

Fukushima, 6 Months After: September 19 “Goodbye Nuclear Power Plant” Rally in Tokyo

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Six months have passed since the Northeastern-Japan earthquake/tsunami and the Fukushima Nuke disaster.

Faced with the deadly serious situation of the radiocative contamination and its possible effects on their livelihood and future life, people are waging various kinds of activities to decommission all the nuclear power plants. Antinuke campaigns have been gaining momentum in the whole country. People of younger generation, who have not been involved in political or social movements until recently, are participating demonstrations and raising their voices against nuclear power plants. On June 11, three months after the earthquake, roughly 70,000 people participated in the antinuke rallies and street demonstrations in more than 140 places nationwide, including 20,000 people in Tokyo.

From September 11 to September 19, six months after the earthquake, a series of actions are planned all over the country as “Denuclearization Action Week”. The culmination of this campaign is the September-19 50,000-participants rally of “Goodbye Nuclear Power Plant”. Kenzaburo Oe, a prominent Nobel-Prize-winner novelist, is one of the promoters of this rally. Zenroren (National Confederation of Trade Unions), which is closely linked with the Communist Party, is to join the rally in line with trade unions under the influence of the Social Democratic Party as well as Zenrokyo (National Trade Union Council) which includes independent leftist unions. Various civic movements and NGOs as well as many leftist groups will also join the September-19 rally. Recent polls show that more than 70% of the Japanese people are for stopping or reducing nuclear power plants and shifting to renewable energies. The participation of the Communist Party seems to reflect the broader popular pressure. The party recently modified its nuclear policy and began to demand the immediate withdrawal from nuclear power.

The ruling Democratic Party of Japan has its political credibility severely damaged by betraying its promise to oppose the building of a new U.S. base in Okinawa, failing to effectively respond to the financial crisis, demonstrating its inability to provide effective supports for sufferers of the earthquake/tsunami, which left more than 20,000 people dead or missing, and causing distrust and confusion due its lack of effective responses to the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Thus, its two prime ministers were forced to resign within only two years after coming to power,

Yoshihiko Noda, who was appointed as a new Prime Minister on September 2, insists on early resumption of the operation of the nuclear power plants which are now under periodic inspection and promotion of the export of nuclear power plants, the neo-liberal strategy of substantial tax increase and reduction of social spending on the pretext of “reconstruction” and overcoming of the fiscal crisis, as well as the strengthening of US-Japan “security” alliance to counter “China’s military expansion strategy”. This set of policies is strongly supported by the Japan Business Federation and big businesses.

The September-19 rally will be focused on forcing the government to abandon the plans for construction of new nuclear powers and renounce the resumption of the operation of the nuclear power plants which are now under periodic inspection, thus making it possible to stop all nuclear power plants promptly. Success of the “Denuclearization Action Week” would have a tremendous implication for the workers’ and citizens’ movements which are eager to resist the big businesses’ policies to cling to the nuclear power generation and prop the nuclear industry as a strategic export sector for a renewed economic growth.

Kenji Kunitomi

Update

More than 60,000 people shouting “no nukes”, joined a rally and demonstration in Tokyo on September 19.

Tens of thousands of trade unionists, citizens, and several hundreds of evacuees from Fukushima participated in the event.

The initiative of “good bye nuclear plant” rally was took by pro-SDP trade union leadership. But nearly 5,000 activists of the JCP-led trade union federation “Zenrohren” and several far left groups also joined the successful rally and demonstration.

We have to put strong pressure on the DPJ government to renounce all the nuclear plant projects through more massive mobilizations.

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