

The New Human Revolution, Volume 7, Chapter 1, Parts 34–35

'The Flower of Culture'

By DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI President

In the midst of the Cuban missile crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union plant seeds of hope that promise to blossom into peace. But, as Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells members: 'We must spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the world as quickly as we can. Unless we do, the problem will never be solved at its root.'

The United States had no intention of changing its position: The first consideration in settling the crisis must be the removal of Soviet missile sites from Cuba. But Khrushchev's new proposal, so different from that outlined in his first letter, created quite a stir among the U.S. leaders. Was it merely a bargaining tactic, or would the Russians refuse to talk at all unless the United States agreed to withdraw its missiles from Turkey? Or could it be a sign of dissension among the Soviet leadership?

President Kennedy sought to uncover Khrushchev's true intent while devising a response to the new demand. In the midst of this, an incident heightened tensions again: a U.S. U-2 reconnaissance plane was shot down over Cuba. Robert Kennedy recalled this as the worst day of the crisis. American leaders met to decide whether to take immediate military action. Once again, any miscalculation, any error in judgment, could result in a cataclysmic war.

In this mood of oppressive tension, President Kennedy decided to override demands for a swift military response and wait one more day before taking action, observing what would develop.

Clinging to a thread of hope, Kennedy replied to Khrushchev's first letter, clarifying that it was not his intention to invade Cuba and calling for the removal of Soviet missiles from the island. Among most of the U.S. leadership, however, there was a strong sense that come Monday, Oct. 29, they would be at war with the Soviet Union.

Sunday, Oct. 28, dawned. Unexpectedly, a new letter from Khrushchev arrived. Moscow Radio broadcast its contents as well. It was a reply to the letter Kennedy had sent the previous day. Khrushchev declared his trust in Kennedy's statement that the United States would not attack Cuba, and he promised to remove all offensive weaponry from Cuba in return. Kennedy immediately announced that he welcomed Khrushchev's decision. With this sudden development, the standoff was on the way to resolution.

Kennedy was finally released from the nightmarish days and nights of crisis. Khrushchev, too, must have breathed a great sigh of relief. They had come to the brink of an all-out nuclear war. But somehow they had averted a disastrous outcome.

This experience contributed to an easing of tensions between the superpowers in ensuing years.

Though they had not met or talked in person, the Cuban missile crisis provided an opportunity for Kennedy and Khrushchev to exchange views and finally begin moving toward mutual trust. This was fortunate for humanity. Though the two superpowers were still far from considering themselves on friendly terms, the crisis may be seen as the start of a shared quest for peace and coexistence. Nor can the important role of the United Nations in averting an armed confrontation be overlooked.

In June 1963, the Soviet Union and the United States installed a hot line linking the leaders of the two nations so that they could communicate directly and immediately in the

Title: Volume 7: Chapter 1 The Flower of Culture (34-35)

Subject: World Tribune 08/21/98 n.3205 p.5 WT980821p05

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: Chapter Culture Flower History Human Kosen-rufu Revolution Tribune Volume World

event of an emergency to avert an accidental nuclear war. Coming within a hair's breadth of nuclear war also contributed to the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty by the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain in August of the same year.

As for Cuba, Fidel Castro was said to have been furious that the United States and the Soviet Union decided to dismantle the missile installations in his country without including him in the discussions. Yet perhaps what angered him more than the removal of missiles was the fact that the superpowers, interested only in advancing their own interests, could with impunity decide or affect the fate of the smaller nations in their sphere of influence.

During the Cuban missile crisis, Shin'ichi Yamamoto paid careful attention to every news report on the radio, on television and in the papers. He also earnestly chanted daimoku with the strongest and unwavering conviction that war must be avoided at any cost. The Gosho states: "Our body and our mind pervade the universe" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 412). A strong prayer, an earnest resolve, reaches the farthest corners of the universe. That's why Shin'ichi prayed with all his might for a resolution to the crisis the world was facing. He prayed so as to envelop the entire world with his daimoku.

A Buddhist's struggle for peace begins with a powerful prayer. From that prayer arises determination, which in turn gives rise to wisdom and expresses itself in courageous, committed action.

On Oct. 27, as the tension-packed moments of that day passed, the Soka Gakkai Headquarters leaders meeting for that month was being held in the Tokyo Gymnasium. During that meeting, Shin'ichi spoke about the Cuban missile crisis.

"As you all know," he said, "the deployment of missiles in Cuba by the Soviet Union has created a very dangerous situation. Ultimately, to eliminate this threat of nuclear war, we must spread a valid, life-affirming philosophy; we must spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the world as quickly as we can. Unless we do, the problem will never be solved at its root."

Shin'ichi did not speak long. He simply stated his conclusion clearly and succinctly.

To be continued