

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
Nagano and A Beginning
By HO GOKU

According to the old Japanese counting system, Feb. 11 will mark Josei Toda's 99th birthday. (He was born Feb. 11, 1900. In the traditional Japanese system of reckoning age, the day of birth is counted as the first birthday.) It is also his 40th birthday since his death in 1958. I celebrate this day with profound emotion.

I met Mr. Toda when I was only 19. I served him and was educated and trained by him. With him, I hope always to be that young man. Day after day, I vow with all my strength and determination to fight like a valiant youth, like a true disciple, who can win his praise.



In 1957, the last summer of his life, I decided I would one day write a biographical novel about Mr. Toda. I came to that decision when Mr. Toda called me to join him in Karuizawa (Nagano Prefecture), where he was recuperating.

It was Aug. 14, the 10th anniversary of my first encounter with him.

Though he was recuperating in this quiet resort town, his mind never rested. He was constantly busy, articulating his vision of the Gakkai's future, giving me many kinds of guidance, carrying on discussions with and encouraging and advising the leaders of Karuizawa District.

At this time, he was also giving deep thought to what he would say in the Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons that he planned to deliver to the youth division on Sept. 8 as the first of his final injunctions to them.

His struggle was unceasing and never-ending, true to the passage from the Lotus Sutra, "I have never for a moment neglected [the Buddha's work]" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 226).

It was then I asked myself: "Who will preserve the story of this great man for all eternity? Is not this noble mission mine — I who have been fortunate enough to be constantly at his side, like his shadow?" Thoughts of writing this novel, *The Human Revolution*, had crossed my mind many times before, but it was at this moment that I finally decided I would do it without fail.



Similarly, I decided to write *The New Human Revolution*, which I am in the process of doing now, to record the life of a disciple who had been trained by Mr. Toda. I did so with the wish that this story might further attest to my mentor's greatness.

On the afternoon of Aug. 6, 1993 — the anniversary of the day on which the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima — I was at the Nagano Training Center in Karuizawa, meeting with Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, director of New Delhi's Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (Gandhi Memorial Hall). Dr. Radhakrishnan talked of Mahatma Gandhi's conviction that the power of the spirit is greater than the power of the atom bomb, and how the most important thing we can do is draw out the power of the human spirit to create peace. He went on to praise the SGI as an unprecedented organization with a bright vision for the future of humankind.

Nuclear weapons, which threaten the most basic of human rights, the right to life, are a manifestation of the insidious authoritarian impulse to dominate and destroy others that resides in human hearts. The human revolution is the struggle to call forth from within

human beings the life of the Buddha, the power of the spirit, that can vanquish this evil propensity.

It was on the morning of that day that Ho Goku began to write *The New Human Revolution*.

“Nothing is more precious than peace. Nothing brings more happiness....”

These words were a personal declaration to fight for peace that I made on the day that marked the dropping of the first nuclear weapon on Japan. I was determined to eradicate the devilish machinations of authoritarianism, the forces of arrogance and ignorance, that had visited upon humanity so many terrible tragedies in this century of war, to prevent them from threatening us ever again.



When the Japanese military government called on farmers to settle in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia as part of its colonization effort, many of them came from Nagano Prefecture. In all, some 34,000 people went. As the tide of the war turned against Japan, nearly half of them lost their lives on the Chinese continent — a larger number of sacrifices than any other Japanese prefecture. The scars of war still remain in the hearts of the people of verdant Nagano.

Before the war, the antimilitarist activist and journalist Yuyu Kiryu (1873–1941) called Nagano the “land of free speech.” Perhaps the wise and independent nature of the people of Nagano gave rise to this tradition of outspokenness. Kiryu called the world as it slid toward the destruction of World War II “an earth dominated by bestiality.” People had abandoned all ethics and morality, he declared.

And it was here in Nagano, the land of free speech, that I, too, with my mentor’s spirit and beliefs forever engraved in my heart, summoned my courage to speak out for humanism in order to fight against the bestiality of the present-day world rife with evil abuses of power.



The 1998 Winter Olympics opened in Nagano on Feb. 7. [As I write this essay,] this celebration of peace is taking place here, where my mentor and I traveled several times, securing the foundation of happiness for countless friends. With the unchanging conviction that peace is the most basic starting point for the advancement of humankind, I pray with all my heart for the Olympics’ success.

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