

How the Japanese Communist Party intends to change Japan

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What is happening in Japan, the second largest economy in the world, in its economy and in its politics? If there's a Communist Party in Japan, what sort of Communist Party is it? How has it been performing? With what kind of program?

I would like to answer these questions and, by doing so, to introduce the other side of Japan which has been reported quite rarely by commercial mass media.

The present situation of Japan is based on an abnormal nation building after the WWII, which is a system of being subservient to the US politically, economically and militarily and giving the highest priority to interests of Japan's big business. Now, it is ending in fundamental failure. Last year alone, the Japanese Government imposed a new additional 9 trillion yen (70 billion US dollar) burden to the Japanese people by introducing consumption tax rate increase, and an adverse revision of the pension system and medical assurance system.

These politics of the Liberal Democratic Party, the ruling party, caused Japanese people greater distress than ever. Even many conservative economists agreed that this new 9 trillion-yen burden froze up personal spending and prolonged present recession. Because of this situation, support for the JCP, which has been criticising LDP politics most severely and protecting the people's life and rights, is now spreading even to the traditional base of support of conservatives.

Recent advances by JCP

This situation developed the JCP's successive advances in recent national and local elections. For example, in the 1996 House of Representatives' general election, the JCP won 7.26 million votes, 13.08% of the total vote, equivalent to 40% of votes cast for the ruling party, the LDP, and increased its seats from 15 to 26.

In the July 1997 Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election, the figure is 21.3% of the total votes and equivalent to 70% of votes of the LDP. We doubled the number of our seats, to 26, and we are the second biggest party in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly now.

In local elections, the JCP has surpassed the LDP and became the top party with the highest number

of local assembly members, which is now 4,073 (at the time of Is' April 1998) and has steadily increased our seats. Last month, the seventh communist mayor in Japan was elected.

The number of local governments where the JCP is the ruling party reached 124.

With these national and local assembly members and mayors at the head of the line, 370 thousand members of the JCP, cooperating with 2.3 million readers of *AKAHATA*, the JCP's official paper, are carrying out activities to protect the people's everyday life all over Japan.

When we made advances in 1996 general election, various foreign mass media asked, *Why the Communist Party is so active in a country like Japan, even in the days after the collapse of communism?'* Their conclusions after covering the JCP and the Japan's politics were as follows: To offer a viable alternative to capitalism, the JCP is one of the best placed communist parties in the world, having been able to observe first hand the success and failures of Japanese-style capitalism over the past 50 years." (Agence France Press)

Founded in 1922, it is the country's oldest, with a mixed but honourable history. It was illegal for the first 33 years of its existence, and many of the JCP's leaders were persecuted and imprisoned for their opposition to militarism. The present generation was left remarkably unembarrassed by the collapse of global communism in 1989, having long before distanced itself from the Chinese and Soviet parties.' (The Independent, UK) Then, how is the JCP responding to the expectations of the Japanese people who wishes to change the politics of the LDP? Let me introduce the JCP's line and objectives to you. I think Mr. Okada of Japan Press Service will deliver a more detailed and concrete picture of Japan's actual state and progressive movements later. *Two fundamental contradictions* As I pointed out already, the contradictions facing Japan now are caused by the politics of giving the highest priority to the interests of big business and the US. First, there is the abnormality of excessively serving big business compared with other developed capitalist countries. If you look at Japans' average working hours, it appears quite clear. Japanese workers in 1995 worked 400 hours longer (means 27% more) than German workers and 300 hours more than French. An internationally well-known Japanese word *KAROSHI*'' , which means death from overwork under the system of long and intense labour, symbolises the real situation in Japan.

These abnormalities of Japan's way of accumulation of capital was criticised even by the chairman of SONY, a leading Japanese multinational. A few years ago, the chairman, Mr. Akio Morita, contributed an article to a Japanese magazine. In that article, he referred to the following points: long working hours; the share of profits between capital and labor; low wages; dividends to stockholders; relationship with subcontractors; position towards the environment; position on local economy. If Japan continues international competition based on such positions, it will be difficult to keep up with other countries, he wrote.

The basic cause of Japan's prolonged economic crisis is the abnormality that while a small number of big business accumulate profits at the highest level of the world, the standard of living of the Japanese people is put the lowest level among developed countries.

The second abnormality is that more than 50 years' subservience to the US under the Japan-US military alliance. The core of the Japan-US Security Treaty, which is the foundation of this situation, is to provide US military bases for carrying out raid on the area of East Asia and Pacific. There are no US forces stationed in Japan which is assigned to defend Japan by the Pentagon.

The aircraft-carrier Independence, which is the only US Navy carrier having a home port abroad (Yokosuka, Japan) and Marine Corps stationed in Okinawa (Japan's southern-most islands) are expeditionary forces with the operational area from east coast of Africa through the Indian Ocean, to the Pacific. The US Army special operation units and the Marines stationed in Okinawa are now training the Indonesian special operation forces which suppress Indonesian people who want democracy in their country. The Japanese Government maintains US military bases of these forces with Japan's money.

The Japanese and the US governments are now implementing the new Guidelines'' which is to expand the Japan-US Security Treaty area to all the area of Asia and Pacific and even to worldwide, and to mobilise Japanese military and economic forces to military interventions initiated by the US in the world. Japan's progressive, democratic and peace movements promote activities for seceding from these position and changing Japan to a country contributing to peace in Asia and the world. We are convinced that this position and movements of Japan has broad ties of solidarity with the people in their efforts for peace in Asia and the world. {{{What is the JCP aiming for?}}} We are working hard to establish a democratic government aiming to resolve these two fundamental problems, within the framework of capitalism, in early next century. This democratic coalition government will be established in cooperation with everyone who supports three objectives: • A Japan in which its extraordinary world position of capitalism without rules'' is remedied, and big business is made to fulfil its social responsibility, and in the course of economic development, priority is given to the people's living conditions.

- An independent, non-nuclear, non-aligned and neutral Japan which breaks with the Japan-US Security Treaty, and which contributes to world peace by developing genuine relations of friendship with the US and the Asian countries.
- A Japan which checks any moves to adversely revise the Constitution and to revive complete militarism; a Japan in which democracy will flourish in all aspects of life, and the people are respected simply as human beings.

We do not aim to establish one-party government. This is our consistent position written in the Party Program. But there is no need for us to assume that the coalition partner should be social democratic parties. We should not be dogmatic and should not regard past experiences as forever relevant.

At least in Japan, in 50 post-war years the social democratic parties have failed to take root among the people as a political trend. The reasons for this failure are: First, they unjustifiably monopolised the control of trade union organisations and failed to build their own organisation; second, when there was outside interference by the former Soviet Union and other countries in Japan's progressive movements, they always supported such interference and even performed the role of cheer leader; third, tempted by a call to join the government'', they abandoned in an unprincipled way their public pledges and policies. In 1980, when the Socialist Party had degenerated to the right completely, we called for cooperation between the JCP and progressive non-party people, not to start from the argument for a united front based on political parties combining, but for progressive political goals. The centre of our efforts has been a movement of the National Forum for Peace, Democracy and Progressive Unity. This forum is working for concerted action based on the three objectives for progress, but at the same time working to influence all organisations and

individuals that want to cooperate on an agreed point of opposition to bad government, even though agreement may not be possible on all three goals. This forum has been making remarkable advances. {{{What sort of party is the JCP}}} I would like to emphasise the point that the JCP is a party based on the position that revolution can be achieved based on a consensus of a majority of the people. All necessary reforms and changes in Japanese society can be achieved by the support and consensus of a majority of the people. The spirit of this is reflected in the phrase "the people are sovereign", and represents the principled position of the JCP's politics. This spirit was carried out even under the brutal suppression by the absolute Tenno (Emperor) system in prewar days.

The JCP members' activities in those days, even with making a sacrifice of their own lives, against the invasion of Asia by the Japanese imperialism, for protecting the rights of the people and realising democratic politics in Japan shine as a ray of light in the Japan's prewar history and has been carried on today.

The JCP specified this spirit in its **Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy** which was published in 1976. This Manifesto gives a broad outline of the JCP's perspective for social progress in Japan: Democratic coalition government, democratic revolution and socialist revolution. It also clearly specifies the connection between each of these stages of social progress and the people's will and says, **The route taken for social progress, as well as when and how far along this route we should move, are questions to be determined by the will of the people, the sovereign, and by the choice the people express in elections**. We are convinced that this current stage of social development, capitalism, will be overcome in time. In Japanese society and among the Japanese people, the situation is now maturing for tackling the task for democratic reform. In the process of achieving these tasks and through a consensus of a majority of people calling for new advances maturing, it will get onto history's agenda. Let me add one comment on so called former socialist countries. We think the Soviet Union, which finally collapsed, had been unable to reach not only the stage of socialism, but even the stage of transition to socialism; it was completely derailed from the path to socialism. If we have time let's talk this issue later.

The second point I would like to emphasise is that the JCP's traditional line of independence. Without following big powers blindly or imitating other countries' experiences unconditionally, we think by ourselves and find answers by analysing Japan's realities scientifically. We have established these lines, ways of activities and the foundation of finance through severe fight against interference by Soviet's great power chauvinism which was carried out even through its national power.

The JCP and Asia

In the last Party Congress which was held last September we adopted a policy to strengthen our relations in Asia and Pacific when the area is going to occupy more important, both politically and economically, position in the world. Let me add a few words about what sort of activities in the Area the JCP has in mind.

First, activities for "denuclearisation" and substantial arms reduction. There already is the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty by ASEAN countries. By clearly declaring at home and internationally that Japan is a non-nuclear country and expanding nuclear free zones to East Asia, we want to increase the non-nuclear trend in Asia. But at the same time, East Asia is the only

area where military spending is increasing. Japan's military budget is the fourth largest in the world now. We plan to take the lead in substantial reduction of military spending.

Second, the question of the movement of non-aligned countries. We are aiming to secede from the Japan-US military alliance and to stand on the position of non-aligned and neutral. We are proposing a policy to join the Conference of Heads of State and Government of non-aligned countries after we establish democratic coalition government.

In Asia, only Japan and two other countries are out of the non-aligned movement now. For Japan to participate would be a major contribution to the movement. Not allowing any sort of hegemonic policy, Japan would make efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Third, making clear at home and internationally the past mistakes of Japanese militarism. Successive LDP governments not only consistently avoided reflection on Japan's wars of aggression and its colonial rule, but even glorified them. It is natural that the unsettled questions of postwar reparations should be sincerely resolved.

Finally, we have a policy of democratising Japan's economic cooperation with Asian countries. The bias of Japan's economic policy toward Asian countries should be corrected and change it to one which is useful for people's life in those countries. We are proposing economic cooperation respecting the economic sovereignty of each country, based on real equality and mutual benefit.

I gave you a rather basic explanation for the JCP's assessment of the present situation in Japan and its perspectives in the future and activities. I welcome your questions. In conclusion, let me emphasise again our belief that to work hard for establishing a democratic government in Japan, which I just presented, and to achieve success in this task should be our way of showing solidarity with the Asian and Pacific people.