

**AFTER LONG SILENCE: REDISCOVERED HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS OF THE  
JAPANESE SOCIALIST PARTY IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA**

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The Japan Socialist Party has participated in a coalition government twice soon after the war, but unsuccessfully, because of its awkward position between the conservative and labouring classes at that time. It has never since come into power, although it has been the leading opposition party in both houses, the House of Representatives and House of Councillors.

Meanwhile, some middle-of-the-road parties have formed in opposition to the two major parties; as a result of this multi-party situation developing in Japanese politics, the Japan Socialist Party has recently shown signs of its long-term decline and seems to face a growing crisis never experienced in the past.

It was at this juncture that several months ago a large quantity of historical documents on the Japan Socialist Party were rediscovered by a reader in the Japanese stacks at the National Library of Australia (NLA). They had been purchased twenty years ago by NLA from Dr A.J. Stockwin, historian in Japanese politics, on his recommendation. They comprise printed publications, mimeographed copies for internal use, original letters, memoranda, notebooks, a large number of official reports, pamphlets, telegrams and scrapbooks. As far as I could ascertain, almost all of them are related to the political activities of the Party between 1950 and 1960, when the conflict between its left and right was at the most intense in its history; the Party was divided into two factions 1951, and the Left and Right Socialist Parties were reunited in 1955 under the leadership of the left wing, which expanded the strength of the Party to 158 seats in the 1958 elections. However, during the late 1950s it gradually moved towards the left and, as a result of the conflict over the revision of the security treaty, Suehiro Nishio and his right wing faction finally formed the Democratic Socialist Party in 1960.

During this period there was a series of significant political events in Japan. Mr Yuki Tanaka, lecturer in Japanese Political Economy at Adelaide University, in his application for a 1989 Harold White Fellowship at NLA to research these materials and assist in their cataloguing, described the events of this period in the following words:

They were, for example, the outbreak of the Korean War, the 'Red Purge', i.e., the destruction of the left wing union movement by the U.S. Occupation Forces, the signing of the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty, the establishment of Japan's 'Self Defence Force', large

scale strike action by the miners at Mitsubishi Mining Company in Kyushu, a civil movement against the expansion of the U.S. military base in Sunagawa, the amalgamation of conservative political parties into the Liberal Democratic Party, Prime Minister Katayama's visit to Moscow, the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the mass demonstration against such revision, to mention just some. Some important political movements of this period were in fact led by the Japan Socialist Party.

Although I do not necessarily think that these materials have any direct relations with the series of significant political events above mentioned, as Mr Tanaka said, they are extremely valuable in so far as these events were closely inter-related with the internal political affairs of the Japan Socialist Party. The materials contain so much variety of topics that it is very difficult to describe them briefly. Therefore it seems better that they should be itemised by each sub-section of the Party most concerned with their publication, for example, as publisher as well as compiler. The following is an overview of the most important documents among them:

- Youth Bureau -- A number of reports on the organisation of activities.
- Agricultural Bureau -- Materials on the situation of the peasants' movements in various parts of the country; reports and representation on measures for agriculture; reports on the election campaign for the members of Agricultural Committee.
- Fisheries Bureau -- Documents of the local chapters on co-operative movements concerned with fisheries in Manazuru City and elsewhere; materials on the movements against sea contamination caused by paper mill waste; materials on the negotiations for northern deep sea fishing with the Soviet Union.
- Labour Bureau -- Research reports on the actual condition of labour movements and the trade unions; materials on various trade unions; materials on May Day and the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan.
- Organisation Bureau -- Reports on the effective strength of the organisation; statements on the Party line; reports on the problems in each constituency and campaign strategy for them; documents on the unification problems of the left and

right wings.

Committee for the Party Members of local Assemblies --  
Letters between Party headquarters  
and local chapters; documents on the  
campaign for the local Assemblies.

In addition, we can find many general party organs published energetically, such as Jōhō Tsūshin, Shakai Tsūshin, Tō Katsudō, Kokkai Nippō, Kokkai Sokuhō and Honbu Tsūshin. Parts of the policy statements, reports and discussion papers are extremely valuable as historical documents because they contain copious annotations written by Party members themselves. Notebooks by Mr. Isao Nishikaze at the time he was Director of the Youth Bureau, entitled Jōsei no Memo, Tōnai Mondai, Tōnai Mondai Shiryō, Kokusai Mondai, Kichi Kankei and Rōdō Undō, are also valuable as chronicles of the Party and of political trends around the Party. Although I have not yet checked whether the same materials are preserved in other libraries in Japan, they appear to be unique, at least so far as the manuscripts are concerned. The more unique they are, the more seriously we have to give consideration to their preservation, their condition in fact being very poor, particularly the mimeographed materials. Therefore it is imperative to consult with conservation experts about their preservation as soon as possible.

By the way, in the latest general election the Japan Socialist Party yielded up to 85 seats in the Lower House and allowed the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party to occupy more than 300 seats. According to an analysis by political scientists, this could be ascribed to a couple of structural problems in the Party itself, such as the main dependence on trade unionism, the encroachment upon its electorate by other parties, idealistic political steering and internal troubles within the Party. In my view, these materials may also possibly suggest answers to such delicate questions as to why matters are as they are, where the Japan Socialist Party is going, and what it will become in the future.

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