendencies, but also those who, without designating Russia as state-capitalist, did see clearly it was no workers' state and called therefore a proletarian revolutionary line, independent both of US and Russia. But when De Gaulle came to power, it was our contention that we could not continue to blame Communists and Trotskyists, who certainly were to blame for ^{the} postwar revolutionary situation in France having been shattered away; that we must begin assuming responsibility for historic situations on our own shoulders, and must, instead of only being against, being for something total, concrete, new. In a word, MARXISM AND FREEDOM, and nothing short of that total philosophy, was unfurled

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by us at that international conference, and we invited others to do the same. We insisted that, after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution when, even from below, the Humanism of Marxism was raised along with the slogan for Workers' Councils, Youth Councils, Intellectual Councils—allaway from the one-party state—it was time to have done away with the intellectual sloth that had accumulated in the years since Lenin's death back in 1924.

I'll admit that we thought that once such a total philosophy was unfurled, Marxists would not stop and talk only of a single situation, a concrete activity, a diversion to where the masses were supposed to be—in other parties—but would pick up the challenge. The truth is that, precisely because our views were now so clear, it meant that, while we gained new forces from below, the old, established leaderships and radicals moved further away.

Didn't you have such an experience since MARXISM AND FREEDOM was published in Japan? And don't you find that, objectively, the growth of the counter-revolution in the new rightist party, gives a further excuse for the challenge to thought not being met, and ever renewed activities that only tailed Communism, of both Russian and Chinese varieties, being undertaken. Exactly how long can the delay continue? It has already lasted 40 years; Trotskyism had only the technical, not the historical-philosophic, right to the mantle of Lenin—and it threw that away. I don't know whether Japanese Trotskyists discuss what Trotskyism has done all this period, and why it has not become a polarizing force for the new revolutionaries. Or do they just discuss only the activity of the moment?

Secondly, irrespective of what the situations were in the US and in Europe in the post war world, we must now consider, on a truly world scale, what has happened since 1960, when a new stage of struggle had begun, in Japan with the mass demonstrations; in the US the sit-ins; in Africa the creation of new independent states; while in the state-capitalist world of Russia and China the schism had begun. You must remember that this conflict in the Communist world was nothing small, had not only economic reasons, as any capitalist countries have when they begin looking at a new, third world, and begin to fight to dominate Africa; this schism also had deep internal reasons, and in many fundamental respects it was new: 1) China's Great Leap Forward was beginning to end so disastrously in life and in thought. The idea of bypassing technology, of leaping from a very early stage of industrialization to "Communism", meant that "Mao's thought" which was substituting, for mass reason, mass sweat or what he called "the mass line" simply had no future. But, like any good capitalist, Mao would not only give up his thought but tried to make it into a universal applicable to all the underdeveloped countries. 2) Guerrilla tactics, which Mao had always thought of as military, were now becoming also a "universal" in thought, substituting war for social revolution. Don't forget that, in 1954, Mao's China, along with Russia, and the private capitalists, had signed the Geneva agreement, calling a halt to warfare and concentration on economic build-up in the countries. But after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, 1957 "100 Flowers Campaign" in China and in Vietnam, and the 1958 Leap Forward falling, there was nothing left in thought. Militarism was to replace it all. 3) Yet the revolutionary phraseology carried an impact, and nowhere more than in Japan which, long before the other CPs begin taking sides, moved toward Maoism. So, for that matter, does Trotskyism still carry that impact so that people take out the concept of "world revolution" from the permanent revolution's disregard of the peasantry, and feel themselves very "vanguardist."

Com. Tsushima said somewhere that I overestimated the Japanese youth's move to the left, to philosophy, to independence from Communism. Perhaps. But the truth is that, once the youth has made the moves they did make in those directions, it is up to us to build on that, single it out, clarify, and work to make a new beginning, and on a total basis. With the new work, Philosophy and Revolution, I don't just throw down a challenge to all other Marxists, I proceed to work out what is needed for our age; whether or not these old radicals follow, the new generation of radicals will—or we have lost all. And I don't believe we have lost anything.