

Keynote Speech: For an Alliance of Hope

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THE HOPE AND SPIRIT OF OUR TIME

The slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress. The cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The call for the next century is hope. It is impelled by that hope in the future, and with a keen sense of urgency, that we begin our Gathering of the People's Plan for the 21st Century in Minamata.

It is significant that we meet in Minamata, a place in the world which symbolizes to all of us development at its most murderous. As it did to the people of Bhopal and Chernobyl, a giant organization with advanced science, technology and production methodology brought to our hosts at Minamata fear, sickness, and death, and brought to their beautiful bay deadly damage that may not be repaired for decades or centuries. These three disasters — Minamata, Bhopal, and Chernobyl — can be taken as benchmarks of our time. At Minamata, the industry of a capitalist country poisoned its own citizens. At Bhopal, a huge Northern multinational corporation poisoned people of a country of the South. At Chernobyl a socialist government spilled radiation out over its land and people, and beyond its borders to the whole world. There is no need here to repeat the long and mounting list of ecocatastrophes. These three tell the story: there is no place to hide.

We know that the 20th century, the Age of development, brought us many things which we value. But we also must be coolly realistic. The 20th century has brought us more, and more murderous, wars than any time in history. The technology of killing has advanced beyond the wildest imagination of any previous era. The state, which was supposed to be our great protector, has turned out to be the greatest killer, killing not only foreigners in wars, but also killing its own citizens in unprecedented numbers. Economic development, which was supposed to raise the world out of poverty, has so far only transformed undeveloped poverty into developed poverty, traditional poverty into modernized poverty designed to function smoothly in the world economic system. The 20th century has added two grim new words to our vocabulary: genocide and ecocide. The practices that gave birth to these

words have all grown out of advance science and technology. And they have occurred in the name of what we have called "progress" and "development." We must ask, is there not something profoundly wrong with our understanding of historical progress, with our picture of what to fight for, with our image of where to place our hopes?

Mr. Hamamoto taught us a beautiful word in the Minamata dialect, Janakashaba. Literally it means, "a world that does not stand like this." It is an exciting word, that tells us there can be a quantum leap, a break, from what we are, what we have, what we are resigned to accept as our fate. This is precisely what is being acted out before our eyes today by millions of people in the Pacific Asia region. They do not accept what has been foisted on them as their fate, they are ready to take the leap, and they are taking it. We witness wave after wave of people's movements emerging, spreading, cutting across state boundaries, complementing with each other, and sharing an increased sense of contemporariness fostered by new networks of communication. The major struggles of the Korean, Philippine, and Burmese people have shown explosive power. Recently they have been joined on a tremendous scale by the new democratization movement of the Chinese people. In these big countries and in the smaller ones, in every prefecture, town, and village, the people are on the move. And they are aware of each other as never before, watching each other, communicating, joining in unprecedented ways. All of this is new. It is the main force defining our situation and the main reason for this conference. Janakashaba is the spirit of the people in our time. This is why we do not hesitate, despite everything this century has brought us, to declare that the 21st century will be the century of hope.

STATE OF OUR REGION

These new movements are growing up within the context of a peculiar contradiction that is appearing in the role of the state. Our region is being organized by transnational capital, which is bringing together far-flung and heterogeneous areas and peoples into a single, vertical division of

labor. The state is serving as a vigorous promoter of this, as the agency which mediates the entry of transnational capital within the national boundaries. At the same time transnationalization of the economy undermines the basis of the state, placing its claim to sovereignty and its pose as protector into question, and weakening its legitimacy. The state seeks to protect itself through intensification of repression and violence as we are seeing today in a series of "developing" countries including China, or, as in the case of Japan, intensification of the attempt to implant statist ideology into the minds of the people.

In this same process the engine of development has overheated in Japan and is running wildly out of control, producing a saturation economy. Japanese work an average of 2200 hours a year, mostly in heavily managed situations in which they are virtually powerless. They are bombarded with advertising that urges them to compensate for frustration by consuming. At the same time, virtually every human activity and every bodily function has a whole shelf of consumer goods or commercial services associated with it. The manner in which one combs one's hair, wipes one's nose, and scratches a mosquito bite, are all the subjects of intensive market research and intense product and service competition. The commodification of every aspect of human life includes the commodification of sex, which has produced a huge sex industry where hundreds of thousands of women, many imported from other Asian countries, are made to serve to satisfy Japanese male taste for alienated sex. The world's most powerful economy does not empower its citizens, but rather seeks to make them powerless and fragmented. And it has also reproduced within its boundaries a "north" and a "south." The "south" includes millions of poorly paid women part-timers, subcontract workers, day laborers, and increasingly guest workers from South and Southeast Asia as well as farmers who are being rapidly marginalized.

Here too the system has begun to undermine itself. The economy has pushed itself to such absurd lengths that more and more people are simply fed up with it, and are beginning to search for a different way of living.

NEW APPROACHES

In this turbulently changing situation we need new maps. We need a new picture, a new paradigm, of the society in which we can live together in dignity. But we need not go far to find this new paradigm. We can partly see it already, emerging out of the people's movements

themselves. This is no romanticism: we are referring here to specific new concepts emerging from certain of these movements.

First let us look at the Asia-Pacific people's movement itself, as it has emerged in the last couple of decades. Everywhere we see the patient, dedicated efforts to promote empowerment — of community people, ethnic groups, women, labor groups, urban slum dwellers, people organizing themselves against "development" imposed from above, or to assert their independence and autonomy. The major national explosions of popular will are in most cases prepared in these small-scale accumulated efforts of empowerment and "conscientization." It is here that the notion of the people as sovereign is being nurtured in concrete form. In the face of this new movement of the people many grass-roots thinkers, religious and intellectual, have drawn on the liberating elements in their teachings to shape them into new forms through which the people can express their anger and hope. The various people's theologies and practical philosophies developed in recent years and indigenous values found in folktales and traditional popular arts are given new light to rebuild people's identity.

This grass roots movement for empowerment points to a new form of democracy, a democracy which we have never seen before, and whose outlines are not yet clear to us. But we can say for certain that it is something more than "democracy" as a form of state. It is a kind of "democracy on the spot," a community-based democracy through which the people build real power over the things that matter in their lives.

Then there is the indigenous people's movements. The revitalization of their struggle of survival and self-determination has enabled us to re-read the history of modern civilization since Columbus. We find the conquest of peoples and nature have proceeded as a single process through the entire course of modern civilization originating in the west. At the same time, it has revealed to us the whole history of Japan's invasion of Ainu lands. Also, their struggles and values show us a different way of living in harmony with nature, of which we also are part.

Women's movements and feminist ideas have also contributed to new ways of reviewing history and understanding the present. They showed, for instance, that the dominant notions of politics, economics, organization and culture have been profoundly characterized by their structural domination of women by men. They showed that social sciences dedicated to revolutionary change by and large ignored the all-important process of reproduction of human beings and thus

misconceptualized work and labor and the importance of human life itself. They showed that male dominated values have done violence not only to women but also to nature. And they offered a profound and exciting new alternative — that a society reordered on the basis of harmonious and equal relations between men and women would naturally tend to move in healthier, less destructive, ways.

Ecological movements since the 1970s of course addressed the issue of establishing a harmonious relationship between human being and the environment. They have shown us that unlimited economic and technological growth cannot be sustained on this planet. They also project, and partially practice, a social relationship with minimum domination, which corresponds to their human being-nature model.

There is a striking concurrence of views among those new movements of different origins in that the social, historical, and ecological approaches are integrated in a single context. It is important to note now that though some of them started in the west, the issues they address are becoming life-or-death issues for the most marginalized populations in the Third World where the very basis of their subsistence is being destroyed at the hands of transnational corporations and their agents.

COMMON THEMES

In order to aid our search for an alternative model of society of tomorrow we designated five areas as common agenda for all the conferences of PP21. They are, (1) Humankind and Nature — From destruction to harmony, (2) Liberation from Oppression — Creating new society and culture, (3) Overcoming Rule by the Strong — Changing the state and changing international relations, (4) Taking Back the Economy — From a relationship between things to a relationship between human beings, and (5) For a Common Future — Ethics and spirituality for people's solidarity. The subtitles indicate what we wish to counterpose to the existing realities in each area. Let us briefly introduce the items (except the last which covers all the rest and so is discussed in the concluding part).

1. Humankind and Nature — From destruction to harmony

By now, nobody denies that nature on this planet is in danger. Even big powers now talk about conservation; even the Japanese government has offered a lot of money for preservation of world environment. But such abstract conservationist cries sound hollow when nothing is

said about who is causing the destruction of nature and for what.

Bringing our civilization into harmony with nature is difficult, yet urgent. It brings us straight to the question of an alternative model of development. It is no longer a matter of how effectively to continue to exploit nature, but how to drastically change our relationship with nature.

Here we have among us people rich in wisdom on just this question. Indigenous people from Hokkaido, Canada, Sarawak, Australia, Aotearoa and elsewhere, considering nature their partner and source of life, have been protesting for years against its exploitation and plunder. Here, the bottomline may be that no exploitation of nature should be allowed without the affected people's consent, and that what the indigenous people say on these matters is given the greatest weight.

Also, the way science and technology have been developed should be called into question. The techno-utopia solution is even now proposed by governments and business, but that is absurd: it is precisely the arrogance of technology that has wounded the world. We should begin by renouncing patently harmful technologies and their applications, nuclear weapons and nuclear power among them. Soil-killing use of agricultural chemicals also must be stopped. We notice that big technology which aims at the so-called "conquest of nature" tends to disempower the workers and farmers who use it. What are the technologies and modes of work which both empower the worker and reestablish harmony between humans and nature?

There should also be a clear recognition that we, human beings, are part of nature. Doesn't violence against nature, regarding it as a mere object of exploitation, entail and justify treatment of human beings and human bodies in the same way?

Last, are harmonious relations with nature possible within the prevailing capitalist system which is unable to survive without endless accumulation?

2. Liberation from Oppression — Creating a new society and culture

The task is to dismantle, nationally and transnationally, the vertical integration that predominates and to replace it with a horizontal integration of individuals and groups.

By vertical integration we mean the socio-economic class structure and other forms of hierarchical formations where individuals or groups are judged and treated by criteria chosen by those at the top and to the advantage of those at the top. It also means the division of the human

community into the rich and powerful North and the poor and suppressed South. Pyramidal formation have entrenched themselves all over the world in government bureaucracy, corporate organizations, and military systems. Society itself has this kind of division, by status, profession, gender, caste, alleged physical and mental capacity, birthplace, religion, and other criteria for discrimination.

Aside from the state, the most powerful vertical formation is the business corporation, particularly transnational corporations which exploit the fact that the people remain divided. How can we deal with them? Here, our response should also be cross-border.

To overcome this discriminatory system, we should demolish the social, institutional, and economic systems that generate or benefit from discrimination. For that to be done we need to create new egalitarian values. Underlying these egalitarian values are what can be termed "simple

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personhood" or "peopleness" which we refer to later. In this way we all work to reorganize the vertical integration into a horizontal cooperation of individuals and people's groups. It is important here that horizontal cooperation encourages diversity as a source of wealth of society, while vertical integration imposes uniformity.

3. Overcoming Rule by the Strong — Changing the state and changing international relations

Here we deal with the state and inter-state relations. Our main concern is how we can overcome the state, which no doubt still remains the strongest entity in the world today. We have to dualize our approach: never losing sight of our long-term goal, we should also fight to make the state and its policies more accountable to the people and to transform regional international relations in favor of peace and justice. We shall come back to this duality later.

A new fluidity in the global international situation seems to have created a space in our region for the people to intervene. The regional

political situation is turbulent, and diverse factors and actors are at work — declining U.S. power, perestroika and resultant foreign policy changes by the Soviet Union, the rise of Japan as the world's most dynamic economic power and Japan's military buildup as part of the U.S. strategy, provision of huge Japanese ODA funds, rampant intervention by the U.S. with Japanese help in the Philippines under the LIC strategy, New Zealand's nuclear-free policy, China after Tienanmen, confrontation on the Korea unification issue, and moves toward an Indochina solution, to name only some.

How can we jointly intervene in this regional situation to weaken the rule by the strong? What are our action programs? What should our priorities be?

Concerning Japan, the Japanese state is emerging as a strong force managing the rest of Asia and the Pacific for the interest of transnational capital. Internally it is a state with an emperor system of discrimination and domination, a state based on corporate supremacy, discrimination against "aliens," minorities, women, and the weak, and negation of the people's independence. The state falsely claims that Japan is a mono-ethnic country and negates even the presence of Ainu as an minority. There are also 70,000 Korean people living permanently in Japan, who, or whose parents or grandparents, were taken to Japan against their will to be put to hard labor or had to move to Japan as the result of Japan's colonialization of their country. Instead of being compensated, they are subject to blatant discrimination in all aspects of life. Okinawa with its distinct historical identity is treated practically as Japan's internal colony. All this is related to the fact that the Japanese postwar state has never truly admitted the crimes the country committed to other Asian peoples as well as the minorities within its territory since the Meiji period. All these injustices should be confronted and overcome.

We in Japan need to strive to go beyond Japanese statehood, ultimately overcome this state from within, and establish ourselves as people who can live together with our neighbors, in a confederation of the peoples of the archipelago.

4. Taking back the Economy — From a relationship between things to a relationship between human beings

How can we remake this world economy which for its survival keeps billions of people starving or undernourished, landless, poor and overworked in the South, and makes waste and saturation consumption a necessity in the North?

However difficult this task may be, it is obvious

that we cannot go on like this much longer. An economy that can operate only through infinite growth measured by GNP will soon enough bump into the wall of the limited capacity of this planet. Nor is it sustainable in an historical period where the people's power is on the rise, for the majority in the South will not tolerate the continued disparity. We who live in Japan should refuse to contribute toward further increasing GNP and further increasing production. We should slow down our activities and reduce productivity and efficiency of the most "advanced" sector of our industry. If we are told that such would invite disaster, then it is the system that has to be replaced.

It is important that we begin with basics — what we need for a decent living and how those needed things should be produced, distributed, and consumed. Value added (GNP) should cease to be the measure for economic activities. Instead, satisfaction of human needs in a human way should be our yardstick.

Economic activities should be reintegrated with the life of the people — people in the community. Production and consumption should be organized as material aspects of communities. On this basis, communities need to be horizontally linked so as to exchange their surpluses. This is not an image of subsistence economy, nor is it a call to go back to pre-modern society. It is an image of an economy of a new affluence made possible by accumulation at the grassroots level, by people themselves. Here, people-to-people relations regulate the economy, and not vice versa. This is what we mean by "taking back the economy."

It is here that we must examine the role of counter economic systems. Now a variety of such movements are developing, cooperatives linking organic farmers to urban consumers, workers' production collectives, people-to-people trade, buffalo banks, and credit associations. How far and in what way can these people's economic systems be a basis for our future economic systems?

Another major problem is how the relationship between agriculture and industry, between the city and countryside, should be transformed. Concentration of power and wealth has caused concentration of population in huge urban centers like Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok, and Shanghai. Can our envisioned decentralization of power and wealth lead to more or less smooth dispersion of the pathologically aggrandized metropolises?

TRANSBORDER PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Now we have sketched what kind of alternative

model of development we have in mind. But isn't it a utopia?

As we have said, our alternative model of development is not a utopia. It is rooted in reality — in the reality of the world today, in the reality of the people, and — most importantly — in the reality of the people's movement. Even so we also must not naively conclude that because of the growing power of the people we can expect someday to wake up in a changed world. We cannot reach this new world without a serious search. We need to identify in the people's struggles of today, those facets which reflect the new realities of the world, and in particular those facets which point to a liberated future. And we need to find ways to consolidate these elements and relate them to the 21st century which we aspire to. In other words, we need bridges.

As one such bridge, we propose a new concept of political right and political action, which we provisionally term "transborder participatory democracy." We present this as the specific people's alternative, the counter-system to stand against the particular formation that oppressive power has taken in our time: the state-supported globalization of capital.

Transborder participatory democracy is the name both of a goal and of a process. As a goal it means world-wide democracy practiced by the people of the world. It is a picture of a world order clearly distinct from the conventional idea of world government or world federation, which presupposes states as the constituent units. Yet as our goal it still remains a remote vision of the future.

As a political process, transborder participatory democracy has two aspects. First, it is a practical method for criticizing, confronting, intervening in, and changing the power formation of globalized capital. In this sense, it is a form of action that corresponds both to present socio-economic reality and to the logic and necessity of the people's movements. Second, in the process of transborder political action, the people's groups and organizations gradually form themselves into transborder coalitions, eventually leading to the formation of a transborder "people," by which the division of the world into North and South can be overcome.

The dominant tendency in the Asia-Pacific today is regional integration by state-backed globalization of capital. I have already touched on the destructiveness of this process. The point here is that in this system, most of the major decisions which affect the lives of millions of people are made outside their countries, without their knowledge, much less their being consulted. Even

those decisions made inside the country are made outside the affected people's communities, in the power centers in cities. Most of the decisions are made in the core countries, by their governments, by transnational corporations, or by collective agencies such as IMF, the World Bank, big power summits, or international business bodies.

For a time there were high hopes that it was the state which could rectify the growing international inequalities. In the 1950s the Bandung Spirit prevailed, and the people expected the coalition of the newly emergent independent states to work on their behalf, promoting import-substituting programs. For some years in the 1970s UNCTAD, bearing the banner of the New International Economic Order, seemed to be effectively pressing for redistribution of the wealth of the world in favor of the majority. Both failed. Illusions about the state as the tribune of the people have faded as we said earlier as almost all of the Third World states — including China — have made a definite shift to the position of promoter of the logic of multinational capital and mediator of capital globalization within their own territories.

The situation calls for the declaration of a new right of the people: the right of the people to intervene in, to modify, to regulate, and ultimately to control any decisions that affect their lives, no matter where those decisions are made. This should be established as a universal right which recognizes no borders. It means that the people's action is no longer confined within the bounds of the state territory, nor to acting only through the state political structure. Transborder participatory democracy is a new principle, by which not the state, but the people themselves can emerge as the chief actor in determining the course of world politics and economics. "The people" here means first of all, the people directly affected by external decisions. But transborder participatory democracy goes beyond this. It operates to form a transnationally coalesced people who emerge as the principal actor.

Take, for instance, a decision by a giant publishing company in Tokyo to inaugurate a new, glossy, useless magazine printed in millions of copies to gain advantage in the competition among publishing houses. This will further increase Japan's pulp demand. It will lead to accelerated plunder of tropical forests in Sarawak and mangrove trees in Papua New Guinea, in turn further destroying the basis of the lives of the people there. We say that the people who live there have just the same right to intervene in this decision, as they would if it were being made in their own village. It does not matter where, or by what agency, the decision is being made.

What matters is that the people's lives are being affected by that decision. We declare that there exists no artificial right — neither the right of private property nor the right of state sovereignty, nor for that matter the treaty-based rights of international agencies — that can take precedence over the natural democratic right of people to speak and act directly against decisions that are destroying them, no matter where or by whom those decisions are being made.

Direct intervention by people from the rain-forest countries is not only a way of protecting themselves. It would also have an important effect on Japan. There are people here already who have their own reasons for questioning the outlandish waste of paper for junk magazines with their people-fooling messages. There are people who work for those magazines, who feel the dull despair of knowing they are devoting their lives to producing a bad product, over which they have no control. If these people can learn directly what disastrous consequences the publishing industry has on far-off people, they have an opportunity to see what this "publishing industry" is in a new perspective, and to join with the affected people in protesting and intervening.

Transborder participatory democracy leads toward transborder coalitions of people, and aims ultimately at the formation of a transborder "people." In particular we can expect to see this process having an effect on the people of the northern or core countries. In Japan, for example, people engaged in this process will move away from their identity as "Japanese," in the sense of identifying with the so-called Japanese national interest — which is often synonymous with corporate interests. For years, movement people in Japan have been saying that we produce, consume, and waste too much. Some argued that in principle we should fight to lower the standard of living, but that such a strategy would be political suicide. This argument is abstract and is an expression of guilty conscience. And it misses the point, which is not a general, abstract lowering of the standard of living, but finding the specific ways in which the country can be changed to allow us to coexist with our neighbors. And as our neighbors begin demanding their legitimate right to participate in those decisions made in Tokyo which affect them, those ways will begin to become clear to us. If accompanied by a paradigm change, can't this be a way to begin to first narrow and finally to eliminate the gap between the South and North?

Transborder participatory democracy does not mean participation in the exclusive decision-making process of monopolies. It is not like the

company union's 'participation' in management decisions. On the contrary, it aims to abolish that exclusivity of decision making.

Take the Japanese automobile industry, for instance. Today it is producing 12 million cars a year. By any standard, this is too many. But no one outside the closed rooms of the corporate directors has any say in this. And to gain advantage in the fierce competition, they are going to make more and more. Now we say that affected people both in and outside Japan — the regular employees of the manufacturers, and also subcontract workers, subsidiary assembly workers overseas, users, city dwellers, and all who are concerned about excessive motorization — can and should assert themselves in determining what should be made, how many, for what purpose, how it should be sold and with what kind of advertisements. Imagine what "Toyota" or "Nissan" would be in such a situation. They could no longer operate only for profit. The purpose of production would have to change. They would be forced in the direction of becoming publicly responsible and accountable. We can see how this would lead toward structural transformation of the profit-oriented nature of production.

I repeat, this is not the model of a utopia. What we describe here grows out of tendencies that already exist in the world. For some time now it has been widely accepted that in the matter of human rights there is no such thing as "intervention in internal affairs." At Berlin last year the IMF-World Bank conference — where governments had gathered to negotiate on the Third World debt — was met by a huge mobilization of people from all over the world, trying to intervene against the imposition of a rich-power solution. Again, several years ago when the Japanese government announced its plan to dump nuclear wastes into the Pacific Ocean, the Pacific Island peoples sent powerful delegations to Japan who, in collaboration with Japanese movements, effectively stopped it. Transborder participatory democracy begins in this way as a movement. The experience of acting together situates them in a new universal context in which each individual action acquires new meaning and direction.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVES

Here short-term and long-term perspectives must not be confused. In many Asian and Pacific countries it is the immediate task of the people to establish their democratic, national states. The great struggle of the Korean people for national unification, as their path toward liberation from the

big-power intervention which keeps them divided, is a case in point. The people's struggle in the Philippines aimed at establishing a national democratic government accountable to the people is another. In many of the Pacific islands, where foreign powers are keeping the people subjugated for colonial or strategic reasons, independence through the establishment of people's own states is essential. And at a time when most of the Third World states have degenerated into agencies for joining the big core capital interests with the interests of the local rulers, it is important to continue to try to "internalize" the state, to make it into a barrier against the dominant powers. In this sense a new alliance of people-oriented states, if such could be resurrected again, would broaden the people's opportunities.

In a slightly different context, changing and

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improving state policies is also important for people in the core countries. In Japan, major policy changes are needed in the field of commitment to US military strategy, in ODA, and in the entire stance of the country towards the Asia-Pacific region as well as in the area of domestic accountability. As we said earlier the postwar Japanese state has never clearly disavowed what Imperial Japan had done against the neighboring Asian countries since the Meiji Era, and it is essential for the Japanese people to fight for a set of clear principles, based on a thorough review of the past history of national arrogance, which the Japanese state must follow.

Crucial as these struggles are, they should not be separated from the long-term perspective. Given the fearsome degree to which the region is being integrated, we cannot expect national solutions to stand by themselves as we could several decades ago. The times call for transborder solutions, and the only means for such solutions is the transborder participation of the people themselves. There should be a constant interaction, a dialogue, between the long- and short-term perspectives. The moments of history overlap in our time. Against

colonialism, the people struggle to establish their national states. Against the development-dictatorship state, the people struggle to establish democratic accountability. Against state-supported global capital, the people begin to marginalize the state, and carry the fight directly to the centers of capital wherever they are. This is not a formulation that divides the people's movements into more- and less-advanced. Transborder participatory democracy means that we join in all of these struggles together. If we can begin the dialogue between our dreams and realities here, we are already on our way to the shaping of the people's future.

PEOPLENESS AND INTER-PEOPLE AUTONOMY

The key to transborder democracy is the people. But what is "the people?" Cynics whisper, are you not romanticizing the people? Are you not setting them up as a god? Let us clarify.

We can begin by defining the people as we always do in this kind of discussion: they are the oppressed, the exploited, the manipulated masses. This is so, yet such "people in general" do not exist. The people are divided into a multitude of groups with their respective identities: gender, ethnic, religious, geographical, cultural, class, nation-state. These groups overlap, and individuals belong to more than one. But today, these groups are being forced to live together under conditions imposed upon them. State-supported global capital is organizing all these groups into a system of international and hierarchical division of labor. This new order is lauded as the world of interdependence. Interdependence, yes. But it is an interdependence forced upon the people and permeated by hostility and division. The dominant system perpetuates itself by organizing internal division, and setting one people's group against another. National chauvinism, religious fundamentalism, machinated communalism, cultural exclusivism, sexism, and the whole varied panoply of racial and ethnic prejudices all serve the ruling elites well in their efforts to establish a great organization incapable of its own unity.

The struggle of the people begins on this terrain, in this divisive structure. It does not begin as the full-blown struggle of the people the world over. It begins rooted in each group's identity, and asserts the group's dignity as well as immediate interests. Or movements may begin as single-issue movements.

Thus each struggle nourishes its seed of liberation. But for the seeds to germinate, they must interact with other struggles and movements.

Suppose a Japanese workers' movement regards their fellow workers from other Asian countries who are underpaid because of their illegal status as merely a threat and show no concern about their conditions, then the movement is no people's movement. It is operating within the borders of the compartmentalized structure which perpetuates mutual hostilities. However "militant" its action may have been, it has allowed its seed of liberation to be poisoned and eventually die.

All movements start in this compartmentalized terrain; the point is to fight our way beyond it, to destroy the whole divisive structure and replace it with a spontaneous alliance of the people's own choice and making. In this process the movement can free itself from captivity. Experience shows that interaction with other movements transforms the movement, helping overcome its narrowness and oppressive practices inside it, if there are such.

In this process, what Xabier Gorostiaga once called "the logic of the majority" should of course be the guideline. "The majority" here means the global majority, that is, the most oppressed. They have the prerogative. In the hierarchy of the 20th century world, each stratum of the people has its own interest not only to assert against the immediate above, but also to protect against the immediate below. Whenever the lower is forced to concede to the higher, that strengthens the existing order. It is the part of the higher to be prepared to concede to the lower. And our new ethic for the 21st century must include a way of seeing such renunciation as entailing a gain, and not a loss, in dignity.

Is this alliance, which we call the Alliance of Hope, possible? Let us call that which makes it possible "peopleness."

Peopleness manifests itself most dramatically when people risk their lives in struggle. When the people take to the streets, fight the police, expose themselves to danger, and help each other, the people's spirit becomes visible. We have seen this in Rangoon, Seoul, Kwangju, Manila, Beijing, Bangkok, and even Tokyo. Men and women, young and old, many meeting for the first time and by chance in the tear gas fog, find each other comrades. If one falls, others help, braving gunfire. There is natural equality and compassion. People transcend their immediate self-interests. A strong human bond is forged that leads people to make extraordinary sacrifices.

But this extreme expression of "peopleness" should not be separated from its roots in daily life. Here, we are alike in what really matters. Each of us was born a helpless infant, each has a life to live, each faces death. Some of us have privileges, but no one is so privileged as to be exempt from

these basics of human existence, or from the constant exposure to the risks of living. We all alike eat, excrete, sleep, love, many of us bear and rear children; we hate, celebrate, enjoy, toil, ponder life, fall in and out of confusion, weep, get sick, express ourselves in our own cultural ways, grow old if we are lucky, and prepare to die in dignity and repose. These simple aspects of human existence are common to all of us, and should give us a basis for relating to each other in compassion in equality. Yet so often this simple common peopleness is hidden from us by centuries-long relations of domination. Or, in this century, it is plastered with the fetishism of money, ambitions for promotion, avarice for commodities, and craving for power. If plastered too thick this simple personhood, peopleness, is lost, and with it the capacity to relate to others. Japanese society today is one where this capacity has been lost to a pathological degree. But if the cult of "things" is a burden, then the rediscovery of peopleness is a path to liberation.

Peopleness is not an idealistic construct. It is what is actually at work in the existing solidarity movements among seemingly very different groups of people. It is what is behind the real sympathies and compassions for other people's struggles. It is what is behind the self-sacrifices being paid to the people's cause everywhere. Denying the working of peopleness would be to deny the reality of these movements — or to render them incomprehensible.

Peopleness represents our radical equality and our equal radicality.

By recourse to peopleness can we expect to overcome internecine conflicts between people's groups and imagine the formation of the people worldwide as the subject of transborder participatory democracy. This is a dynamic process of action and counteraction, and not like signing an agreement in a ceremonious atmosphere.

When people's groups thus begin to regulate their mutual relationships spontaneously and for themselves, destroying the system of forced mutual relationships, then we shall have inter-people autonomy cutting across the state barriers and replacing the interstate system. The inter-people autonomy will represent the people of the world collaborating with each other while developing all their rich diversities.

Inter-people autonomy thus is an affair of billions of people, and it is still a vague picture of the 21st century. But one thing that is certain is that the alliance of hope of billions should be preceded by an alliance of hope of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands, an alliance based on inter-movement autonomy, an arena and network where people's movements from different concerns and backgrounds meet and recognize each other's peopleness, and enter into a dynamic process of interaction. This is what PP21 in 1989 in Japan is up to. Let us together engage in this task.

