

Letter from Japan**Socialist Dilemma**

THE Socialist Party of Japan has just completed its three-day convention at the Kudan Kaikan in Tokyo. A solid phalanx of police, looking conspicuous though somewhat bored, surrounded the venue of the convention. As one approached the main entrance to the hall, one was moved into one of the different queues for guests, delegates and general public, according to one's status, and one's credentials were thoroughly examined. Police were not allowed inside the hall, but the fear that the rightists' attempts at political assassination had not ended with the murder of Asanuma, the late chairman of the Party, was at the back of everyone's mind. Inside the hall, at the bookstall, one could buy a 35-minute-long tape recording of Asanuma's last words before he was stabbed to death.

Inside the hall, at the back of the platform, on a large banner with the Party's large three-hafted red arrow were inscribed the three slogans of the Party: "Protect the Constitution", "Democracy" and "Neutrality". The contention itself was much less active compared with some previous party conferences. Jotaro Kawakami was elected new Chairman for one year. Kawakami stands for a somewhat middle-of-the-road policy. He was Asanuma's principal opponent at the last election. He is 72 and a Christian. He once taught at the mission university of Kwausei Gakuin. The Secretary of the Party, Saburo Eda, was re-elected for another term. He had been acting Chairman since Asanuma's death.

The main interest in the Party convention this year centred on the Party's theory of "structural reform", especially in its new assessment of foreign policy. At the time of the Mutual Security Treaty demonstrations, the Socialist Party tended to associate itself with the Communist Party in "opposing American imperialism" as the real enemy of the Japanese people. The new analysis rests on a recognition of the fact that there are two large power blocs and that the threat of world war will arise from a struggle between them. Japan should, therefore, adopt a policy of neutrality and friendliness towards both blocs

and not merely towards the "peace-loving" nations of the Communist bloc. Consistent with this stand, the Socialist Party hopes to send a goodwill mission to the Tinted States this year to counterbalance the missions to China during the past year.

Extreme Opinions Prevail

In Japan, both the Socialist and Liberal Democratic parties have very few individual members. Most of their support comes from collective organisation, either Trade* Unions or various employers' organisations. Thus, to some extent, discussions in conventions such as this are somewhat formal for the main decisions have already been taken elsewhere. This year for the first time, the speakers at the Convention were chosen in such a way as to represent all factions. Their views were, therefore, well known already. Japanese feel that it is wrong to air differences in public as that affects unity. Most important decisions are consequently made privately earlier. One must confess that this may not be unwise when one considers the extreme opinions that prevail in the Socialist Party. On the one side is the group which so completely accepts Marxist thinking that it considers itself to the left of the Communist Party. For example, they subscribe to the Chinese-Marxist point of view that war is inevitable in a capitalistic system and that everything should, therefore, be done to precipitate the revolution. On the other extreme are people who believe in liberal humanism to such an extent as to regard wars and civil disorder as simply the result of misunderstanding. The Social Democratic Party of Nishio which broke away last year is by no means as right-wing in its views as many others who remained in the Party. At the other extreme there are members who are Communists under cover and who completely tow the Communist line. Under these conditions, it is extremely difficult for the Socialist Party to follow a completely coherent policy.

As one listened to speech after speech, one came to regret the stereotyped thinking of the various sneakers. Such questions as whether

the biggest enemy of the Japanese working class were American imperialists or Japanese monopoly capitalists were continually debated but there were none of the deeply human speeches which are characteristic of British Labour Conferences. During the last year, Sohyo and the Socialist Party have been engaged in the abortive strike over the Miike coal mines, yet not a single delegate rose to describe from personal experience the hardships of the Fukuoka coal miners.

At present the membership of the Socialist Party is between 50,000(H) and 60,000 persons. Last year 15,000 members defected to Nishio's Social Democratic Party but during the year 7,000 new members have been recruited. Known communists and Communist Party members are not allowed to become members. Communists; have also been excluded from the executive committee of the National Council against the revision of the Japan-U S Security Treaty, the struggle against which will continue during the coming year. Most criticisms against the Party's official policy for the coming year originated from the left wing group, the Heiwa Doshikai, of whom only one was elected to the 15-member executive committee.

The Socialist Party will follow a predominantly middle of the road policy during the coming year. But it is believed that this will be only temporary. As Sohyo, the largest Trade Union movement, embarks on a policy of strikes and other activities against low wages during the coming year, the Socialist Party is likely to be forced into a more and more left-wing position. It is unfortunate that the Party does not try to come closer to other socialist movements in India, Burma and other countries of S K Asia to form a solid socialist group rather than try to balance uneasily between China and the United States. But even the most ardent neutralists in the Socialist Party do not regard neutrality as an active force. They look upon it as a temporary policy to be pursued till it is possible to see clearly whether the East or West is likely to emerge the more powerful in the cold war.