

Japan: the Right on the Offensive



How do you assess the results of the simultaneous elections for both Houses of the Diet of last June?

The first important result of the elections is that the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party won a stable majority in both Houses for the first time in ten years. (284 seats in the 511-seat House of Representatives and 135 seats in the 251-seat House of Councillors.)

It had been expected that this election would be only for the House of Councillors, one half of the members being up for re-election every three years. Having been elected six years ago, I was among those standing for re-election. But in May, with inter-faction struggles intensifying in the LDP, a no-confidence motion presented by the Opposition was carried, because anti-mainstream faction members of the LDP absented themselves when the vote was taken. The Ohira government then decided to dissolve the Diet and hold simultaneous elections for both Houses. This was only eight months after the previous general election held in October 1979. In our 15th Party Congress in February last year, the JCP characterised the present situation as 'the 1980s in turbulence', and this unexpected double-election was but one indication of it.

The decision to hold a double-election was an electoral tactic that presented the LDP in a favourable light. Then the sudden death of Prime Minister Ohira during the election campaign won sympathy votes for the LDP. But political factors that played a major role were two important events at home and abroad that transpired during the intervening eight months. On the international scene was the military intervention in Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, which gave the Carter administration the opportunity to bring into full play its policy of strength, and exacerbate tensions. Here in Japan, the quick turn to the right by the Socialist Party and the General Council of Trade Unions (Sohyo) took place. These incidents were of extraordinary help to the LDP.

It should be remembered however that the LDP failed to win majority votes in the elections for either House, showing that the majority of the people have no confidence in the LDP.

The second result of the election to be noted is that the plan for an anti-communist coalition government, trumpeted by the Socialist Party, the Democratic Socialist Party and the Komei Party, offered no attraction to the electors, resulting in the plan proving to be a fiasco.

The Socialist Party managed to retain its previous 107 seats in the lower house, but the chairman of the Party had to fight a hard battle,

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and the general secretary lost. The strength of the Komei Party fell from 58 to 33, and the DSP from 36 to 32. These results show that the anti-communist opposition parties on the whole suffered a setback in both the number of seats and the ratio of votes won. Without doubt, though, the anti-communist splittism and pro-LDP policy line of these parties were major factors in the success of the LDP.

The third important result was that the Japanese Communist Party, the mainstay of the progressive forces following the downfall of the Socialists, unfortunately lost seats. The number of JCP members in the House of Representatives fell from 41 to 29, and in the House of Councillors from 16 to 12, where it lost four of the eleven seats up for re-election.

Nevertheless the JCP won overall a larger number of votes (except in the national constituency of the House of Councillors), and Party members and supporters are all in high spirits. In the lower house election, the JCP won an additional 180,000 votes, bringing the total to 5,940,000 (10.1%) and in the upper house local constituencies 6,650,000 votes (11.7%), an increase of 1,490,000; both figures are close to the highest ever cast for the Party.

Why did the JCP suffer a setback this year, despite the very good results achieved in the October 1979 general election, especially when compared with the previous general election in 1976, when you suffered somewhat of a setback?

In view of the fact that we gained votes, we do not attribute our defeat to a decline in the influence of the Party. But in our analysis, we consider that however severe the situation, it would have been possible for us to save the Party from losing seats if we had fought a better campaign.

The political situation in this election had a new complexity such as had not been seen in the previous election.

For example, previously, when the corruption in LDP political life was laid bare in case after case, it was revealed that most opposition parties were also involved in these scandals. This led to the conviction that only the Japanese Communist Party was free of such corruption.

But on this occasion, the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan gave the opposition a timely pretext for an extensive anti-communist attack on the JCP.

The swing to the right by the Socialist Party and the General Council of Trade Unions (Sohyo) threw into sharp relief the progressive character of the Japanese Communist Party, but it also gave wider room for manoeuvre to isolate the JCP.

The electoral system in Japan divides the country into medium-sized constituencies with representation of from one to five members,

but not with proportional representation. This makes it necessary to win a severe competition between the seven political parties to win seats. In this respect we have pointed out the following reasons for our losses: First, we had relaxed our stand, on the mistaken assumption that 'we will be successful because we succeeded in returning these candidates only eight months ago'. This is the main reason why we failed to secure the return of 14 previous seat-holders in the lower house.

In the second place, the Afghanistan issue, and the plans for a coalition government put up by the Socialist, Komei and Democratic Socialist Parties, were used by all the other parties in their anti-communist attacks on our Party. In constituencies where our counter-attacks and criticism of other parties were not adequately organised, we suffered setbacks, and lost.

Important advances were made in the early seventies by the JCP. Then, from the mid-seventies a determined offensive to 'roll back' those advances came from the Right with some success. Now, following the election, how do you see the prospects for the coming years?

In the International Theoretical Symposium organised by the JCP held in July 1979, it was pointed out that the developed capitalist countries have all been plunged into a serious structural crisis, and Japan is no exception. In our view, Japan has been going through a period of transformation characterised by intensifying political struggles since the beginning of the 1970s.

The general election of 1972, the first in the 1970s, when the crisis of Japanese capitalism had greatly deepened, resulted in a setback for the LDP and rapid progress for the JCP, lifting our parliamentary strength from 14 to 40. The first half of the 1970s saw new victories won one after another by the progressive forces, including the Communist and Socialist Parties.

With a deep feeling of crisis, the forces of reaction began a desperate and real 'rollback' of the JCP. As is common in Europe also, the call for 'defence of free society' was central to the ideological attacks in their anti-communist campaign. One characteristic of this campaign was that the anti-communist middle-of-the-road parties, the Democratic Socialist Party and the Komei Party, co-operated with the LDP in it. An attack against our Party Presidium Chairman Kenji Miyamoto was made in the Diet by the Democratic Socialist Party, and the constitutional dispute, in which they branded us an 'anti-democratic party', was led by the Komei Party.

The JCP vigorously counterattacked this anti-communist offensive, and strove positively to give the people a new vision of socialism in which democracy will be completely guaranteed. In relation to this, the 13th extraordinary Party Congress in 1976 adopted a 'Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy'. But the Party suffered setbacks in the two following Diet elections, first in the general election of 1976, when our parliamentary strength was reduced to 19, and then in the 1977 election for the House of Councillors. Nevertheless, in the 1976 election the JCP won 6.3 million votes, an increase of 300,000, thus defending the Party's base.

The Party won two successive victories in the simultaneous local elections and the general election in 1979, and when they saw the rapid advance of the Party in winning 41 seats in the lower house, the forces of reaction criticised the 'inadequateness of their anti-communist attack'. This bitter experience led to another anti-communist campaign in which they used the Afghanistan issue as a weapon.

The Liberal-Democrats did better than they expected in the last general election. How would you characterise the new government and what is its relative strength?

As is common in Europe also, the call for 'defence of free society' was central to the anti-communist campaign

On the strength of its majority in both houses, the LDP, at least in form, has quietened down its inner-party strife, and set up a new Cabinet led by Zenko Suzuki. They are using to the maximum the idea that such a 'victory will be hard to come by again', and are therefore forcing the line of reactionary politics. Similar to the Thatcher government, the Suzuki government has already begun to put forward one rightist policy after another.

The JCP has characterised the opening of the 1980s as 'a period when the conservative forces are launching the second postwar reactionary offensive'. The first postwar reactionary offensive as we call it, came around 1950, at the closing stage of the US imperialist occupation of Japan, when the 'red purge' was carried out against the Communist Party; the trade union movement was reorganised to give it a rightist orientation; the Communist Party was forced into semi-illegal status; the Korean War was launched; the San Francisco 'peace' conference was held, and the Japan-US Security Treaty was concluded. I do not mean that we have entered fully into a period of reaction. The question of whether we will allow the forces of reaction to win, or we can defeat them and enter a new phase of peace and social progress will depend on the way we develop the struggle.

Speaking of the relative strength of the LDP, the following factors can be cited; the political base consolidated under the long-standing LDP one-party rule since 1955; support from US imperialism; with Chinese support recently added. A serious aspect now is that, except for the JCP, LDP rule is backed by all the opposition parties, which have capitulated and come close to the LDP in their policies, and have gone so far as to make themselves into a quasi-ruling party. This means that there are now no real opposition parties except the JCP, and this has a negative influence on extra-Diet activities, the labour movement, the mass struggle, and the people's movements.

The Liberal Democratic Party has had a central position in Japanese politics for many years now. Could you say something about its character as a Party, and its role in Japanese politics and society? How does it compare with the conservative parties of Western Europe?

The Japanese conservative forces have changed their alignment a number of times since World War II. In 1955 the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party were merged into the present Liberal-Democratic Party, which has held political power for over 25 years.

As the government party, the LDP has Japanese monopoly capital as its class base, so we may call it literally the 'servant of the business circles'. This is an important point, for the cost of the management of the party and the intra-party factions, reportedly amounting to 30,000 million yen (approximately £58 million) a year, as well as the fabulous sums spent on campaigns, are all met by the big business world. The LDP president, who is also Prime Minister, always has close relations with representatives of business circles, and meets with various business groups for consultations at dinner almost every evening.

This must be a very Japanese way of doing things, different from conservative parties in Western European countries, though the conservative parties of both Japan and Europe have this in common, that they represent the class interests of monopoly capital. But the LDP differs essentially from West European conservative parties in the following respects:

First, the LDP as agent serves not only Japanese monopoly capital but also US imperialism, to which Japanese interests are subordinate.

To understand the Japanese situation, it is absolutely necessary to



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know about the status and role of US imperialism in Japan, so let me explain a little.

As you know, along with German and Italian fascism, Japanese militarism was responsible for launching World War II, entering into war with the Allied forces, including Great Britain. We are really proud of the fact that only the Japanese Communist Party opposed and struggled against the war of aggression, in spite of the brutal repression we suffered. The JCP Central Committee Chairman Sanzo Nosaka, who joined the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920, and was one of the founders of the Japanese Communist Party, directed the anti-war movement from abroad while in exile for 16 years. Presidium Chairman Kenji Miyamoto carried on the struggle from within prison for more than 12 years. After the defeat of Japan, the Japanese people came under the total formal occupation of the Allies, but effectively, under US imperialism. In 1951, while the Korean War was going on, the San Francisco peace treaty was signed without the participation of the Soviet Union or China, but this did not bring real independence to Japan, and Okinawa continued under total US occupation until 1972; the Japan-US Security Treaty made the whole of Japan into a US base, with US troops continuing to be deployed here. This complex situation has no parallel elsewhere, so analysing this situation was very difficult for the Party. After a series of incorrect analyses, the JCP adopted the present Party Programme at the 8th Congress in 1961, which set out the Party position of independence and self-reliance. The Programme defined the situation in Japan as follows: 'Fundamentally, those who control Japan today are US imperialism and its subordinate ally, Japanese monopoly capital. Although it is a highly-developed capitalist country, Japan is virtually a dependent country, being semi-occupied by US imperialism.'

That was said about twenty years ago, and the correctness of the basic stand of the JCP Programme has stood the test of events and practice in this period. One fact that testifies to the statement's correctness is that the LDP is still playing the role of political agent of

US imperialism in ruling Japan, and the agent of Japanese monopoly capital, and is more truly a faithful subordinate of the United States than any Western European conservative party. In dealing with the problems of Iran and Afghanistan, the former Ohira government used the slogan 'coexistence and sharing hardships', and, as you well know, gave full and active cooperation to the Carter administration in its dangerous policy and actions.

Secondly, I must point out that the character of the LDP stands out as one of reactionary backwardness. In West Germany, for example, Nazi war criminals are still being prosecuted even now; but in Japan, war criminals have been publicly restored to office and are taking part in political life. The first LDP secretary-general, Nobusuke Kishi, was imprisoned as a Class-A war criminal, but under the patronage of the United States he was made Prime Minister. It was he who, as Prime Minister, put through the mal-revision of the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1960. Now the Suzuki government is organising various campaigns in praise of pre-war Japanese militarism. We call the politics of the Liberal Democratic Party 'the politics of three-evils', plutocrats, traitors and war criminals.

Thirdly, I have to mention the characteristic Japanese form of organisation. The LDP lacks the unity that is essential for a modern political party; it is actually a federation of factional groups.

There are five factions in the LDP, each led by a former Prime Minister or a would-be Prime Minister. The shuffling of political power is done in accordance with changes in the competitive groupings of factions, and their management. True, the strong tendency is for these factions to be grouped according to personal connections, rather than by policies, but their policies come into the categories of hardliners and softliners, hawks and doves, as well as other differences based on different emphases. This kind of loose organisation, which is politically outmoded, is useful not only for attracting monopoly capital, but also for conservative sectors in rural areas, small and medium-sized producers and traders, and working citizens in urban areas. It also makes it possible for the Party to temporarily and partially allay the people's dissatisfactions by shuffling political power.

But faced with the deepening crisis and the expanding contradictions, the LDP is in historical decline. Popular support for the LDP was nearly 60% at the time of its inauguration, but has now dropped to some 40%, and in major cities even as low as 20-30%. While there has been a recovery of popular support in the Diet elections, this should be regarded as a temporary phenomenon.

If in the present crisis situation the LDP wants to implement political tasks called for by Japanese and US ruling circles, it will need to reorganise and reinforce the present staggering LDP rule. To do this, the plan is now to establish a smaller-constituency system for the House of Representatives, by which they hope to be able to get 80% of the lower house seats with only 40% of the votes, and they are manoeuvring to win the anti-communist opposition parties over to their side. But if they force this, it could possibly arouse the people's anger at the fascist development of politics, so contradictions surrounding the LDP can be said to be deepening in many ways.

Could you give a brief account of the Democratic Socialist Party and the Komei Party? Also, could you explain the JCP's attitude towards the mass of Buddhist followers?

As flagbearers of the political moves of the anti-communist middle-of-the-roaders, these two parties are mutually competing to aid the reactionary moves in Japanese politics.

For several years after the War, the Socialist Party was led by the right wing faction, but later, control was taken over by the leftist Socialists. Then the right wingers broke away and formed a rightist

social-democrat party called the Democratic Socialist Party. It now has 33 seats in the lower house and 12 in the upper house, and a membership of 48,000, according to their official statement.

The DSP's organisational base is the Japanese Confederation of Labour, a trade union organisation affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU); but stated precisely, it is more and more blatantly revealing its character as a spokesman for big corporations, the big private corporations that control the company trade unions. Moreover, it is moving conspicuously closer to the LDP, to business circles and rightist religious organisations, and giving full support to the fascistic military regimes of South Korea and Chile. These moves show that the DSP is increasing its rightist and reactionary character, which takes the party out of the category of social-democrat. Its anti-communism and promotion of the rearmament of Japan marks it as far more rightist than the average LDP member.

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As envisaged by the DSP, the plan for a future government has been to form a coalition government in alliance with the Komei Party and the LDP, as the latter loses its parliamentary majority. But this turned out to be a bankrupt dream in the recent elections, and they are now in the doldrums.

The Komei Party is a religious party founded in the 1960s as the political wing of the religious organisation called Soka Gakkai. It has made progress by taking up the malcontents among unorganised workers, small and medium producers and traders, and conservative sectors in cities. It has 34 seats in the House of Representatives and 26 in the House of Councillors. The Komei Party has a membership of 140,000, but its organisational base, Soka Gakkai, is said to have a membership of 2-3 million.

At the time of its upswing, the Komei Party used the pretext of being anti-LDP and pro-progressive in its policies, but in the latter half of the 1970s it shifted its position to pro-LDP and conservative policies, coming closer to the Liberal Democratic Party. In its advocacy of anti-communism it competes with the DSP. In January this year it succeeded in getting the Socialist Party to come into the plan for an anti-communist coalition government.

But the declining trend of the Komei Party is now evident, its organisational expansion having been stopped by a sharpening internal conflict in Soka Gakkai, the only support-base the Komei Party has.

Now, let me say something about Soka Gakkai. There was a time when Daisaku Ikeda, the president, for various considerations, was groping for a way to abandon the anti-communist position, and in late 1974 entered into an agreement with the Japanese Communist Party. I represented the JCP in signing the agreement. But the very next year this became a dead letter as a result of a fierce rollback by Komei Party leaders and reactionary ruling circles. The consistent position of the JCP has been that it will take joint actions with religious people on practical problems, regardless of whether they are Buddhists or Christians. The JCP-Soka Gakkai Agreement pledged joint efforts for the welfare of the masses, for world peace and anti-fascism; it was also an expression of the JCP attitude, that it 'will unconditionally defend the freedom of religious persuasion, including freedom to engage in missionary activities.'

Based on this experience, at the 7th plenum of the Central Committee, in December 1975, the Japanese Communist Party

adopted a 'Thesis on Religion'. This was also based on a summation of the history of the theories of scientific socialism, including those of Marx and Lenin, and aimed at establishing dialogue, mutual understanding, cooperation and joint action with the broadest range of religious people. This is still basically the orientation of the JCP.

The Socialist Party has considerable electoral support, despite its recent setback. How would you assess the Socialist Party? What are its relations with the Communist Party? Is there a 'left tendency within the Socialist Party on both policy and the question of relations with the Communist Party?

The Socialist Party of Japan remains numerically the No 1 opposition party, with parliamentary strength of 107 in the lower house and 47 in the upper house, won in the recent double-election. It has a vote-getting strength of more than 10 million but a membership of only 50,000 according to its official announcement, more or less only 10% of the JCP membership. Their organ paper is published not daily but bi-weekly. Why is it possible for the Socialist Party with only 40-50,000 members to get more than ten million votes? Its secret is this: the Socialist Party forms a political bloc with the General Council of Trade Unions (Sohyo) one of the national trade union centres, with a membership of 4.5 million; it makes it obligatory for union members to support the Socialist Party, under a decision made by the union leadership, and forces the unionists to contribute to campaign funds for the Socialists; which is an outrageous trampling on the right of union members to make a free choice of which political party to support; it violates proper relations between political parties and trade unions. Similar relations exist between the Democratic Socialist Party and the Japanese Confederation of Labour (Domei).

Like European parties of social-democrats, the Socialist Party of Japan has two faces; one looks toward the Japanese Communist Party, and the other backs the policy of anti-communist splittism. We have criticised the latter by presenting facts, and have constantly placed importance on united action with the Socialist Party, with a view to their development, and have called for formation of a broad united front which includes the Socialist and Communist Parties. This effort has achieved some success in establishing progressive governments at local levels and promoting unity in the mass movement. Three agreements have been made by the chairmen of the two parties on formation of a united front.

But after Ichio Asukata became chairman, the Socialist Party began swinging to the right, under pressure from Sohyo. And in January this year, it went so far as to make an agreement with the Komei Party on a plan for a coalition government that excludes the Communist Party, and approving for now the Japan-US Security Treaty and the Self-Defence Forces [the Japanese armed forces, *ed.*]. This move was endorsed by the Socialist Party congress. So, for the first time in twenty years, the Socialist Party made a turn to the right by following the line of anti-communist splittism. The party is moving further ahead with this orientation since the recent Diet elections.

This is not a mere plan for an anti-communist government drawn up by the Socialist, Komei and Democratic Socialist Parties; it is directed toward the formation of an alliance with the conservative forces, a fact which has been openly admitted by a Socialist leader. This shows the worsening of relations between the Communist and Socialist Parties. Of course we have severely criticised this, and our position is to do our utmost to promote joint actions both in the Diet and in the mass movement.

Dissatisfaction with and criticism of the Socialist leadership for taking the right-leaning line is spreading considerably amongst the Socialist Party rank-and-file, as well as among activists in the labour movement. Vacillations and confusion are also spreading among

them, but no concrete action has yet been taken to resolve the crisis.

Formerly, there was a left group within the Socialist Party, which sought to establish a united front with the Communist Party. But, when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and then the Communist Party of China, intervened in the Japanese Communist Party, some of the left groups in the Socialist Party tailed along with the CPSU, and others with the CPC, both attacking the JCP. Most of them still persist in their anti-communist attitude. And now there are no left groups forming a current in the Socialist Party. The intervention by foreign parties in the Japanese revolutionary and the mass movement has had most serious negative effects, extending even to relations between the Communist and Socialist Parties.

The historic decline of the Liberal Democrats obviously raises the broad issue of alternative government solutions. What is the JCP's conception of this? What does it see as the next stage in terms of a progressive governmental realignment? Specifically, why does the JCP reject the idea of a Communist-Socialist government?

At the 11th Party Congress, in 1970, the JCP called for the establishment of a democratic coalition government in the 1970s to replace the Liberal-Democratic Party government. In the following year, we formulated 'Three Objectives of Progress' as unanimous policy goals of such a government. The 'Three Objectives' are:

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1 To break free from the Japan-US military alliance, and establish Japan's neutrality,

2 To abolish politics serving the interests of big capital, and establish politics protecting the lives and livelihood of the people,

3 To oppose the total revival and strengthening of militarism and strive for democratic leadership of the Diet and the establishment of democracy.

These three objectives, to abolish politics of subordination to the United States and in the service of big capital in present day Japan, and to build a Japan of peace, neutrality, democracy and a better quality of life, represent the main factors in the desires of most working people. When, in 1973, the Komei Party shifted its position and called for abrogation of the Japan-US Security Treaty, there was temporarily an objective accord at that time in the 1970s between the Communist, Socialist and Komeito Parties on these goals.

At the 12th Party Congress in 1973, we adopted and published a proposal on the programme for a democratic coalition government, which set out specific policies for each field based on the Three Objectives. This initiative had enormous political repercussions.

At the time of the upsurge in the first half of the 1970s, there was a spread of regional joint struggles centring around the Communist and Socialist Parties, which won victory after victory in the election of prefectural governors and mayors. As a result, more than 200 progressive local administrations were set up, including Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Okinawa, covering areas where 40% of the Japanese people live. If at that time the Socialist Party and Sohyo had responded to our call and decided to form a nationwide progressive united front, the subsequent Japanese political situation would have been vastly different from what it is today.

But the 1970s passed without a united front being formed. The desperate counter-offensive of the forces of reaction have met with some success, overthrowing the progressive local governments in

Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and so on. The Komei Party changed its position to give approval to the Japan-US Security Treaty, which was followed by the Socialist Party. By winning the election, the LDP has overcome a crisis. All this has led to changes in the political situation relating to the progressive transformation of politics, and to the next stage of development.

At the 15th Party Congress in February this year, the JCP made a full analysis of the situation and adopted new tasks for the formation of a united front, which confirmed the following points: progressive change in national politics is now an increasingly urgent people's task; but for this goal to be reached in the serious situation of the Socialist Party's degeneration, the JCP and politically conscious democratic forces must become stronger and bigger, and take the initiative to arouse the movement for a progressive change. To implement this policy, the whole Party is engaged in a nationwide movement to establish a progressive united front, rallying broad sections of the progressive forces.

The JCP does not call the progressive government for which we are working a 'communist-socialist government', because we do not consider an alignment of political forces should be the starting point; it should start from policy accords to be reached by unconditionally rallying all those forces that support the Three Objectives of Progress. This means that 'socialist-communist government' would be an incorrect and inappropriate expression, because there are forces other than the Communist and Socialist Parties which support these goals; and the Socialist Party has deviated from support of these goals.

We hope that the Socialist Party will return to the progressive course, but it will hardly be possible for the Socialist Party as a whole to do so at the present time. In addition, in the united front there will be not only political parties, but also trade unions, democratic organisations and non-partisan individuals. In our experience, those who have achieved appreciable successes as heads of progressive administrations, elected as united front candidates, are all progressive people. Compared with West European countries, Japan has a shorter history of modern political parties, so here the role of non-partisan progressive currents and progressive intellectuals is very important in both the mass movement and the movement for political unity.

The JCP has grown quite remarkably—from about 40,000 members in 1960 to well over 400,000 today. How do you account for this transformation?

Fundamentally, the growth of the JCP reflects the growth and development of demands and energies aroused by the present political, economic and social circumstances of the Japanese working people, centring around the working class, in the struggle for independence, peace, democracy and a better life, as we have described it in this interview.

After World War II, our Party went through a period of complicated zigzags until it was able to express the democratic energies of the people more or less correctly, and play a leading role as vanguard party of the working class in their struggles, as a genuine party of our nation and people. As your question says, it was around 1960 that the postwar history of the Party went through an important development, by achieving political and organisational guarantees that were to make our subsequent growth possible.

The first guarantee was the independent and autonomous position adopted, refusing to blindly follow any party, determined to think with our own brains and carry on our work based on our own thinking, as far as the Japanese revolutionary movement is concerned. Although it seems natural now, some bitter experiences were endured before we could arrive at this position; we experienced setbacks in the movement because of foreign interference.

Without going into details, it should be noted that in 1950-51 the JCP suffered from interference by the Cominform, added to the repressions of the US occupation forces. The Party committed the big mistake of allowing itself to be split by an intermixing of submission and repulsion in the face of interference; one of the groups that split adopted a policy of ultra-left adventurism, imposed by Stalin and supported by Mao Zedong. The influence of the Party quickly fell off. The Party membership was reduced to only a small fraction of its previous strength. The number of the JCP members of the House of Representatives fell from 35 in 1949 to zero in 1952. Then, after party unity was restored, we began to explore the autonomous position, and adopted a new Party Programme independently at the 8th Congress in 1961.

During the 1960s, the Party was subjected to unjustifiable interference and attacks from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and subsequently from the Communist Party of China. Except for a very small number of anti-Party elements, the whole Party then stood united, and resolutely repulsed such interference. These struggles made it clear to the Japanese working people that we were a Party that belonged to the whole Japanese nation. If we had failed to establish an independent and autonomous position, the subsequent growth of our Party would have been impossible.

Second, this is inseparably linked with the establishment of a correct strategic and political line, based on a scientific analysis we made of the Japanese situation, defined in the new Party Programme.

At the same time, we placed a great deal of importance on the question of policies in various fields, as a link between the strategic Party line and the demands of the masses.

Using somewhat of a caricature to describe it, there was a tendency in the past to do nothing but talk about demands of the masses as

being realisable only through a revolution. We overcame this tendency, and set about publicising concrete policies by which to meet their demands, showing how their vital demands can be met one by one as specific reforms in the course of the struggle, and that only a revolution can achieve the fulfilment of all their demands.

I think that this political line has been very important in enabling our Party to avoid major mistakes and strengthen our links with the masses.

Third, on the organisational line of the Party.

For some time after the War, there was an unsound tendency in our Party to depend on 'patriarchal personal leadership'. When the unity of the Party was restored, we established an organisational line of building a mass vanguard party organised on strict democratic centralism, with special emphasis on linking collective leadership with individual responsibility.

What was of special importance in the development of the Party was the emphasis we placed on 'activities on two legs', meaning simultaneous mass struggle and party building, never ceasing the campaign to expand Party membership and the readership of *Akahata*, our daily paper. By reason of the constant persevering efforts of all Party members, and the results of special 'Month' campaigns for that purpose, we were able to increase our membership to 440,000, and the readership of *Akahata* to more than 3 million and several hundred thousands; that is, of both daily and Sunday editions. This forms the base for our healthy Party finances and our victories in elections. There are now about 3,600 JCP members in local assemblies, and 41 members in the two Houses of the Diet.

Of course, all these results are still only initial ones. We have much backwardness, many weaknesses and defects in the labour movement and other fields of activities. By overcoming these negative aspects and mobilising the efforts of the whole Party, we are determined by the strength of all to carry out the tasks facing us in the 1980s.

What significance did the 1961 Congress have for this process of transformation?

The main significance of the Congress lay in having unanimously adopted a new Party Programme after five years of democratic discussions by the whole Party, to which must be added the experiences in mass struggles, especially the struggle against the Japan-US Security Treaty, enabling the Party to establish a stable scientific line by its own strength.

The postwar occupation of Japan, the conclusion of the Peace Treaty and Japan-US Security Treaty in 1951 etc, were all new complicating factors. In particular, the question of how to view US imperialism and its policy toward Japan was a serious problem for the Party, which had been re-established after the War.

The Programme analysed the Japanese position after the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which brought Japan under the rule of 'two enemies'; US imperialism and its subordinate ally, Japanese monopoly capital. It became clear that the immediate strategic task was a new democratic revolution for genuine national independence and complete democratic transformation, by overthrowing the rule of the 'two enemies'. It gave us a clear strategic perspective that our way to socialism will be by way of a democratic revolution.

This strategic outlook differs from the view of the Socialist Party, which aims directly at a socialist revolution, thus underestimating the significance of Japan's subordination to the United States. Nor is ours a one-sided approach such as claims there can be no revolution in a monopoly capitalist country other than a socialist one. Our outlook comes from the analysis that, under the circumstances of our times, a democratic revolution that overthrows the rule of monopoly capital is possible.



the Party was subjected to unjustifiable interference and attacks from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and subsequently from the Communist Party of China

Many of the strategic positions of the JCP closely parallel those of Western European Communist Parties, such as the Italian, French, Spanish and British. To what extent would the JCP describe itself as Eurocommunist?

If one could describe Eurocommunism as the exploration of an independent line, and the perspective of socialism that fully guarantees democracy, then the JCP has points in common with the Parties you mentioned.

Giving concrete form to the line of our Party Programme, the 11th Party Congress in 1970, for example, decided on a position that aims at establishing an independent and democratic Japan, and on to a socialist Japan, both forms to guarantee the plurality of political parties, allowing the possibility of changes of government, and freedom of speech, expression, press, meetings and association. Our Congress Resolution said: 'Freedom of activity will be guaranteed to all the political parties, including those that take a critical attitude toward the government, so long as they do not take action to destroy the democratic system of the people by violence'.

The 13th Extraordinary Congress in 1977 adopted a 'Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy' which even more clearly defined the historic and theoretical relations between modern democracy and socialist democracy, and portrayed the image of a socialist Japan of the future. The Manifesto also included new developments, such as the 'principle of separation of the three powers' (legislative, administrative and judicial — *tr*) to be carried over in a more developed form, and with no specific world outlook to be declared as an 'authorised philosophy'.

General Secretary Carrillo of the Communist Party of Spain was pleased to see that West European Parties and the Japanese Party have important points in common in their explorations and described this as 'Euro-Nippo-communism'. We have sometimes used this formulation.

The Resolution of the 14th Party Congress in 1977 said: 'The term "Eurocommunism" is far from accurate to describe the phenomenon, because of its geographical connotation, but the line pursued by Communist Parties in Japan and in Europe is doubtless very significant as a contemporary development in both the theory and practice of scientific socialism in respect of the diverse paths leading to socialism. . .

'The bilateral joint statements issued respectively by our Party with the Communist Parties of France, Italy, Spain and Great Britain, confirmed our views, held in common, that in future socialist society, the possibility of democratic alternation between majorities and minorities through elections, the guarantee of freedoms and human rights, and the rejection of any "authorised philosophy" must be fully upheld. We do not try to impose such a course upon parties working under different historic conditions from ours; but, obviously, those points confirmed by the parties of Japan and West European countries do represent a lawful course of development in the people's liberation movement, and social progress in these developed capitalist countries.'


How important have the debates in West European Communist movements been for the JCP? Has the widespread interest in Gramsci since the early sixties also been true for the JCP?

It may be said that the specific political structure of Japan, as analysed in the JCP Programme, has a Western European character in being a highly developed capitalist society, but is also of an Asian character, with tasks for national liberation due to its subordination to US imperialism.

In fact, at the 81-Party meeting in Moscow, 1960, our Party delegation posed a question in general terms about a democratic revolution in highly developed capitalist countries that are in subordination to US imperialism. Some Party representatives from Western European capitalist countries who stood for a straight-out socialist revolution, wanted to add a geographical qualification of 'non-European'. Our delegation did not insist on our formulation. As a result, the Moscow Statement spoke of a 'revolution aimed at achieving genuine national independence and democracy', but limited this to 'some non-European developed capitalist countries which are under the political, economic and military domination of US imperialism'.

The JCP is deeply interested in the lines and policies and the debates going on among Western European Parties. We publish a fortnightly international review, *World Political Affairs — comments and documents*, in which as many useful materials as possible are published.

Among Japanese intellectuals, however, there is still a tendency since the Meiji Era to lack a spirit of independence and merely copy European thought and culture. Within some parts of the Left, we often see an uncritical following of the theories and lines to their own advantage in a distorted way. Some right wing distortions are also seen in some quarters in the use of Gramsci, among others. For our Party, Gramsci's works are an object of independent and critical assimilation, as is the case with other Parties and revolutionaries. •



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