

Long Live Independence

The following is SGI President Ikeda's acceptance speech when he received an honorary doctorate in philosophy from Kyung Hee University in Seoul, South Korea, May 15.

Honored Chancellor Choue and Madame Oh; honored President Choue; esteemed faculty of Kyung Hee University; distinguished guests:

In the Chancellor Choue's congratulatory address just now, he was as kind to me as an older brother. And I'm afraid that his praise was exaggerated. I am happy and grateful for his generosity.

When he talked about his battles with Japanese militarism, I was filled with deep grief and pain for what he had to go through. Thrown in prison by arrogant Japanese, he not only survived but has found it in his heart to look upon Japan, the nation that caused him and his people so much suffering, with compassion and forgiveness. This is a hallmark of his greatness.

I, too, have fought and continue to fight Japan's arrogance.

Chancellor Choue also spoke of his vision that Asia form a regional cooperative organization, just as Europe has done with the European Union. I am in absolute agreement with Chancellor Choue's view of Asia and the world.

In closing, Chancellor Choue referred to Kyung Hee University's founding motto, "The Creation of a New Civilized World." This idea that world peace will be attained through culture and civilization is indeed a great truth, a supreme ideal. I was impressed by the many important issues that Chancellor Choue addressed in his speech.

Also, thanks for the wonderful musical welcome. I have learned that your honorable university will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year. To commemorate that milestone, I propose a joint performance, in either Korea or Japan, of this Kyung Hee University musical group and the Soka University wind orchestra.

Seeing all of you today, I am reminded of something the British poet John Masefield said: "There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university." How grand this campus is, here at the foot of Mount Kohwang, cloaked in the fresh green of spring! Yet even brighter shines the lofty founding philosophy of Kyung Hee University set forth by Chancellor Choue — creating a new civilized world.

I have just received an honorary doctorate in philosophy from this pinnacle of humanistic education, which I humbly accept, with infinite gratitude and pride. I regard it as an unparalleled honor, and I cannot begin to describe my joy and emotion. Thank you very much.

I have been told that the anniversary of Kyung Hee University's founding is May 18, just a few days from now. In the five decades since its opening, your university has forged exchange relations with 150 institutions of higher learning around the world and has always been in the forefront of world peace efforts. Kyung Hee University's tradition of service to society as symbolized by its Brighter Society Movement is also deservedly famous. Your school is like a big brother to Soka University, and we look up to you for guidance. I hope you will continue to inspire and support your younger brother, Soka University, in the years to come.

Today, May 15, is a special day in Korea — Teachers Day, a day when students honor their teachers and disciples honor their mentors. What a wonderful custom, in complete keeping

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with your nation's reputation as the Eastern Kingdom of Courtesy.

From the ancient past, Japan has learned a great deal from Korea, acquiring many aspects of its culture from this great land. Korea has been Japan's teacher. On this Teachers Day, I express anew my never-ending gratitude for Korea's great contribution to Japan.

My teacher and mentor in life, Josei Toda, and his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of value-creating education, both had profound respect for your nation, acknowledging the enormous debt Japan owed it. Mr. Toda became Mr. Makiguchi's disciple in the spring of 1920. That was one year after Korea's March 1st Independence Movement. It is also the year that the courageous young freedom fighter Yu Kwan Sun died in the struggle for Korean independence, crying out "Long live independence!" with her last breath.

This noble struggle for independence spearheaded by your youth led to China's May 4 Movement, also of 1919, and then on to Gandhi's nonviolent struggle for Indian independence. And further, to the independence movements of many nations in Asia and Africa. The value-creating education movement tapped into this same spring and arose from this same current of popular self-determination movements that swept the globe. At the very same time that Chancellor Choue was incarcerated by the Japanese military for his iron commitment to liberating Korea, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda were jailed for their refusal to go along with the dictates of Japanese militarism. Mr. Makiguchi died in prison at age 73.

One of the factors contributing to Japan's narrow-minded ethnocentrism is the Japanese people's lack of an established guiding philosophy. Another is that Japan's educational system is warped by nationalism. That is precisely why I have made an effort to create a global alliance based on education and a philosophy of humanism.

In my published dialogue with Aurelio Peccei, co-founder of the Club of Rome and a friend also of Chancellor Choue, we agreed that humanity needs to create a new philosophy of life and establish an unshakable pillar of human wisdom. We also spoke about pursuing educational exchange as a means to transcend the outdated confines of national boundaries and about creating regional zones of cooperation so that we can live and prosper together.

It was in 1981, still at the height of the Cold War, that Chancellor Choue proposed to the International Association of University Presidents Conference held in Costa Rica that year that the United Nations establish the International Day of Peace and International Year of Peace. The association adopted the proposal, and Chancellor Choue began to make extraordinary efforts to ensure that the United Nations would implement it.

And indeed it was his tremendous determination, his single-minded commitment to give even his life to realize this cause, that led to the blossoming of the first glorious flowers of peace, as lovely as the blossoms of the magnolia, your school flower. It is impossible to measure the effect that the creation of the International Day of Peace, the third Tuesday every September, and International Year of Peace, 1986, had on raising the consciousness of people around the world, on rallying them to work for the Cold War's end. I was personally influenced: In my SGI Day peace proposal that year, I talked about the significance of the International Year of Peace, and I made increased efforts to spread the message of peace around the world.

In November 1997, Chancellor Choue spoke at Soka University, addressing us as a kindly father, saying that the age of the Pacific Rim was dawning, that Korea, China and Japan should create a cooperative regional association similar to the European Union. The great historian Arnold Toynbee expressed a similar hope in his discussions with me years ago.

Speaking of a united Europe, there has been a tremendous increase in educational

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exchange among European nations since the process began. A plan is now under way to make it possible for as many as 40 percent of Europe's 8 million university students to study in other European nations.

From today, I am a member of your university community. As such, I will work with you toward a second Renaissance. For the sake of Korea and Japan, as well as the youth of Asia and the Pacific Rim, I am determined to widen and extend the great road of education and philosophy. The construction of Soka University of America is a part of that plan.

In closing, I express my unceasing wishes for the eternal progress and glory of Kyung Hee University as we enter the 21st century. I also pray fervently for the health and long life of both Chancellor Choue and Madame Oh, great world treasures of education, and all of you here.

Kamsahamnida (Thank you very much).

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