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Conflicting Visions

The Shaping of Industrial Relations in Japan and the Founding of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Asian Labour Institute

Abstract

This research paper seeks to shed light on the involvement of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and the trade unions of West Germany in the shaping of industrial relations in Japan. The period observed starts with the domestic crisis of 1960 flowing from the labour dispute at the Mitsui Miike coal mines and the renewal of the Japanese-American Security Treaty and concludes with the consolidation of industrial relations in Japan at the beginning of the 1970s. By examining the ways in which the key proponents with conflicting approaches toward Japan's future industrial relations interacted with both the FES and West German trade union affiliates, it shall be demonstrated that the exchange between West Germany and Japan on trade union level provided positive impetus to the process of shaping industrial relations in Japan during the 1960s.

Keywords: *Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Japan, industrial relations, trade unions*

Introduction

Today, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation[1] (*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, FES) is one of the most internationally established political foundations in Germany. The FES has been associated with the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD, *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) from the very beginning and was named after the first democratically elected President of Germany, Friedrich Ebert. Founded after his death in 1925,

1 The term *Stiftung* refers to a specific legal entity established either under public or private law with a public service mission. Therefore in legal terms it has thus a much narrower meaning than its literal English translation *foundation,* which is often applied in the context of nonprofit organisations committed to charitable purposes.

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the FES was originally solely committed to the funding of education for orphans, but since the 1950s it has been steadily expanding its sphere of activities based on close co-operation with labour organisations. Its achievements in supporting the democratic transition processes in other countries are well documented, such as in the case of Spain in the 1970s and 1980s.[2] However, its overseas involvement dates back even further, to the beginning of the 1960s. In fact, Japan was one of the first countries given priority by the FES.

At that time Japan had entered into a transition period of industrial relations after years of intense conflict between management and labour that, according to the Historian John Price, had affected Japan's industrial relations to a degree unrivalled by any other advanced industrialised nation in the post-war era.[3] As a consequence of the enormous culmination of social tensions, still in the 1960s a number of conflicting visions about the future relation between labour and management existed in Japan. These visions were mostly dominated by either ideas of class struggle or paternalism, or marked by efforts to achieve a more balanced relationship between labour and management.[4] This research paper seeks to shed light on the involvement of the FES in the shaping of industrial relations in Japan since the first half of the 1960s.

To understand the interface between the shaping of the future relation between labour and management in Japan and the presence of the FES on-site, one needs to examine the common structural features of the labour movements in the post-war history of West Germany and Japan. Lonny E. Carlile's comparative historical analysis of the development process of the Japanese and selected Western European labour movements, highlighted that West Germany's and Japan's labour movement reacted in a similar way towards industrial modernisation and increasing prosperity. On the one hand, especially socialists on the left of the political spectrum of the respective countries began to focus on the struggle for better wages. On the other hand, influential parts of the trade union movement began to engage in efforts to harmonise diverging interests of labour and management. However, unlike in West Germany, these social trends did not eventually merge into a common organisational framework. Instead competing trade union federations started to evolve in Japan with some of them remaining ambivalent towards Japan's democratic institutions for a long time.[5]

2 Antonio Muñoz Sánchez: Von der Franco-Diktatur zur Demokratie: Die Tätigkeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Spanien, Bonn 2013.

3 John Price: Japan Works: Power and Paradox in Postwar Industrial Relations, Ithaca, NY 1997, pp. 269–270.

4 Ibid., pp. 150; 159.

5 Lonny E. Carlile: Divisions of Labor: Globality, Ideology, and War in the Shaping of the Japanese Labor Movement, Honolulu 2005, pp. 213; 218.

Nakakita Kōji's[6] survey about the impact of international events on the restructuring of Japanese labour policy after the Second World War further extended the historical frame of reference, by identifying the starting point of an active exchange between trade unions from West Germany and Japan. Nakakita Kōji was able to demonstrate in this context that the Cold War had been an essential part, particularly in the motivation of leading trade union affiliates from West Germany in seeking relations with the more influential and militant acting sections of the Japanese trade union movement. Already these militant elements had been intensely courted by the communist East German regime to support its position on a divided Germany. Against this background, the unsolved German question, one of the main political concerns of the West German trade unions, and the uncertain future of Japan's industrial relations immediately became an entwined set of problems.[7]

The results presented by Lonny E. Carlile and Nakakita Kōji when taken together demonstrate that the conflict in Japan's industrial relations did not only result in tensions among management and labour and the emergence of competing labour organisations. They also highlight that industrial relations in Japan had been embedded in Cold War antagonism and thus became directly linked to Cold War foreign policy. Yet, it remains unclear whether the West German trade unions and more specifically the FES – committed to both labour related issues and foreign policy matters[8] – were actually able to make a contribution to the consolidation of Japan's industrial relations in the course of the following years. Based on Lonny E. Carlile's and Nakakita Kōji's findings, this study seeks to answer the question, in which ways key proponents of the conflicting visions about Japan's future industrial relations interacted with the FES. It shall be demonstrated that the engagement of the FES was considered to be of value by key Japanese stakeholders in the shaping of Japan's industrial relations during the 1960s. To begin with, critical developments in Japan's industrial relations of the 1950s will be examined. The second chapter seeks to identify the stakeholders involved and their motivations. The following chapters of the study are arranged chronologically and focus on the interaction between the identified stakeholders and key events, starting with events relating to the crisis of 1960 and concluding with the consolidation of Japan's industrial relations in the early 1970s.

6 The so-called *Hepburn transcription* in this article is used for writing down Japanese terms. Japanese names mentioned in the text are rendered according to local custom, meaning family name before given name.

7 Kōji Nakakita: Nihon rōdō seiji no kokusai kankeishi 1945–1964: Shakai minshu shugi to iu sentakushi. Tokyo 2008, pp. 299–300.

8 The importance of non-profit organisations in the context of West German foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s were examined in Arnulf Baring: Außenpolitik in Adenauers Kanzlerdemokratie: Bonns Beitrag zur europäischen Verteidigungsgemeinschaft, vol. 2, Munich 1971.

This study is based on primary sources obtained from a number of archives, namely the *DGB-Archiv* of the *Archiv für Soziale Demokratie* (AdSD) in Bonn, the *Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* (PAAA) in Berlin, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Archives of the *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis* (IISG) in Amsterdam, and the materials of the *Freie Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* of the *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv* (SAPMO-BArch) in Berlin-Lichterfelde. Included in the analysis were also the source editions about the History of the Labour Movement (*Shiryō rōdō undōshi*) published by the Japanese Ministry of Labour (since 2001 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare), trade union journals as well as other German, Japanese, and English periodicals and publications on labour related matters.

Export-Driven Economy and the Cold War

The emergence of conflicting visions about Japan's industrial relations of the 1950s were strongly characterised by instability and class-based conflicts. Important labour rights obtained in the early years of Japan's post-war history were successfully undermined soon afterwards by management's attempts to achieve extensive control over the entire workplace. Especially in industries considered strategically important, management had taken a firm and rigorous stand against trade unions as soon as they started to act independently or in militant ways. As a result of these measures a performance based wage system, as well as flexible workplace regulations, were established by the beginning of the 1950s. Those developments were not least the result of an economic policy aimed at fostering economic growth through the export of heavy industry produced goods. The capital required for funding the necessary infrastructure and technology was accumulated through the implementation of a low wage policy and the prolongation of the working week that affected all industries. On the one hand international competitiveness of Japan's heavy industry did increase due to the strategy applied, as demonstrated by a sharp increase of the overseas export of steel products, accounting for 34 per cent of Japan's overall export by the end of the 1950s. On the other hand Japan's economy became extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in the global economy because of the priority given to export related matters. In addition the extensive accumulation of capital did not grant enough leeway to raise wages, despite loud demands being articulated from several industries collectively since the middle of the 1950s.[9]

9 John Price: Japan Works, pp. 219–220.

Social tensions finally peaked during the labour dispute of 1959/60 at the Mitsui Miike coal mine located on Japan's main southernmost island Kyushu. What started as a redundancy announcement turned out to be an attempt by the Mitsui Group and the Japan Business Federation (*Nihon keizai dantai rengōkai*, Nikkeiren) to break the trade union of the Miike coal mines. The trade union of the Miike coal mines – one of Japan's most militant acting trade unions – had in previous years successfully undermined Mitsui's extensive control over daily life in Miike (a district of the city of Ōmuta) by gaining complete control over the production process and thus the workplace. Altogether 15,000 coal miners, strengthened by public opinion and further support from thousands of workers coming to Miike from all parts of Japan, made a stand against the measures of the Mitsui management.[10] Together with the large public protests against the renewal of the Japanese-American Security Treaty – an arrangement regarded especially by militant acting trade unions as the origin of all "capitalist attacks" against the workers of Japan[11] – the Miike coal mine dispute became a centrepiece of the first major domestic crisis in the post-war history of Japan. Both events combined to create the temporary impression that Japan was facing a fundamental decision between socialism and capitalism.[12] Millions of citizens had taken to the streets in popular demonstrations in spring 1960. In the end Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke gave in to public pressure and announced his resignation on the 23rd of June of that year.

Ikeda Hayato's subsequent rise to power on 23 July 1960 coincided with the government's recognition of the need for a more balanced relation between labour and management. By directly addressing labour issues Japan's conservative elite sought to avoid the recurrence of another labour dispute comparable to that of the Miike coal mines, even though the miners failed to realise their demands in the end. Therefore the Ikeda Hayato cabinet aimed for the linking of economic growth with an increase in domestic demand. The implementing of an economic policy that gave priority to the linking of the producer goods sector and consumer goods sector was seen as a promising approach to strengthen formerly disadvantaged industries and to prevent social tensions. Thus Ikeda Hayato's income-doubling plan was announced in September 1960 to underline the government's commitment to boost domestic demand.[13]

However, the aspired reshaping of Japan's industrial relations after the labour disputes of 1960 involved severe complications, to some extent because of the embedding of the conflict-ridden environment of the Far East caused by Cold War antagonism

10 Ibid., p. 191.
11 Japan Times: The Labor Scene, 9 September 1959.
12 Makoto Iokibe (ed.): Sengo nihon gaikōshi, shinpan, Tokyo 2006, p. 106.
13 John Price: Japan Works, pp. 219–221.

into Japan's political landscape.[14] One example of the interface between Cold War tensions and Japan's industrial relations was the political course of Japan's largest trade union federation, named the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (*Nihon rōdō kumia sōhyōgikai*, Sōhyō), with a membership of 3.7 million at the beginning of the 1960s.[15] Soon after its constitutional convention on 11 July 1950, Sōhyō adopted a neutralist policy, similar to the one agreed to earlier by the 7th Convention of the Japan Socialist Party (*Nihon shakaitō*) in January 1951, as a reaction to the outbreak of the Korean War. By this means Sōhyō leaders sought to protect the economic interests of Japanese workers. Sōhyō had repeatedly warned against the remilitarisation of Japan, which would lead to the exploitation of workers due to its adverse effects on social programs and the peacetime economy.[16] Due to the commitment to neutralist principles, Sōhyō's anticipated accession to the anti-communist ICFTU collapsed, albeit considered highly important by American and British government officials in the wake of Cold War antagonism in the international trade union movement and its eventual splitting.[17]

Still Sōhyō remained unable to exert significant direct influence on management's decision-making process. Negotiations about key issues concerning Japanese workers, such as wages or working conditions, had to be conducted by Sōhyō's affiliated trade unions and management individually. The national trade union federation Sōhyō was not able to directly participate in those negotiations. Instead Sōhyō focused on creating favourable conditions for the participants representing labour interests in negotiations. With Sōhyō's especially strong stance towards peace, nuclear weapons, military bases as well as the Japanese-American Security Treaty all were considered important means for supporting labour interests. It was not until the beginning of the 1960s that Sōhyō's direct influence on wage related issues and other major labour concerns began to increase, due in most part to the growing successes gained by the initiative of collective bargaining at industry level – called the spring offensive (*Shuntō*).[18]

Sōhyō's political engagement was brought to a high point of intensity at the time of the Miike labour dispute and the public protests against the renewal of Japanese-American Security Treaty in 1960. However, despite the limits of Sōhyō's actual influence, exposed by the coal miners' failure to realise their demands, increasing activism in the second half of the 1950s had strongly contributed to a prevalence of ideas of class struggle among influential elements of Japan's organised labour at the beginning of

14 Kōji Nakakita: 1955-nen taisei no seiritsu, Tokyo 2002, p. 258.
15 Monogatari sengo rōdō undōshi kankō i'inkai: Monogatari sengo rōdō undōshi VI: Anpo to miike no kessen kara dōmei, JC no kessei e, Tokyo 1999, p. 245.
16 Mari Yamamoto: Grassroots Pacifism in Post-war Japan: The Rebirth of a Nation, London/New York 2004, pp. 68–69.
17 Kōji Nakakita: Nihon rōdō seiji no kokusai kankeishi 1945–1964, pp. 49–54.
18 Mari Yamamoto: Grassroots Pacifism in Post-war Japan, p. 79.

the 1960s. Against this background two conflicting visions about the future of Japan's industrial relations became dominant. (1) A vision strongly shaped by ideas about employment relationships from the post-war period that completely refused to recognise labour's involvement in issues concerning wages and working conditions. This vision had already begun to fall short of modern expectations but was still held mainly by employers' interest groups such as Nikkeiren. (2) As a reaction to prevailing employers' views, especially among militant acting trade unions, an equally confrontational vision characterised by complete control over the production process and the workplace exerted by labour took hold. However, in contrast to those conflicting approaches to industrial relations in Japan, an alternative vision started to evolve as a result of the Miike labour dispute.[19]

The Shaping of Japan's Industrial Relations and the Origins of the Involvement of the West German Trade Unions

The Miike labour dispute and the protests against the revision of the Japanese-American Security Treaty can be considered decisive for initiating the extensive exchange between West Germany and Japan at the trade union level. At the same time tensions in Japan's industrial relations, conflicts related to Cold War antagonism, and the amalgamation of these two issues became the main characteristics of the crisis of 1960 and also central elements of the exchange between the trade unions of both countries during the 1960s. To understand in which ways these dynamics shaped the relation between West German and Japanese labour organisations, one needs to identify the stakeholders involved, their approaches towards industrial relations in Japan, and their motivations respectively.

The Ministry of Labour

One of the earliest institutions endorsing an extensive exchange between Japan and West Germany at the trade union level had been Japan's Ministry of Labour (*Rōdōshō*). Major efforts to achieve this objective can be traced back to the time of the Miike labour dispute.[20] Such initiatives appeared to be directly linked to an alternative vision, diverging from the established approaches, towards a more aspirational relationship

19 John Price: Japan Works, pp. 150; 159.

20 Wilhelm Haas to Auswärtiges Amt (3 Dezember 1959), in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, AV Neues Amt, Bd. 6841.

between labour and management in Japan that had been gaining increasing popularity among Japan's governing elite since the Miike labour dispute. In contrast to the prevailing confrontational approaches about industrial relations, this vision was based on the idea of a more balanced relation between labour and management, to create foundations for future co-operations aimed at improving economic productivity. These considerations evolved not least from an understanding of industrial relations in West Germany as perceived by key figures committed to the improvement of economic productivity in Japan, such as Gōshi Kōhei, who had witnessed the rebuilding of the West German economy on-site in 1953 and regarded the trade unions sole focus on economic matters as one of the main origins of the positively perceived industrial relations in West Germany.[21]

By the beginning of the 1960s West Germany had become the exemplary model of industrial relations for Japan by a number of government officials, who highlighted the relation between labour and management in West Germany with detailed reports about the pleasant daily life of West German workers.[22] To be able to learn from the "politically independent" trade unions of West Germany, who were considered to be "solely committed to the improvement of the economic and social conditions for their members", as stated by former Minister of Labour Matsuura Shūtarō in June 1961,[23] a direct engagement with the West German trade unions in Japan appeared to be crucial.

The Japanese Trade Union Movement

Attitudes towards industrial relations in Japan based on ideas of class struggle remained dominant among the leadership of Sōhyō and other influential trade unions after the breakdown of the trade unions of the Miike coal mines. However, the following transition period of industrial relations was temporarily accompanied by a prioritisation of wage struggles over political struggles. Why leading Japanese trade union affiliates sought an exchange of experience with the trade unions of West Germany became especially apparent when demands for wage increases to European wage levels (*yōroppa nami chingin*) became the centre-piece of the spring offensive campaigns of 1963. With some labour organisations even specifying wage increases equalling those of West German and English levels.[24]

21 John Price: Japan Works, pp. 151–152.
22 Takuji Ishiguro: DGB no ayami: Doitsu no rōdōsha to sono seikatsu 1, in: Kankō rōdō 15:6 (1961), pp. 30–33.
23 Welt der Arbeit: Japanischer Minister sprach vor Betriebsräten, 30 June 1961.
24 Monogatari sengo rōdō undōshi kankō i'inkai: Monogatari sengo rōdō undōshi VI, p. 200.

These developments were also related to a significant shift of power within Japan's trade union movement. The failed attempt of the coal miners of Miike to realise their demands at the time of Miike labour dispute resulted eventually in a strengthening of Japan's moderate trade union federations. As a result, four of the major more politically conservative oriented Japanese trade unions experienced an increase of 18.9 per cent to 1,348,268 million members between 1962 and 1963. After joining forces in 1962, they consequently merged into the Japan Confederation of Labour (*Zen nihon rōdō sōdōmei*, Dōmei) on 11 November1964.[25] Hence a significant moderate counterpart to Sōhyō was established. In contrast to the confrontational ideas of class struggle prevalent among leading Sōhyō members, Dōmei agreed to collectivism based on co-operation, social security, and protection of the workplace.[26]

The Federal Foreign Office

The West German involvement in conflicts between labour and management in Japan appeared to be of little relevance until the beginning of the 1960s. However, an active West German interest in partaking in the shaping of Japan's industrial relations began to evolve when the Miike labour dispute and protests against the revision of the Japanese-American Security Treaty provided the foundations for an increasing exchange between influential parts of Japan's trade union movement such as Sōhyō and the trade unions of the socialist countries. Specifically the state-controlled trade union of East Germany – the Free German Trade Union Federation (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund,* FDGB) – provided extensive material and moral support to the coal miners involved in the Miike labour dispute. Through these means close ties between Sōhyō and the FDGB were established and a noteworthy exchange between trade unions from Japan and East Germany began to evolve. The FDGB consequently started to spread the East German regime's claims regarding the unsolved German question among organised labour in Japan, and demanded international recognition of the existence of two German states.[27] At the same time, West Germany's Federal Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*) was engaging in an extensive campaign to isolate the communist East German regime internationally – a task given the highest priority by the West German government. When this campaign appeared to be temporarily

25 Kōji Nakakita: Nihon rōdō seiji no kokusai kankeishi 1945–1964, p. 327.

26 Takao Matsumura: Japan, in: Joan Allen/Alan Campbell/John McIlroy (eds.): Histories of Labour: National and International Perspectives. London 2010, pp. 315–352; 322.

27 Christian Heideck: Reisenka no nichidoku rōdō kumia kankei: Anpo tōsō to berurin kiki no hazama de, in: Akira Kudō/Nobuo Tajima (eds.): Sengo nichidoku kankeishi, Tokyo 2014, pp. 177–218.

ruptured in spring 1960 by the Soviet-friendly West-African state Guinea – not least because of the involvement of the FDGB[28]– the German embassy in Tokyo began to actively engage in measures to counteract the FDGB's influence in Japan.

The Confederation of German Trade Unions

The German embassy's means to exert influence on Japanese trade unions appeared to be limited. Therefore West German diplomats championed for an active exchange between Japan's trade union movement and the national trade union federation of West Germany, named the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB, *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*). The DGB was committed to both the integration of West Germany into the Western Alliance as well as to the reunification of the divided Germany,[29] and thus in strong opposition to the stance of the FDGB. Yet, the DGB – considered one of the main pillars of the anti-communist ICFTU[30] – remained hesitant, since Sōhyō, as an integral part of Japan's trade union movement, was regarded as being mainly under communist influence.[31] Bureaucrats of Japan's Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Gaimushō*) finally spotted a window of opportunity, at the time of the Miike labour dispute and the public protests of 1960 and the further tightening of relations between Sōhyō and the FDGB, for successfully urging both West German diplomats as well as leading members of the DGB to engage in an exchange between both countries at the trade union level. West Germany's national trade union federation eventually began to disavow claims about the German question spread by the FDGB among organised labour in Japan. At the same time the DGB began to co-ordinate its activities regarding Sōhyō with the ICFTU headquarters in Brussels, to counteract the still prevailing "distorted reality" (*Trugbild*), which referred to the socialist countries' influence among parts of Japan's trade union movement.[32]

28 Telegramm Nr. 161 vom 10. Juni 1960, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, AV Neues Amt, Bd. 6841.

29 Arnulf Baring: Außenpolitik in Adenauers Kanzlerdemokratie, pp. 49–50, 58–59.

30 Magaly Rodríguez García: Liberal Workers of the World, Unite?: The ICFTU and the Defence of Labour Liberalism in Europe and Latin America, Bern 2010, pp. 86; 89.

31 Vermerk, 18 December 1959, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, B12, Bd. 1531.

32 Omer Becu to Willi Richter, 8 August 1962, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000568.

Ludwig Rosenberg's Visit to Japan and the Assignment of an Adviser of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation

The benefits of an extensive exchange at the trade union level became increasingly evident to the involved West German stakeholders over the following years. Yet, further West German engagement appeared to be hindered for a period of time because of disagreement among West German diplomats and the leadership of the DGB about the official status of the proposed permanent West German representative dealing with labour matters in Japan, although both sides agreed on the need of such an intermediary.

The incident was finally resolved after a visit to Japan from 27 until 30 May 1964 by the president of the DGB Ludwig Rosenberg, who had been a strong proponent of an overseas engagement of the DGB based on his experiences gained in British exile during the Second World War.[33] Instead of introducing a union affiliated labour *attaché* to the German embassy in Tokyo, a solution strongly favoured by the DGB, or assigning an intermediary to the local ICFTU office, as proposed by the high-level diplomats, Rosenberg started to embrace a different approach. Originating from an informal agreement with Günter Grunwald, the chairman of the FES, 20 or so trade union advisers of the FES were assigned to Africa, South America, and Asia at that time,[34] including one person to become involved in local matters in Japan as an official representative of the FES.[35]

The agreement made was certainly encouraged by the talks held between Rosenberg and Japan's Minister of Labour, Ōhashi Takeo, and the leaders of Japan's major national trade union federations and opposition parties respectively. Rosenberg later concluded in an interview that Ōhashi intended "to adapt to Western standards in any respect" by granting more extensive rights to Japan's trade unions. He also considered the emerging Sino-Soviet conflict as a further source of opportunity.[36] Although he did not provide further details, it appears likely that his views were partially shaped by Japanese government officials or representatives of the German embassy who believed

33 Frank Ahland: Ludwig Rosenberg: Der Bürger als Gewerkschafter, Bochum 2002, p. 388, published by Ruhr-Universität Bochum, available online at: http://www-brs.ub.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/netahtml/HSS/Diss/AhlandFrank/diss.pdf (accessed on 7 September 2013).

34 Entstehung, Aufgaben und bisherige Tätigkeit des Asian Labour Institute der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo, 25 April 1967, p. 1, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, AV Neues Amt, Bd. 6645.

35 Heinz Gottschalk to Erich Sievers, 7 June 1967, p. 3, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000317; Ludwig Rosenberg to Günter Grunwald, 18 August 1964, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000497.

36 Welt der Arbeit: Sozialhelfer des DGB gehen in alle Welt, 5 June 1964.

to witness an increasing ideological distance between the party leadership of the Japan Communist Party (*Nihon kyōsantō*) – mostly sympathetic towards Chinese revolutionary theory – and leading Sōhyō members, whose neutralist policy appeared to be more in line with the Soviet Union's policy of "peaceful coexistence".[37]

In the end, the meetings between the president of the DGB and the leaders of Sōhyō and the major conservative trade union federations resulted in a commitment to further broaden the exchange of information and to deepen relations.[38] This task was handed to Heinz Gottschalk, the 35-year trade union affiliate and first representative of the FES in Tokyo, who had to innovate in a number of fields, namely: (1) observing local developments in Japan and, if considered of national interest, in other Asian countries; (2) liaising with Japan's trade unions, political parties, bureaucracy and with international organisations in Southeast Asia, such as those affiliated with the ICFTU; (3) providing information and lending support to study groups; (4) providing translations and preparing print publications of scripts made by the DGB and the FES; and (5) organising conferences and lectures.[39]

Though a comprehensive list of tasks was handed to Heinz Gottschalk during the initial stage of his involvement in Japan, judging by the content of his earlier reports, primary interest was still given to Sōhyō and the future direction of Japan's most important national trade union federation. The FES representative in Tokyo thus provided detailed information about his first meetings with Sōhyō general secretary, Iwai Akira, and Sōhyō chairman, Ōta Kaoru. According to Heinz Gottschalk's report, Sōhyō appeared to be quite positive towards a cooperation with the FES, although West German irritations about Sōhyō's neutralist policy and its relations with the Eastern "pseudo trade unions" (*Pseudo-Gewerkschaften*) remained untouched by the talks held.

Heinz Gottschalk's first meeting with Iwai Akira and Ōta Kaoru had already exposed the Sōhyō leaders' strong interest in the experiences gained by the West German trade union movement in the field of employment law, industrial disputes, welfare policy and cultural issues. Iwai Akira and Ōta Kaoru therefore proposed to organise a trade

37 This assessment was given to the German embassy in Tokyo by Japan's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In: Aufzeichnung des Forschungs- und Planungsstabes des japanischen Außenministeriums vom 27. Juni 1964, 13 August 1964, pp. 2–5, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, B37, Bd. 67.

38 Ochiai Eiichi to Stefan Nedzynski, 3 June 1964, in: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Archives, Folder 3530e.

39 Aufgabenstellung für ein Büro der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo-Japan, 3 February 1965, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGA000497.

union conference focusing on topics such as the history of trade unions in Europe, the improvement of working conditions, industrial disputes and issues related to trade union level training and education.[40]

During Heinz Gottschalk's twelve months assignment in Tokyo, leading members of the West German trade union movement had come to the conclusion that having a representative of the FES constantly on-site would make a noteworthy contribution to the shaping of Japan's industrial relations. Consequently, after a short break Heinz Gottschalk returned to Tokyo in November 1965 to focus on the realisation of the first major project initiated by the FES in Japan.

Development of Networks and the Founding of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Asian Labour Institute

Following the first talks held with Iwai Akira and Ōta Kaoru, an outline of a joint Japanese-German conference began to evolve. Since several influential national trade union federations strongly welcomed the exchange of knowledge with the trade unions of West Germany, convincing the leading members of the respective Japanese trade union federation of the benefits of this sort of platform, did not seem to cause major difficulties. However, serious problems did occur, when Heinz Gottschalk attempted to bring together the partially competing major national trade union federations. Therefore Heinz Gottschalk reported with great satisfaction in January 1966 to the headquarters of the FES in Bonn that he had succeeded in involving them, albeit all other foreign trade union specialists in Japan at the time had forecasted, at the early stage of planning, that a platform of this sort could not be realised in Japan.[41]

He also reported to the FES headquarters in Bonn that a summit, comparable to the Japanese-German trade union conference, had never been realised in Japan before. The actual objective of conference was clearly voiced by Heinz Gottschalk: providing a "comprehensive overview" of the experiences gained by the DGB in the past to give Japan's trade unions "new impetus, to illustrate by comparison tasks that need to be addressed by the trade unions, and not, least, to promote international co-operation".[42]

The topics covered by the conference hence focused on fields of interest suggested by the participating Japanese trade union affiliates, including the history of the German trade union movement, the relation between trade unions and the state in respect to

40 Heinz Gottschalk to Günter Grunwald, 27 February 1965, pp. 1–4, in: Ibid.
41 Heinz Gottschalk to Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 3 January 1966, p. 1, in: Ibid.
42 Bericht über das Erste japanisch-deutsche Gewerkschaftsforum vom 27.1.-4.2.1966 in Tokio/Japan, p. 1, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000354.

the major political parties, the trade unions' organisational structure, occupational safety, retirement provision, and solidarity towards developing countries.[43] The conference was finally held at the Toshi Center Hotel in Tokyo between 27 January and 4 February 1966. According to the conference draft, 24 affiliates of the major Japanese trade union federations and an additional four members of trade union federations from other Asian countries were expected to participate. The involved Japanese trade union federations, the ICFTU, and, of course, the DGB contributed at least one presentation. The headquarters of the FES in Bonn funded the conference with DEM 17,200 (ca. JPY 1,540,000). The German embassy gave further support to the FES's initiative by organising a reception attended by 80 participants, including "the who's who" of Japan's trade union movement, according to Heinz Gottschalk.[44]

Judging by the fact that the representative of the FES in Tokyo was going to organise another trade union conference comparable to the one being held at the beginning of 1966, before the end of the year, the initiatives of FES appeared to have been met with approval. With the benefit of hindsight the German embassy even went so far as to say that the original conference "prepared the ground" (*Schrittmacherdienste leisten*) for close relations between the FES and Japan's trade union movement.[45] However, the implementation of the first Japanese-German trade union conference also demonstrated that the initiatives of the FES in Japan were also met with strong criticism from the left of Japan's political landscape. In early February 1966 an article published in the Japan Communist Party's organ *Akahata* called the Japanese-German trade union conference a tool of American imperialism, established by the FES and the DGB to infiltrate Sōhyō.[46]

Thanks to Heinz Gottschalk's skilful manoeuvring, the FES eventually gained recognition among Japan's trade union federations, despite significant difficulties caused by quarrels among respective labour organisations. The realisation of a second trade union conference which was held from 21 to 25 November 1966 was considered in no small part a result of Heinz Gottschalk's continued efforts. West German government officials in Tokyo described the second conference of this kind as the "high point" (*Krönung*) of the FES's representative two-year-long involvement in Japan, which came to an end when Heinz Gottschalk returned to Germany in December 1966. Given the title *Trade Unions in a Free Society*, the Japanese-German trade union conference systematically expanded collaboration by bringing together once again members of Japan's

43 Lectures, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000497.
44 Heinz Gottschalk to Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 3 January 1966, pp. 1–3, in: Ibid.
45 Tätigkeit des Büros der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo, 25 December 1966, p. 2, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, B37 339, Bd. 339.
46 Akahata: Seidoku no kanban de sesshoku, 3 March 1966.

major trade union federations and as well as further afield trade union representatives from Okinawa, South Korea, South Vietnam, Hong Kong and the Philippines, thus becoming an international trade union conference.[47]

An article published in November 1966 in the English edition of Japan's largest daily newspaper, the *Yomiuri shinbun*, further highlighted the importance given to the conference by Japanese observers. The author of the article, Onose Kaji, provided a positive evaluation of the FES's representativeFES' representative's overall achievements in Japan and stated in the opening passage "Heinz Gottschalk [...] has worked a near miracle with Japanese labor unions. He has succeeded in bringing together leaders of vying Japanese labor unions in one room for friendly discussion."[48] The positive personal traits described in Onose's article were also in line with the perceptions of Heinz Gottschalk's personality provided by German embassy representatives.[49]

In late 1966 conditions to participate in the reshaping of Japan's industrial relations and to further strengthen ties between the FES's representative in Tokyo and different organisations in East Asia were certainly perceived favourably by the FES's headquarter in Bonn and by DGB officials. Consequently, more than two years after Heinz Gottschalk's arrival in Japan, the FES's liaison office in Tokyo became more involved in matters concerning East Asia, albeit originally only of secondary importance to the FES's representative in Tokyo.[50] Expanding both the geographical scope as well the conceptual framework for the activities of the local FES office was closely linked to the highly influential theoretician of the SPD, Willi Eichler, who had demonstrated a keen interest in local matters in East Asia and specifically in Japan since the beginning of the 1960s.[51] Based on his ideas, the FES in Japan began to embrace a wide range of topics such as ethics and religion with regard to labour related issues in East Asia.

Eventually the exchange of ideas about social issues was extended to political parties, universities and the mass media in the region. In order to cope with the new tasks, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Asian Labour Institute (FESALI) was established in Tokyo with permission of the Japanese government and opened on 20 March 1967. The staff of the FESALI consisted of five employees, including a trade union affiliate assigned by the DGB. The FESALI's mandate in reference to Japan had been a seamless

47 Tätigkeit des Büros der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo, 25 December 1966, p. 1–2, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, B37 339, Bd. 339.

48 Kaji Onose: German Labor Expert, in: Yomiuri, 26 November 1966.

49 Tätigkeit des Büros der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo, 25 December 1966, p. 1–2, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, B37 339, Bd. 339.

50 Aufgabenstellung für ein Büro der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo-Japan, 3 February 1965, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000497.

51 Masaaki Yasuno: Nihon shakaitō to doitsu shakai minshutō: Yūtō kankei kara bōkyaku e, in: Akira Kudō/Nobuo Tajima (eds.): Sengo nichidoku kankeishi, Tokyo 2014, pp. 135–175, 167.

continuation of the activities of the former FES liaison office in Tokyo. Therefore attempts to provide impetus on economic, social, and political issues were also linked to the purpose of counteracting propaganda from the countries of the "Eastern bloc" aimed at West Germany.[52] According to information of the German embassy, the FESALI's annual budget was DM 500,000 (ca. JPY 45,000,000). However, in the end the FESALI did not meet the expectations in reference to the coordination of the FES's activities in East and Southeast Asia, since the FES's local liaison offices in the respective countries did not appear to focus on common objectives, as pointed out in the report of the German embassy in Tokyo.[53]

Over the coming years the FESALI might have failed to convince observers of it being capable of coordinating the FES's efforts in East- and Southeast Asia. The initial stage of the FESALI's activities, however, indicated that the institute was acknowledged by heads of state and government, while also being recognised as a potentially important contact point to promote co-operation among organisations in the region. The first conference organised by the FESALI titled *One World – A Forum on International Cooperation* had already strengthened the FES's reputation outside of Japan by utilising the institution of the Japanese-German trade union conference, initially designed by Heinz Gottschalk and leading Japanese trade union affiliates, as a means for advocating regional exchange. For this reason Japanese trade union affiliates, leading members of both Japanese socialist parties as well as socialists and social democrats from Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, South Korea, South Vietnam and the Philippines came together from 20 to 25 March 1967 at the New Japan Hotel in Tokyo. However, the most prominent participant in the conference was the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, who had come to Japan together with the Singaporean Minister of Culture, primarily to attend the event organised by the FES.

The talks held between the Singaporean Prime Minister, the Japanese Prime Minister Satō Eisaku and the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Miki Takeo respectively following Lee Kuan Yew's attendance at the conference of the FES strongly contributed to the general approval of the Japanese government towards the activities of the FESALI and thus helped to dispel scepticism over the FES's involvement in Japan among Japanese bureaucrats originating from the FES's close relations with the Socialists in Japan.[54] However, even though the FES's activities were mainly perceived positively

52 Entstehung, Aufgaben und bisherige Tätigkeit des Asian Labour Institute der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo, 25 April 1967, p. 2–3, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, AV Neues Amt, Bd. 6645.

53 Tätigkeit deutscher Stiftungen im Ausland, 10 March 1971, p. 2, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, AV Neues Amt, Bd. 6789.

54 Tätigkeit des Asian Labour Institute der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Tokyo, 2 May 1967, p. 1 in: Ibid.

by the majority of those involved, there was one particular task which had been given priority by the FES in Japan from the very beginning. This had become increasingly difficult to tackle: guiding the leading Sōhyō affiliates away from ideas of class struggle.

Increasing Estrangement

The FES's involvement in Japan certainly helped to promote co-operation between Sōhyō and the trade unions of West Germany but even after years of intense efforts for closer ties, Sōhyō's continued relation with the socialist countries of the world remained a source of tension. The topic was also implicitly addressed by the Sōhyō general secretary Iwai Akira in the opening address for the conference *Trade Unions in a Free Society*, organised by the FES in November 1966, with Iwai Akira referring to "the process of depolarization" in the Eastern European countries as the starting point for people gaining "freedom in every respect."[55]

It appears likely that such remarks were also linked to the perception of the developments in Vietnam among leading Sōhyō affiliates following the beginning of bombings conducted by the US Air Force and the US Navy in the Northern part of the country in 1965. Since Sōhyō leaders had similar views on Vietnam as those of other trade union leaders of the socialist countries, their shared commitment became the starting point for an extensive exchange between Sōhyō and the trade unions of the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1960s. In May 1965, Sōhyō general secretary Iwai Akira visited several socialist countries. According to information obtained by the ICFTU liaison office in Tokyo, talks held between Iwai Akira and leaders of the state-controlled unions centred on the topic of counteracting US foreign policy by strengthening international workers' solidarity.[56] During his visit to the Soviet Union, Iwai Akira had made arrangements for the establishment of a *Japanese-Soviet committee for trade union exchange* (*Nisso rōso kōryū iinkai*). The joint communiqué of the Soviet hosts and the Japanese guests further expressed strong opposition against the war in Vietnam, imperialism and colonialism.[57]

Ochiai Eiichi, the ICFTU representative in Tokyo, also regarded these activities as well as the strikes organised by Sōhyō after the bombing of the Northern Vietnamese port city Haiphong in July 1966, as a reaction towards economic growth, social changes and their impact on the development of Japan's labour movement. The linking of

55 International Trade Union Forum, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000497.

56 Ochiai Eiichi to Omer Becu, 23 May 1965, in: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Archives, Folder 3549.

57 Rōdōshō: Shiryō rōdō undōshi, Shōwa 41, pp. 905–906.

the producer and consumer goods sector in the early 1960s, at the beginning of Ikeda Hayato's term of office, eventually contributed to raising standards of living. By the end of the decade, Japan had become one of the world's leading exporting country for both capital-intensive goods, such as steel and ships, as well as for technologically complex consumer goods, such as cars, household and other consumer electronics. These developments were accompanied by an increase in labour productivity, wages, and employment levels.[58] In this context, Ochiai Eiichi reported to the ICFTU headquarters in Brussels after the Sōhyō convention of July 1967, that Sōhyō was facing severe pressure to bring its policy in line with the ongoing economic and social developments. But instead leaders of both Sōhyō and the Japan Socialist Party clung to Marxist theory, and regarded themselves as the true disciples of Karl Marx.[59]

Sōhyō's relations towards the countries of the "Eastern bloc" at the time of the American bombings in North Vietnam was also closely observed by the FESALI. Attempts to dissolve tensions,[60] however, were thwarted by the knowledge of a steadily increasing exchange between Japan's largest union federation and the FDGB,[61] as well as, the regularly published joint *communiqués* of Sōhyō and the Soviet Union Central Council of Trade Unions, which were also warning against West German revanchism and the resurgence of Neo-Nazism in the Western part of Germany.[62] After participating in the *Industrialization and Technological Change in Asia* conference, organised by the FESALI in November/December 1969, the president of the DGB, Heinz Oskar Vetter, had thus adopted the view that a change of mind among the respective Japanese trade union leaders was necessary to create favourable conditions for a closer co-operation with Sōhyō.[63]

Scepticism was by no means solely confined to leading trade union affiliates from West Germany. After information was made public in May 1967 that foreign activities of the lar-gest national trade union federation of the USA had been funded by the Central Intelligence Agency in the past,[64] general suspiciousness towards the activities

58 John Price: Japan Works, p. 270; Lonny E. Carlile: Divisions of Labor, p. 213.
59 Confidential: Sohyo Annual Convention Tokyo, 19–22 July 1967, Some Observations, in: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Archives, Folder 3549.
60 Stephan G. Thomas to Erich Sievers, 7 July 1967, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000317.
61 Japan – DDR, 26 February 1969, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, AV Neues Amt, Bd. 6763.
62 Shūkan rōdō nyūsu: Dai 2 kai nisso kōryû i de kyōdō seimei, 26 June 1966.
63 Aufenthalt von Herrn Heinz O. Vetter, dem Vorsitzenden des D.G.B., in Tokyo vom 28.11. bis 4.12.1969, 28 January 1970, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, B98, Bd. 1150.
64 Tom Braden: I'm Glad the CIA Is 'Immoral', in: Saturday Evening Post, 20 May 1967.

of the FES in Japan started to grow. In particular Sōhyō began to act more reluctantly towards the FES and thus, temporarily, did not participate in conferences organised by the FESALI. [65]

By the end of the 1960s the FES's involvement in the shaping of Japan's industrial relations became increasingly complicated. The military intervention of the United States in North Vietnam, the later strategic reorientation of Sōhyō towards the two antagonistic power blocs and mistrust towards certain Western trade union federations originating from the knowledge of former links to the Central Intelligence Agency, left the FES only little leeway to promote their vision of industrial relations based on the model established in West Germany among leading Sōhyō affiliates. Instead more than half of the Sōhyō affiliated trade unions were still committed to Sōhyō's "old policy" and ideas of class struggle, according to a report handed to the ICFTU headquarters by Ochiai Eiichi after the 40th Sōhyō convention in August 1970.[66]

Under these circumstances, the German embassy in Tokyo did not regard the FES's remaining influence among Japanese trade union leaders as being very far reaching. An evaluation of the FESALI's involvement made by West German government officials in October 1971 – almost five years after the establishment of the institute in Tokyo – concluded that the FES was still prioritising co-operation with organised labour in Japan while good contacts were also maintained with most of Japan's major political parties, the Japanese press, and a number of Ministries. At the same time the Germany embassy pointed out difficulties the FESALI was facing in Japan. One major problem identified by West German government officials had been related to the fact that in Japan – unlike most developing countries where the FES were involved with labour related matters – a well-established trade union system already existed. The German embassy also criticised the lack of a clearly formulated policy regarding tasks and goals of the FESALI in Japan, as some of the involved Japanese participants had been asking about the reasons of the existence of such an institute on-site. Finally, by the beginning of the 1970s, most relevant Japanese trade union affiliates had become aware that the FES's activities were partially funded by West German public resources. As a result, suspiciousness of both government agencies and opposition groups in Japan towards the FES further evolved, culminating in occasional allegations of intelligence activities.[67]

65 Monatsbericht, August 1969, Gutzmann Tokyo, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000318.

66 Ochiai Eiichi to Harm S. Buiter, 2 October 1970, p. 4, in: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Archives, Folder 3550.

67 Tätigkeit deutscher Stiftungen im Ausland, 10 March 1971, pp. 5–6, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, AV Neues Amt, Bd. 6789.

All these developments taken together certainly prompted the FESALI by the beginning of the 1970s to shift its main focus towards the coordination of development aid in Southeast Asia and to co-operation in this matter with organisations close to the Japanese government.[68] Ties between the institute and Japan's largest trade union federations and opposition parties remained intact as indicated by the FESALI's annual report of the following year. But from the perspective of the FES, their value increasingly derived from the possibility of joint efforts in regional affairs in South East Asia. By the end of 1971, leaders of both Sōhyō and the Japan Socialist Party were regarded by the FESALI as mainly being interested in closer ties with the People's Republic of China, North Korea, and North Vietnam. At the same time Japan's second largest trade union federation, Dōmei, had taken the initiative in the formation of a political alliance of Asian trade unions, aimed at reducing the influence of the FES and the DGB in Southeast Asia and thus strengthening their own position in the region.[69] Under these circumstances the basis for a shared vision of industrial relations in Japan evolving from joint efforts of the Japanese trade union movement, the FES and the DGB respectively appeared to have vanished.

Final Thoughts

This research paper focussed on the question of how the FES became involved and participated in the shaping of industrial relations in Japan following the culmination of massive tensions between labour and management during the 1950s. For this purpose, interaction between proponents of popular visions concerning the future relations between labour and management in Japan and affiliates of the FES and the DGB who were committed to Japan, were examined. The results of the analysis highlighted that the beginning of the involvement of the FES in Japan had been tied to two parallel and partially intertwining developments related to Japan's industrial relations: (1) Increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth caused by the implementing of a low wage policy and the setback of labour rights to further strengthen competitiveness of the export-oriented heavy industry; (2) and the embedding of regional conflicts in Northeast and Southeast Asia related to Cold War antagonism in the political landscape of Japan resulting in rising political polarisation.

Those developments had become the source of increasing militancy among influential elements of organised labour in Japan, as demonstrated by the extensive political activism of Japan's largest trade union federation, Sōhyō. In this context visions based

68 Jahresbericht 1970, I.2, 31 January 1971), p. 3, in: Archiv für Soziale Demokratie, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAJ000466.

69 Jahresbericht 1971, I.2, 10 December 1971, in: Ibid.

on ideas of class struggle or paternalism about the future of industrial relations had become prevalent in Japan. The proponents of these approaches clashed at the time of the Miike labour dispute and the public protests against the renewal of the Japanese-American Security Treaty. The events of 1960, however, strongly contributed to the adaption of a "third way" among Japan's conservative political elite that is, i.e., an alternative vision, whichprioritised co-operation between labour and management. To achieve this aim, the Japanese government promoted an exchange between Japan's trade unions and those of West Germany, since influential stakeholders perceived the relation between labour and management in West Germany as an exemplary model of industrial relations due to the priority given to the reconciliation of interests.

Finally, against this background, the benefits of the FES's involvement in Japan and the exchange between Japan and West Germany on trade union level can be understood. Early efforts to participate in the shaping of Japan's industrial relations at the beginning of the 1960s were affected by the hesitation of the trade union affiliates and government officials from West Germany. In 1964, the president of the DGB, Ludwig Rosenberg, personally began to urge for extensive involvement of West Germany at the trade union level in Japan. The following initiatives by the FES on-site and especially the institution of the Japanese-German and the international trade union conference, which had evolved from the joint efforts of the first FES representative in Japan, Heinz Gottschalk, and leading Japanese trade union officials, were certainly contributing factors to the shaping of industrial relations in Japan in at least two ways, namely: (1) by advocating dialogue among competing Japanese trade union federations on essential questions facing the workforce of Japan; and (2) by initiating an exchange of ideas at the trade union level in a regional context. The results of these efforts of the FES and the DGB respectively were not only acknowledged by the Japanese press but also at the highest level of government in Japan. Under these circumstances, the Japanese government gave its approval to the establishment of the FESALI in Tokyo.

At the same time, this exchange at the trade union level between Japan and West Germany was constantly accompanied by developments in the Cold War. The emergence of tensions between influential parts of Japan's political opposition related to the Sino-Soviet dispute created opportunities for the FES and the DGB to provide further impetus on labour related matters to Japan's largest trade union federation, Sōhyō, during the 1960s. The Vietnam War in the later half of the decade, on the other hand, reinforced the old vision of Japan's future industrial relations, based on ideas of class struggle among leading Sōhyō affiliates.

When, in the late 1960s and respectively in the early 1970s, the framework of industrial relations was eventually consolidated through measures initiated by the Japanese government after the political crisis of 1960, the FESALI had already fostered an extensive mutual exchange of knowledge and ideas on matters of primary concern to both labour and management in regard to organised labour in Japan. The joint efforts of the FES and the DGB in Japan were certainly affected by Sōhyō's expanded

co-operation with the state-controlled trade unions of the "Eastern bloc" in the wake of the Vietnam War and by allegations of intelligence led activities at the FES articulated since the late 1960s. Taken all together though, the involvement of both the FES and the trade unions of West Germany were perceived as being of positive value in the shaping of Japan's industrial relations during the 1960s.

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