

## SHISO-UNDO NEWS No. 184

In the wake of the House of Representatives election  
that resulted in a “landslide victory for the LDP”:

### A Shortage of Struggle and an Excess of Elections

FUJIWARA Akira, School Worker

#### Why was this “soil” created?

The House of Representatives election of February 8 ended with a historic “landslide victory” for TAKAICHI Sanae’s Liberal Democratic Party. The LDP alone secured 316 seats (up from 198 before the election), accounting for 68 percent of the total. Combined with the Japan Innovation Party (*Ishin*), they now hold 75 percent of the seats. In contrast, the Centrist Reform Alliance, the Japanese Communist Party, and – the Reiwa Shinsengumi (party) together won only 54 seats. Excluding the former Komeito, that number drops to 26 seats - merely 5.6 percent of the total.

Unsurprisingly, this extremely lopsided outcome has triggered a flood of analyses and commentaries. It is clear that a certain segment of the public is shocked by how extreme the results were.

As for analyses of vote flows and electoral behavior, many others have already discussed them extensively, so I will leave that aside here. To be honest, I have little interest in recent election analyses. This is because, at best, they yield nothing more than techniques for gathering votes (and in reality, they do not even seem to manage that, offering little more than the same old rallying cries to “work harder”). What matters is whether such analyses provide material for discussing how we, the working class in Japan, should fight from here on. Without that, they are meaningless. With that in mind, I would like to offer an analysis that includes my own set of questions and concerns, and I hope you would think through them with me.

Several commentators have described this election not even as a “populist election,” but as an “*oshi-katsu* (supporting my favorite) election,” one in which even the minimum level of policy debate had vanished. This was made possible by the LDP’s overwhelming financial resources - estimated in the hundreds of millions or even billions of yen - which enabled it to collaborate with firms specializing in analysis and advertising. Yet we must also consider the other condition that made such an election possible: the “soil,” the mass ideological environment that has been cultivated over time.

The recently popular business method that incorporates “*oshi-katsu*” is apparently called “fandom marketing.” A promotional text from a consulting firm is suggestive, so I quote it here:

“(Since we live in an age of information overload in which products no longer sell,) we have organized the concepts and procedures for intentionally designing a ‘state of being *oshi*-ed’ through the co-creation of brand, entertainment, and fandom, along with our company’s track record and case studies. At the center is the use of ‘disposable mental energy,’ which exists as something one

‘cannot live without,’ a ‘source of life-energy,’ ‘healing,’ and a ‘top daily priority.’ Rather than ending tie-ups or influencer campaigns as one-way announcements, we design the entire experience from awareness → interest → purchase → attachment...”

This passage captures with uncanny precision the mechanism behind the “*oshi-katsu* election.” What we should read from it is that society has accumulated such deep anxiety and exhaustion that people feel they cannot endure daily life without becoming fervently attached to some form of “hope,” even if that hope is false. In this election, the “desire for change” born from that condition was effectively purchased by Takaichi’s LDP, the political representative of the capitalist class.

What, then, of the “liberal” forces opposing this? When forming the centrist reform bloc, NODA Yoshihiko declared, “If the result is less than  $1 + 1 = 2$ , I will consider stepping down.” Indeed, if one simply added together the support rates of the former Constitutional Democrats and the former Komeito in the previous Upper House election, it might have surpassed that of the LDP and its auxiliary forces. But this statement symbolizes an attitude that sees voters only as numbers.

A similar attitude permeates today’s labor-union movement. The slogan “organizational expansion is the top priority” seems, in practice, to reflect a stance that views union members merely as organizational ratios and dues revenue. What is lacking is the commitment to stand with each individual worker and attempt to fight to resolve their difficulties.

These attitudes all lead to ignoring those who bear the concentrated contradictions of capitalist society - namely, unorganized workers and those subjected to discriminatory treatment under wage-increase strategies that presuppose such discrimination. The fact that this has been repeated for decades has produced the current state of total defeat for Japan’s working class, and it is difficult not to see it as a factor that allowed the “soil” that shaped this election’s outcome to form.

### **The Strata Society Chooses to Ignore**

Eighteen years have passed since AKAGI Tomohiro cried out that “hope means war,” capturing the depth of social despair at the time. But how much has Japan’s left, as a whole, truly taken in the voices of this so-called “lost generation” (or employment ice age generation) since then? The responses from the left were essentially a kind of “left-wing” version of the self-responsibility argument: “He doesn’t understand the real nature of war,” or “The real target of criticism should be the business elite and the government that created a society of poverty.”

Yet by that time, labor movements that attempted collective resistance in the workplace had already been delegitimized. In civic movements, it had become fashionable to lower union flags. Student movements had long since declined, and even autonomous activities and campus circles were being suppressed to the point of disappearance.

In such a social environment, it was only natural that the “elite” nearby - those who went to good universities and secured “regular employment” at good companies - would come to be seen as the “enemy.” And that “enemy” overlapped with those “privileged people” who called for “stopping constitutional revision,” “protecting Article 9,” or “opposing discrimination.” Given that, it is not difficult to understand why “*Sana-katsu*” (pro-Sanae fan-style political activism) and “*Sana-oshi*” (devotion to Takaichi Sanae as one’s chosen figure) emerged, casting a heroine who stands up to that “enemy.”

The tragedies that followed - KATŌ Tomohiro in the Akihabara on-the-road massacre in 2008, AOBA Shinji in the Kyoto Animation arson in 2019, YAMAGAMI Tetsuya in the Abe shooting in 2022 - are all merely the visible tip of the iceberg of a “lost generation” driven into a corner by the abuses of capitalist society. When their backgrounds came to light, there were indeed groups of people who expressed sympathy. One cannot help but wonder how many of these tragedies might have been prevented - and how much strength could have been added to the movement - if the Japanese working class had been able to stand with them, arm in arm, ready to fight alongside their cry of “Enough is enough!” Today, their children’s generation is labeled the “Generation Z.”

War strips people of all meaningful labor; conversely, war is prepared in societies where meaningful labor has already been stripped away. But the chronological order is the reverse. This is why it is said that “war is something the masses themselves come to desire.”

### **What Must Be Done**

Prime Minister Takaichi Sanae, determined not to miss this opportunity, is rushing to “swiftly realize” a unified system of wartime mobilization and intensified exploitation. Space does not allow a full discussion here, but this haste is also driven by the need to align Japan with the United States’ reorganization of the imperialist world order under its global domination strategy. Yet at the same time, resistance among the masses is growing - within the United States itself, across Europe, and throughout South America. The ruling classes’ sense of crisis in the face of these developments is manifesting as increasingly blatant repression through violence.

Even if we look only at this past New Year period, the signs are clear. In New York - long a conservative stronghold - Zohran Mamdani, who openly identifies as a democratic socialist, was elected mayor, symbolizing the reconstruction of mass movements. There have also been both repression and resistance, including killings, against movements opposing anti-immigrant exclusion; the military invasion of Venezuela and the kidnapping of its head of state, followed by popular resistance that pushed back the subsequent expansion of the invasion; and moves toward conscription in Germany, France, and other countries, along with the resistance they have provoked.

Japan alone appears to have lost, to an abnormal degree, even the very word “resistance.” Why is that? And what must be done?

### **Why Struggle Is Necessary**

Should we imitate our opponents - cultivating a sense that we will “get things done,” deploying short-form videos on social media, and countering them with our own version of “*oshi-katsu*” politics? The answer is no. On that terrain, we cannot win - neither in financial resources, nor in technical capacity, nor in analytical power. The strength of the working class does not lie there. As noted earlier, we must begin with the recognition that decades of “absence of struggle” in workplaces and everyday life have allowed society to become as stagnant and suffocating as it is today.

We must focus on the principle that struggles at the site of daily life and labor can only move forward. Each individual confrontation may appear to end in defeat, and the tangible results may be small. Yet even the smallest acts of practice can increase the number of people willing to engage

in resistance, and they broaden the perspective of class antagonism. We must orient ourselves toward building such expanding struggles. This is not a matter of launching large-scale quantitative campaigns, but of ideological struggle - creating discussions through everyday conversations.

### **From Conversation to Debate**

Some may object that without visible, concrete results in everyday life, such efforts amount to nothing more than self-satisfaction. That criticism is valid. The task is whether we can interpret the contradictions and injustices before us at any given moment through the clear principle of class antagonism. This does not contradict the gradual pursuit of concrete gains; it strengthens it.

For example, why are there two categories - “regular” and “non-regular” - for people doing the same work, and why does discriminatory treatment exist between them? Why has the consciousness that treats workers like objects - “competent or incompetent,” “useful or useless” - become so deeply ingrained in today’s workplaces? Can we raise such questions? And can we explain them through the clear principle of capitalist strategies to divide the working class? That is the capacity required of conscious activists. Of course, some will say that unjust systems will be imposed anyway and that resistance is meaningless. But it is precisely at such moments that ideological struggle is necessary.

To repeat: at each moment, we must pose questions, turn conversations into debates, and - when new tasks are proposed that would intensify labor - refuse to take them on individually. Even if only a few people are involved, we must discuss, reach a shared understanding, and raise objections. Through the accumulation of such practices, each worker regains confidence as a subject of the workplace. Where union organizations exist, they should position such practices as part of their movement strategy. This is of critical importance today.

Whether in the workplace or within unions, it is clear that there is no future in a mode of existence where workers remain isolated, divided, doing only the tasks assigned to them, or merely paying dues and responding to petitions and surveys as passive objects.

### **Toward an “Activist Group”**

But is such a shift in orientation possible within the existing major labor unions or political parties? Unfortunately, it appears impossible. Even at this stage, they remain bound hand and foot by their established organizational structures and are unable to move toward genuine transformation. At the same time, there is no “party” capable of consciously, organizationally, and proactively taking full responsibility for such a task.

In the present situation - one of total defeat for Japan’s workers and people - what is required is the practice of activists who are consciously socialist across every field. This includes, for the time being, efforts aimed at transforming existing organizations. What is essential is to create connections through which these various practices can be shared and learned from, and to consciously work to expand these circles step by step. This monthly newspaper “Shiso-Undo” exists for that very purpose.

(“SHISO UNDO”, No. 1122, March 1, 2026)