

Japan's Stalinists seek to head off anti-war movement ahead of election

Ben McGrath
21 October 2017

Heading into tomorrow's general election in Japan, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) has been striving to contain and divert popular opposition to the Abe government's drive to remilitarize the country. Thoroughly integrated into the political establishment in Tokyo, the JCP is calling for the removal of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in favor of another faction of the capitalist class.

The JCP is a Stalinist party that has long since abandoned any commitment to socialism. While posturing as pacifist to head off widespread anti-war sentiment and political alienation, it effectively has lined up behind Japan's ruling elite and Washington in their confrontation with North Korea and China.

In an interview with the *Japan Times* last Monday, JCP chairman Kazuo Shii backed the measures being taken to cripple the North Korean economy, while calling for dialogue between the United States and North Korea. "Economic sanctions against the [North Korean] regime are necessary, but they alone wouldn't resolve the problem," he said.

Earlier, Shii condemned North Korea in a September 3 statement following Pyongyang's sixth nuclear test, saying it posed "a grave threat to global and regional peace and stability" and a rejection of "the international community's efforts for resolution through dialogue."

In other words, the danger of war was not caused by Washington's aggression and imperialist designs in the region, above all directed against China, but by impoverished North Korea. Moreover, the futile appeal for dialogue flies in the face of repeated declarations by President Trump that talks are futile and there is "only one way" to deal with North Korea, that is militarily.

By supporting the sanctions against North Korea and adopting language similar to Washington's, the JCP is lining up, like the rest of the Japanese establishment,

with advanced US preparations for war, in which Japan is centrally involved.

The JCP is also covering up the broad push for remilitarization by Japanese imperialism, by blaming Abe alone. On September 29, the Stalinists wrote: "[The Abe government] is the first ever regime in the postwar era to have totally undermined the Constitution." The JCP pledged "to join hands with any party, lawmaker, or candidate who is sincerely, bravely loyal to their commitments to the alliance with citizens."

Despite condemning the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the JCP is leaving the door open for collaboration with it or other right-wing parties. If the primary goal is to remove Abe, as the JCP states, what prevents it from aligning with factions in the LDP that oppose him?

The fact that Japan's well-armed military, the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), even exists, let alone takes part in numerous operations abroad, is a flagrant breach of the constitution by all the ruling parties since it went into effect in 1947. In recent decades, the SDF has been dispatched overseas to aid US imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as joining so-called UN peacekeeping operations in other parts of the world.

It is not just the LDP that supports remilitarization. Many members of the Democratic Party (DP), which the JCP has supported for years, back the lifting of constitutional and legal restrictions on the Japanese military. That became evident when the DP split after announcing a merger in late September with the right-wing populist Party of Hope that backs constitutional change.

Those DP members who did not join the Party of Hope formed the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), with which the JCP then formed an

electoral alliance. The major difference between these two DP factions was on maintaining a pacifist fig leaf, by upholding Article 9 of the constitution that bars the maintenance of armed forces or the use of war as an instrument of foreign policy.

The DP's opposition to remilitarization has always been a fraud. Last year, for example, the Democrats called for the repeal of military legislation passed in 2015 that removed barriers to Japanese troops taking direct part in conflicts overseas in conjunction with allies, primarily the US. However, the Democrats offered nearly identical bills as replacements, merely adding UN oversight as a requirement for going to war.

The Democrats proved to be no alternative to the LDP and completely discredited themselves while in office from 2009-2012, unwilling to carry out any policies to halt the corporate offensive against the jobs and conditions of the working class. The fact that the JCP continued to sow illusions in the Democrats contributed to the growth of right-wing nationalist and populist parties.

If the JCP maintains the name "communist," it is only to maintain the pretense that it defends the interests of the working class. The party is Japan's oldest and was founded in 1922, following the 1917 Russian Revolution. While other parties have undergone name changes and regroupments amid shifts in political winds, the JCP claims falsely to have remained committed to its founding principles.

In reality, the only line it has followed consistently since the late 1920s is that of Stalinism, attempting to bind the Japanese working class to one or other faction of the bourgeoisie. Before World War II, it faced intense state repression, including mass arrests of its members under threat of execution. Many within the post-war JCP leadership had spent more than a decade in prison before being released following World War II.

The major bourgeois parties were all deeply compromised by their support for the militarist, war-time regime. The JCP gained support in the working class only to betray the mass movement that developed. The Stalinists praised the post-war US occupation forces for supposedly carrying through a bourgeois democratic revolution. The JCP shut down opposition to the US occupation, including a planned general strike in February 1947, thus playing a critical role in restabilizing Japanese capitalism.

With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the JCP altered its line to denounce the US, claiming that socialism could not be achieved while Japan remained an ally of Washington. This provided the rationale for continuing to subordinate the working class to sections of the Japanese capitalist class.

Over the years, the JCP increasingly sought to integrate itself into the political establishment. It declared at its Twelfth Party Congress in 1973 that it was committed to maintaining the parliamentary form of government—and thus capitalism and the capitalist state. The JCP said it would form a coalition with any party that supported the termination of the US-Japan security treaty.

Today, even that has been discarded. The JCP stated in October 2015 it would support the US alliance if it entered a coalition government with the Democrats, who backed the treaty. The JCP's demand to end the US-Japan alliance is now little more than a dead letter. The JCP's latest maneuver, backing the CDP, underscores the Stalinists' thoroughly pro-capitalist perspective.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact