

**Irresponsible Media Campaign against Nuclear Plants**

Yoshiko Sakurai

Four months have passed since demonstrations against nuclear power plants began to be held every Friday in the vicinity of the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. Participants in the weekly demonstration have increased since the government decided to restart the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture. The demonstration sponsor claimed a peak number of participants as between 150,000 and 180,000, while the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department estimated the number at 7,000.

In its editorial on July 30, the Asahi Shimbun said, "Since the 1960 struggle against the Japan-U.S. security treaty a half century ago, this is the largest ever number of people saying 'No' to government." It also said the demonstration is "protests by silent citizens" and "direct democracy movements will spread further."

**Okinawanization of mainland Japan?**

I feel intense *deja vu*. The wide gap between the estimates by the sponsor and the police reminds me of a meeting in Okinawa on September 29, 2007, to protest school textbooks' description of the Japanese Army's alleged wartime mass suicide order. The meeting's sponsor then claimed that 110,000 people took part in the gathering. But an analysis of aerial photos indicated the number of participants at 18,000. The Tokyo demonstrations against nuclear plants lead me to anticipate the "Okinawanization of mainland Japan."

Learning lessons from the failure of 1960s demonstrations led by the leftist students union known as Zengakuren, the present demonstrations in front of the Prime Minister's Office are reportedly designed to refrain from specifying any organization as sponsor and from becoming radical or violent and retain favorable impressions based on peace and ecology. As far as the sponsor remains behind the scene, participants may fail to share basic concept. Ideological base to support the demonstrations may be vague.

Under such slogans as peace and ecology, there are no ideas about Japan's energy policy as industrial infrastructure supporting Japan or about the development of excellent Japanese nuclear power plant technology to invigorate the nation. Instead, a vague dissident emotion grows. But even such emotion can exert a great political pressure.

**Demonstrations similar to 1960 struggle**

Susumu Nishibe, who was a Zengakuren leader driving the 1960 struggle against the Japan-U.S. security treaty, made the following point in his book titled “1960 Struggle – Sentimental Journey” published by the Bungeishunju Ltd:

“In conclusion, the 1960 struggle was not against the Japan-U.S. security treaty. Most of participants, including many of struggle leaders, were unaware of or indifferent to what impact the new treaty would have on international politics or military conditions.”

Nishibe also said the magic word of “peace” “clouded struggle participants’ visions and made them unable to coolly observe real world politics and military situation.”

In this sense, the present demonstrations in front of the Prime Minister’s Office are similar to the 1960 struggle, as noted by the Asahi Shimbun. While the Asahi writes the direct democracy movements will spread further, a poll on the July 29 issue of the Mainichi Shimbun, known for its campaigns against nuclear plants, indicated that those viewing the restart of the Oi nuclear plant as necessary accounted for 49% of total poll respondents, against 45% seeing that as unnecessary. Public opinions against nuclear plants or their restart are not dominant. Major media organizations are responsible for failing to report this fact.

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