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Speech at the 40th Akahata Festival

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JCP Executive Committee Chair
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Dear friends,

Good afternoon. I am Shii Kazuo of the Japanese Communist Party. Welcome to the Akahata Festival! I also would like to express a hearty welcome to all the honorable ambassadors and other distinguished guests from the diplomatic corps in Tokyo.

It has long been a custom at the Akahata Festival for us to focus on the JCP's role both in Japan and the world in the existing situation. Today, I would like to talk about the topic: "What yardstick should we use to evaluate political parties?"

In recent years, there have been attempts to introduce a so-called "two party system," pushing voters to choose either the Democratic Party of Japan or the Liberal Democratic Party. The intent is to exclude from voters' choice those parties with no chance of becoming the ruling party. But this is not the way to judge the true value of political parties, is it?

I'd like to present you with five yardsticks which I imagine every one of you would agree on in evaluating the value of political parties. Let's think about it.

First yardstick—party program

First is the party's political program.

The program is essential for a political party. No one can deny this. One of our forerunners, Friedrich Engels, once said: a party program is "a banner planted in public" and "the outside world judges the party by it." The program is also the party's basic promise to the people.

The DPJ has no program, the LDP has never presented its program before the public

What do these two major political parties have to say about a party program?

The DPJ is the ruling party, but does not have its own program. The party took power helped by the public opinion demanding an end to the LDP-Komei government. But after much wavering and disarray, it ended up as just another LDP on many policies including the U.S. Futenma base relocation issue, consumption tax hike and the “money and politics” problem. Underlying this is the problem that the party does not have its own program to change the present situation in the country. They don’t even seem to mind that they have no program, which is beyond my understanding. Here lies the party’s fundamental problem.

The LDP criticizes the DPJ for “having no program.” But what about the LDP? Just after becoming an opposition party in January, the LDP hastily drew up a so-called “new program.” But this program lacks substance. It only lines up empty words: the LDP will build a country which the Japanese people can be proud of and provide politics that is fair to everybody.

In fact, since the foundation of the party, the LDP has had an unwritten but nevertheless real program, one which is subservient to the United States and which works for the interests of large corporations. The party, feeling ashamed of this program, has never advanced it in public.

These are what you may call the two major parties. The one has no program, and the other, feeling ashamed of itself, has never shown it in public. Isn’t it clear we can’t leave our future in the hands of these parties?

Japanese economy: The only solution to the crisis can be found in transforming the economy toward one governed by rules

What is the Party Program that the JCP has been upholding for half a century? What the program puts in a nutshell is that the JCP will end two aberrations: politics characterized by Japan’s subservience to the United States and priority given to the interest of large corporations, and will remake Japan so that the people are the key players. This is the banner the JCP has consistently carried for half a century. It has become clearer than ever that only through this path can we break Japan’s current political stalemate.

Now let us look at Japan’s economy. The old argument, “If you support large corporations, the economy will get better and people’s livelihoods will be improved before long,” does not work anymore. The typical example is that the

wages of working people have kept decreasing for 12 years in a row. Average wages in the private sector sharply decreased by 610,000 yen from 4.67 million yen in 1997 to 4.06 million yen in 2009. On the other hand, the savings or internal reserves of large corporations continued to swell to 244 trillion yen, of which 52 trillion yen is reserved in the form of cash and deposits, an excessive amount of savings unprecedented in the world.

Large corporations are at a loss how to use their excessive savings. Then why don't we demand that the government use its power to make large corporations spend their huge savings for investment and employment in the interest of the Japanese economy and people's livelihoods? To make it a success, we need to change the current economic policy to one directly supporting household economies and stimulating domestic demand.

Friends, let us join forces to achieve a drastic revision of the Worker Dispatch Law and a drastic increase in the minimum wages so that higher wages and decent work are guaranteed.

Let us abolish the medical care system for the elderly aged 75 and older, and reduce the high premiums for national health insurance, and take a step forward to improve overall social services, including free medical care for the elderly and children.

Let us establish rules for fair trade between large corporations and small- and medium-sized enterprises. In agriculture, we call on you to join us in a major campaign on the following tasks: price guarantees and income compensation so that farmers can earn incomes adequate to be able to continue farming; opposing Japan's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) that will destroy Japan's agriculture and the local economy; and establishing trade rules to guarantee food sovereignty for all countries.

Let us build an economy governed by rules in which large corporations are obliged to fulfill their social responsibility, an economic reform proposed by the JCP Program. Only through this reform can we overcome the current crisis in the Japanese economy and get it on track to sound growth.

An economist close to the business circles: "Wage hike is the best strategy for economic growth"

Recently, an economist at a think tank close to Nippon Steel Corporation made a proposal: "A growth strategy required by Japan is a policy to set forth targets for wage hikes."

The report says, "It may be reasonable for individual companies to curb wages, increase profits and save money. But if all companies do the same thing, demand will cool down, goods won't sell well and companies will end up digging their own graves. But it is difficult at the same time for an individual company to raise wages on its own. Here it is the responsibility of the government. On such issues as temporary workers, regulation on dismissals, and corporate institutional structures, the government must put forth a policy package to reverse the currents of deregulation and facilitate wage hikes, and must implement it step by step. This is the best growth strategy."

This is very reasonable, isn't it? The proposal was made by an economist close to the business circles, which clearly illustrates the relevance of the JCP Program.

U.S. military bases in Okinawa: An opinion advocated by the JCP 14 years ago has now been embraced as the consensus of the Okinawan people

What about diplomacy? The question of U.S. military bases in Okinawa has come to a dead end. The Japanese government insists on pushing ahead with the "Japan-U.S. agreement" on the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station from Futenma to Henoko, but the Okinawan people's consensus on the closure and removal of the Futenma Air Station and opposition to its relocation within the prefecture is all the more determined.

I am filled with deep emotion when I recall that it is only the JCP that has consistently opposed "relocation" within Okinawa from the beginning. In December 1996, the governments of Japan and the United States signed the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) agreement, with the aim of fending off the Okinawans' anger over the rape of a young girl in 1995. The SACO agreement decided on the return of the Futenma Air Station, but on condition that it be relocated within Okinawa by building a new sea-based station. It was only the JCP that opposed this agreement and put up a fight with the slogan: "We want removal, not relocation."

Fourteen years ago, we were labeled "unrealistic," but we argued, "It is relocation that is unrealistic because suffering will remain wherever it is transferred. Removal is the only realistic solution." People's struggles have spread all over Okinawa. They have not allowed even a pile to be driven into the beautiful sea for the last 14 years. The policy of "relocation within Okinawa" went bankrupt, and "opposition against relocation within Okinawa" has spread across political affiliations and became a solid consensus of the people.

Why has the JCP been able to maintain the call for "removal, not relocation" for the last 14 years? Underlying this is the power of the Party Program "aiming for a

Japan without the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the U.S. military bases.” Only because we firmly raise this major goal, can we consistently oppose the attempt to build new bases for the U.S. military to remain in Okinawa far into the 21st century.

The Okinawa gubernatorial election is coming up. We call on all of you across the country to engage in struggles in solidarity with the people of Okinawa supporting Iha Yoichi with the aim of realizing their aspirations: “Opposition against the relocation within Okinawa” and “U.S. Marine Corps, out of Okinawa.”

Second yardstick—party history

Why has the JCP been able to maintain the same name for the last 88 years since its founding?

The second yardstick is what kind of history the JCP has. Party history is also an important yardstick with which to measure the value of a party.

Since it was founded 88 years ago in 1922, the JCP has continued to maintain the name, the Japanese Communist Party. The JCP is the only party to have opposed, at the risk of the lives of party members, the war of aggression and colonial domination by former Japanese militarism. Therefore, we were able to restart our activity postwar with the same name. We’ve heard many people ask us, “Why don’t you change your name?” But I want them to see why we did not need to change the name.

The other parties also have their own histories. All the other parties, except the Komei Party, originated in prewar politics. But all of them other than the JCP, namely conservative parties as well as one calling itself “socialist,” dissolved into the Imperial Rule Assistance Association and promoted the war of aggression. After World War II, all of them changed their names as they could not face the people with their former names.

JCP history does not belong to the past alone. Its vitality remains alive in the present. Let me introduce two events I came across this year by which I felt this vitality deeply.

100 years after Japan’s annexation of Korea—We declare categorically the annexation treaty is illegal and unjust

This year marks the 100th year of Japan’s annexation of Korea. On August 15, I had an opportunity for the first time to address a meeting sponsored by the Korean

Residents Union in Japan in commemoration of the Liberation Day of Korea. Entitled the “100th year anniversary of Japan’s annexation of Korea and the JCP position,” I spoke as follows:

“Japan’s annexation of Korea was achieved through repeated aggression, the assassination of Korea’s Empress, the intimidation of Korea’s Emperor and government officials, and military repression of the Korean people’s resistance, all of which were carried out by the Japanese military. Therefore, the ‘Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty’ is illegal and unjust, having been unilaterally imposed by Japan on Korea by military pressure.” The moment they heard this, the whole audience responded with warm applause.

Actually, the Japanese government cannot say even now that the annexation treaty is illegal and unjust. All they can say is that the treaty is already null and void. This is because they did not reflect on Japan’s colonial rule when they normalized diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea in 1965 by signing the Japan-ROK Treaty on Basic Relations.

The JCP can say clearly and firmly that the annexation treaty is illegal and unjust, only because it had demanded the liberation of Korea, Taiwan and other areas from the yoke of colonial rule since the party’s establishment. Addressing the people in the room, I took pride in the unyielding struggle of our predecessors.

History does not have a statute of limitations. Only when Japanese politics resolves this question, can it establish true friendly relations with the Korean people.

I’d like to tell you something. In October, we received an invitation to join the Japan-ROK Parliamentarians’ League, and so we arranged memberships for all JCP Dietmembers. Four years previously, when I visited the ROK heading the JCP delegation, we heard many people from the political circles there say, “Why is the JCP excluded from the Parliamentarians’ League? We think they should be accorded membership.” This had been a pending issue, but I’d like to tell you we have seen a step forward also on this question. As members of the Parliamentarians’ League, we have entered into normal relationships with the ROK.

Senkaku Islands question—Pioneering view of the party that consistently opposed the war of aggression

Another point I’d like to make is the Senkaku Islands question. The JCP made public its view on this question in 1972, making clear that Japan’s possession of the Senkaku Islands is legitimate based on history and international law. On October 4 this year, it issued a more detailed view on this question.

The point we delved into this time was the following: In countering China's claim that "the Senkakus were unjustly taken over by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War," we proclaimed, after a careful examination of the Shimonoseki Treaty that provided for peace in the Sino-Japanese War and all the minutes of the related negotiations, that "the acquisition by Japan of the Senkaku Islands was a legitimate act under international law, completely different in nature from the acts of aggression and territorial expansion as was the case in the cession of Taiwan and the Pescadores (Penghu) Group through the Sino-Japanese War."

This statement drew a wide-ranging response from various quarters. A Ministry of Defense official said, "It is most important for Japan to persistently appeal to the international community the legitimacy of its possession of the Senkaku Islands. I pay respect to the JCP view on this question." A former Japanese diplomat said, "The JCP surpasses the government in its view on the question." A minister of an Asian embassy in Japan said, "It is amazing that the JCP made its position clear to this extent in the face of China." Yomiuri Shimbun in its column wrote: "The JCP ranks first in appealing on the Senkakus." During the House of Representatives interpellation, my questioning on this problem drew roaring applause from the hall. On the following day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on its homepage its comments on this question. Many points they carried on the homepage are very similar to those of the JCP. Of course, they can use any phrases they like!

How can we issue such a statement? It is because we are the party that has most vigorously opposed Japan's past wars of aggression and colonial rule. That is why we can put forth a clear-cut argument that Japan unjustly robbed China of Taiwan and the Pescadores (Penghu) Islands through aggression, but its possession of the Senkaku Islands was legitimate and different from the former case.

Weak points of the successive governments, unable to assert Japan's legitimate possession because they haven't made a profound reflection of the war of aggression

What are the problems of the successive Japanese government on this question? They have avoided making serious diplomatic and political efforts to assert the legitimacy of Japan's possession of the Senkaku Islands, either to the Chinese government or to the international community.

Neither at the time diplomatic relations were restored between Japan and China in 1972, nor at the time the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty was concluded in 1978, nor at the time China enacted a territorial-sea law to incorporate the Senkaku Islands into the Chinese territory in 1992, was the Japanese government serious about making a case for Japan's possession of the Senkaku Islands. The DPJ government has the same weakness on this point.

What is the cause of this weakness? Underlying this is the fact that the Japanese government restored diplomatic relations with China without serious examination of the past wars of aggression. According to the declassified minutes of negotiations in September 1972 to restore Japan-China relations between Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei and Chinese Prime Minister Zhou En Lai, Mr. Tanaka did not show any reflection on Japan's past war of aggression. His understanding is something to the effect that Japan caused some troubles to China. On the Senkaku Islands issue, Mr. Tanaka asked, "What do you think of the Senkakus?" Mr. Zhou answered, "I don't want to talk about it." That was all. Japan made no claim of sovereignty over the islands. Absence of reflection on the past war of aggression made him feel guilty. It undermines Japan's ability to assert its case on the possession of the Senkakus, leading to a servile attitude. In the absence of sincere examination of the wars of aggression, the Japanese government is unable to distinguish between the territory it seized as part of its aggression and the territory it lawfully acquired.

In the hope that our ongoing struggle will surely be given life in the future

Only by facing the past errors sincerely and accepting them, can we acquire genuine friendship with Asian nations. By so doing, we can assert our legitimate rights as in the case of the Senkakus, and defend our national interests in the true sense.

The JCP predecessors fought a life and death struggle against the wars of aggression defending the banner of peace during the dark oppressive era. They could have never expected their struggle would make such a lasting contribution to our work in the 21st century. But an action that stands for social justice and reason will inevitably be reflected in the future. This is our conviction.

Friends, let us work together with confidence and hope that our ongoing struggle will surely be given life in the future.

Third yardstick—diplomatic power

Now is the time when diplomatic power based on reason and self-reliant independence carries weight

Mr. Nakae Yosuke, former head of the Asian Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Ambassador to China, said in an interview with the Akahata Sunday edition, as follows:

"What matters most in defending Japan is diplomacy, not defense capabilities. We must enhance our diplomatic prowess. It means we have to watch carefully the

situation of the world as well as countries you are dealing with, and think with our own heads.”

What matters most is “diplomatic prowess backed by independent thinking.” I fully agree with him on this point, the words of a professional who has worked in the diplomatic field for a long time.

The JCP Program puts forth a new world vision in the 21st century on the basis of the structural changes which took place in the past century. The 21st century world is not a place where a handful of big countries can behave as they wish. Rather, it should be a place where every country is a key player in world politics with equal rights. This is what the 21 century world should be like. What is important in such a world is not the size of a country. Not the economic strength, either. Let alone the military might. It is diplomatic prowess that matters, based on reason and self-reliant independence. I would like to stress that this is the new world image in the 21st century.

Who are the key players promoting the currents toward the “world without nuclear weapons”?

Based on this position, the JCP has engaged in what we call opposition party diplomacy.

In the past years we have devoted ourselves to the work on the elimination of nuclear weapons, the goal the Japanese people have long aspired for. The JCP delegation participated in the NPT Review Conference held in May this year in New York and has taken every opportunity to work for “starting international negotiations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.” Let me tell you what I came to realize through my experiences.

First, the task of starting international negotiations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons is in the process of becoming the actual agenda in world politics. The final document adopted by the NPT Review Conference in May 28 set forth an important step in this direction. Furthermore, the First Committee of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly adopted on October 29 a resolution calling for “commencing multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention” with the support of 121 states, an overwhelming majority of the member countries. No doubt Japan’s movement against A and H bombs and the JCP made an important contribution to these positive currents.

Second, the prime movers of these positive currents are not the nuclear weapons states, but the emerging or developing countries. Mr. Libran Cabactulan who successfully presided over the NPT Review Conference is the Philippine’s

Ambassador to the United Nations. Mr. Boniface Chidyausiku, who chaired the Main Committee 1 on nuclear disarmament and prepared a wonderful draft resolution, is Zimbabwe's Ambassador to the United Nations. Mr. Sergio Duarte, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who contributed greatly to the successful outcome of the conference as a whole, is a diplomat from Brazil.

These diplomats from the emerging or developing countries were vying fairly and squarely with the nuclear weapon states, occupying key positions in steering the conference. I was excited to see this and am convinced that this is the landscape of the 21st century.

Third, a new era has come where world public opinion and movements directly influence international politics. Receiving nearly 7 million signatures collected in Japan toward the NPT Review Conference, President Cabactulan began his opening speech by saying that they should respond to these aspirations of the people for a world free of nuclear weapons. His message was very encouraging.

Also UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, after returning to UN Headquarters from Hiroshima Nagasaki in August, said, "The impact of the damage from the nuclear bombs was beyond words, beyond imagination. (...) Hibakusha's courage and strength through so much suffering were truly inspiring. (...) My visit strengthened my personal conviction that we must do everything in our power to realize a world free of nuclear weapons."

The key to creating currents for a nuclear-free world is the struggle by all peace-loving people in the world with Hibakusha at the head.

Fourth, why has the Japanese anti-nuclear weapons movement as well as the JCP been able to play a pioneering role in this field? It is because they built their strength through the trials of history.

In 1963, the former Soviet Union began interfering in Japan's peace movement and the JCP by imposing the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), which was to leave underground nuclear testing go unchecked. Under these circumstances, the former Socialist Party and Sohyo (General Council of Trade Unions of Japan), the then trade union national center, dropped out of Gensuikyo (Japan Council against A and H Bombs). But Japan's peace movement and the JCP have continued the cause for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The fact that they resisted the Soviet interference to the end and established an independent position has made them what they are now.

JCP refused outrageous interference from two big powers and worked out just solutions

The JCP, while suffering outrageous interference from the Soviet Union and China, firmly refused them and was able to make them recognize their errors, in an effort to reach just solutions. We have such a history. During that time, what we depended on was the power of reason or our diplomatic prowess. Not military capabilities. We don't have such power. The JCP history tells us that we can solve problems even without military power.

As regards the nuclear weapons issue, too, we can exercise diplomatic power and influence international politics only if we work with reason and an independent spirit and in solidarity with peace movements in Japan and the world. With this conviction, let us work together to create "a world without nuclear weapons" as early as possible.

Now I'd like to report something. From December 1 to 4, the 6th International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) will be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. I am going to attend it at their invitation. There, I want to discuss with many Asian participants the issue of peace as well as the way to abolish nuclear weapons.

Japanese government lacks diplomatic power—Nuclear weapons issue and the Chishima Islands question

Friends,

Regrettably, the Japanese government lacks such diplomatic power. As regards the nuclear weapons issue, Japan keeps relying on the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" and deflecting the goal of nuclear weapons abolition. Japan itself is obstructing nuclear weapons abolition. Nothing has changed on this issue even after the former LDP government was replaced by the DPJ government.

The Japanese government on October 29, at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, again abstained from voting for a resolution calling for commencing negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention, which was in fact adopted by the overwhelming majority. This was the 15th time in a row for Japan to abstain from voting for similar resolutions since 1996. What a shame for the government of the world's only A-bombed country to suffer 15 consecutive defeats on such a resolution. The government resorts, not to diplomatic power, but to "nuclear deterrence," the means of war. Japan cannot survive in the 21st century with such a policy.

Also on the Japan-Russia territorial issue, what the Japanese government needs is diplomatic power based on reason. Underlying this problem were Stalin's violation of the territorial non-expansion principle embraced by the post-war settlement and the ensuing illegal military occupation. But the Japanese government has never demanded that the world correct this injustice. The JCP demands that the entire Chishima Islands as well as Habomai and Shikotan islands be returned. We strongly call for the DPJ government to stop acting in the conventional way and take steps to start negotiations with Russia on the territorial issue, based on the principled position to redress the unjust post-war settlement.

Fourth yardstick—attitude toward freedom and democracy

The fourth yardstick is the attitude toward freedom and democracy. Democracy and freedom is the important yardstick to measure human progress. We've heard a lot of arguments that "socialism is dictatorship," citing examples of the collapsed Soviet Union and other countries. Let me tell you the JCP position on this issue.

Future society we aim for: full realization of human freedom

Our great predecessors Marx and Engels used "freedom" as a keyword in their theory of future society. The people's right to freedom and democracy is inherited, not only as a valuable achievement of the capitalist era, but will be developed further: Communist society is a community intrinsically characterized by the full realization of human freedom. This is the important part of what Marx and Engels embrace in their theory of future society.

The JCP inherits this viewpoint. In 1976, we published the "Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy" and integrated this viewpoint into the Party Program. The Program says:

"A socialist/communist Japan will inherit and further develop all valuable gains of the capitalist era, including those of democracy and freedom."

"The freedom of various ideologies and beliefs as well as political activities, including those by opposition parties, will be strictly protected."

We will aim for "an association of equal and free human relationships."

These are what the JCP proclaims in its Program.

We will never allow the emergence of a system in Japan that suppresses people, like the one in the former Soviet Union. This is the JCP position and promise.

Human rights question in China: Responses called for from the position reached on human rights in international politics

In relation to the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Chinese writer Liu Xiaobo, China has been under the critical attention of the world for its human rights issues. Let me clarify the JCP position on this issue.

Our position on the political system in China is this: Regardless of the socio-economic system, it is important to envisage development into a political system that acknowledges freedom of speech in responding to any critical remarks about the political system without banning such criticism. Since the normalization of our relations with the Communist Party of China in 1998, we have candidly told China this position on several occasions. I again want to stress the importance to envisage China developing a political system which acknowledges freedom of speech in responding to any critical remarks about the political system.

In view of the achievement reached on human rights in international politics, I also want to emphasize the following points:

In the past, how to deal with human rights in each country was considered to be the internal affairs in each country. But based on historical lessons that the violation of human rights, especially by fascism and militarism, led to World War II, the world came to understand the necessity of establishing a system under which human rights are guaranteed in all countries for the purpose of maintaining peace in the world. To this end, a series of international agreements have been made.

China has supported these international agreements. It supported the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted in 1966 at the UN General Assembly. The covenant set forth its parties' responsibilities to promote and protect a wide range of civil and political rights of individuals, including the freedom of speech and expression.

Furthermore, China supported the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action. It was adopted at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, which was held in Vienna in accordance with the UN General Assembly's resolution. The Vienna Declaration says as follows:

“While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

We can see two principles expressed in this statement. First, the development of freedom and human rights follows a different process in each country, and “the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind,” so that a certain model should not be imposed forcefully.

Second, at the same time, however, “it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms” because human rights and fundamental freedoms are of universal character. This is the important point agreed to by the international community on human rights protection.

We strongly hope that China will adopt the position reached by the international community on this question and earn global trust and understanding.

Human rights and freedoms are big problems facing Japan; We will fight for the protection and development into the future

The protection of basic human rights and freedoms is an overriding problem for Japan. Are those who attack socialism as being dictatorship real protectors of democracy and freedoms?

Suppression of the free distribution of political flyers has taken place again and again, as seen in the Horikoshi, Setagaya and Katsushika incidents. How can you call it a crime for a government employee to distribute an extra edition of a political party’s newspaper around his house on holidays as a private citizen? Why does a citizen have to be prosecuted for placing political flyers into mail boxes at an apartment building that is accessible by anyone? Such unreasonable suppression must never be allowed anywhere in the country.

I’d like to take this opportunity to express our determination to continue fighting in solidarity with all struggles for the freedom of speech and expression.

Also, a major confrontation is taking place over parliamentary democracy. The JCP demands the abolition of the single-seat constituency system and government subsidies to political parties, and strongly opposes a reduction in the number of proportional representation seats in the House of Representatives. It is working for a change toward an election system which properly reflects public will such as through a proportional representation system.

We oppose all dangerous attempts to destroy parliamentary democracy and introduce dictatorship.

On the occasion of the Akahata Festival, I would like to declare the JCP's firm determination to fight for protection and development of basic human rights and democracy far into the future.

Fifth Yardstick—Advance Politics United with the People

The fifth yardstick is whether a political party is united with the people and uses that power to advance nation's politics.

The JCP has about 400,000 members, 22,000 party branches, some 3,000 local assembly members at 80 percent of municipalities, and 1.4 million Akahata readers. It is a party tied to people at the grassroots, and uses that power to advance the political process. This is what we are most proud of. Lastly, I'd like to present the role played by our grassroots network in Japanese society.

Akahata—A newspaper giving people energy and hope

Akahata brings people the energy to live and hope at a time when they are treated very shabbily.

One of the recent feature articles that had far-reaching repercussions was the series, "Asahi Lawsuit: 50 years since the lower-court ruling." I hope you enjoyed it. It vividly depicted the life of Asahi Shigeru, a severe tuberculosis patient who lived on welfare and fought a lawsuit against the government, seeking the right to have humane living conditions.

Asahi joined the JCP in April 1946. For seven years from the time he filed the lawsuit in 1957 till he died, he wrote about 10,000 letters from his bed and organized a nationwide struggle. He left the following words right before his death in February 1964:

"Listening carefully and sincerely on my deathbed, I hear the footsteps of people's liberation like the sound of storm. As a JCP member, I have lived with the support of the party's warm leadership and comrades' passionate friendship. It is my greatest pleasure to silently close my eyes under this flag."

The words he left deeply touched my heart. I believe this series encouraged all the people who are fighting for the right to live humane lives. The JCP is the only political party in Japan publishing a newspaper with such content reaching 1.4 million readers.

“LDP Secretary General’s instructions to develop a paper like Akahata has yet to be carried out”

The Liberal Democratic Party has an organ paper titled “Jiyu Minshu (Freedom and Democracy).” I heard the paper’s chief editor made a report in the 2009 annual meeting of the Japanese Association of Electoral Studies as follows:

“In 1974 when the LDP was led by Tanaka Kakuei, then LDP Secretary General Hashimoto Tomisaburo ordered us to work out an organ paper like Akahata. Comparing Jiyu Minshu with Akahata, the latter has a strategy to increase readership among not only JCP members and its supporters but also the general public to make them JCP supporters. The reason why Akahata carries sports and the TV listings like other commercial newspapers is because of this strategy. The LDP paper targets only its core supporters and is filled with political and party-related articles. Hashimoto’s order in 1974 has yet to be carried out.”

Considering that the chief editor of LDP’s organ paper says that they cannot follow the suit of Akahata, I think the value of Akahata is indisputable.

Distribution network represents over two trips around the earth every day—activity no other party can duplicate

The daily and weekly Akahata are printed at six factories across the country and transported to local JCP offices in preparation for delivery. Thanks to efforts made by more than 120,000 party members and supporters, Akahata is delivered to readers throughout the country. The daily mileage of trucks transporting Akahata is about 43,000 km, more than one complete journey around the earth. Together with other transportation involved in Akahata delivery, this represents more than two complete journeys around the earth.

Those who engage in delivering Akahata and collecting subscription fees require tenacious efforts on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. These are not very appealing but still very precious activities to support the JCP by the base, which no other political parties can achieve.

On the occasion of the Akahata Festival, I express my heartfelt gratitude to those who engage in these activities.

**Power of the network combining 3,000 local assembly members (1)—
financial support for medical treatment fees for children**

Three thousand JCP local assembly members working together with 22,000 JCP branches across the country play a significant role in advancing Japanese politics.

Let me give you three examples.

The first example is their contribution to facilitating financial support for children's medical treatment fees. At present, all local governments provide households with children programs to help relieve their burden, including a free medical service for children.

This service drastically developed from the late 1980s through the 1990s. A major driving force was a signature collection campaign on a petition circulated by local JCP branches together with various organizations, including civil groups, the New Japan Women's Association, the Japan Federation of Democratic Medical Institutions, and the Japanese Medical and Dental Practitioners for Improvement of Medical Care, demanding that local assemblies exert efforts for free medical services.

At first, political parties except the JCP opposed the petition in many local assemblies. But repeated actions changed local governments' policy. It is often the case that once the authorities of a local government start studying a service, other parties also start demanding that the service be enacted. I won't mention the name of a specific party, but the party never fails to show up in such a case. Anyway, on this case, local JCP assembly member groups urged respective local governments to decide on providing the service by saying, "Now that this is the request of all the political parties, we want you to decide on implementing the service." Thus the program on financial support for medical treatment fees for children spread from one municipality to another.

Once the system began to spread, JCP local assembly members in respective municipalities made further efforts to expand it across the country by saying, "All municipalities should provide such services."

Thus in cooperation with residents' movements, JCP local assembly members groups succeeded in developing their own system in all municipalities. I'm deeply proud of the power of this grassroots network involving 3,000 JCP local assembly members.

**Power of the network combining 3,000 local assembly members (2) —
Stop invalidating the health insurance card**

The second example is the struggle urging local governments to reduce the excessively heavy burden of payment of the national health insurance fees and stop invalidating the health insurance cards of those who cannot afford it.

We often see the following situations: the national health insurance premium is

too high to pay; local authorities invalidate the insurance card and issue short-term insurance card; and tragedies never cease to happen. In other words, many people have no alternative but to die because they cannot afford to see doctors.

Also in this case, 3,000 JCP local assembly members, in cooperation with residents, JCP branches, and JCP Dietmembers, are making a big breakthrough in the ruthless administration of the national health insurance. In Saitama Prefecture, thanks to joint efforts of JCP local assembly members groups and citizens, 30 out of 70 municipalities stopped invalidating the national insurance cards.

The spread of those municipalities finally moved the national government. The government decided to change its policy to one preventing local authorities from taking away the national insurance cards from households with children as well as those who are faced with financial difficulties. With conviction in this power, let's continue to work for a reduction in the excessively high national health insurance fees.

Power of the network combining 3,000 local assembly members (3)— Financial support for housing improvement costs

The third example is the program to provide financial support for housing improvement costs. This is an effective economic policy because, if this program is implemented, its ripple effect in the local economy will reportedly be 10 times more than the budget amount of the local government concerned. JCP local assembly member groups across the country, together with local associations of small- and medium-sized companies, local construction workers unions, and local construction companies, proposed a program to give financial support for housing improvement costs and stepped up the campaign. The survey conducted by the small business owners' group, the All Japan Federation of Traders' and Manufacturers' Organizations, showed that 170 local governments throughout the country introduced the system.

We have heard a variety of interesting stories. At Toride City in Ibaraki Prefecture, the JCP assembly member group twice submitted to the City Assembly a bill to enact an ordinance on financial support for housing improvement costs, but the bill was voted down both times. Without giving up, the JCP assembly member group visited all 44 member companies of the local construction association to explain the JCP proposal. As a result, some member companies in support of the JCP proposal played a coordinating role and in September, 61 member companies including related-companies jointly submitted to the assembly a petition calling for establishment of a city ordinance on financial support for housing improvement costs. The petition was adopted by an overwhelming majority. At first, the petition included as its purpose a phrase saying, "In response to the JCP's

call and efforts we decided to submit the petition.” However, in order to obtain other parties agreement, the JCP assembly members group asked the petitioners to erase the phrase in preparation for a vote. I have heard that the JCP’s sincerity attracted public attention in Toride City, building trust among citizens.

Friends, the 2011 simultaneous local elections will be held in five months. Please render us your help for building the grassroots network of these irreplaceable 3,000 JCP seats in local assemblies who work tirelessly to support residents’ livelihoods. We depend on your support in the elections.

JCP Advancing on the High Road as a Political Party—Let Us Open Up Future by Reinforcing the Party

We have examined political parties by using five yardsticks: “Party Program,” “party history,” “diplomatic power,” “attitude toward freedom and democracy” and “advance politics united with the people” to evaluate political parties. I am confident that the JCP is the only party to satisfy these standards.

I want to stress that building a strong JCP advancing on the high road as a political party is the best way to open up a bright future for Japan.

On this occasion, I would like to appeal to you from the heart to join the JCP, to those of you who are participating in the festival, who established warm contact with people here, and who have some sympathy with my speech!

I have talked about Akahata. I hope you will render cooperation in increasing the readership so that Akahata has far-reaching effects on public opinion in Japan whenever we initiate campaigns on any problem.

By building a strong party, let’s work hard to win a major advance in the forthcoming simultaneous local elections.

Viva, the 40th Akahata Festival!

Akahata, November 9, 2010