

Gus
x: IC, B/c

July 6, 1979

Memo from: Dan

To: Gus

Re: The JRCL's defense work and financial situation

Attached is the translation of an article from the Japanese comrades' paper. It summarizes the present state of their defense campaign for the comrades arrested at Narita Airport, and describes the impact of the arrests and the trials (which are still going on) on their finances. It also reflects where they stand in the process of drawing a balance sheet of the Narita campaign.

This is a very unusual article for them--unusual both in its tone and its content. The JRCL has had summer and winter fund drives in the past, although with lower norms for comrades' contributions. As far as I know, though, this is the first time they have ever included any specific information about their finances in a public fund appeal. (Usually they print fund appeals without even mentioning the total amount they aim to raise. There are no progress reports, and at the end of a fund drive they announce a successful collection, but give no figures. This is in keeping with the semi-clandestine norms of functioning of the Japanese New Left.)

The fact that they decided to print an appeal of this sort underscores the seriousness of their predicament. (Pierre Rousset told me that they are in danger of losing their print shop unless the party can cover some very big debts.)

I realize that some of the formulations in this article sound strange. Ordinarily, in translating Japanese, you just leave out all the honorific expressions ("our humble party begs our honorable readers to...." etc.), since they don't have equivalents in everyday English usage. Parts of this article, though, are written in what is strikingly "humble" language even by Japanese standards. In part this reflects New Left conceptions about what it is "shameful" to reveal in your public press, and in part it serves to emphasize to readers the seriousness of their situation and hence the urgency of their appeal for funds.

I'm sorry I couldn't get this to you earlier.

[translated from Sekai Kakumei No. 579, June 11, 1979]

The Question of Finances is an Eminently Political Question

A FRANK DESCRIPTION OF OUR PARTY'S PREDICAMENT,
AND AN APPEAL FOR A HUGE SUMMER FUND DRIVE

(The Central Committee of the JRCL, meeting in late May, issued the following appeal to all of our comrades, friends, and readers to make substantial contributions out of their summer bonuses.)

Bail Fees and the Financial Crisis of the JRCL

Comrades, friends, and readers of Sekai Kakumei around the country! Right now, as summer bonuses are coming up,¹⁾ our party would like to give a frank account of our financial predicament, and to make a sincere appeal for everyone who fought in or sympathized²⁾ with the March 26 action²⁾ to come to our aid in surmounting this crisis.

The March 26 struggle ended in victory thanks to the unyielding fighting spirit of the farmers, as well as to the efforts of our party. It was the JRCL that had an understanding of the deep crisis brewing within the present political situation, and that pointed out the strategy and tactics which could provide a way out of it. And more than that, we threw all the strength of our organization into implementing that strategy and those tactics in practice.

For militant working people, March 26 was a call to arms. It laid bare for all to see the true shape of things to come in the sharpening class struggles of the 1980s.

Through the victory of March 26, our party opened up a splendid situation for working people. But at the same time, of course, the JRCL itself has been put to a most severe test--an ordeal that will determine whether we can make the giant leap to become a leading force in the politics of the next decade.

Among the ordeals imposed on our party, the greatest has been the state's vindictive repression. With our 123 indicted comrades leading the way, the JRCL as a whole has stood up to this repression without retreating a single step. But the repression has stubbornly, relentlessly continued, in the form of prolonged detention of arrested comrades and torture during their interrogation, surveillance of our organization outside the prison walls, illegal searches, additional arrests, and more. And on top of all that, the state has sought to deal our party a crushing financial blow by setting exorbitant bail fees.

As of May of this year, only ten of our comrades--those who occupied the control tower and a few others--remain in jail. We have won the release of the other 113. But just to get those comrades out on bail we have been forced to pay an average of nearly one million yen per person--a total of ¥110,000,000 [US\$500,000]. In addition, since prosecutors are expected to demand bail of ¥2.5 - 3.0 million or more for each of the militants arrested in the control tower, we still need to come up with at least ¥30,000,000 in bail fees.

Our party has stood up to this repression, to this ordeal, with all our strength. Members of the party, the JCY, and the Youth Joint Struggle Coalition,³⁾ without a thought to

their own living standards, have made self-sacrificing contributions to the fund drives to free their comrades. Contributions have also come in from friends, readers, and people on the street we'd never seen before. There have even been the tearful contributions of several parents who sympathized with their sons' and daughters' struggle and were outraged by the injustices committed against them. All these contributions have helped enable us to free the comrades one after another. But even so, the financial pressure on the party itself has been extremely heavy.

Take as an example one of our branches in Tokyo. The (XXXX) Branch had fourteen of its members imprisoned. The branch has since had to pay for bail, legal defense, medical treatment for wounded comrades, and other repression-related expenses. To date they have had to come up with a total of ¥10,777,600 [US\$48,939] in cash. Comrades in the branch were able to raise ¥8,912,600 of this through special fund collections, but they have also had to pay out ¥1,865,000 [US\$8,477] from the regular branch budget. This amounts to one-third of their total annual budget. Needless to say, the branch's finances have suffered a tremendous blow. The comrades are continually hounded by financial problems, including non-payment of full timers and the lack of funds for projected activities.

And the situation in this branch is shared by others all around the country. The heavy burden of these financial problems bears down on the entire party. It has now reached a point where if we do not achieve a breakthrough soon it could cripple our party's ability to intervene boldly in the politics of the

1980s.

Although we are frankly acknowledging these painful facts, we have never had--nor have we now--the slightest doubt that we'll be able to overcome these difficulties. But in order to do so, we will need substantial assistance from comrades, friends, and all people who sympathized with the March 26 struggle. We are appealing for some reinforcement from the militant working people who will be marching with us in the 1980s.

For Help From Comrades and Friends

To Give Our Finances a Big Boost

Some of our more experienced friends may say, "You should have known this is the price you'd have to pay. Weren't you ready for this when you launched the March 26 action?"

We would reply by recalling that in the past, when many people's struggles grew into sharp clashes with the state, things were not necessarily always done with careful advance preparation. The key thing in cases like these is whether or not people have the will and the ability to advance the struggle by overcoming whatever hardships may arise in the course of events.

Today, as the radical movement that arose in the late 1960s is collapsing, degenerating into sectarian violence and terrorism, the JRCL is carrying on a resolute struggle, raising high the banner of revolutionary Marxism, of Trotskyism. The March 26 action was not just a recreation of the late 1960s. March 26 was a fight to defend and carry forward the most revolutionary aspects of the struggles of the late 1960s, and in so doing to turn the working class in the direction of a deci-

sive, all-out confrontation with the state. It was an attempt --in a certain sense a fumbling attempt--to open up a new era. It was a fight on which the JRCL staked its very existence.

And we won a victory. But we have also had to pay the price for that victory. The question now is whether having to pay that price will cause the JRCL to lose heart, or whether on the contrary we will transform our present hardships into the springboard for a new leap forward.

We submit that this question has already been answered in part by the JRCL's campaign in the April municipal elections in Sendai and Mitaka.⁴⁾ It was answered by the hard struggle waged day after day by over one thousand young activists, including 123 comrades whose entire lives are devoted to the revolution, to nothing other than the victory of the revolution.

There can be no doubt of it. The JRCL will surely break out of our present predicament.

As part of our struggle to surmount this crisis, we will also confess here some of the weak points of the JRCL's financial activity. We hope that all the comrades and friends who put their hope in us will respond by expressing their criticisms, and through their warm support help us overcome these weaknesses.

Our organization continues to be plagued by pronounced opportunism and spontaneism in financial work.

Opportunism in the field of finances is the lack of a firm awareness that in order for the JRCL to grow into a real party it must above all be supported by the selfless financial contributions of broad layers of working people. Those who fail to understand this always remain within the framework of trying

to resolve financial problems "inside the organization." Errors of this sort are one result of the prolonged isolation our organization has suffered. But today the "isolation" of Trotskyism has been broken. The millions of people who reacted with joy to the March 26 struggle have given the JRCL a new lease on life. We must now turn to the political work of creating a party based on the power of militant working people. The JRCL, while feeling ashamed of our backwardness in this respect, now wishes to boldly call on working people to lend us a hand. Help us break out of this financial crisis. Our party should be your party.

Spontaneism in the field of finances is the other side of this same coin. It involves a failure to realize that monetary income is not something that flows naturally from achievements in the mass movement, but rather, has to be organized, organized, organized. Our opponents refer to us derisively as the "Buddhas" of the left.⁵⁾ It must be admitted that at least where financial activity is concerned, there is hardly a more demeaning epithet.

The JRCL appeals to our comrades and friends. Our membership is fully determined to overcome these weaknesses in the financial functioning of our organization. By all means please respond, lend us a hand.

The JRCL Is Moving Ahead

When comrades were arrested March 26, prosecutors yelled at the detainees, "You fuckers really did it this time, didn't you? Well we're going to smash you!" A leading activist of a certain sect as well,⁶⁾ watching the March 26 struggle on tele-

vision, reportedly blurted out, "The Trots did it! This'll get them smashed." (What a degenerate remark, just what you'd expect from a sectarian hooligan!)

Has the JRCL been smashed?

Who was it that stood up to the cops' pistols and rifles on May 20, that resolutely fought the Hundred Days of Struggle and defended the Opposition League,⁷⁾ and that today is shouldering its tasks on all fronts of the Narita struggle, fighting to halt Phase II of construction and move toward a showdown battle to make them close down the airport?

Who is it that is waging the most energetic campaign in defense of the Vietnamese revolution, setting an example of proletarian internationalism at a time when almost all other parties have sunken into confusion or are falling apart?

And in the face of government attacks on the postal workers and other public sector unions, who is it that has shown the way forward (beginning with the defense of public employees victimized in connection with the Narita struggle), and become the most trusted friend of workers in the public sector unions?

The JRCL, that's who.

Where outside of the JRCL is a party being built that can lead the impetuous class struggles of the 1980s?

Within the bankrupt reformist parties? In the Kakumaru Faction or the pro-Beijing groups, who have all fallen into social patriotism? Among the degenerate sectarian hooligans?

Not on your life.

To be sure, the JRCL has yet to become a real party. We are painfully aware, we have given no little thought to the

meager strength of our little group, not yet a party. But we are nonetheless firmly convinced of the correctness of our Trotskyist program, and we're sure that advances in consolidating our organization, along with our day-to-day activity in the mass movements, will arouse the sympathy of thoughtful working people and lead to our rapid expansion. We are painfully conscious of the sympathy, the attention, and the hopes of militant working people, that are focused on us today.

We will not let those people down. With the help of contributions--in whatever form--from our comrades and friends, we will not let them down.

For a Tremendous Fund Drive

The contributions we receive from comrades and friends will be used first of all to win the release of our remaining imprisoned comrades. They will also go to fund our international activity, which is becoming more and more important. And they will be used for mass work--in particular for the Narita struggle. You can bet that every single yen will be well spent.

In the vanguard of our summer fund drive stands the membership of the JRCL. Each party member is contributing forty percent of his or her summer bonus. We appeal to all other comrades and friends to donate ten, twenty, or thirty percent of your bonus--whatever your circumstances permit--to the JRCL fund drive. Please respond generously!

Notes

1. Japanese workers receive a substantial part of their pay in the form of twice-yearly bonuses. For most workers covered by union contracts, each bonus payment is on the order of one month's regular wages (although there are wide variations).
2. The occupation and sabotage of the Narita Airport control tower on March 26, 1978.
3. YJSC is a united-front group set up by comrades in 1977 to organize contingents in demonstrations at Narita. It has never included many activists outside the JRCL and JCY.
4. The JRCL put a lot of resources into running two comrades for city council seats in Sendai and Mitaka this April. In Mitaka (a working-class suburb of Tokyo), Comrade Setsuko Sugawara was elected. She ran as a candidate not of the JRCL, but of the Mitaka Progressive Alliance, a radical coalition more or less like the "Socialist Unity" slates in Britain.
5. The phrase Hotoke no yontoro (literally, "Trot Buddhas") was coined by the Kakumaru Faction, the first of the New Left sects to start murdering members of rival groups. The phrase conveys the idea that because the JRCL refuses to carry out physical attacks against its opponents on the left, the comrades are "like Buddha"--very fervent in their beliefs but unwilling to fight for their ideas.
6. Apparently the Kakumaru Faction.
7. Narita Airport opened amid protest demonstrations May 20, 1978.

Thousands of police were mobilized for the occasion, many of them brandishing firearms--something very rare for Japanese cops.

Immediately after the opening of Narita Airport, local farmers grouped in the Sanrizuka-Shibayama United Airport Opposition League called a series of protest actions over the course of a few months, billed as the "one hundred days of struggle." Although none of these actions was very large, they played a key role in keeping the Opposition League alive at a time when most farmers had dropped out of it and those who remained were discouraged by the failure of their campaign to prevent the airport from opening.