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'The Flower of Culture'

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The Cuban missile crisis drives home to members just how pressing the issue of nuclear war really is, making them deeply aware of the tremendous importance of their mission. This awareness spurs them to even greater efforts to spread Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

On Oct. 28, Shin'ichi Yamamoto attended a nationwide leaders meeting held at the head temple. Afterward, he met with leaders from each headquarters to offer guidance. At these meetings, convened separately by headquarters at the different lodging temples on the head temple grounds, Shin'ichi again spoke about the Cuban missile crisis.

At one such gathering, he said: "I understand that members have been directing questions to you about the Cuba situation, asking, 'What is going to happen?' or 'Which side does the Gakkai support, the United States or the Soviet Union?' This is only natural. The basis of our response to this grave issue is our powerful prayer that war cannot and must not be allowed to break out. Our world today is divided into opposing camps, East and West. But the Soka Gakkai leans neither toward the political right nor left, nor does it side with either the United States or the Soviet Union. We believe in global humanism. Our position is to lead all the world's people in the direction of peace.

"The present confrontation has only underscored our conviction that Buddhism is an absolute necessity for our age. The people of the United States, the Soviet Union and Cuba all cherish a desire for peace. They all want to enjoy their lives. Common people and concerned leaders the world over are beginning to seriously consider what can be done to eliminate war, how to solve the problem at its root, and what philosophy is needed to achieve that.

"Yet despite this desire for peace, nations succumb to mutual distrust and regard one another with hatred and hostility. This is the reality of our world. How, under such circumstances, can we eliminate all possibility of nuclear war? Buddhism holds the only true solution.

"Buddhism teaches that all living beings are Buddhas. It reveals that all people possess the Buddha nature, that oneself and others are inherently endowed with the life force of the Buddha. The life philosophy of Buddhism is a magnificent system of thought firmly based on respect for the dignity and sanctity of human life. When this teaching spreads around the world, it surely will act as the most powerful force for preventing war.

"In addition, all those who strive in Buddhist faith and practice will cause the life force of the Buddha to well up from within them. With this, they can crush the negative impulses to destroy and slaughter that may exist within their lives. The disaster of nuclear war arises solely from fundamental darkness, the most basic delusion inherent in life. Many negative and evil states of mind arise from that fundamental darkness, including distrust, hate, jealousy, the desire to dominate others and the impulse to kill.

"Nam-myoho-renge-kyo cuts this fundamental darkness off at the root and allows the light of true wisdom — that is, fundamental enlightenment or the inherent Buddha nature — to illuminate our lives and thus transform hate into compassion, destruction into creation, and distrust into trust. We also call this human revolution."

Shin'ichi continued to emphasize how the Daishonin's Buddhism could function as a powerful force in preventing nuclear war and building a lasting peace. Through their daily activities, the members had come to keenly recognize this truth, but many were unable to

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explain clearly why it was so. Shin'ichi's words confirmed their deepest intuitions, dispelling their frustration.

Shin'ichi continued: "The preamble of the UNESCO Charter opens with the famous declaration, 'That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.' This is an extremely important observation. How, then, do we build defenses of peace that are truly lasting?"

"Buddhism makes such construction possible, and this is what the Soka Gakkai has been doing in actuality. By sharing the great life philosophy of Buddhism with others through one-on-one dialogue, haven't we been building strong and unassailable defenses of peace in the heart of one individual after another? The road to our goal of kosen-rufu may seem incredibly long, but in fact it is the most direct way to the establishment of enduring peace.

"By passing the great Buddhist message of compassion and peace from one friend to the next, we can absolutely guarantee that nuclear war never happens. That is our mission."

The Cuban missile crisis had driven home to members just how pressing the issue of nuclear war really was, making them deeply aware at the same time of the tremendous importance of their own mission. This awareness spurred them to even greater efforts to spread the Daishonin's teachings.

At the time, hardly anyone appreciated the fact that the Soka Gakkai, with its goal of building defenses of peace in the hearts of people around the world, was at the cutting edge of the movement for humanity's dream of lasting peace.

The Cuban missile crisis reconfirmed for Shin'ichi the importance of his vision to engage world leaders in dialogue. The exchange of letters between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev forestalled the worst of all outcomes, a full-scale nuclear war. If the leaders of nations around the world could forge bonds of genuine empathy through sincere dialogue, Shin'ichi was certain, the road to peace would be opened. He also firmly believed that it was necessary to put more effort into cultural exchange among the world's peoples to foster mutual understanding. Based on that conviction, Shin'ichi lost no time in taking the first step in that direction by establishing an association for the promotion of music and the performing arts.

To be continued