

## Develop True Ability and Spiritual Strength

*SGI President Ikeda gave the following address at the joint graduation ceremony of the Tokyo and Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High Schools, March 16. President Ikeda, the schools' founder, attended the ceremony at the Tokyo campus, the proceedings of which were televised live to the Kansai school via satellite.*

Congratulations on your graduation! I wish I could present each of you with the Founder's Award. For those whose grades may not be quite up to par, perhaps today we can get away with blaming it on your teachers!

Joking aside, however, it is of course important that you apply yourselves diligently to your studies. At the same time, our teachers should have the determination and desire to help every student achieve excellence. This is the spirit of value-creating education as established by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of the Soka Gakkai.

I also offer my heartfelt congratulations to the families of our graduates, along with my sincere thanks to all the members of the faculty and staff for their dedication.

Today, at the Tokyo campus, we are honored to have with us a delegation of guests from the Moscow City Council, led by Deputy Chairperson Zinaida Duragunkina; and at the Kansai campus, a delegation from South Korea's prestigious Cheju National University, led by President Cho Moon Boo. The presence of these distinguished guests adds tremendous significance to our graduation ceremony.

Just now, as the founder of the Soka School System, I was presented with a Certificate of Special Commendation from the Russian government commemorating Moscow's 850th anniversary. I understand that I am the sole Japanese recipient to date. I deeply appreciate this great honor. Since mentor and disciple, teacher and student, are one and inseparable, I wish to share this award with all the graduates as a parting gift. I hope all of you — both those who received special prizes today and those who didn't — will take pride in sharing this loftiest commendation with me.

### **Those Who Fight to the End Will Be Victorious**

The great Russian poet of the people, Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), who is a particular favorite of mine, sings Moscow's praises in "Eugene Onegin":

*Oh, Moscow, Moscow! I would view  
You in my fond imagination  
Moscow: those syllables can start  
A tumult in the Russian heart!*

Over the course of its 850-year history, Moscow, a capital of culture and the arts, has triumphed over countless ordeals. For its courageous stand in World War II, Moscow was honored with the title Hero City. It is also well known how in 1812 the city withstood the invasion of Napoleon's hitherto invincible forces, who were finally driven into retreat.

During the war, Moscow was also the only city on the European continent that did not fall to the fierce onslaught of Nazi Germany. Why? The late rector of Moscow State University, Dr. Rem Khokhlov, whom we once had the privilege of welcoming to this campus, explained that Moscow was not defeated because its citizens burned with the powerful determination to protect their home at any cost.

In the future, each of you may likewise encounter dark moments of misfortune or attack by hostile forces. I, too, have lived out my life amid a storm of persecution. But I am confident that all of you graduating and leaving these hallowed grounds today are lions with tremendous courage. Please challenge all difficulties with determination and composure. Those who persevere with unflagging passion and enthusiasm always win in the end. In contrast, those who give up and stop trying out of fear only wind up unhappy.

I made my first trip to Moscow in 1974, the year after the founding of the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High Schools. That visit elicited a barrage of opposition and criticism from many circles in Japan. To most Japanese at that time, the Soviet Union, with its vastly different social and political systems, seemed a very distant neighbor indeed. In response, I proclaimed: "I am a humanist. I will go wherever there are people." The purpose of my visit, I explained, was to promote exchange among ordinary people.

At the time, tensions were running high between the Soviet Union and China. When I had visited Beijing for the first time three months earlier, the Chinese were constructing an enormous air-raid shelter. In the junior high schools, too, the pupils were digging up the school grounds to make underground shelters. At this heartrending sight, I resolved to do what I could as an individual to contribute to a reconciliation between the two countries.

To take the initiative to go where the circumstances are most difficult, to be the first to take on the most arduous tasks — this is the way of life that my mentor, Josei Toda, taught me; this is the Soka Gakkai spirit. I am not the least concerned or troubled by the criticism or scheming of corrupt, underhanded people.

On that first visit to the Soviet Union, I met Soviet Premier Aleksey Kosygin — the first of many meetings. He assured me on that occasion that the Soviet Union had no intention of attacking China. His words were clear, and on my next visit to China I conveyed to the Chinese leaders precisely what he had said.

I also initiated a program for educational exchange between Moscow State University, an institution with a proud history of more than 200 years, and the then recently founded Soka University. It was, incidentally, also Moscow State University that awarded me my first honorary doctorate, in 1975.

Since then I have received many honorary doctorates and professorships from universities around the world. I have accepted these awards out of the sole desire to see all of you continue along the global path of trust and friendship that I have opened, with the hope that you will widen it and develop it as you go. That is my sentiment. All of my efforts are for you, and all those after you, who will be active in the 21st and 22nd centuries.

Toward that end, I hope you will study foreign languages, and English, in particular. Without a command of foreign languages, you will be left behind in the coming century.

My youth coincided with World War II, and anyone caught studying English was denounced as a traitor. After the war, I enlisted a private tutor and tried to learn the language, but poor health and various other circumstances forced me to abandon those studies. I still regret this.

I further request that the principals and teaching faculty redouble their efforts to help the students of the Soka schools learn foreign languages. As for the students, if you find that you're not learning as much as you would like to in your classes, then I urge you to find additional ways of gaining the skills you seek on your own.

Those graduating from junior high school today will graduate from senior high school in the year 2001. That is the year that the new campus of Soka University of America will open in Orange County, California. I look forward to seeing some of you taking your places among the members of the first class of that new institution.

The world is vast. I hope you will each play an active role on its boundless stage.

### **The Darker the Night, the More Brilliant the Spirit**

I have been to Moscow six times. I will never forget the visit I made to the home of the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910). It prompted me to ponder the strong bond that united the great author and the people.

About a hundred years ago, when Russia was suffering a terrible famine, Tolstoy helped his starving fellow citizens. Leaving his home in Moscow, he traveled to the hardest-hit areas and carried out relief activities there. Tolstoy's daughters and sons gallantly followed his lead. They set up facilities to provide meals for the hungry and formed a relief organization. They worked with selfless dedication to assist tens of thousands of suffering people. Tolstoy also appealed to other countries for aid.

The authorities, however, grew jealous of the international attention the author's humanitarian efforts were attracting and turned their fury on him. They angrily condemned him for exposing Russia's plight to the world, declaring that it seriously undermined the Czar's prestige and dignity.

This is so absurd. It is a trait of those ensnared by the devilish nature of power to feel jealous when a person of true greatness and integrity appears.

The authorities of Tolstoy's day were not the least concerned about the welfare of the people. Instead, they were consumed by egotistic pride and vanity and worried only about appearances. They instigated the publication of articles discrediting Tolstoy and made him the target of base attacks. They also tried to threaten his sons. But the darker the night of persecution became, the more brilliantly the spiritual light of Tolstoy and his family shone.

I hope the students of the Soka schools will join me in advancing with this same spirit.

### **A Leader Committed to the People**

Ms. Duragunkina of Moscow's City Assembly, who is one of our honored guests today, has the lofty motto, "To do good — that is our greatest happiness." With steadfast dedication, she continues to extend humanitarian assistance to orphans, to sick and needy children of poor families, and children and youth exposed to radiation from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident.

Sadly, this compassionate spirit to reach out to the less fortunate is entirely lacking in Japanese society today. Japan has become a country devoid of generosity. Interested only in personal gain and advancement, the so-called elite readily sacrifice and exploit the people for their own ends without the slightest scruple. Such people are caught in the grip of power's insidious nature. Theirs is a truly miserable existence, and they are bound to find themselves in the most pitiful circumstances one day.

The times cry for genuine leaders committed to serving the people and working on the people's behalf. It is the mission of the Soka schools to foster such individuals.

In addition to pursuing academic knowledge, we need to ask how such knowledge can be put to use for people's happiness. This is where wisdom is vital. I hope all of you will develop into outstanding humanistic leaders who possess both abundant knowledge and vibrant wisdom.

### **Advance Tenaciously**

Incidentally, Cheju-do, the island that is home to the distinguished Cheju National University, is called the Hawaii of South Korea for its exceptional scenic beauty.

The island is said to have three beauties: the beauty of the natural environment, the beauty of lush fruit, and the beauty of its people's hearts.

Since ancient times, the people of Cheju-do have had the spirit to fight evil and injustice

and uphold that which is good and just.

In the past, Japanese forces cruelly invaded this beautiful island. However, there was a great champion of Korean independence, An Ch'ang-ho (1878– 1938), who fought relentlessly against militarist Japan, undaunted by repeated imprisonment. He, like Soka Gakkai founder Mr. Makiguchi, died in prison.

An Ch'ang-ho constantly called on his compatriots to develop true ability and strength. He urged them to do so day by day and month by month, making that their primary purpose. He told them they mustn't moan about not having opportunity, assuring them that if they fostered true ability, there was no limit to the opportunities they could create for themselves.

Cheju-do, which has today become one of the most prosperous and flourishing areas of South Korea, has certainly shown actual proof of his words. And Cheju National University, under the direction of President Cho, has been an important driving force behind the area's remarkable growth.

My ardent wish is that each of you, the students of the Soka schools, will develop the true ability and strength to see through and defeat the schemes of ill-intentioned people. Tenacious effort is important. If you persevere with patience and tenacity, you'll find that tremendous energy will well forth from the depths of your lives.

The courageous young Korean poet Yun Tongju (1917–45) wrote: "Though the wind blows fiercely, my feet remain firmly planted on the rocky soil. Though the water of the river flows vigorously and unceasingly, my feet remain firmly planted on the hillside."

May you let nothing defeat you in your youth but advance always with firm and steady steps. May you always be guided by good sense and bright optimism, undisturbed by the winds of praise or censure and never swayed by fickle fads or passing trends. It is vital that you do not give in to defeat.

To the west of Moscow there stands a towering monument to the victory of the Russian people against Napoleon called the Triumphal Arch. As you strive forward with strong bonds of friendship and a spirit of mutual encouragement, I would like you to build a magnificent Triumphal Arch of Soka in the 21st century.

Whatever my circumstances or wherever I may be, I will continue praying for your success in your activities and your excellent health. That is my unchanging determination.

In closing, I wish to offer my heartfelt prayers for the boundless prosperity of Moscow and Cheju-do, which are both very dear to my heart.

*Spasibo!*

*Kamsahamnida!*

(Thank you very much!)

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