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Commemorative speech on the 90th anniversary
of the founding of the JCP

Looking Back on the 90-Year History of the Japanese Communist Party

JCP Social Science Institute Director
Fuwa Tetsuzo
July 18, 2012

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Looking Back on the 90-Year History of JCP

Japanese Communist Party
Social Science Institute Director
Fuwa Tetsuzo
July 18, 2012

Good evening, everyone.

Thank you very much for coming to this gathering in the heat wave to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Communist Party. On this day, I am so delighted to have an opportunity to look back on the JCP history with you all.

Throughout its 90-year history, the JCP has persistently strived to protect people's interests, to promote peace and democracy, and to develop Japanese society, fighting bravely against its foes, no matter how formidable they were. We cannot help but remember the three main struggles of the party.

1. Fighting against the State under the Emperor System

What was the state under the emperor system?

Immediately after its foundation, the JCP had to confront the state under the emperor system. What was the Japanese state like at that time? It may be beyond imagination for those living today. It was a war state in which the military authorities could do anything in the name of "emperor's absolute power," which they claimed sprung from the Emperor's "mandate from heaven." The people were forced to unconditionally obey the authorities'

decisions or orders, and those who did not do so had to face the threat of harsh punishments including the death penalty.

JCP's basic policy and its theoretical proposition

Since its establishment in 1922, the JCP courageously made calls for a democratic revolution to change this state structure. This policy was summed up in the programmatic documents called the "1927 Theses" and the "1932 Theses." Both were decided at the Comintern, the international communist organization with the participation of its JCP representatives. Here, I would like to remind you that even before these documents came out, the then party's theorists had reached basically the same conclusion through their independent analyses of Japanese society. As I mentioned in my recent interview with AKAHATA, at the center of those efforts was a young theorist, Noro Eitaro, who strived to rebuild the party center that was destroyed by a wave of severe repression in 1930s and was killed by the state just 3 months after his arrest at the age of 33.

Three national experiences

Our opposition to the emperor state led us to be labeled a group of traitors, a target of every sort of oppression and persecution. Many people who were instrumental in establishing our party were killed, such as Watanabe Masanosuke, Ueda Shigeki, Iwata Yoshimichi, Kobayashi Takiji, Kokuryo Goichiro, and Ichikawa Shoichi. Other party leaders and activists were also arrested and imprisoned for a long time. For example, former JCP chairperson Miyamoto Kenji spent more than 10 years in a prison during the war.

However, the outcome of Japan's 15-year war, the war of aggression that ravaged Asian countries, clearly showed that these JCP struggles against the emperor state were important and just. To understand this, we would like you to remember three aspects of our national experience in the war.

First, we look at the fate of Japanese soldiers and sailors mobilized for this war. Nearly two and a half million died on battlefields across the Asia-Pacific region. However, most of them were not killed in action. In fact, more than half of the Japanese war-dead starved to death. It was the consequence of the government sending soldiers en masse to the frontlines without securing lines of food supply. There is no precedent in world history of a government holding its soldiers' lives in such cruel disregard.

The second is a series of developments in 1945, the final year of the war. By then, the defeat in the battle of Philippines made it clear to everyone that Japan's war efforts were in dire straits. Nevertheless, the government refused peace talks for fear that the imperial regime might be destroyed. If the government had gone ahead with peace talks at that time, the air raids on Japan's mainland would never have taken place, nor would the Battle of Okinawa from March to June, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the tragedies in Manchuria and Karafuto (Sakhalin) created by the Soviet Union's entry into war with Japan in August have happened. Frantically crying out for "decisive battles on the mainland" and "honorable deaths for all Japanese people" without having the slightest prospect or plan of rolling back the situation, the leadership of the imperial regime gave top priority to retaining national polity at the expense of the people's lives. Eventually, this brought about the series of nation-wide tragic events in 1945 I mentioned.

Thirdly, what did the world require of Japan at the time of its surrender? The Allies' Potsdam Declaration accepted by Japan demanded not the destruction or extermination of Japan but a change of the war state, turning a despotic and militaristic Japan into a democratic and pacifist one. That course was generally in accord with what the JCP had been striving to realize through a democratic revolution. It also proved that the party's struggle was in step with the world current toward peace and social progress.