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The JCP's Role in Changing Politics

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Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chair

Speech at the 39th Akahata Festival

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The JCP's Role in Changing Politics

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Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chair

Speech at the 39th Akahata Festival, November 4, 2006

The following is the speech by Japanese Communist Party Executive Committee Chair SHII Kazuo on November 4, 2006 at the 39th Akahata Festival in Tokyo.

Three Aberrations of LDP Politics Are Deepening Contradictions and Bringing about Hopeful Changes in Politics

Good afternoon. I am SHII Kazuo of the Japanese Communist Party. Welcome to the Akahata Festival! I want to express our deepest gratitude to the foreign ambassadors and diplomats for their participation in the Akahata Festival.

Following our established custom, I will speak about the role of the JCP in conjunction with the major issues affecting the future course of Japan and the world. Today, I will speak about “the JCP’s role in changing politics.”

At the JCP 24th Congress in January this year, we called for a change in politics to put an end to the three aberrations of Liberal Democratic Party government policies. The three aberrations we pointed out are:

- The position of justifying the past Japanese war of aggression,
- Subservience to the United States, and
- The policy of giving priority to defending the interests of large corporations.

Are there any changes taking place after Prime Minister ABE Shinzo’s cabinet took over the Koizumi cabinet?

I believe that on each one of the three aberrations, LDP government policies are increasingly contradictory in a no-way-out-situation and that hopeful changes are taking place in the political arena though they contain various complexities. In this, the JCP is the main force that is helping to move the political situation in positive directions on many issues.

I want to talk about this subject from various angles.

We Will Make Every Effort to Stop the Forces Justifying Japan's Past War of Aggression

Let me begin with the aberration of justifying the past war of aggression.

Former Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro repeatedly visited Yasukuni Shrine and brought about a dead end in Japan's Asia diplomacy. The question now is whether new Prime Minister Abe Shinzo will correct this aberration.

Present stage of debate over Prime Minister Abe's view of history

Mr. Abe's remarks on the historical questions are very problematic.

In 1995, when the Diet was discussing a resolution on the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, Mr. Abe took the position that Japan's past war was a "just war" necessary for "the country's survival and self-defense and for peace in Asia". In 1997, he used his question time in the Diet to criticize the 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary KONO Yohei that admitted that the Japanese military coerced comfort women to serve Japanese soldiers as sex slaves. Mr. Abe insisted that the Kono statement turned out to be groundless and demanded that description of "comfort women" be deleted from history textbooks.

In my questioning in the House of Representatives Plenary Session on October 3 and in the House of Representatives Budget Committee on October 6, I told Mr. Abe that as Prime Minister he must not put his personal view of history before the government position and increase political obstacles to Japan's Asia diplomacy.

Prime Minister Abe responded by making clear that his personal view as well as the government's policy is one of accepting former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi's statement expressing remorse over Japan's war of aggression and colonization saying that it was based on a mistaken national policy as well as the Kono statement about the "military comfort women." Regardless of his personal opinion, Mr. Abe has the responsibility to act upon the statement he made publicly in the Diet.

At the end of my question in the House of Representatives Budget Committee meeting, I made the following request to the prime minister. "Mr. Prime Minister, you will soon visit China and South Korea. I would like you to keep in mind the following: For politicians to be humble does not mean feigning innocence in the face of the errors committed by the Japanese government and state. It is their duty to face up to the truth of history of the war of aggression and colonial rule that inflicted enormous

damage and suffering on Asians as well as on the Japanese people themselves. It is particularly important for politicians to know how deep the wounds Japan caused to other countries are. I want you to share this position.”

JCP efforts have born fruit in influencing a step forward

On October 8 and 9, Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and Chinese President Hu Jintao held talks. It was the first time in five years for a Japanese prime minister to visit China for a summit meeting. The two agreed to build a “strategic relationship of mutual interests.” Given the fact that Japan-China relations had been worsening to the point where even a summit meeting was impossible, the resumption of summit talks and the confirmation of a “strategic relationship of mutual interests” marked the opening of a new phase in Japan-China relations.

This is why in a published statement regarding the summit meeting I said I welcomed the outcome and expressed my hope that this agreement will help promote friendly relations between our two countries. If Japan and China took a major step forward in their relations, we welcome it as a matter of course, no matter who did it.

The JCP has emphasized the importance of the struggle against the reverse political current that justifies the past Japanese war of aggression as a basic issue that has a bearing on Japan’s position in Asia and the world. We have made the effort to overcome this adverse current. In May last year, then JCP Central Committee Chair FUWA Tetsuzo spoke on “Breaking Japan’s diplomatic stalemate.” After this, the JCP in *Akahata* ran a campaign to explicate the crux of the Japanese prime minister’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine, making clear that they amount to giving the government’s official approval to Yasukuni Shrine’s view of history that praises the last Japanese war as a “just war for Japan’s survival and for the liberation of Asia.”

I believe that our efforts in the last year and a half have increased public awareness, that there has been a lot of synergies between our argument and public opinion in Asia and the United States, and that this has contributed to changing the situation in a progressive direction.

Struggle against reverse trend that distorts history is still an important task in national politics

The Japan-China summit marked a start of the effort to resolve the historical issues, but the problems are still unresolved.

The pro-Yasukuni Shrine people are perplexed, disappointed, and even vexed with the prime minister's stance.

Commenting on Prime Minister Abe's changing statements, YAGI Hidetsugu, professor at Takasaki City University of Economics who chaired the "Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform" stated: "I'm confused. I want the prime minister to explain what's going on. If we are left without a clear explanation from him, those who have been solid supporters of the prime minister could change their minds to become his staunchest opponents." You can hear them grinding their teeth in frustration.

On October 18, members of the Parliamentarian Group Worshiping Yasukuni Shrine visited the shrine. Eighty-four Dietmembers from the Liberal Democratic and Democratic parties participated in the visit, including assistants to the prime minister and vice ministers. They are the ones who have not learned anything.

There is still a deep-seated current that depicts the past Japanese war of aggression as a just war. The three aberrations of Japanese politics are there. The struggle to overcome this reverse current continues to be a major task of national politics.

Prime Minister Abe's future remarks will have to be scrutinized. He deliberately tries to be ambiguous about this question, arguing that he won't say whether he will or will not visit Yasukuni Shrine. But he has acknowledged the "Murayama Statement." He must not act contrary to it. Also, he must stop visiting Yasukuni Shrine in order to avoid adding political obstacles to establishing friendly relations with other Asian countries.

Prime Minister Abe has also accepted the "Kono Statement" as the government position. He must earnestly act to fulfill its commitment made to the international community by disclosing the "military comfort women" issue to future generations through history education.

At the Japan-China summit meeting, the two leaders agreed to start up a project for the joint study of history by Japanese and Chinese intellectuals by the end of this year. At the House of Representatives Budget Committee meeting, I brought up a Japanese historical diplomatic document that clearly indicates that the past Japanese war was a war of aggression for territorial expansion. But the prime minister's response was: "It is a matter to be determined by historians."

It is absurd that the head of government continues to wait for future historians to determine the character of the war that the Japan waged as a national policy.

I want to express the determination of the JCP, the party with a history of indomitably struggling against the war of aggression and colonization, to continue to make efforts to root out the reverse current that distorts history.

Extraordinary Subservience to the United States Turning Japan into a Nation that Fights Wars Abroad Goes against the World Current for Peace

Prime Minister Abe's ambition for constitutional revision

Secondly, I will talk about how extraordinary the government's subservience to the United States is.

Abe's zeal for constitutional revision in response to the U.S. request is even more dangerous than that of former Prime Minister Koizumi.

In a CNN interview on October 31, Abe said, "The LDP president's term is three years, and one is allowed no more than two terms. I will aim to get the Constitution revised during my term of office." He is the first prime minister to give a specific time frame for constitutional revision.

What does he have in mind when he says he is determined to revise the Constitution? In his recent book, Abe calls for Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense by stating, "A military alliance is an 'alliance of blood'. However, under the present constitutional interpretation, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces are not asked to be prepared to shed blood when the United States comes under attack."

No Japanese prime minister in the past was more outspoken than Mr. Abe in stating that the aim of constitutional revision is to turn Japan into a nation that can fight wars abroad together with the United States.

The point here is that Prime Minister Abe's attempt to lead Japan in that direction goes against the moves taking place globally regarding world peace. I think there are two important moves that we should pay attention to.

Iraq war shows failing U.S. unilateralism for global hegemony

One is that U.S. unilateralism for global hegemony is facing failure. Look at the lawless war in Iraq. It is in a critical situation. The U.S. aggression and war have only increased terrorism and violence, provoking

sectarian violence. Iraq is now on the verge of civil war.

How many people have died in this war? The influential British medical journal *Lancet* recently shocked the world when it said that the death toll among Iraqis is estimated at 650,000 since the U.S.-led invasion of the country. The number of deaths among U.S. soldiers has reached 2,800.

An intelligence estimate produced and made public last September by 16 U.S. intelligence services, including the CIA, concluded that the Iraq war has increased the threat of terrorism, making the United States and the world more dangerous. This amounts to admitting that the argument for the need to “counter terrorism,” which the Bush administration put forward to justify the war was wrong.

This corroborates the criticism we made along with the international community. We said that the lawlessness of the war that violates the U.N. Charter would be brought to light by history, and that no international order hinging on military power could be viable.

But Prime Minister Abe in the Diet has insisted that the government decision to support the invasion of Iraq was appropriate. U.S. and British leaders who led the war have made remarks that admitted to launching the war based on false allegations and expressed apologies for doing so. While leaders responsible for initiating the war feel “pain”, Prime Minister Abe seems to be not sensitive about it. We must not overlook this extraordinary lack of sensitivity.

At a time when U.S. unilateralism for global hegemony is failing, as clear from the Iraq war, Mr. Abe is uncritically following the United States and is even trying to revise the Japanese Constitution to make it legitimate for Japan to join the United States in fighting wars abroad. Isn't it clear that this goes against the world current for peace?

Peaceful settlement of disputes based on U.N. Charter is universally accepted, including the North Korea issue

The other important point to make in the current state of the world is that a U.N.-led peaceful and diplomatic resolution of international disputes based on the U.N. Charter is the universally accepted approach in the present-day world. Note that even the United States, in the face of the difficulty in dealing with problems exclusively with military power, is now groping for a way to resolve international problems through negotiations.

The U.S. response to the crisis involving North Korea is one such example. The international community faced a major question as to how to respond to North Korea's nuclear test explosion on October 9. The JCP,

strongly protesting against the nuclear test, from the outset emphasized the importance of adhering to the following two principles:

1. The international community must maintain unanimity in dealing with the issue through cooperation,
2. A diplomatic and peaceful resolution of the problem must be pursued.

The issue was discussed in the Diet. At the House of Representatives Plenary Session on October 10 and at the House of Councilors on the following day, two draft resolutions were proposed, one by the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic and Komei parties and the other by the Democratic Party. Both included military measures. The JCP opposed including military measures and emphasized the importance of the two principles that I have just mentioned. As a result, the Diet unanimously adopted the resolution that concluded that “[T]he international community should conduct a concerted diplomacy and work for a peaceful settlement.” I would like to stress that the JCP’s reasoned proposal influenced the National Diet.

The international community also followed the two principles. The unanimous UN Security Council resolution of October 14 urged North Korea to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. It also decided to use non-military measures to resolve the problem by peaceful and diplomatic means in accordance with Article 41 of the U.N. Charter.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reportedly told Chinese leaders that she would make efforts to resolve North Korea’s nuclear issue by diplomatic means and that she did not want to escalate the crisis. It was reported that China and the United States made great efforts to achieve a diplomatic resolution.

It was in this context that we heard news that officials of China, the United States and North Korea met in Beijing on October 31 and agreed to resume the Six-Party Talks. The JCP wholeheartedly welcomed this agreement. We hope that the six countries will meet at the earliest possible time and that the goal to make the Korean Peninsula nuclear free will be realized through the earnest efforts of all countries concerned.

Debates on ‘Law on Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan’ and argument calling for ‘Japan’s nuclear armament’ represent dangerous argument calling for military response

Precisely as the international community was making serious efforts to resolve the crisis through diplomacy by peaceful means, some Japanese

politicians began to argue that Japan should respond militarily and should be ready for war.

Politicians from the government as well as the ruling parties and some Democratic Party politicians called for the “Law on Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan” to be invoked. But what is this law about? It is a law we opposed as a “war law,” a mechanism for the Japanese Self-Defense Forces to join with U.S. forces in wars outside of Japan. It is clear that invoking this law runs counter to the U.N. Security Council resolution calling for a peaceful and diplomatic approach.

And now LDP Policy Research Council Chairman NAKAGAWA Shoichi and Foreign Minister ASO Taro are saying, “There should be a debate about whether Japan should be nuclear armed.” In defiance of the strong criticism that has arisen at home and abroad, the two are repeatedly making such remarks. If they cannot stop doing so, they should be asked to resign.

Prime Minister Abe, while stating, “We will adhere to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles,” gives tacit approval by saying, “Given the right of freedom of speech, we cannot suppress their opinions.” But we are not arguing about the freedom of speech. At stake is whether it is appropriate for the Japanese foreign minister and for the ruling party’s senior official in charge of policymaking to make such public political statements.

Precisely at a time when the international community is trying hard to work out a way to have North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons, it is absolutely unconscionable to talk about Japan possessing nuclear weapons. Japan is the only country that has been A-bombed and its people know how atrocious nuclear weapons are. It has the duty to take the initiative in ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

The United States is holding fast to its policy of asserting hegemony by using the military, as is the case with the Iraq war. But it is also employing diplomacy, as is the case with the North Korean nuclear issue, in what we may call a two-tiered policy. But the LDP government is faithful to the militarily hegemonic policy of the United States, and when it comes to diplomacy, it shows an inability to respond to the situation and is left behind. Japan is often described as more American than the United States. I must point out that such politics has no future.

A Korean student: ‘I’m in favor of the movement to defend the peace Constitution’

Look at the world in a broader perspective and you will see that the United States has failed in its pursuit of hegemony and that the future is

with the current calling for a peaceful international order based on the U.N. Charter. It is in this historic context that I want stress that the 21st century is an era in which the value of the Japanese Constitution's Article 9 - renunciation of war, prohibition of armament, and denial of a right of belligerency- will be more appealing than ever.

In September, I visited the Republic of Korea. In meetings with political leaders and well-known historians as well as in the discussion with undergraduate and graduate students of Yonsei University, I heard many people talk about Korean people's deep concern about "Japan tilting to the right," in particular about the call for the revision of the Constitution's Article 9.

I told them that the "Article 9 Association" launched by OE Kenzaburo [Nobel Prize laureate] and other intellectuals representing Japanese conscience, has increased the number of its local associations to more than 5,000 throughout the country and that this shows that the Japanese people are working for the defense of peace. I added that the JCP is working hard in every corner of the country to support grassroots struggles that set aside ideological and political differences in order to unite the majority of people in opposition to the adverse revision of the Constitution.

Many of our new Korean friends showed high expectations of the Japanese peace movement and the JCP. A Yonsei University student wrote the following comment:

"In his lecture, the JCP leader firmly said, 'I assure you that we will defend the peace Constitution by all means.' I got emotional to hear him state this, like a thirsty deer coming across a well. As a man aspiring to world peace, I support the Japanese people's movement to defend their peace Constitution."

I renewed my determination to fulfill my promise to the Korean university students to defend the Constitution.

Given the fact that Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution was established at an enormous cost of foreign as well as Japanese lives, we must keep in mind that we share Article 9 with all peoples. It is the duty of the Japanese people to Asia and the rest of the world to defend this treasure with all our might. Let us do all we can to form a majority of the people in Japan in opposition to the adverse revision of the Constitution.

Extraordinary Big Business-first Policy Widening the Gap between Rich and Poor – A Major Social Problem

Thirdly, I'll touch upon how extraordinary the big business-first policy

is.

The further widening social gap between rich and poor, which we exposed at the JCP Congress in January, is now a major social issue.

The tone of media reports about this issue has changed. An NHK television documentary on the working poor drew strong public attention. It reported that the working poor, who are so underpaid that their incomes are below the welfare-benefit recipients' level even though they are working hard, has rapidly increased and that the number of such households has reached 4,000,000.

In bookstores, you'll find many books using such terms as "class society" or "exploitation" in the titles, terms that have been familiar to us but not familiar to the general public.

At issue in our society is the self-centered behavior of large corporations that are enjoying a record prosperity by exploiting the general public as much as possible, drawing wider criticisms from the mass media.

Recently, a cultural page column of *Sankei Shimbun* newspaper took up a series of impressive stories.

Disguised contract labor -- Workers' struggle and JCP debate help change workshop

One that appeared in the October 19 issue was entitled "Is 'Abe's challenge-again support program' serious?" states, "At the House of Councilors Budget Committee meeting on October 13, the questioning by JCP Secretariat Head Ichida concerning 'contract employment in disguise' was well worth viewing."

"Contract employment in disguise" means using temporary workers as contract-based workers. By law, if a company uses a temporary worker for longer than a certain period, it must offer the worker direct employment and ensure their safety and health. But it has no such obligation for "contract workers". Many workers disguised as contract workers are disposable and without any worker rights. Their take-home pay is as low as 100,000 yen (about 870 US dollars) a month. Even if a worker has a fever of 40 degrees Celsius and is too ill to go to work, he is compelled to report for work. Failure to do so means dismissal. Such inhumane conditions are prevalent, and the government policy is to blame for the widespread lawlessness in workplaces because it allowed the use of temporary workers to be expanded to the manufacturing industry. Secretariat Head Ichida took up this issue out of concern for workers' sufferings in workplaces. His questioning about the responsibility of large

corporations and government policies for the widespread use of temporary workers disguised as contract workers was distinctively inherent in JCP actions which have been working hard to protect worker rights.

The *Sankei* column said: "Enterprise - staffing agencies and companies - are prospering by using contract employment in disguise." This represents a severe criticism of large corporations that use temporary workers disguised as contract workers.

The columnist concluded, "I'm neither a communist nor communist sympathizer, but the government reply to JCP Ichida was and tepid that no one could take the (prime minister's) 'Challenge again Labor Program' seriously. Aren't the government and Dietmembers called upon to 'challenge' to the prevention of corruption? "

JCP Dietmembers joined together with workers in order to get rid of this lawlessness, producing dramatic results.

The struggle began by taking on some of Japan's major corporations - Canon Inc., Hitachi, Ltd and., and Matsushita Electric Industrial- that extensively use "temporary workers disguised as workers on contract." Workers at these workplaces demonstrated courage in publicly exposing the illegal labor practices.

The breakthrough was made by workers at Koyo Sealing Techno, a Toyota-affiliate supplier in Tokushima Prefecture. In September 2004, 20 young workers joined the regional branch of the All-Japan Metal and Information Machinery Workers' Union (JMIU) (*) and established the union branch at their workplace to demand a wage increase, improvement of working conditions, and their direct employment at Koyo Sealing Techno.

*JMIU is an industrial union federation affiliated with the National Confederation of Trade Unions (Zenroren).

The JCP Dietmembers Group sent House of Representatives members SASAKI Kensho and SHIOKAWA Tetsuya, and House of Council members KOIKE Akira, DAIMON Mikishi, and NIHI Sohei to the Koyo Sealing Techno workplace for inspections. After this, they took up the issue five times in the Diet and made representations several times to the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry. The *Akahata* Sunday edition was the first to report on their struggle in October 2004, and followed up on the struggle constantly.

On September 1 this year, 59 temporary workers disguised as contract workers won direct employment. These workers thus pioneered the struggle to put an end to the illegal labor practice of using the "disguised

contract employment" practice prevalent in manufacturing.

Pressed by this struggle, the labor ministry on September 4 issued a "directive" for the prevention and elimination of "disguised contract employment." On October 3, "Collaborate," a staffing company affiliated to the major business contractor Crystal Group, was ordered to suspend business in connection with the problem of "disguised contract employment," the first measure ever taken on this issue. After this, JCP Secretariat Head Ichida brought up the issue at a House of Councilors Budget Committee meeting. His questioning drew public attention, bringing other disguised contract workers' struggles calling for direct employment to a success one after another throughout the country.

Courageous struggles by workers, in cooperation with the JCP in the Diet, have influenced government policy. These struggles are beginning to change working conditions. These facts show that struggles can make a difference.

We will continue to join forces with workers to make advances in the struggle to eliminate "forced overtime work without pay" and the use of temporary workers disguised as workers on contract employment." This is the struggle to put an end to "ruleless capitalism." Let us work together to establish rules that enable people to work under adequate conditions.

'Shame on you, the banks!' - The regressive taxation system criticized

I saw another impressive *Sankei Shimbun* column in its October 26 issue. It was entitled, "Shame on you, the banks!" It severely criticized the major banks for their selfishness and the government for supporting them. Let me quote:

"During the bubble economy, the banks were making large profits by lending money at high rates of interest. The irresponsible way of loaning out money for quick profits resulted in large amounts of nonperforming loans following the burst of the bubble economy. In the first place, this kind of problem should be dealt with by the banks under their own responsibility. But the government was so kind as to lend 12 trillion yen in tax money to the failing banks and allowed them to lower the interest rates to near-zero for deposits. This was the government bailout of the failing banks. As a result, the three mega-banks reported a record profit of about 2.5 trillion yen at the end of March of this year. What's more, these banks colluded with politicians to receive tax breaks using the system that makes carry-over losses deductible so they do not have to pay any corporate taxes. One could die of indignation to hear it. While banks are getting fatter, the public is becoming skinny. This is not a beautiful Japan!"

The 12 trillion yen of public funds was used for helping the banks rebuild themselves and will never be returned to the public. What's more, the Bank of Japan has estimated that household losses caused by the zero-interest policy amount to about 300 trillion yen.

While greatly helped by public money, major banks have been reluctant to lend money to smaller businesses and have forcibly collected loans from them. The amount of bank loans to small businesses decreased by 96 trillion yen.

As the *Sankei Shimbun* column said, "Everybody could die of indignation," banks taking advantage of tax breaks do not pay any corporate tax.

What's more, while receiving generous tax breaks, major banks are saying that they are considering donating money to political parties. How can they say such a thing?

The problem is not limited to the major banks. Large corporations have earned 1.6 times the profits they made during the bubble economy, but corporate tax revenue decreased to 13 trillion yen from 19 trillion yen due to a series of corporate tax breaks.

The government is forcing elderly people to pay more in income and residential taxes as well as increasing social insurance premiums. In addition, the government is considering a further consumption tax increase.

In contrast, large corporations, major banks, and wealthy people are allowed to make more money without paying taxes. Reversing the present regressive tax system is what we must demand now.

The root cause of the widening income gap is the tyrannical acts of business circles and large corporations that have destroyed labor regulations and neglected to fulfill their corporate social responsibility for paying taxes and contributions for social services as well as the government that promotes it. The JCP, which has never received any donations from the business world since its founding, is the only political party capable of working to solve this problem. Join with the JCP to establish a new Japan in which everyone can live and work with dignity.

Increase Common Action to Block the Adverse Revision of the Fundamental Law of Education

I now move on to the burning issue of the bill to adversely revise the Fundamental Law of Education. The government and ruling parties are

desperately trying to get the bill enacted by any means in the current session of the Diet. However, the Diet deliberations have made it clear that the government proposal for the revision is totally groundless.

In the previous session of the Diet, the JCP made clear that the bill is in contravention of the Constitution on two issues. One is that the bill will allow the government to force children to show "patriotism" in violation of Article 19 of the Constitution establishing the freedom of conscience. The other is that the bill will pave the way for government interference in the content of education by trampling upon the constitutional freedom of education.

Revising the law is counterproductive to the effort to end school bullying

I also want to point out that the proposed revision of the Fundamental Law of Education will not be a remedy to the immediate problems facing education today. I would say that it will only exacerbate the problems.

Cases of suicides linked to school bullying have been reported from many parts of the country. I think everyone is deeply concerned about this problem. We have heard many parents say they are worried about their children all day until they come home from school.

What is the hindrance to the effort to overcome school bullying? What is the breeding ground for it? Has this problem anything to do with the proposed adverse revision of the Fundamental Law of Education? I took up this issue in my questioning at the House of Representatives Special Committee on Educational Reform on October 30

Why is the real situation of bullying concealed? The reason is that in the present system of evaluating schools and teachers, the criteria for measuring how good schools are include the number of bullying cases reported. If a teacher reports cases of bullying in the class, that teacher will be rated low and may even get a pay cut. This system discourages teachers from reporting bullying cases in the class and tries to deal with it without asking for help. I want to point out that this system will makes it harder for teachers to work to detect bullying at an early stage and solve it.

What is it that turns children into bullies? It does not suffice to cite children's lack of morals. In my questioning in the Diet, I pointed out that Japanese children are under severe stress and that this must be a contributing factor in the widespread cause of bullying.

A survey of more than 3,000 elementary and junior high school students found that 13 percent of them are likely to suffer from depression and that the percentage is higher in the higher grades. For example, it is 30

percent among 9th graders (third year of junior high school). Respondents made the following comments: "I don't feel content with anything I do"; "I feel sad all the time"; "I feel like crying"; "I don't see why I should live." These children are exposed to severe stresses, and may try to seek an outlet for their frustration by bullying other children.

One of the causes of this high level of stress is Japan's competitive education and rating system that drive students into constantly competing with each other for higher marks, dividing them into good students and poor students.

This competitiveness in the education system that rates and ranks both children and teachers is the primary cause of school-related maladies in which children are hurting and teachers' dignity is trampled.

The government plans to adversely revise the Fundamental Law of Education and introduce a National Academic Standards Test. It is considering making the test results public in a national ranking of all elementary and junior high schools. In addition, it will expand the school-choice system in compulsory education throughout the country. Such a way of controlling education will further harm the education system by making schools more competitive and selective and will further exacerbate the deteriorating conditions surrounding schools and children, including adding to cases of bullying.

Cabinet that turns its eyes from problems is not qualified to change foundation of education

Prime Minister Abe responded to my argument only by stating that "teachers are to blame for hiding cases of bullying" and that "it is important to help children learn to follow the moral standards". He did not come up with any idea for helping to overcome the problem of school bullying.

The government shows no willingness to face up to the difficult issue of school bullying; it has nothing to propose for overcoming the problem. Is such a government qualified to change the Fundamental Law of Education? The answer is "No."

Prearranged questions at public hearings reveal that the government is leader in ignoring the moral standards

You hear them talk about the need to teach children the "moral standards". Take a look at this set of documents; we revealed it in the Diet. It shows how the government had planted pre-scripted questions favorable

to the government stance at a “town meeting” in Aomori Prefecture. The revelation has become a major issue in the Diet. The government asked some participants in the event to ask questions favorable to the government using questions written by the government.

The set of documents includes a list of instructions for participants who were to speak at the request of the government. It says that speakers will “try to articulate what you are requested to speak in your own words”. Isn’t it difficult to ask pre-scripted questions in your own words? Speakers were also asked to avoid reading the script in a monotone and not to mention that they had been requested to ask the questions. “Please try to speak in a manner that gives the impression you are stating your own opinion.”

I am not kidding, that was how the government was manipulating public opinion. If the government points out a lack of moral standards on the part of children, it should be known that the government, in particular the education ministry, is number one in lacking moral standards. The government is not qualified to discuss education reform.

Education to help children experience joy in learning, develop students’ critical thinking skills and encourage them to help each other

Competition and rating is not the way to increase children’s scholastic ability. I believe that the need is to help children experience the joy of learning, cultivate their curiosity to learn, and develop human relations in which they help each other learn. I believe that this is the way to improve the education system.

The Fundamental Law of Education provides the basic guidelines for education that we need. For the future of the children, we shall build the widest possible cooperation in the struggle get the bill to adversely revise the Fundamental Law of Education scrapped.

Our Opposition Party Diplomacy Reflects the Changing World

In closing my speech, I want to talk about the recent development of the Japanese Communist Party’s opposition party diplomacy.

In September, I visited the Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. These visits were very meaningful for the JCP. I made a speech about it at a public meeting on September 25, and the details have been compiled in a book. What struck me throughout these visits was that major changes are taking place in the world, and that in this regard, the history of the Japanese Communist Party as well as its Program can exert a

positive influence.

Two elements that made these encounters possible in South Korea

I was the first JCP leader to ever visit South Korea. I had meetings with the ROK National Assembly Speaker and the heads of five political parties, both ruling and opposition. In all these meetings, I was warmly received and had productive discussions. I think two elements were interwoven into these friendly meetings.

One is the fact that dynamic changes are now underway in South Korean society. After the end of World War II, South Korea for many years adopted anti-communism as its basic state policy. For many years it was under militarily dictatorial regimes. The turning point came in 1987, when Roh Tae Woo who was to assume ROK presidency, pressed by the South Korean people's life-and-death struggle, issued the "Proclamation of Democratic Reform." In 1990, the National Security Law that had prohibited communism was amended to delete the provision that had penalized exchanges and cooperation with foreign communists. These drastic changes made our meetings in South Korea possible.

Everyone I met shared the same feeling with me. Chairman Kim Geun Tae of the ruling Uri Party said to me, "As we receive JCP Chair Shii and other JCP leaders at the National Assembly, my heart is filled with deep emotion. If this meeting had taken place before 1987, the year when the ROK president for the first time was elected by popular vote, we would have faced a court trial for violating the National Security Law." He has been jailed more than 30 times for his struggle for democracy. I could not but have great respect for the South Korean people, who have achieved democracy through persistent struggles.

The other element is the power that the Japanese Communist Party Program has, including its party history. South Korea was forced to endure the Japanese colonial rule for 36 years. I acutely felt the suffering that the South Korean people had experienced when they were left without a motherland. I told our South Korean friends that the JCP stood firmly against Japan's colonial rule in solidarity with the Korean patriots during that difficult era. On several occasions, this explanation helped to establish a rapport between us.

I have here with me a copy of *Sekki*, the predecessor of the *Akahata* newspaper. This is an issue that called for solidarity with the Korean people's struggle for independence between 1931 and 32. I presented this at our meetings in South Korea. It served as an historic certificate of friendship between the Korean people and the JCP.

In Pakistan we reconfirmed that relations between the JCP and the Pakistani government are developing based on their respect for the JCP's sovereign independence

We visited Pakistan at the invitation of the Pakistani government, the first official invitation the JCP ever received from a foreign government. We felt how Pakistan is determined to build their nation without foreign interference and with pride despite the difficult and complex conditions facing them.

Pakistan has been experiencing enormous suffering due to superpowers' tyrannical acts of interference. The former Soviet Union's aggression in Afghanistan massively brought in Afghan refugees to Pakistan as well as drugs and guns. After 9/11, the United States tried to force Pakistan to cooperate in the retaliatory war against Afghanistan. Its war against Iraq resulted in a rapid increase in the number of terrorists.

At the meeting with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, I could confirm that there was a broad measure of agreement on a peaceful international world order based on the U.N. Charter, the reasonable way to eradicate terrorism, and a worldwide abolition of nuclear weapons. During the talks with Prime Minister Aziz, I found that the Pakistani government maintains broad diplomatic perspectives as the government of a country that has made efforts to build an independent-minded country in defiance of all difficulties. I was particularly glad that I as a representative of a party of the atomic-bombed country and the government of Pakistan, a nuclear power, agreed on the need to abolish nuclear weapons from all over the world.

Pakistani people have trust in the JCP primarily because they know that the JCP has held fast to its sovereign independence and never succumbed to the arrogance of any great powers, as demonstrated by its opposition to the Soviet aggression against Afghanistan. In my talks with Prime Minister Aziz, Senate Chairman Mohammedmian Soomro and Senate Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Mushahid Hussain Sayed, they showed deep respect for the JCP based on their good knowledge of the JCP's historical struggle on this issue.

I particularly enjoyed Mr. Sayed's company. He is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and general secretary of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League and is a great supporter of the JCP. The moment I met him, he showed me his watch with the JCP's red emblem on its face, a watch that is sold here at the Akahata Festival.

We had presented the watch to him when he visited Japan in January. He told me he always wears it, calling it the "Marx watch," which he said

keeps accurate time. It was a heart-warming moment in which he showed his deep trust in the JCP.

South Korea and Pakistan are often referred to as pro-American countries, one in eastern Asia and the other in western Asia. The United States sees them as footholds for wars it starts in those areas. In these countries, the JCP had heart-to-heart exchanges. Isn't this proof that dramatic changes are underway in the world?

In the Era of Historic Tumult We Will Emerge Victorious in the Two Major Nationwide Election in 2007

Friends, it's time to change Japan's politics.

Our country is entering a tumultuous era that offers great possibilities. LDP politics with their three major aberrations have reached an impasse. We are witnessing changes taking place in political currents on all issues. And the JCP's efforts are effective in bringing about changes in the political situation.

With confidence in this possibility, we will work hard for a JCP victory in the two nationwide elections next year -- the House of Councilors election and the simultaneous local elections.

Long live the Akahata Festival!

Thank you.

- Akahata, November 6, 2006