

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
When the Original Spirit Flows Strong
By HO GOKU

In this essay series, SGI President Ikeda uses his pen name Ho Goku — as he does in The New Human Revolution — to write the story-behind-the-story. This series is published as “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” in the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto was inaugurated as the Soka Gakkai's third president on May 3, 1960. The inauguration took place at the Nihon University Auditorium in Ryogoku, Tokyo.

The sky was clear and bright. Rousing strains of Soka Gakkai songs echoed under the great metal dome of the hall. I remember that momentous meeting as if it were yesterday — and the feeling of determination that surged through my heart as I walked into the hall and gazed up at the portrait of my beloved mentor, Josei Toda.



Many know that the auditorium was originally a sumo stadium, but what not so many know is that, during World War II, the stadium was requisitioned by the military authorities and turned into a balloon bomb factory.

The balloon bomb was a special kind of weapon in which a small explosive or incendiary device was attached to a balloon made of Japanese paper about 33 feet in diameter. It was also rigged with a timer so that the bomb could be dropped automatically. The balloon was then launched on the prevailing westerly winds, the idea being that it would drift across the Pacific to the United States and then explode.

Toward the end of the war, some 9,000 balloon bombs were released, but only around 10 percent ever came close to the United States. The bombs were deemed ineffective, and the release of further balloons was halted.

A battle between balloon bombs and nuclear weapons — one of the many idiocies that make up that most idiotic of human actions, war.



After the war, the stadium-turned-weapons-factory was appropriated by the Occupation forces. It was renamed Memorial Hall and became a place of popular entertainment. In 1952, it was returned to its original owner, but the bowl-shaped sports arena had been paved over with concrete and was no longer suitable for sumo. The facility was renamed International Stadium and, until its purchase by Nihon University in 1958, was rented out as a public hall.

The Soka Gakkai used the hall the first time for its 10th General Meeting, May 3, 1954. The meeting lasted four hours from its opening at noon until closing ceremonies. President Toda cried out to our members, “Let us return to the time of the Daishonin!” It was a rousing call to all — a call to rise up and work for the happiness of humanity.

Shin'ichi was responsible for the organization and smooth running of that meeting. In his diary, he recorded his great appreciation for the efforts of the young people who worked hard to clean the hall after the meeting: “I am determined, as long as I live, never to forget the spirit of those who work hard behind the scenes.”

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From that day on, until 1977 when Nihon University stopped renting out the hall, some 280 Soka Gakkai meetings — Headquarters leaders and general meetings, and divisional general meetings — were held at the auditorium.

It was also where Shin'ichi announced his vision for the future based on the concept of Seven Bells after President Toda's death; where he announced plans to establish Soka University and make it a fortress for peace; and where he made his landmark call for the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China at the 11th Student Division General Meeting, exactly 30 years ago.

From that auditorium, how many young people awoke to their mission for kosen-rufu and set out into the wide world to fulfill it? The old balloon bomb factory became a launching base for peace and happiness. Does not this demonstrate the principle of purifying and transforming the land as expounded in the Lotus Sutra?



Today the auditorium has been torn down, and offices and homes stand in its place. When notice of the building's demolition was posted, some of the local members searched for the original speaker's podium. They found it after great effort, were told they could have it, and presented it as a gift to the Soka Gakkai.

It was their wish, they said, that the podium be a lasting memorial to the powerful spirit and determination of Shin'ichi the day he became president — a spirit that they had tried to make their own. I was deeply touched by their sincerity.

Where the original spirit flows strong, magnificent dramas of mission unfold, and eternal development and prosperity are assured.

On May 3, 1960, Shin'ichi vowed under his mentor's portrait: "From this day I take leadership as a representative of President Toda's disciples and advance with you another step toward the substantive realization of kosen-rufu."

I believe I have kept my vow and have indeed made kosen-rufu a reality as I promised — fearlessly, dauntlessly, with the Soka Gakkai spirit in my heart.

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