

Peace Accords will never be effectively implemented until a government has been elected with the political will — and desire — to follow them through.

The changes outlined in the Accords are wide-ranging and fundamental, particularly those aimed at demilitarizing Salvadoran society. These include the demobilization of the Treasury Police and National Guard, two of the most repressive military institutions during the war, and of the elite US-trained Rapid Response Battalions, guilty of some of the worst human rights abuses. Half of the remaining military is also slated for demobilization, and a new body — the National Civilian Police (PNC) is being established to replace the National Police. Twenty per cent of its members will be ex-combatants from the FMLN, and twenty per cent from the Salvadoran Military, with the remaining sixty per cent recruited from among the civilian population. The aim of such reforms is to institutionalize the democratization process in the country, by breaking the monopoly on power held by the established military institutions, and creating an autonomous and accountable policing force to displace the military's presence in the lives of civilians.

The increased freedom gained by curbing the military's power has allowed civilian society and the broad-based Popular Movement, which embraces students, organized rural communities, unions and Church-based groups, to mobilize and participate with greater strength in setting the national agenda. This grassroots mobilization, already highly articulate during the war years, is the greatest strength of the Peace Process, not only at the level of demanding rights and denouncing many of the Government's policies, but also in working towards alternatives and actively organizing to meet material and other community needs.

After twelve years of civil war and a highly dependent economy, these needs are acute. Unemployment, under-employment and malnutrition are increasing, as is the demand for health services. In San Salvador some 140,000 people work informally as street vendors, shoeshiners and so on, work which cannot provide them with the basic necessities. Nationally, the informal sector represents around thirty-five per cent of the economically active population, which itself only officially numbers one million in a nation of five million people. Much of the national infrastructure has been destroyed and the economy is in no position to rebuild it, especially since a severe cut in US dollar aid — sixty per cent according to the *Wall Street Journal* — was announced recently.

At the same time, the ARENA government has exacerbated the situation by going ahead with neo-liberal policies aimed at turning El Salvador into a Central American Taiwan or Hong Kong, with Free Trade Zones and foreign-owned rapid-assembly *maquiladora* factories along the Mexican industrial development model, where labour rights are virtually non-existent. Labour disputes and clashes have risen significantly in the past year, most of all in the public sector.

Changing this permanently and developing a more equitable economic basis for a democratizing society will be very difficult without a left-wing victory in the elections. For all the dynamism of the Popular Movement, there will be no mass civilian participation until some benefit is evident for the sacrifices and terror of the war years. For this, people need to be able to control their own means of existence. Important gains have been made in this direction: programmes for the development of community and producer-controlled co-operatives have become more widespread, as have popular schools and health services, broadening initiatives begun during the conflict. Many large unoccupied estates had been taken by ex-refugee and displaced communities, who have then received land title under the conditions of the Peace Accords. These processes and the attendant debates suggest the possibility of an alternative model of development, pursuing the industrial growth necessary in a country as dependent as El Salvador is, but with an emphasis on programmes initiated and implemented from the grassroots.

But this will always remain limited without the necessary changes in financial and other laws; without a priority of material support from State resources; or with a government which, like ARENA, deliberately stonewalls or sabotages the changes demanded. The experience of the Popular Movement needs the party political expression of the FMLN, in coalition with the Democratic Convergence (CD) and National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) parties, at the government level.

In the past months, the extreme right has reverted again to its most familiar weapons, fear and intimidation, and to the brutal habits of the last twelve years. More than thirty members of the FMLN have been assassinated by the death squads since the beginning of the ceasefire, in attacks designed to convince people that all they have gained so far can easily be lost. Yet, unlike previous elections, the reforms that have preceded this one make the chance of a democratic change to the established political hegemony very real. As seriously destabilizing as it is, the success of terror politics is tempered by the presence of hundreds of foreign observers, and by international pressure upon ARENA to investigate the killings.

Despite the intimidation, the possibility of a left-coalition victory appears to be increasing. Although ARENA still leads in the polls, they have consistently lost popularity to the FMLN-CD-MNR coalition — at the time of writing, it seems unlikely that any party will gain the absolute majority needed to win the presidency on the 20 March voting day, leading to a second round in April. At the legislative level also, the various opposition parties appear set to take ARENA's Assembly majority away from them.

The changes to the political landscape following the April round of voting will decide how quickly, and how far, a true process of broad-based consolidation can become real. With some fundamental reforms carried through into law by elected left parties, El Salvador will be able to continue to resist the militarism and neo-liberal 'savage capitalism' dominating the rest of the region, and begin putting down the foundations of a democracy.

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Godzilla Rising

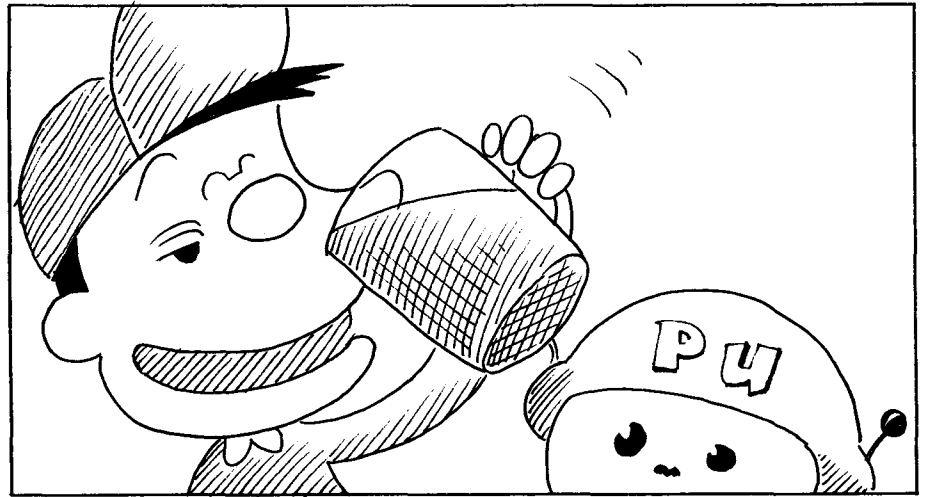
Japan's Nuclear Industry

AS WITH WESTERN NATIONS, Japanese nuclear physics research in the period between 1940 and 1945 was strongly concerned with the development of the atomic bomb. A programme of experimental research was initiated in 1940 by a small group of scientists, led by Dr Yoshio Nishina, and was supported by the Japanese Imperial Forces in the hope that Japan would be able to arm itself with the atomic bomb by the mid 1940s. After Japan was defeated, the occupation forces banned research in nuclear physics for several years. In 1954 however, following the US Atoms for Peace initiative, the Japanese Government officially embarked on its Nuclear Power Project and committed itself to a high level of funding for research. Professor Hideki Yukawa, a Nobel Prize winner in Physics who had collaborated with the Imperial Forces in atomic bomb research during the war, was appointed chair of the Atomic Power Committee. But until the mid 1970s, the Nuclear Power Project remained in an experimental phase.

Japan's economy experienced exceedingly high growth during the 1960s and early 1970s, but experienced a major setback in 1973 with the 'oil shock' following the founding of OPEC. Japanese industry, which depends heavily on imports for energy supplies, responded to this crisis by restructuring, moving away from heavy chemical and engineering industries towards less energy-intensive high-technology industries. At the same time, the Japanese Government introduced policies to encourage the development of nuclear power. These were, above all, designed to reduce Japan's reliance on oil imports.

As a consequence of government incentives, the nuclear power industry developed at a rapid rate. Prior to 1973 there were only three power generating reactors in Japan. Now there are forty-two, producing approximately thirty per cent of Japan's electricity supply. A number of problems have developed, including the handling and disposal of nuclear waste, and security and environmental problems stemming from the production of plutonium as a by-product of power generation. As a means of dealing with these problems, the Japanese Government and the nuclear industry companies planned to build nuclear complexes in which facilities dealing with all

'I feel so fresh!' — Pu and his plutonium-drinking friend. From a Japanese nuclear industry promotional cartoon.



stages of the nuclear fuel cycle were located on a single site. In the early 1980s preliminary plans were made to build the first such nuclear complex, Shimokita Peninsula, at the northernmost tip of Honshu. In 1992, a uranium enrichment plant went into operation at Shimokita. Other facilities, such as a fuel reprocessing plant, are currently under construction at the Shimokita site. When these facilities are completed, Shimokita will be the world's largest nuclear complex.

Along with its huge financial commitment to the construction of Shimokita, Japan also has the largest nuclear power research and development budget in the world. The annual budget in 1991 was approximately \$US2.5 billion, compared with the United States's \$US0.8 billion, the second largest level of nuclear research and development funding. Further, around seventy per cent of funding for energy research and development in Japan is devoted to nuclear power, compared with around thirty per cent in the United States. This clearly indicates Japan's ongoing commitment to nuclear power. In the next century, Japan could become the most powerful nation in the world in terms of its development of, and control over, nuclear power technology.

The development of its nuclear power generating capacity has made for political problems within Japan, and also between Japan and other nations. For example, in November 1992 the *Akatsuki Maru* carried most of the way around the globe one and a half tonnes of plutonium (enough for one hundred and fifty nuclear warheads), which had been extracted from Japanese nuclear waste at the Cap de le Hague reprocessing plant in France. The plutonium was destined for use in Japan's experimental fast breeder reactor, Monju. The voyage of the *Akatsuki Maru* generated considerable debate over the risks of transporting plutonium, as well as direct action protests organized by Greenpeace.

At the G7 Conference in Tokyo in July 1993, the Japanese Government refused to make a clear commitment to the unconditional extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is due for renewal in 1995. The attitude of the Japanese Government has created suspicion that Japan might be interested in producing nuclear weapons at some future time.

Immediately following the G7 Conference, North Korea, criticized in recent times for the secrecy surrounding its nuclear research programme, issued a statement claiming that Japan was developing nuclear weapons and that it was using North Korea's alleged nuclear weapons programme as a justification for developing its own. Japan has vigorously denied that it has any intention of developing nuclear weapons, explicitly committing itself to maintaining its 'three non-nuclear principles' (to neither produce, possess, nor allow the importation of nuclear weapons). However, Japan's huge plutonium stockpile and the development of its fuel reprocessing capabilities (allowing it to separate even more plutonium from spent nuclear fuel) might be seen by neighbouring nations, such as North Korea, as constituting a significant threat in itself.

On the other hand, relations with Russia, which previously constituted a nuclear threat to Japan, have improved immensely since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1992 the Japanese Government became interested in a Russian project to convert plutonium from nuclear warheads into fuel for use in fast breeder reactors, expressing its intention to fund the Russian research. This decision might well be related to the fast breeder reactor programme's poor commercial showing. The burgeoning co-operation between Japan and Russia is under threat, however. In October 1993 Russia dumped nuclear waste in the Sea of Japan and this action, together with the ongoing dispute over the northern territories (the islands to the north of Hokkaido), could yet mean the end of joint Russian-Japanese nuclear research.

In the last several years, Japan has also developed a co-operative relationship in this area with Indonesia, offering technological assistance in the construction of its first

power reactor. Japan has also been involved in nuclear technology transfer with China and South Korea. It may be that Japan is encouraging these developing countries with the intention of building up business for its facilities at the Shimokita complex.

The United States has expressed some concern at the rapid development of the nuclear industry in Japan. There have been calls in the US Congress to work for a world-wide ban of the commercial use of plutonium. If the commercial use of plutonium were to be banned, the decision would have most impact on Japan.

Since 1980 the Self Defence Forces of Japan have greatly increased their capability. Japan is no longer reliant on the US military, and now has the second or third largest military budget in the world. In 1992 the military budget was increased by three per cent, even as the Soviet threat melted away. The SDF has been purchasing the most advanced military hardware, such as the F4 and F5 fighter-bombers, which are nuclear-capable. Japan's increasing military might, together with its development of nuclear technology and its plutonium stockpile, is undoubtedly perceived as a threat by certain countries.

Japan's increasing nuclearization is becoming the major security and international relations issue, not just in north-east Asia, but throughout the Asia Pacific region. For Australia, which supplies uranium to Japanese and Korean power utilities, the issue is also of increasing importance. To date, Australia has seen its relationship with Japan primarily as one of shared economic interest. The political implications of Australia's relationship with Japan may need to be rethought in response to the recent developments outlined above.

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