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Join with JCP to Make 21st Century an Era of Hope and Social Progress

Speech by

Shii Kazuo

**Japanese Communist Party
Executive Committee Chair**

**The 37th Akahata Festival
November 3, 2001, Tokyo**

*Shii Kazuo, Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee
Chair, delivered a speech at
the 37th Akahata Festival on November 3.
The Festival was held at Yumenoshima Park in Tokyo from
November 2-4 and attended by about
200,000 people.*

Join with JCP to Make 21st Century an Era of Hope and Social Progress

**Shii Kazuo
Japanese Communist Party
Executive Committee Chair**

Good afternoon. I would like to first extend my hearty welcome and gratitude to all of you here participating in the Akahata Festival, performers on the stage, representatives from overseas and diplomatic circles, and all the staff and volunteers who have supported this festival in a variety of ways.

Military Campaign against Afghanistan is in Quagmire as Expected

This year's Akahata Festival is being held in the midst of a major international crisis.

Let me begin with the massive terrorist attacks on the U.S. and the on-going war of retaliation. The terrorist attacks took the lives of thousands of innocent citizens. These unprecedented atrocities have called upon the international community to rally the wisdom of humanity to build its unity in order to eradicate terrorism.

To realize such international unity, the Japanese Communist Party in the joint names of Central Committee Chair Fuwa and myself has twice sent letters to government leaders throughout the world, calling for the problem to be solved by United Nations-led non-military measures and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

However, a group of countries led by the United States started military strikes against Afghanistan, which continue for almost a month now. The war increasingly takes on an appearance of a war of retaliation, and is falling into a quagmire only to confirm our deep concern.

Innocent people are forced to pay the price -- U.N. office appeals to JCP research team

First, more and more innocent civilians of Afghanistan are falling victim to the war. The offices of NGOs and the International Red Cross, residential houses, hospitals, and an elderly people's facility have been bombed, and many people, including children, women, and elderly, have been killed.

U.S. Time magazine has reported that even in the most conservative estimate, at

least 450 bombs missed their targets. That's about 15 percent of the bombs dropped by the United States on Afghanistan. They say they just missed their targets, but if targets are missed almost every day, they cannot avoid being criticized for causing indiscriminate casualties.

U.S. and British forces are using deadly weapons called "cluster bombs." Exploding in the air, they release about 200 smaller bombs capable of killing and injuring civilians indiscriminately. Dud bombs remain on the ground as landmines. They are so brutal that the International Red Cross is calling for a halt to their use. Fearing that criticism may grow, the U.S. forces are said to be broadcasting a warning about the danger of dud bombs, but only after dropping such bombs. Such a warning would be unnecessary if cluster bombs were not be used. Such a brutal method of warfare must not be condoned.

The United Nations estimates that 900 thousand people among refugees will starve to death as a result of the on-going air strikes. At present, a group of JCP members of parliament led by Ogata Yasuo (House of Councilors member) is in Pakistan. Chris Kaye, head of the Programme Section of the Office of the U.N. Coordinator for Afghanistan, told Ogata that humanitarian assistance to refugees has been suspended by the air strikes and that many of the refugees are on the verge of starving to death. He said that with winter approaching, the need is to resume relief activities without delay and expressed hope that the war will be ended at once.

We must ask what is the purpose in the elimination of terrorism? We are calling for terrorism to be rooted out in order to regain a world in which everyone can feel safe everywhere, aren't we? No country has the right to use force against another country and take the lives of innocent people in pursuit of terrorist suspects.

Unable to serve the aim of eliminating terrorism, the military campaign is at an impasse

Secondly, what they are doing will not help at all to achieve the aim of eradicating terrorism. It has caused many civilian casualties, but the suspects have not been captured. They do not know how to catch them, nor do they know how long they should continue the present military campaign. Everything is uncertain.

U.S. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld now admits that arresting bin Laden is virtually impossible, saying it is like "looking for a needle in a haystack." John Stuffelbeem, joint chief and deputy director of operations for current readiness and capabilities, said, "Honestly we are surprised that the Taliban is so die-hard."

Professor John Arquilla of the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School says that air strikes cannot destroy the terrorist networks and that assassinating bin Laden will only help to make him a martyr and heighten the group's loyalty to their organization. He says air strikes produce evil and does no good.

Recently, I found on the Net that the U.S. defense department is calling on the public to propose ideas that would help combat terrorism. Isn't this more proof that the United States has no exit strategy?

Why don't they adopt what we proposed in our letters to government leaders

throughout the world?

Iranian vice president's remarks and concern over international unity for eradicating terrorism being eroded

Thirdly, due to the retaliatory military operations by the U.S. and other forces, cracks are appearing in the international unity to end terrorism, which in turn is working to benefit the terrorist groups.

Iranian Vice President Mohammad Ali Abdahi recently appealed for a halt to the military strikes against Afghanistan, stating that intellectuals of the Islamic world have long worked to prove to the world that Islam is a peaceful religion and has nothing to do with terrorism or violence. He said that their efforts have helped Islam to reject acts of terror or an ideology that affirms violence practiced by Islamic extremists and that many people regard democratic Islam as acceptable, overshadowing bin Laden's ideology. Then came the terrorist attacks on the United States, and the indignant United States launched strikes against Afghanistan. The Iranian vice president said he was concerned that violence and extreme ideologies may again become prevalent in the world of Islam. He also expressed concern that the U.S. and British strikes will help to make bin Laden a hero and that their extremist ideology will spread.

These concerns are becoming real. Intense anti-U.S. demonstrations are held repeatedly in Pakistan and elsewhere. It is legitimate for them to be indignant at the military strikes on innocent Afghan people, but it is distressing to see some people in those anti-U.S. demonstrations carrying pictures of bin Laden. There are even people who are willing to join the Taliban forces as "volunteers."

The world, including Islamic societies, was united in the effort to eradicate terrorism at least until the retaliatory attacks began. This unity is now being seriously eroded.

Terrorist groups with a global network can only be rooted out when a united world stands firm to besiege them. I want to strongly criticize military actions by a handful of countries will only help to create more hotbeds of terrorism, rather than eliminating them.

Switch to U.N.-led Efforts to Find a Solution

What would be the way to solve this problem? I would like to call for a shift from military strikes by a handful of countries to U.N.-led measures to bring the perpetrators to justice. An immediate halt to the air strikes must be called first.

It will help rebuild international unity for elimination of terrorism

No one can predict what terrorists would do in response to U.N.-led measures. But I can assure you that such measures are essential for the restoration of international unity in the effort to eliminate terrorism.

The United Nations could identify bin Laden as a suspect of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States and demand that the Taliban extradite bin Laden. If the Taliban refuses bin Laden's extradition, the United Nations could

take measures against the Taliban based on international agreements that involve Islamic societies. If we take these steps one by one, we will be able to besiege the terrorist group and no longer allow bin Laden to distort the struggle against terrorism as a struggle between the United States and Islam. In a setting in which the international community confronts the terrorist groups, a united international community can isolate them.

Calls for "no more acts of terrorism, no more wars" will influence international politics

Calls for "no more acts of terrorism, no more wars" are rising throughout the world. Government leaders of Islamic countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Iran, have issued statements demanding a halt to the on-going military campaign. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan recently stated that the military campaign as a whole, in particular the air strikes, should be ended as quickly as possible.

Let us raise awareness and strengthen the movement, both in Japan and internationally, calling for a halt to the retaliatory war and a switch to U.N.-led efforts to solve the problem and use its power to influence international politics.

LDP Government is Only Interested in Sending SDF Troops as Quickly as Possible to Battlefields

What is the Japanese government doing at this juncture? Japan is a country which has renounced war in the Constitution's Article 9. Referring to the JCP letters to the world's government leaders, JCP Central Committee Chair Fuwa has said that given Article 9, the Japanese government should have issued such a letter if it stands for the constitutional principle laid down in Article 9. I totally agree with his view.

Prime Minister Koizumi only showed subservience to U.S.

One week after the start of the U.S.-led military campaign, I had a talk with Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro. On that occasion, I explained what we stated in the letter to the world's government leaders and said that the government should present this position to the United Nations and the international community. The prime minister said U.N.-led efforts won't be effective because bin Laden would not turn up even at the request of the United Nations. I disputed Mr. Koizumi by pointing out that the United Nations has neither identified the suspects nor demanded their extradition in connection with the recent incidents. I said it is illogical of him to conclude that the suspect would not turn up and is unreasonable of him to insist that there is no way other than using force without even requesting an extradition. Prime Minister Koizumi only said, "We and the JCP have disparate views" and fell silent. How undemocratic it is for the Prime Minister to refuse to even discuss simply because he has differences with the JCP.

The talk with the prime minister makes me strongly feel that the Japanese government totally lacks judgment about ways to determine a reasonable means of eliminating terrorism. How lamentable his attitude is!

The only thing the Japanese government has in mind is how quickly Japan can

take part in the retaliatory war and go to the battlefields. That was why the government railroaded through a bill in both houses of parliament to allow the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to take part in the retaliatory war in violation of the Constitution. The discussion of the bill took only nine days.

Struggle now begins to block the implementation of the unconstitutional law

The unconstitutional law has been enacted, but specific measures are still to be determined. In the course of making concrete plans to implement the law, we will see how outrageous what the government has in mind is.

There is a plan to deploy a Maritime Self-Defense Force fleet to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean for the purpose of transporting fuel and other supplies to the U.S. aircraft carrier task force from which missiles are being launched and fighters are taking off for air strikes. SDF supply units will be firmly integrated into the U.S. carrier task force at war. The government's claim that "Japan will not participate in war" can thus no longer be tenable.

Sending a state-of-the-art warship equipped with the Aegis system is another problem. "Aegis" is a Greek word for "shield." The Aegis destroyer has a system that can simultaneously intercept more than ten aircraft and missiles from as far as away several hundred kilometers. It also has a system that can detect submarines and attack them. But what is the point in deploying such a powerful warship? The Taliban has neither aircraft nor missiles to strike targets in the sea, let alone submarines. First and foremost, Afghanistan does not face the sea. The necessity of deploying the Aegis destroyer cannot be explained. The Japanese government wants to deploy it only because it wants to see the Japanese national flag fly proudly in the Indian Ocean. Once "satisfactory results" are achieved, Japan will be allowed to do anything in the future. This is exactly what the Japanese government wants.

Our struggle now begins. We need to closely monitor how the unconstitutional law will be implemented in order to send SDF units to the retaliatory war.

Japan's Participation Only Makes It Difficult for Japan to Carry out What is Needed

The point here is that Japan's participation in the U.S. retaliatory war is making it very difficult for Japan to do what's needed.

Refugee assistance: Trust Japan has earned because of its war-renunciation is in jeopardy

Look at the activities in support of refugees. Japanese NGOs have been doing a great job in giving Afghan refugees assistance in cooperation with the United Nations and the International Red Cross. But we know that many people are expressing concerns that Japanese SDF participation in the U.S. war may cause difficulties in their relief activities.

A relief worker told the JCP team that he is concerned that news about SDF

military support for U.S. forces might give rise to anti-Japanese feelings among Afghan and Pakistani people who have looked at Japan with favor, thus making it difficult for Japanese NGOs to continue their activities.

Another relief worker said that Japan would be regarded as a party to the war, and that NGO volunteers would have to stop their activities and leave if SDF troops come into the refugee camp.

A volunteer organization member said that Japanese volunteers have been accepted because they are from a country that has never been involved in any wars since the end of World War II, and that the existence of Japan as an "exceptional country" has held out hope to all those people who have been suffering from wars.

Precisely because of the war renouncing Article 9 of its Constitution, Japan has been a country of hope and gained international trust. But if Japan becomes a party to the war in violation of the Constitution, Japanese refugee assistance will face enormous difficulties.

If Japan is serious about helping Afghan refugees, it should call off the SDF participation in the war and extend adequate support to relief activities by civilians, including NGOs.

Japan's approach to Middle East question will destroy friendly feelings Middle Eastern people have had toward Japan

Another problem is that what Japan is doing will also make it difficult for Japan to carry out diplomacy for a just peace to be achieved in the Middle East.

Terrorism and the question of Palestine are often described as being interlocked. The JCP does not support the view that "the problem of terrorism cannot be solved before the Palestine question is settled." Acts of terrorism are unjustifiable. It is also clear that a just solution of the question of Palestine will be of great significance in bringing the world together in the effort to root out terrorism. It is because the terrorist groups have taken advantage of the U.S. defense of Israel's policy of aggression which draws strong criticism from the Arab people.

The JCP has called for a just solution of the question of Palestine to be achieved through the recognition of the Palestinian people's national right to self-determination, including their right to establish an independent state, Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories, and coexistence of the Palestinians and Israelis without calling for each other's destruction. Isn't this the kind of initiative that should be taken by the Japanese government, which is guided by the Constitution's Article 9?

Many Middle East watchers point to the friendly feelings that the people of the Middle East have toward Japanese people. The Middle East is a region that suffered hardships under colonial rule by European countries. In the past, Japan also made a big mistake of carrying out a war of aggression in East Asia. But Japan has not admitted to the mistake and therefore is still to be cleared of responsibility for the crime. Japan stopped short of attacking the Middle East. After World War II, Japan's Middle East diplomacy on the whole has lacked an independent policy and has uncritically followed that of the United States. But unlike the United State and

the former Soviet Union, Japan has no history of militarily intervention in Middle East conflicts. This is because of Article 9 of the Constitution. The friendly feelings the Middle Eastern people have toward Japanese people are related to this historical background. This is an example showing the value of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. But this value is being endangered by the SDF's participation in the retaliatory war.

Pakistanis are asking Japan to play its role in accordance with Article 9 by not sending the SDF

In Pakistan, Ogata Yasuo, leader of the JCP fact-finding team, met with a representative of a think tank called the Professional Forum, which is composed of experts from various fields in Pakistan. In a report to us, Ogata quoted the representative as making the following points:

"Japan is wrongly sending SDF units abroad. No country or nation of this region has ever looked at Japan with hatred. By deploying SDF units abroad, Japan will be involved in the conflict and even go so far as to assist U.S. forces in action. This will mean that Japan will no longer be their friend. Japan constitutionally renounced military force, so I hope Japan will play its part accordingly, all the more because it knows the havoc created by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the calamity the war caused to innocent people."

This is what we hear in Pakistan. As a country that has a war-renouncing constitution, Japan must not send SDF units only to lose the Middle East people's trust. Japan should take a diplomatic initiative to shift the course of combating terrorism to one of U.N.-led efforts; it should actively cooperate with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations in helping Afghan refugees and make independent diplomatic efforts to help realize a just peace in the Middle East. I want to strongly demand that Japan should address these tasks immediately as a country guided by Article 9.

Let's Work to Have Regulations Established in Japan to Make Large Corporations Fulfill Their Social Responsibility Concerning Employment

Let me move on to the question of the struggle to defend our living conditions.

Unemployment is a major social problem today. The unemployment rate for September was a record 5.3 percent. Despite this, the large corporations are competing with each other for job cuts through corporate restructuring, and the government is actively supporting them!

U.N. has warned against log work hours and outrageous restructuring

In no major industrialized country other than Japan are large corporations allowed to carry out their restructuring on such a large scale without regard for the basic rights and needs of the workers.

In its August 31 letter to the Japanese government, the U.N. Executive

Committee on Economic and Social Affairs made an important warning on two issues:

One was about long working hours. Expressing deep concerns about the excessively long working hours being allowed, the U.N. committee advised the Japanese government to use necessary legal or administrative measures to reduce working hours.

The other is about corporate restructuring. Expressing concerns over the fact that workers 45 years or older are in the danger of being forced to accept pay cuts or to be laid off without any adequate compensation, the U.N. committee recommended that the Japanese government take measures to ensure that those workers will maintain the same level of wages and job security as they did in the past.

Long working hours and ruthless job cuts represent the terrible conditions imposed on Japanese workers, and this is why the United Nations has issued a warning. In light of the U.N. recommendations, we are demanding that dismissals by large corporations be regulated and that jobs be created through a shorter workweek without pay cuts to make work-sharing possible.

I want to call on you to act in opposition to the outrageous restructuring and in defense of jobs in a national struggle.

In the workplaces of large corporations, workers are beginning to struggle to have regulations established to protect workers in the workplace. Corporate restructuring in most cases is carried out in complete disregard of the existing labor laws. If workers pluck up their courage to protest, they certainly can win. At the Shirokiya restaurant chain, the workers' struggle succeeded in making the company pay 3.8 billion yen for unpaid overtime work. At Keihin Steel Company, workers forced the company to stop transferring workers to subsidiary companies without workers' consent. At Oki Electric, the JCP branch called on the workers to keep a record of overtime worked, which turned out to be instrumental to get the Labor Standards Inspection Office to advise the company to fundamentally correct the practice as a result of its inspections.

Residents of all strata are beginning to act to protect their local economies. Massive corporate restructuring by large corporations is causing enormous hardships on subcontractors, local shopping districts, and local governments. In Kashiwazaki City in Niigata Prefecture, when NEC announced a plan for a plant closing, the mayor and the president of the local chamber of commerce requested that the company reverse the decision. They said, "We are more angry than surprised to learn of the closure plan which was announced in disregard of the help and cooperation the city has offered to the company using about 10 billion yen." This has led to a community-wide struggle.

Large corporations are lacking sense of social responsibility

The aim of our struggle should be to establish rules that make big corporations fulfill their social responsibility. Frankly, many of those who run large corporations in Japan lack a sense of social responsibility. Asked in a recent magazine interview about the responsibility of a CEO for the deteriorating corporate

environment, a major telecommunication company president, who is pushing ahead with massive restructuring, said, "A stupid question. Lazy workers are to blame." " I am responsible for shareholders because we use their money as operating fund, but I am not responsible for the workers. The president tells them what to do. That's what company management is about."

These companies say that their political donations to the ruling LDP are justifiable because "corporations are social entities" but that they are not responsible for their workers. How selfish and arrogant they are!

In Europe, those companies that are willing to assume social responsibility are regarded as good corporations with higher investment values

In Europe, such conduct is impossible. Large corporations are commonsensical in fulfilling their social responsibility, and rules are established in all fields of society to safeguard the people's livelihoods.

In July, the European Commission issued a policy document ("Green Paper") entitled, "Promoting European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility." It states that corporations are responsible not only to shareholders but more broadly to workers, trading partners, the environment, and local people. In Britain, the government has a special minister in charge of affairs related to corporate social responsibility. The Danish government makes public its evaluation of corporate performances regarding their social responsibility, scoring them from 0 to 100.

In Europe, those companies that are willing to assume social responsibility are regarded as good corporations with higher investment values in the longer term.

These rules in Europe were not created spontaneously. In the last 20 years, many corporate restructuring plans have been put forward by large corporations only to meet with fierce opposition from the public. After protracted struggles, regulations concerning dismissals have been established as rules to protect the vested rights of workers. This is how the idea of corporate social responsibility has been formed.

Advances achieved through the anti-pollution struggle in late 1960s

In Japan, too, significant results were achieved in the struggle to force large corporations to accept social responsibility. Beginning in the late 1960s, industrial pollution became a major social problem, giving rise to a major anti-pollution national struggle led by pollution victims. Court struggles achieved victories in lawsuits, including the four major cases: Minamata disease; "Itai-itai" disease; the Yokkaichi air-pollution that caused asthma among the region's residents; and organic mercury poisoning in a district near the Aganogawa River in Niigata Prefecture. Combined with the JCP's parliamentary struggles, legislation to control industrial pollution was substantially strengthened, and the advancement of relief measures for the victims was achieved. After many twists and turns, we have achieved such significant results in this field that no one can deny the need for corporate social responsibility.

This is the first year of the 21st century. Let us make 2001 the starting point of

the historic national struggle to establish corporate social responsibility as in Europe, and to get rules established to protect jobs, local small businesses, and local economies,

Let's Establish Social Services in Conformity with Constitution's Article 25

Plan for unprecedented adverse revision of the health insurance system

Now, let me talk about the struggle against the proposed adverse reform of social services, in particular the health insurance system.

The Koizumi Cabinet is proposing a major adverse change that will ask individual insured patients to pay 30 percent of medical treatment costs instead of the 20 percent at present, and raise the eligible age for free medical care to 75 instead of 70 at present.

Remember that not one of the three ruling parties (Liberal Democratic, Komei, and New Conservative) put forward plans for such a major adverse revision in the July 29 House of Councilors election. The present health, labor and welfare minister is a Komei Party member. During the election, when surveyed by the Japanese Medical and Dental Practitioners for Improvement of Medical Care Hodanren, the Komei Party clearly stated that it was opposed to raising the patients' payment of medical bills to 30 percent of medical treatment costs. We call this a renege on election promises, but they would call anyone that breaks election promises a "liar." Let us remind them that they must not be allowed to call for the adverse revision that would affect people's lives and health without asking for the electorate's judgment.

In Europe, rising medical expenditure would not be balanced by increased patient burden

Japan's social services, in particular medical services, may be seen as aberrant abroad. No European country would try to restrain medical expenditure by shifting heavier burdens onto patients and making it difficult for patients to receive medical treatment as it is Japan. Let's take a look at patients' burden of medical expenses in 15 European Union (EU) countries.

In Germany, Britain, Italy, Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, and Greece, patients -- both insurance policy holders and their family members -- do not have to pay expenses for medical treatment. Patients in these countries are only asked to pay a small fixed-amount or a certain amount of the cost for medicine.

In the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Finland, inpatients and outpatients are asked to pay a fixed percentage of medical treatment costs which is much lower than in Japan. In France, patients are asked to pay 20 percent (for inpatients) and 30 percent (for outpatients) of medical treatment costs, but about 80 percent of the people can use the mutual aid system to be exempt of such payments.

In Europe, the common notion is that patients with chronic diseases or those with low-incomes must not be charged with high costs.

What the Koizumi cabinet is trying to do is totally aberrant in light of what's happening in many advanced capitalist countries.

Social programs in Europe have been protected and even improved thanks to popular movements against all attempts to adversely change the systems. In the second half of the 1990s, millions of people took part in general strikes in France and Germany to foil attempts at major adverse changes in social services, and in both countries the governments were forced to resign.

Let us also build up a national movement to foil the plan that threatens the people's lives and health, a movement strong enough to overthrow the government.

Court ruling shows quintessence of Constitution's article 25

What do we want to achieve in the struggle over social services? It is to establish social services guided by Article 25 of the Constitution.

Article 25 proclaims the Japanese people's right to live in comfort. We can take pride in and treasure this constitutional provision that establishes the people's social rights with such clarity that no other G-7 country has in their constitutions.

Article 25 provides that all people have the right to maintain "the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living. It states that the State has responsibility to promote and extend social welfare and security. Let's think about the responsibility of State.

Many years ago, there was a lawsuit brought by Asashi Shigeru, a JCP member, demanding an overhaul of welfare assistance. He based the demand on Article 25 of the Constitution. In 1960, the Tokyo District Court upheld Asahi's demand, saying, "'Wholesome and cultured living' as provided in Article 25 is a right for every Japanese citizen, and therefore the State has a duty to translate the provision into concrete action. Such assistance must be provided regardless of whether the nation's coffers are empty or full. The State must be in full control of it."

What an outstanding idea it is! Although this lawsuit was concluded with a reactionary higher court decision verdict as a result of his death, I believe the definition of Article 25 delivered by the Tokyo District Court represents the quintessence of Article 25.

The State has the responsibility to improve social services. The Tokyo District Court ruling means that social welfare and social security serve as the basis of people's lives and health, and that the government cannot refuse to provide social services because of a shortage of government funds. Funding social services must be a budgetary priority.

The LDP government's way is totally upside-down. It decides the amount of money to be used for wasteful public works projects first, followed by military

expenditure and then the budget for helping major banks. After all this, the remainder is allocated to social services, and they then say, "We have run out of money, so please persevere with the limited resources left for social services." This explains how an upside-down budget has been established, in which 50 trillion yen per year of tax money is used for public works projects, while only 20 trillion yen is spent for social services, and government expenditure on social welfare and social security has been reduced year by year. I believe this is the root cause of Japan's inadequate social welfare and social security systems.

Let's establish a social security system guided by Article 25. Let's unite and carry out a national struggle to block the further adverse changes in social services and even improve them, and straighten the upside-down fiscal policy.

We must struggle in order to pave the way for the future. In the 21st century, let us make social progress toward a Japanese society in which we will fight against any attacks on the safety and living conditions of the people in relation to peace, corporate restructuring, social services, and any other issues.

Make JCP Stronger and Bigger so that 21st Century will be a Century of Hope

In advancing any struggle by the people in building a better Japan in the 21st century, it is essential to make the JCP stronger and bigger .

The JCP recently held its 3rd Central Committee Plenum and decided to concentrate on the United Effort till April 2002 to make the party bigger. We will devote all our energy to a JCP membership/Akahata readership drive, while playing an activist role in organizing popular struggles everywhere.

We are determined to make a success of the drive as an essential effort to be victorious in the next House of Representatives general election and the local elections, and to build the party's basic strength which is necessary to shoulder the cause of social progress in the 21st century.

JCP struggle unifies two elements: "Indomitable courage" and "enlightened viewpoint"

What kind of party is the JCP? At the JCP 22nd Congress in 2000, we revised the JCP Constitution to define the party as "a party conscious of its responsibility to play an enlightened and indomitable role in Japanese society." The JCP is a party with indomitable courage with which to work hard for social progress in defiance of any oppression and difficulties. It is also a party that has an enlightened viewpoint and capacity to grasp society and nature with scientific vision based on the achievement of human wisdom. The JCP unifies these two aspects.

This of course means that we are aware of our responsibility, and do not intend to impose our will on the general public. Only through our untiring efforts to get popular support and understanding, can we earn a favorable appraisal of the JCP.

When we talk about "indomitable courage" and "enlightened viewpoint," the JCP has a history which we are proud of. In the prewar dark years, our predecessors

risked their lives to stand firm for peace and democracy, and many of them lost their lives under severe repression. But their demands are fully reflected in the Constitution after the War.

Yesterday, we had a special event at the Akahata Festival to celebrate the historical victory in the leprosy lawsuit. We are also proud that JCP members have strenuously supported this struggle with indomitable spirit in sanatoriums throughout the country for decades since the end of World War II.

"Indomitable courage" and "enlightened viewpoint" is not something that belongs to a special group of people. We deliver the JCP newspaper Akahata every day throughout the country and collect Akahata subscription fees. These activities also represent the "indomitable courage" that pertains to the JCP. Allow me to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt respect and thanks to all those who participate in these activities.

Why don't you join the JCP and work hand in hand with us

The JCP doors are open to all people who are willing to devote their lives to the cause of social progress in appropriate ways. Anyone who refuses to overlook injustices and tries to correct them will find in the JCP a their reliable partner. Join the JCP and work together with us toward a Japan of hope in the 21st century.

Three Outstanding Aspects of Akahata's Role in Present-day Society

I'd like to point out the important role played by Newspaper Akahata in Japan today. I'm sure you will allow me to use the Akahata Festival to promote some public relations for Akahata. Let me explain "three outstanding aspects."

Newspaper representing Japan's intelligence and awareness

First, Akahata is a newspaper that represents Japan's intelligence and awareness.

I think this is vividly demonstrated through its reports on the on-going war that followed the terrorist attacks.

Many of the commercial media are being criticized by some media people for putting out biased reports that would incite the retaliatory war and encourage the Self-Defense Forces' to participate in the war. Akahata is the only newspaper that persists with cool-headed and intelligent reports.

A famous journalist commended Akahata for reporting on demonstrations and gatherings, large and small, taking place at home and abroad in opposition to the retaliatory air strikes. He also likened Akahata's coverage to a close meshed net covering the whole of the globe.

War is a reflection of the essence of things and events. During the war of aggression half a century ago, commercial newspapers competed with each other for larger circulation by campaigning for the war. Commercial newspapers are They have a weakness for war.

In the last war of aggression, Sekki -- Akahata's predecessor -- was the only newspaper that fairly and squarely argued that the war was wrong. Akahata reports on the on-going retaliatory war are testimony to the historical courage which is alive and well. Akahata does not get carried away by any war fever, and its reporting is consistent with the cause of peace. Akahata is a newspaper which is critical of war.

Akahata as banner of people's struggles

Second, Akahata is a banner for people's struggles.

There have been cases in which what Akahata reported became known widely in society and helped social struggles to achieve results.

At Sega Corporation and NCR Japan, flagrant human rights violations took place in confinement rooms for the segregation of workers. Reporters of Akahata's People's Movement Section discussed the matter and decided to completely expose the inhumane corporate restructuring practice until the company management apologize for the outrageous practice and end it.

Akahata reports on the inhumane treatment of employees in those companies were followed by commercial newspapers and broadcast media. Finally, the company was forced to close the infamous confinement rooms. Now you can see how Akahata is a newspaper for all those who pluck up the courage to fight against injustices and absurdities.

Akahata helps develop heart-to-heart human relations among its readers

Thirdly, Akahata is a newspaper that can help develop heart-to-heart relations among its readers.

I read readers' comments in Akahata's "Readers Forum" every day. Recently, I noticed a letter from a woman who receives medical treatment for her back pain apparently caused by long hours of work. She said:

"People are living in many different conditions. Some are struggling with hardships. Others might say, 'Stop and take a rest before you collapse.' I don't know how many times I was moved to tears by such hearty comments. I now know I am not alone suffering. When I physically feel that I have close ties with people all over the country, I recover both physically and emotionally."

Akahata's humane contents that create such warm solidarity among people can help attract readers.

Future Belongs to Cause of Social Progress and Change, the Question being How Fast We Can Get It

None of us believe that the Liberal Democratic Party will continue to be in power throughout the 21st century. The end of LDP politics will come, paving the way

for a new Japan in which people are the key players. The future belongs to the cause of social progress and progressive change. The point is how fast we can accomplish this objective. It hinges on making the JCP stronger and bigger.

Let's join hands with the JCP to make the 21st century a hopeful era of new progress for the Japanese people and humanity worldwide.

Power to the 37th Akahata Festival!

Thank you for your patience in the heavy rain. (end)

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