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June 16, 1978

Political Bureau  
Japan Revolutionary Communist League

Dear Comrades,

We have not received your reply to our letter of April 18, nor the updated article on the Sanrizuka struggle after the May 20 opening of the airport, which Comrade Muraki said would be sent to Inprecor/IP. As you will have seen, the June 8 issue of Inprecor/IP carried an article against the repression of the anti-Narita-airport demonstrators, as well as a brief survey of the issues involved derived from the material you sent us.

However, the questions raised by aspects of your line and their implications for the section are serious enough for us not to wait any longer before beginning a political discussion with you about them. That is the purpose of this letter. When Comrade Roman arrives at the end of the month, we will have a further discussion with him.

From the reports you have sent to us, the struggle of the Sanrizuka peasants and their supporters against the opening of the airport has won sympathy in broad sectors of the population. The high-handed way the government has dealt with the farmers involved and the environmental dangers of this airport are important questions which have made this struggle a political issue on a national scale. The fact that our movement has been part of the leadership of this struggle is to the credit of the Japanese section.

But the orientation the section has utilized in this fight raises important problems, especially in regard to the March 26 sabotage of the airport control tower.

In the "APPEAL TO THE JAPANESE PEOPLE" which the JRCL issued on March 30, you take responsibility for this action and state that "We are, and always have been stubbornly against individual terrorism and uchigeba (sectarian fighting), always calling for militant mass struggle, based firmly on the people's support, to fight against government power." You also say, "We fight against the government and its agents with all our might and by any means necessary. In this sense, we are proud to be called 'extremists.' However, at the same time we believe that the best weapon we can have is the support of the people. In this sense, we call ourselves a 'vanguard.'"

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We of course commend the JRCL for its stand against the disastrous uchigeba policy of many of the radical groups standing to the left of the reformist parties.

You report that the sabotage of the control tower had the support of the 20,000 demonstrators who had gathered that day near the airport to protest its scheduled opening, and that in fact it had the sympathy of much wider layers in the population, including in the working class. We have no reason to dispute this assessment. However, it seems to us that the conception behind your sabotage of the control tower was that of a small "vanguard" acting for the "people," as long as it has the "support of the people." This conception assigns to "the people" a passive role of supporters of the actions of a small "vanguard" of dedicated fighters.

Such tactics reduce the number of those who are willing to actively engage in the struggle to those who are willing to engage in the kind of tactics you projected. This unnecessarily limits the struggle.

In the concrete circumstances of the struggle at Narita airport, these tactics also reinforced the idea that the way to fight against the airport is to sabotage its facilities. Of course, if essential airport facilities such as the control tower are disabled, the airport cannot function. But the resources of the capitalist state are great enough to overcome sabotage. The question will not be settled on this ground, but politically. To divert the objectives of the anti-airport fighters towards sabotage turns them away from the job of winning broader masses to their side. Moreover, if future sabotage should result in injury to passengers or crew, this will be utilized by the government to politically isolate opponents of the airport.

Such actions also give the government a handle to divert the discussion from the dangers and injustices of the airport itself and the methods of the government into a debate over the tactics of the opponents of it. The government has also played upon the March 26 incident to step up its repression against opponents of the airport, and to make a more general attack on democratic rights. From the information you sent us on the positions of the leaders of the SP and CP, the reformists have also utilized the incident to try to divert the discussion away from their own failure to support the struggle effectively.

In our opinion, tactics should be subordinated to a different strategic conception. The goal of our tactics should be to involve ever wider layers of the masses themselves in action. We should help lead the anti-airport forces to look outward to actively involving wider forces. Tactics, such as the kinds of demonstrations held, should be geared to this objective. Actions such as the sabotage of the control tower cut across this perspective.

In your "APPEAL TO THE JAPANESE PEOPLE," you state: "Let us unite all our struggles, learning from the lessons of the farmers' determined struggle over the past 13 years. Let us organize a militant united front from below, from factories and farms and homes, to overcome the capitulationist political parties and labor bureaucrats. The real enemy of the people is the tiny capitalist class and its parties. Therefore the object of our struggle is nothing other than the overthrow of the capitalist government and the establishment of a people's government. The victory of March 26 showed our sincerity quite concretely.

"Let us unite!

"Let us overthrow the Fukuda government with our fighting united front!

"Let us overthrow all capitalist governments!

"Let us establish a workers and farmers government!"

The difficult task of replacing the reformist misleaders of the working class cannot be accomplished by the example of the Sanrizuka farmers alone or even primarily. Class consciousness develops through the mobilization and experiences of the masses themselves. To develop this class consciousness requires that revolutionists are inside the mass organizations of the working class, projecting mobilizations around a concrete class struggle strategy as against the class collaborationist one of the reformists. Consistent work along these lines, which includes bringing the issue of the Narita airport fight inside the mass organizations of the class, should be our road forward.

The "APPEAL TO THE JAPANESE PEOPLE" is unfounded in its conception that the March 26 action can result in a "militant united front from below" which can "overthrow the Fukuda government."

The issue of the airport could possibly be the final straw that brings down the Fukuda government (although certainly not "all capitalist governments"), resulting in new elections. We are not able to judge from afar whether the Fukuda government is that weak. But the task of building a class struggle leadership that succeeds in winning the allegiance of the working masses from the reformists is not so simple. The building of such a leadership requires not an orientation of "united fronts from below" but proposals for united front struggles aimed both at the ranks and the leaderships of the reformist parties, the reformist-led trade unions, and other organizations. This should be our approach in the Narita airport struggle as well. Tactics such as the attack on the control tower give the reformists excuses to reject participation in the struggle at the very moment when the dynamic of the mass movement was entering into opposition to the policy of the bureaucratic apparatuses. It makes it more difficult to mobilize the masses who still, unfortunately, follow these reformist leaderships.

Comrade Sakai, in his letter to us of April 9 for the Political Bureau of the JRCL, states that the March 26 action had "a kind of 'Tet Offensive' effect." This concept is developed in the article by Jun Yazaki, "Sanrizuka Throws Fukuda Into Crisis," written before the May 20 opening of the airport. As you know, we did not publish this article, waiting for a version that brings it up to date after May 20. Comrade Yazaki writes: "For the rank-and-file workers, the March 26 victory and the political impact it gave even to the traditional parties of the parliamentary lefts provided a new perspective through which they can revitalize the militant tradition of the Japanese working class. The process of consolidating a nationwide class struggle tendency inside the trade unions and factories has been accelerated through the broad united front of workers under Rentaisurukai (Sanrizuka Solidarity Committee) which joined the March 26 action. Just as the Sanrizuka struggle could continue and win its first victory by regional as well as nationwide support from both farmers and workers, many militants have now realized the fact that if we unite on-going struggles in the factories and break down their local isolation, this can open a new phase where they can win and even defeat the government. The task of all revolutionaries is to intervene into this new period in every field and counterpose socialist and working class alternatives to the class collaborationist policies and organize a real mass struggle to overthrow the LDP government now in crisis. One final blow to Fukuda will surely come from Sanrizuka, again, on and after May 20 and it will be a deadly blow."

Struggles such as the Sanrizuka struggle, or similar struggles of various layers of the population, can have wider impact in the working class as a whole. Whether such examples of struggle in one sector are immediately taken up by wider layers, or whether this impact is felt in the longer term, is of course determined by the overall concrete situation. The Sanrizuka struggle can set an example for wider layers, but the example that needs to be set is not that of the March 26 action, of the heroic action of a handful, however much applauded by the masses on the sidelines, but of the masses themselves coming into struggle. Building the widest solidarity among the workers and their organizations behind the Sanrizuka struggle could provide an example of the road forward in other struggles, e.g., the current fragmented occupations of factories being shut down by the bosses.

You of course know the political situation in Japan much better than we do. We question, however, the sweeping assertion that the airport struggle itself will have the overall impact you are predicting. Do you have any reservations about this prediction after May 20?

Finally, we would like to raise the question of the impact on the section of your orientation. It appears to us that you have staked everything on your analysis that the Narita airport struggle will be the "detonator of wider struggles," and that the March 26 action represented the "Japanese breakthrough of the Fourth International," in Comrade Sakai's words. A significant part of your resources, it seems to us (and you should correct us if we are wrong), have been thrown into this struggle, and along the tactical lines epitomized by the sabotage of the control tower. This has resulted in heavy repression against our militants.

We think Comrade Yazaki is correct when he says that the task of "all revolutionaries is to intervene into this new period in every field to counterpose socialist and working class alternative against the class collaborationist policies . . ." Above all, this requires that we seek to deepen our roots in the working class itself. It appears to us, however, that the JRCL and its youth group have thrown a large part of their cadres into heroic actions around Sanrizuka. This can only cut across this necessary proletarian orientation. And also this orientation makes it difficult to have a rounded intervention in the class struggle as a whole and also to intervene in the Sanrizuka struggle itself in a political manner as opposed to a technical manner. While recognizing the importance of struggles like that of the Narita airport, we cannot take it upon ourselves to physically substitute for the necessary action of the masses, without harming the construction of our own section.

The struggle around the airport is obviously at a new stage after the May 20 opening. The Japanese section itself must now also make important choices. It is our considered opinion that the JRCL must make a sharp turn. To continue along the road indicated by March 26 -- that is, further sabotage actions by a small group -- will lead to disaster for the section. We urge the JRCL to reject that alternative.

The immediate burning need now for the anti-Narita struggle is to turn toward a mass campaign in defense of the victims of government repression. This requires a turn away from all "triumphalist" proclamations about the "defeat" of the government on March 26, toward exposure of the repressive measures taken by the government, as well as of the issues of the airport itself. Our appeal must be to as wide layers as possible, not on the grounds of support to March 26, but against government repression. This requires a united front approach. We should try to convince the Sanrizuka farmers and other anti-airport activists that it is necessary to reject sabotage. Launching a broad campaign for defense of those charged, and against the other repressive measures the government took, can be a first step in mobilizing the broader sympathy in the population which you report is with the farmers. This

can be the road to rebuilding the mass movement against the airport. We of course will do everything we can to help build international support to such a campaign.

Given the gravity of the questions we have begun to raise in this letter, we ask that the Political Bureau discuss it and write to us your reactions and opinions, so that we can clarify the issues involved. We know that you will consider this letter in the fraternal spirit it is intended, however sharp some of its criticisms may be.

Warmest revolutionary greetings,  
*Stateman (m)*  
Stateman,  
for the United Secretariat Bureau