

THIRD STAGE

'A life must be judged by what the person has achieved in total,' SGI President Ikeda says in this continuing dialogue.

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SPEECH

Against the Powerful: part one of SGI President Ikeda's recent speech in Kansai.

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No. 3202

JULY 31, 1998

Your VOICE COUNTS



'Attending meetings for kosen-rufu is part of our Buddhist practice and we attain immense benefit as a result. When we participate in such activities, our spirits are lifted and rejuvenated.'

Speaking out and taking action for the people makes our lives shine brilliantly, SGI President Ikeda says at a youth division meeting in May. This is the purpose of faith and our activities.

Before SGI President Ikeda's speech, the Soka Gloria Wind Orchestra performed Jean Sibelius' Finlandia.

Members of the orchestra, thank you for your performance! It was splendid! This piece is well known. Does anyone here know the meaning behind it?

Someone in the audience stood and said: "It's a revolutionary song of the Finnish people, who fought to throw off oppressive Russian rule."

That's exactly right. Singing and playing this song, the people of Finland achieved independence. A country that had seemed small and weak succeeded in casting off the shackles of the mighty Russian empire. This struggle for independence began exactly 100 years ago.

At the end of the 19th century, a movement to resist Imperial Russia's repressive rule over Finland arose among the people. Finlandia, sometimes referred to as Finland's second national anthem, was first performed in 1899. Due to the com-

position's patriotic timbre, the Russian authorities prohibited it from being performed. Nevertheless, it was soon being played and sung throughout the country under different names, symbolizing the struggle for freedom. Finland gained its independence in 1917. At President Ikeda's request, the orchestra performed the piece again.

Finlandia is a wonderful melody overflowing with joy. The music begins somberly, but gradually the sound and tempo intensify until they explode into a bright, energetic dance. Listening to this piece unfold conjures images in my mind of the people who are at first lost and afraid, worried about their livelihoods and fearing for their lives. Slowly, they begin to awaken, and finally they rise up with the spirit, "Let's fight!" They dance with joy at their newfound confidence.

Attending Meetings Lifts Our Spirits

Congratulations on this youth division leaders meeting!

I also commend the efforts of the arts division members who are watching via satellite broadcast at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters.

Among those of you gathered here tonight, there may be some who were reluctant to come, thinking on the way, "I really don't feel like going," "I'm not in the mood for this," "I'd much rather stay at home," or "I'd like to go and relax somewhere." I wish to state, however, that the fact that you came to this meeting is in itself most noble and is a victory for your life. Attending meetings for kosen-rufu is part of our

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STUDY

Impartial — but not impersonal — devotion.

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Dr. Jane Hurst lectures on 'Priestly vs. pragmatic' in D.C.

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PERSPECTIVES

Where 'the good old days' and the future of kosen-rufu in America intersect....

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Always Present

By PATRICIA FORD

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

When one embraces this mandala, all Buddhas and gods will gather around him, accompanying him like a shadow, and protect him day and night.... ("Upholding Faith in the Gohonzon," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 177)

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to a woman named Myoshin-ama upon bestowing the Gohonzon on her. Here, he compares the Buddhist gods' power to that of a parent, thus assuring her that, because of her faith, she and her infant will always be protected.



In My Life


NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS IN ACTION

At times, it is easy to forget that these protective forces are always present. When we chant, we reawaken these protective forces.

I sometimes forget that they are with me. In March, I moved out of an intolerable living situation; things went bad with my roommate. (I am out almost \$1,000 because I committed myself to a sublease without realizing what I was getting into.)

I had to look at myself and see what I needed to change. I realized that there was something wrong with the situation and with my life. From the day that things went bad, I chanted an hour every day. My "protection" came in the form of my realizing that I needed to take more responsibility for my life, especially when it comes to money.

Since this internal change, my environment has responded with protection. I was offered a graduate teaching assistantship for the fall at the university I attend. I also moved out, and I began to spend more time with my boyfriend; he recently proposed. I started a great summer job with TWA, too, that would not have been possible if I were still living in the same place.

These experiences remind me that so long as I "embrace this mandala" — that is, practice faith — everything turns into a benefit, one way or another. These benefits showed me that no matter where I live, these protective forces are always present. Especially when I challenge myself. 

'NAM' Impartial But Not Impersonal

WHAT A Concept

ON THE BASIC IDEAS
OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

By LISA JONES

STAFF WRITER

Nam, one of the components of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, means devotion — it means to apply ourselves in faith, practice and study with the seriousness and earnestness evoked by our bodhisattva vows. (For more on these vows, please see the "Bodhisattva" concept article in the June 19 issue.)

Nichiren Daishonin explains: "People place the word 'Nam' before the names of all deities and Buddhas in worshipping them. But what is the meaning of 'Nam'? This word derives from Sanskrit, and means to devote one's life. Ultimately it means to offer our lives to the Buddha" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 267)

In the Daishonin's Buddhism, *nam* means to offer, or devote, our lives to the Gohonzon.

Elaborating on this, SGI President

Ikeda once wrote that "*nam* is two-directional: that is, one aspect of *nam* is that we devote our lives to or fuse our lives with the ultimate, unchanging reality, while the other is that through this fusion, we are simultaneously capable of drawing forth an infinite wisdom...."

In other words, when we devote our lives to the Buddha, the Buddha is expressed through us; by devoting our lives to the Gohonzon, our innate Buddhahood becomes manifest in all our endeavors.

In Buddhism, devotion is synonymous with wholeheartedness. Halfheartedness, on the other hand, equals cowardice and is said to be an enemy of Buddhist practice. *Halfheartedness* means withholding from or not being ourselves in front of the Gohonzon, while *wholeheartedness* means exposing our true feelings to the Gohonzon and trusting in it without reservation.

In this regard, *nam* means putting all our eggs in one basket, so to speak: honestly discarding provisional teachings and employing the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before all others; entrusting our honor, our hopes and dreams, our very lives to the Gohonzon and, concurrently, to our own Buddhahood.

It could be said that the Gohonzon is impartial — it functions in strict accord

with cause and effect — but it's not impersonal. Rather, it's the ultimate expression of the Daishonin's compassionate, teacherlike, parental concern for each of us. Josei Toda used to say that we should be serious but not rigid in front of the Gohonzon. We should feel as if we're actually in the Daishonin's presence, but we should chant as we are, whether joyful, bored or sad.

Also, devotion to the Gohonzon does not mean that we subjugate our individuality to the "greater will" of the Daishonin. On the contrary, wholehearted prayer to the Gohonzon enhances and gives direction to our individuality.

It could be said, then, that *nam* implies mutual devotion — between us and the Gohonzon, between mentor and disciple, between the common mortal and the Buddha.

In *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda writes:

I'm sure some of you regard expressions such as...dedicating one's life to Buddhism as encouraging a sort of self-sacrifice, some kind of tragic self-immolation. But the state of mind underlying the devotion I am talking about is entirely different. It is a state of complete, self-assured calm and peace, a state utterly without fear. It is a feeling as expansive and serene as the clear blue sky, a fullness of hope, joy and total satisfaction — a state of being ultimately free and true to oneself.

Fourteen in a series

The People Are the King's Parents

STANDS TO REASON

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM
THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The king makes the people his parents. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1554)

The Atsuhara Persecution, in which a Tendai priest conspired with government officials to persecute farmers practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, was the worst ordeal the Daishonin's believers ever faced. In 1279, the crisis peaked when Atsuhara village believers were tortured and three of them executed.

The persecution had begun years before, in 1275. The believer who stood up to lead everyone on the road to victory (which finally came in 1281) was Nanjo Tokimitsu, to whom this letter was written in 1279.

It's often said that the Atsuhara Persecution — or rather the believers' unwavering faith during this trial — is what inspired the Daishonin to inscribe the Dai-Gohonzon for all humanity. He felt that the Atsuhara farmers had shown that strong faith had become the rule rather than the exception among his followers. The Atsuhara believers, although by and large practicing Buddhism only a short while, were willing to give up their lives for faith; this was true conviction in the Daishonin's eyes.

In this letter, the Daishonin tells Tokimitsu that "the king makes the people his parents." A Buddha reveres the people above all. How could a Buddha not revere people so determined to protect the Law as the Atsuhara farmers?

On March 16, 1958, President Toda made the same point. He called the Soka Gakkai the king of all religious organizations: The Soka Gakkai was king precisely because it made the people its parents; it existed solely to serve them. Each Soka Gakkai member, working for the happiness of all people, was to Toda a king. Or a queen — he didn't mean the term to be gender specific.

For 40 years, SGI President Ikeda has been teaching this spirit to succeeding generations of SGI members. In a recent essay on true democracy (July 17 *World Tribune*), he used this quote "The king makes the people his parents" to emphasize again that "the spirit of Buddhism is to see the noble Buddha in the people — in fact, in each individual."

Shouldn't our experience of eight years of the temple issue — of seeing what happens when a "king" goes against Buddhism and disrespects the people — inspire us to aspire even more to this spirit of leadership? Seeing what happens when a king completely loses the spirit to serve (or never has that spirit), when he condemns millions through undeserved excommunications, when he destroys the monuments to peace that they have put their hearts (and money) into...isn't this all a loud, loud wake-up call? Yes.

In Buddhism, *everyone* can become a true king or queen. And this Buddhist "royalty" likewise *reveres everyone*. The people, indeed, are our parents.

Fifteen in a series

A Remarkable History — and Future

SGI president meets with Chinese officials from Xinjiang.

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

On June 8, SGI President Ikeda met with a friendship delegation from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China, headed by Regional People's Government Chairman Abul'ahat Abudixit, at the Seikyo Shimbun building in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. The SGI leader and his guests discussed Xinjiang's vital role in the eastward transmission of Mahayana Buddhism and the region's history and its present and future.

Quoting the late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, "When you drink water, you must not forget the person who dug the well," Chairman Abul'ahat said that the Chinese people will never forget how President Ikeda worked with Premier Zhou to lay the groundwork for China-Japan friendship and contributed to the development of bilateral exchange over the years.

The SGI leader remarked that, if anyone, it is the people of Japan who should seriously strive to repay their great debt of gratitude to China, and he vowed to personally continue exerting



SGI President Ikeda welcomes Chairman Abul'ahat Abudixit of Xinjiang, where in two years poverty has been reduced 50 percent.

himself in that endeavor.

Observing that Xinjiang, 4.4 times the size of Japan, is the largest autonomous region in China, President Ikeda commented on how difficult it must be to govern such a vast area. Noting that under the leadership of Chairman Abul'ahat, in just two years the rate of poverty in the region had been reduced by 50 percent and that its goal is to completely eradicate poverty by the end of the century, the SGI leader commended the government head for his outstanding accomplishments.

Mr. Ikeda also said he has heard that Xinjiang has one of the highest rates of longevity in the world, and that Uygurs ac-

count for about 20 percent of China's centenarians. Public Health Department Vice Director Gulibusitan said that she attributed the longevity of the Uygur people to their diligence, working in the sun, eating fresh produce rich in vitamins, as well as their good nature, broad-mindedness and love of song and dance.

Not only does Xinjiang have a remarkable history, Mr. Ikeda asserted, but it will also be a main focus of China in the 21st century. He also said that the development of the region's oil fields, China's most plentiful, has been designated one of the nation's three major projects in the coming century. MT

Priestly or Pragmatic: Two Approaches to Religion

Emphasis on individual responsibility and a diverse, open structure characterize the SGI's pragmatic approach to religion, Dr. Jane Hurst says.

By **LUCY MICHIKO DIBY**
CORRESPONDENT
Washington, D.C.

"A priesthood of all believers" was one of many thought-provoking ideas presented by Dr. Jane Hurst, professor of Philosophy and Religion at Gallaudet University during a Culture Department Renaissance lecture at the Washington, D.C. Community Center on May 17. Dr. Hurst

has observed the SGI-USA since the early 1970s. Her book, *Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai in America: The Ethos of a New Religious Movement*, was published in 1992 (New York: Garland Press).

Dr. Hurst compared Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation of the mid-1500s to the recent split between Nichiren Shoshu and the SGI. The Protestant Reformation occurred during a time of rapid social changes that caused individuals to adopt a more global and progressive view. The Roman Catholic Church remained focused on ritual, mysticism and adherence to a hierarchical connection to a spiritual source. The laity, meanwhile, was increasingly

engaged with the world. The Church excommunicated Martin Luther and his followers, resulting in the present day Protestant/Catholic split in Christianity.

Similarly, the SGI and Nichiren Shoshu conflict is not only about issues of doctrine, Dr. Hurst said. When located in an increasingly global environment, it's about the nature and purpose of religion itself. Out of this conflict are emerging "priestly" and "pragmatic" orientations to religion, concepts that Dr. Hurst defined.

A "priestly" orientation emphasizes a connection to the sacred only through mystical ritual that is tradition-focused and hi-

PLEASE SEE HURST, 4

NEWS BRIEFS

Diversity Workshop in S.F. Focuses on Inner Change

The first San Francisco diversity workshop, sponsored by the Culture Department, was held June 20 at the San Francisco Culture Center. To open the meeting, a video of Kathleen Dockett's lecture on diversity given at the Florida Nature and Culture Center was shown, explaining such concepts as the Buddha nature that exists in each human being, the eternity of our lives and global citizenship. The key to positive

change, she stressed, is human revolution, which enables each person to break through his or her limitations. Next, participants broke up into smaller discussion groups to share their experiences, both positive and negative, about growing up and learning about their ethnic background as well as about interacting with other ethnic groups.

— RON BAIRD,
Bureau Chief

Florida Group, District Leaders Network at FNCC

Group and district leaders from throughout Florida Region gathered at the Florida Nature and Culture Center June 13 to learn more about what it means to spread a message of hope around the world. The day opened with a lecture by Shinji Ishibashi, of the Men's Division Secretariat. "We need to feel good about ourselves — we need pride in something. But what we need to develop is our inner value — our understanding, our compassion, our fairness, our patience," he said. "If we're not developing, we feel empty inside."

The conference continued with presentations by David Rubin and Miriam Lawson. Mr. Rubin stressed that the skills we develop as leaders in the SGI are sought after in the world at large. Ms. Lawson said that her years in the public forum have convinced her that conflict in society results from inculturated beliefs that people hold, often unconsciously. Dialogue, role-playing and further encouragement rounded out the conference.

— TERRY ELLIS,
Bureau Chief

SGI President, Russian Ambassador to Japan Discuss New Era in Relations

On June 10, SGI President Ikeda met for the first time with Russian Ambassador to Japan Alexandre Panov. Discussing the prospects for a new era in Russia-Japan relations, the SGI leader and the Russian envoy shared their hopes at the Seikyo Shimbun Building for the conclusion of a peace and friendship treaty between the two countries.

The SGI leader expressed appreciation to the ambassador for his recent gift of a Japanese translation of Russian children's stories written by Tolstoy. He noted that there is a clear moral to each story. In "The Old Man and the Apple Tree," someone

asks an old man why he has planted an apple tree, when in all likelihood he will never live to taste its fruit. The old man replies that he knows he will never partake of its fruit, but that others will — and they will feel appreciation for his effort. President Ikeda commented that the idea of putting aside personal, short-term gain and seeking benefit for future generations is a lesson all leaders should learn.

Ambassador Panov concurred that Tolstoy was a great philosopher and, as a result, even his short works are pervaded with philosophy.

— Courtesy of
SGI NEWSLETTER

NEWS BRIEFS

Soka University of America Gets High Marks for Ethics

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, was one of 21 businesses and organizations in Orange County, Calif., that received the third annual Ethics in America Award on June 30. SUA, which will open its doors to students in 2001, was chosen for the honor by the Aliso Viejo Chamber of Commerce.

California Governor Pete Wilson sent a message to the honorees, commending them on their "high standards of personal and professional ethics." Russ Williams of the Passkey Foundation presented the award to SUA, citing the "civic, cultural and

educational tradition of Soka University."

SUA received a glass trophy and a letter signed by Orange County's three elected State Assembly members, Marily Brewer, Bill Morrow and Curt Pringle. The letter applauded SUA's "commitment in standing for ethical action in business," and that the school represents "basic ideals of integrity and personal responsibility."

The award is significant in light of the fact that the university is still in its early planning stages.

— LISA KIRK, Assistant Managing Editor

SGI President Recognized by South Korean County

On June 28, SGI President Ikeda was awarded a Plaque of Commendation by the South Korean county of Puyo in Chungchongnam Province in commemoration of July 3, the SGI's Day of Mentor and Disciple. The presentation ceremony took place during an SGI of South Korea Puyo Zone meeting, held in the au-

ditorium of the Puyo Training Center for Youth, with some 500 KSGI members in attendance. Also on hand were County Council Chairman Kim Jeong Sik and other county officials. Mr. Ikeda is the first non-Korean citizen to be so honored by the county.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

SGI President Commended by Brazilian City

On June 26, the Brazilian city of Pindamonhangaba in the state of São Paulo conferred a Certificate of Commendation upon SGI President Ikeda. SGI of Brazil Vice General Director Osvaldo Maki received the award on

the SGI leader's behalf from City Councilor Noriaki Odan in a ceremony held at Tiradentes Palace, the city hall. City officials and BSGI members were in attendance.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

SGI President Honored by Brazilian City of São Paulo

On June 22, the city of São Paulo, Brazil, conferred an honorary citizenship upon SGI President Ikeda in absentia in a ceremony held at the SGI of Brazil Culture Center. SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda received the distinction on the SGI leader's behalf from City Council Vice President José

Índio Ferreira do Nascimento. The 1,500 participants at the ceremony included BSGI members and guests, among whom were São Paulo State Legislative Assembly President Paulo Kobayashi and Brazilian composer and pianist Amaral Vieira.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER



Some 200 members, both gay and straight, share Buddhism during gay pride parade in San Francisco.

Members March With Pride

By **RON BAIRD**

BUREAU CHIEF
San Francisco, June 28

Approximately 200 SGI-USA members, representing both gay and straight communities, marched in the June 28 San Francisco Gay Pride Parade. A banner was carried proclaiming the SGI-USA to be a Buddhist organization for peace, education and culture. At the civic center, the end of the parade route, members at an information booth distributed copies of the *WorldTribune*, SGI-

USA pamphlets and specially printed bookmarks.

"We ran out of bookmarks about three-quarters of the way through," said Diana Elrod. "We had 4,000 of them, and the people just had their hands out, ready to take them."

After morning gongyo for the marchers earlier in the day, Sam Cady, the San Francisco #2 Region vice leader, urged participants to express to the crowd the power of this practice. He said that in a recent "Dialogue

on the Lotus Sutra" segment in *Living Buddhism*, a definition of bodhisattvas emerging from the earth was given. "Emerge," he said, "means to leap forth joyfully. With that spirit, today let's share with everyone our happiness."

As follow up to this event, an introductory meeting on the Buddhist practice was held in the San Francisco Ikeda Auditorium on July 12. More than 150 people attended this meeting, including 60 guests. ❖

HURST, FROM PAGE 3

erarchical, Dr. Hurst said. Nichiren Shoshu displays this orientation, she said, by:

- denying the individual's ability to connect to Nichiren Daishonin and the Mystic Law without the aid of a priest; and
- maintaining a hierarchical, closed, un-democratic and ethnocentric structure.

A "pragmatic" orientation, according to Dr. Hurst, supports the individual's faith connection to the sacred with the aim to make the present-day reality of believers better through that faith. The SGI-USA displays this type of orientation, she said, by:

- emphasizing the individual's responsibility to attain enlightenment through personal faith, practice and study; and
- creating an organization based on democracy, diversity and openness.

A pragmatic orientation, said Dr. Hurst, allows the laity to become their own priesthood, what Martin Luther called "a priesthood of all believers." The benefit of "a priesthood of all

believers" is that each individual forms a direct connection to a spiritual source.

Dr. Hurst was followed by Dr. Robin Meader, SGI-USA member and assistant professorial lecturer in English at the George Washington University. The weakness of "a priesthood of all believers," she said, is that the lack of authority can corrupt religious purity. Members should be careful that their study of Buddhism does not deviate from Nichiren Daishonin's true teachings. Dr. Meader cited Shakyamuni's words, reminding people to always "return to the text" and "embrace not the person, but the law."

"It was good to have a third party perspective on the priesthood-Soka Gakkai split," Stuart Washington said. "When I first heard about the priesthood issue, I wondered how does this relate to me? Now I understand that if you see someone doing something wrong, you have to stand up and fight."

Jimi Lyons said: "Scholars around the world are giving their perspectives on the temple issues,

and it gives you a feeling of solidarity. What we are going through now will ripple through government and religion and will be noted when people look back."

Dr. Hurst encouraged the members to "walk the talk" of our Buddhist philosophy and take responsibility for turning the poison of the conflict with the temple into the medicine that will power the dynamic growth of the Soka Gakkai. ❖

World TRIBUNE The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

(ISSN-0049-8165)

The *World Tribune* (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401; (310) 451-8811; FAX (310) 260-8910; E-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org. Subscriptions Office: (800) 835-4558; FAX (310) 260-8970; E-mail: SGISUBS@aol.com.

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA, and at additional mailing offices.

Subscription Rates (subject to state taxes) \$15 for Three Months; \$28 for Six Months; \$50 for One Year; \$85 for Two Years; \$110 for Three Years.

Printed on 100% recycled paper

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI

'THE FLOWER OF CULTURE'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 1, PARTS 28-29

A U-2 spy plane photographs Soviet-made missiles and missile installations in Cuba. President Kennedy and a top-secret committee engage in a fierce debate on how to best respond to the deepening Cuban missile crisis.



By **DAISAKU IKEDA**
SGI PRESIDENT

The U.S.-Cuba conflict was intimately linked to U.S.-Soviet Cold War tensions, and it became a dangerous flash point between the two superpowers. From the end of April 1962, maritime freight traffic between Cuba and the Soviet Union grew increasingly heavy. In July, U.S. intelligence picked up a sudden, dramatic rise in the shipment of military supplies from the Soviet Union and also confirmed a large contingent of Russian youth entering Cuba.

The United States regarded these developments very seriously, and it made efforts to step up its surveillance and collection of information about Cuba — for example, by sending U-2

spy planes over the island. This was, of course, an invasion of Cuban airspace, but the United States was certain it had no other choice.

From Aug. 27, intelligence briefings on Cuba became a part of the Kennedy administration's daily cabinet meetings, though at this point nuclear weapons had yet to be discovered. In September, the U.S. government warned the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, that it would regard the installation of offensive missiles in Cuba as a matter of the gravest consequence. While publicly denying the presence of missiles in Cuba, the Soviet Union was then secretly working at break-neck speed to finish constructing the Cuban missile sites.

On Oct. 14, a U-2 spy plane took aerial photographs over

Cuba, and thorough analysis of these photos revealed the presence of Soviet-made missiles and missile installations. This information was reported to President Kennedy the morning of Oct. 16. He then brought it up at a specially convened meeting of top government officials. Shock and fear ran through the White House. That moment marked the beginning of a crisis that would last 13 days and severely test them all.

President Kennedy and the 14 or 15 officials became a top-secret committee that met in the Cabinet Room of the White House over the course of several days. The atmosphere was tense — they knew that any misstep on their part might result in nuclear war. Later, this committee became known as Ex Comm (the Executive Committee of the

National Security Council). It included the president's brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Director of the CIA John McCone, the president's counsel and top military leaders. At times, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson also participated.

If medium-range nuclear missile sites became operational, it would mean that the major U.S. cities of the eastern seaboard, such as Washington, D.C., and New York, would be threatened by attack. The U.S. leaders found themselves engaged in a fierce, desperate debate on how to best respond to this frightening new development.

There was no ready answer to the question weighing so heavily on the U.S. leaders' minds: How should they respond to the deployment of missiles in Cuba? Their discussions went on and on without end; it was like trying to find an exit in the dark.

Some of the officials insisted that the United States should launch an air attack on Cuba immediately and destroy the bases before they could be made operational. But others countered that this would lead to an escalating cycle of retaliation, culminating in the worst-case scenario: full-scale nuclear war.

Yet others believed that the best route was diplomatic negotiation. And others still, a small minority, felt that a wait-and-see strategy was preferable.

So much depended on the reaction of Cuba and the Soviet Union. There was no easy solution to the problem. Just as the group seemed ready to decide on a strategy, they began reconsidering others they had previously rejected. But gradually the many ideas were distilled into two basic, opposing approaches.

The first was a naval blockade. Rather than attack Cuba, the United States would block

the further importation of missiles to the island. Then, while monitoring the Cuban and Soviet reaction, it would gradually increase pressure for removal of the weapons and bases there.

The second plan was a military attack. This stemmed from the belief that a blockade would not result in weapons removal and the fact that there were already missiles in the country. According to this line of argument, immediate military action was the only option.

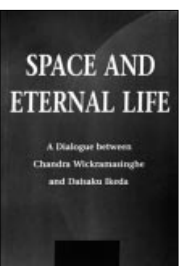
Especially the top military officials pressed for a surprise attack. Robert Kennedy, the president's brother and attorney-general, is said to have replied to these calls by imploring that the United States not do what Japan had at Pearl Harbor. During these intense, top-secret discussions, on Oct. 18, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who was in the United States to address the United Nations, paid an official visit to the White House and met with President Kennedy. The president never mentioned to Gromyko that he knew about the construction of the bases in Cuba or that he knew ships carrying missiles had already left Soviet ports and were on their way to Cuba. Kennedy wanted to keep the U.S. awareness of this situation secret a while longer.

At the meeting, Gromyko simply stated that Soviet assistance to Cuba was restricted to agricultural equipment and a small amount of military aid, solely for self-defense. He asked the United States to stop its persecution of Cuba.

President Kennedy's only response was that the Soviet Union was responsible for the present international tension.

To be continued

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962. Illustration by Ken'ichiro Uchida.



'Buddhism teaches that the Earth itself, including not only animate things but also trees and grasses, mountains and rivers, is a single living organism....' p. 89

This dialogue between Chandra Wickramasinghe and Daisaku Ikeda probes some of the deepest aspects of our existence. Both the Buddhist viewpoint and an astronomer's view of the world are expounded, side by side, with interesting comparisons.

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THE
Third Stage
 OF
LIFE

You Are Your Own Judge

Participants in this discussion are SGI President Ikeda, Seikyo Shimbun General Editorial Bureau Senior Director Osamu Matsuoka and Vice Director Katsusuke Sasaki.

MATSUOKA: Congratulations on the special commendation you received from the World Federation of U.N. Associations, "in recognition of invaluable services rendered in the support of the United Nations and promotion of world peace." And congratulations on the Peace Ambassador award bestowed on you by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation earlier this month. It is a tribute to your commitment to the spirit of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's declaration for the abolition of nuclear weapons, issued 40 years ago [September 1957] and your tireless work to promote peace activities and cultural and educational exchange.

SASAKI: You have initiated many different projects to support the United Nations, such as sponsoring exhibitions on themes like the threat of nuclear weapons and the importance of human rights and conducting refugee relief fund-raising campaigns. In June 1996, you attended the opening of the exhibition "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" in Costa Rica, a nation so dedicated to peace that it has done away with its military forces altogether.

You first visited the U.N. Headquarters in New York 23 years ago, in January 1975. I remember a cold wind was blowing from the East River. You had a meeting with the secretary-general and presented him with a petition circulated by the youth division for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It had 10 million signatures. You also conveyed your wish to make broad-ranging efforts to arouse international support for the United Nations.

MATSUOKA: Then, after your U.N. visit, you went to Guam.

IKEDA: Yes. We flew from New



Daisaku Ikeda founds the SGI, a global peace movement, on Jan. 26, 1975. 'I have worked to achieve my goals one step at a time. I have never been interested in reward or recognition. This is my greatest pride and treasure.'

York and, after stops in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, went on to Guam. During World War II, the beautiful green island of Guam was turned into a bloody battleground. Many people lost their lives. I wanted to begin a worldwide movement for peace from there.

Chicago, buffeted by the winds over the Great Lakes, was freezing — minus 4! Tropical Guam was a balmy 86. That's a difference of 90 degrees. My trip lasted about three weeks.

SASAKI: In the midst of this busy itinerary, you founded the SGI on Guam [Jan. 26, 1975]. Soka Gakkai members from 51 nations gathered for the event. Before the meeting, each of them signed the attendance book. At the entrance to the hall, you were asked to sign the opening page. In the nationality column, you wrote "World." When the members, many wearing their respective national dress, heard this through their interpreters, they broke out in enthusiastic cheers.

MATSUOKA: You have been a true citizen of the world, devoting mighty efforts to peace and activities to support the aims of

the United Nations.

IKEDA: We must always do what we say we will. We must always keep our promises. This is the only proper way for a person to behave.

Mr. Toda used to say: "Once you lose people's trust, it's all over. You can talk about integrity all you want, but unless your actions match your words, it's useless." These are the words of a great man.

I have worked to achieve my goals one step at a time. I have never been interested in reward or recognition. This is my greatest pride and treasure.

A life must be judged by what the person has achieved in total. When you stride with vigorous, determined steps along the path you have chosen, you will always triumph in the end. Such a life is noble. It doesn't matter how others judge you. When all is said and done, you are your own judge.

MATSUOKA: Yes, I agree. Speaking of the final period of life, there is one issue that many people have to face at that time: nursing care. I want to share a heartwarming story of one family's experience with this problem. Kazuko Mori-

moto, a women's division leader of the Shin'etsu region [Niigata and Nagano prefectures], told me this story of the Kondo family in Niigata Prefecture.

Mrs. Morimoto is very familiar with what the elderly face because, as she reported, elderly members are in the majority in the largely rural Shin'etsu region. Many younger people have moved away to the big cities. Often as much as 90 percent of discussion meeting attendance is elderly members of the Many Treasures Group.

IKEDA: I know Mrs. Morimoto from when she was in the young women's division. She's a hard worker. I remember her being very interested in Yoshida Shoin, a 19th-century thinker and reformer who established an innovative private school. When she was a student with long hair and jeans, she visited all the sites around Japan linked to Shoin. She read everything about him. She's a very active person. I'm sure that she's still rushing busily about as she always has, this time on the vast stage of the Shin'etsu region.

SASAKI: A short distance from where Mrs. Morimoto lives is a

mountain called Obasuteyama, which is associated with the legend of abandoning old women that appears in ancient collections of Japanese folk tales such as *Tales of Yamato* and *Tales of a Time That Is Now Past*. The general scenario of this legend goes something like this: There is a man who loses his parents when young and is raised by his aunt. After he marries, his wife persuades him to get rid of his aunt, and he carries her on his back up to the top of the mountain, abandoning her there.

But as he gazes at the bright moon on the way down the mountain, he can no longer bear what he has done. The next morning, he returns for his aunt and takes her back home. This legend also formed the basis for the prize-winning novel *The Oak Mountain Song* by Shichiro Fukuzawa.

IKEDA: The Daishonin's writings mention the country Kirokoku, or "The Country Where Old People Were Abandoned" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1514). It is described in Buddhist scripture as a place where the elderly were discarded and left to die to reduce the number of mouths to feed.

Then one day the country was faced with a terrible crisis, only to be saved by the wisdom of one elderly man whose son had hidden him away, refusing to follow custom. The king thereupon changed the laws to ensure that the elderly would be treated with reverence.

MATSUOKA: Going back to the Kondo family, whom I mentioned earlier, one of our *Seikyo Shimbun* reporters went to visit them. Five family members are currently living together: Sachiko Kondo, the zone women's division general leader; her husband, a joint prefecture vice general leader; one of their two sons; and Mr. Kondo's father and mother. The Kondos have another son who is in Tokyo studying at Soka University.

PLEASE SEE JUDGE, NEXT PAGE

JUDGE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

SASAKI: Mrs. Kondo's mother-in-law, Naka, has been bedridden for five years, and she is experiencing symptoms of senility. Our reporter said that Naka's room was kept bright, cheery and tidy, and that Naka had the most beautiful face.

MATSUOKA: Mrs. Kondo's father-in-law, Kanoe, is 89 and an indispensable part of the family. He remains healthy and active and helps Naka, one year younger, with eating and going to the bathroom. They are a very close couple.

At night when he goes to sleep, Kanoe takes his wife's hand and repeats three times, "Tonight again, let us hold hands as husband and wife and sleep peacefully, with pleasant dreams." Then he lies down in his bed beside hers.

SASAKI: They were both elementary school teachers, and Kanoe is an accomplished pianist. He still plays every day, from classical works such as "For Elise" to children's songs and popular music. He will often sing along as he does so. Naka rests in the next room with a happy expression on her face, as if she were glad to hear her husband playing the familiar old songs again.

IKEDA: What a beautiful scene. Kanoe and Naka are certainly enjoying the most wonderful end to what seems to have been a fine life together.

Charles Chaplin, the great comedian of the silent screen who lived to 88, was once asked in his later years what he thought his greatest work was. He replied, "The work I am about to create, of course."

Such a positive attitude toward life stimulates the brain cells and produces new energy and vitality, no matter what your age. People who are naturally optimistic, who are forward-looking, are truly happy. I'm sure many such people also enjoy the warm support of family members.

MATSUOKA: Yes. Kanoe sits by Naka's bedside and talks to her: "You have worked so hard for your family all these years, so please don't worry about accepting help now. Let's live to 100 together!"

IKEDA: It's remarkable for an 89-year-old man to nurse his wife. A Buddhist scripture says that the full span of human life is 120 years. The

determination to live more than 100 years must certainly have an invigorating, rejuvenating influence.

SASAKI: When our reporter inquired into his secret for a long, healthy life, Kanoe offered the following three poems:

*The fine friends I have made
Are the rainbow
Stretching across my later years*

*

*The best fashion
Is to wear old age
With grace and elegance*

*

*Pleasant
Happy talk
That rolls off the tongue*

MATSUOKA: One of Sachiko Kondo's sons has Down's syndrome, and she once collapsed from the hard work and stress of caring for him. She says that the sight of her in-laws supporting each other with such love and kindness helped her get back on her feet. She also says that she can keep going because Naka says to her from time to time, "Thanks, Mom."

SASAKI: When his mother became ill and required nursing care, Sachiko's husband also humbly asked for her help and support, explaining that he wanted to make his mother's remaining days happy ones. He acknowledged the extra burden

it would place on his wife and asked for her understanding and cooperation. That really helped Sachiko decide to do her best, too — even in difficult circumstances.

MATSUOKA: They avail themselves of the city's welfare services, for example, using a day service to help Naka with her weekly bath. They also use a short-stay-care service once a month, which gives them a few days' break from nursing duties. They rent Naka's wheelchair and special bed from the city. Now Sachiko's sister, who lives nearby, also helps when she can. At last, they have created a manageable routine.

IKEDA: Like it or not, the way in which we have lived — for instance, whether we have been kind to others and helped them — is revealed in unvarnished form when we grow old and frail and senility overtakes us. This is another reason why it is so important for couples to forge bonds of love and trust while they are both still healthy and strong.

Though they certainly have struggled, the Kondos are in many ways fortunate. In most cases, there are not enough hospitals or other care facilities available, and with the tendency toward smaller families, it is more difficult to care for the elderly within the family.

SASAKI: Some people become utterly exhausted by nursing el-

derly family members. With no end to the task in sight, they wear themselves out completely, mentally and physically, even sacrificing their family and professional lives.

IKEDA: Only those who have gone through it themselves can really grasp how heavy the burden can be. It's important for us to care for the caregivers as well and offer them our support. If there is a family in your neighborhood facing this situation, I hope you will help them out and encourage them.

A scholar who has had personal experience with such nursing has suggested that we have reached the point where we must evolve from family care for the elderly to care provided by a network of outside caregivers, who have a genuine commitment to provide quality nursing services and support. I think that is correct.

Society's emphasis in this respect is changing from blood relations to "care relations." I think this will be an important theme in coming years.

I want to discuss this topic at greater length in the future, but I believe that this is precisely the kind of caring network or family that the Soka Gakkai and the SGI have created in communities in Japan and around the world.

MATSUOKA: Speaking of caring for others, this is a theme passionately advocated by Dr. Jutta Unkart-Seifert, undersec-

retary of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Sports, with whom you enjoy a close friendship. She performed at the Kanagawa World Youth Music Festival [Sept. 14, 1997]. Dr. Unkart-Seifert is utterly dedicated to working for others. She is a model and inspiration for all in their third stage of life.

IKEDA: She is an opera singer, a government official, a doctor of philosophy and a homemaker. She lives her life to the fullest. Both her parents were blind, and her father was a recital singer. Dr. Unkart-Seifert chose not to follow her father's footsteps but went to Vienna University, where she received her doctorate before entering government service.

Then, when her father died, she decided that she wanted to sing again as she had as a child with her father. While juggling her family and professional duties, she studied voice to make up for the 10 years she had not sung.

She says, quite simply and matter-of-factly, that she worked five times harder than most people. "Life is too short," she has said. "We must leave something behind. I want to serve those who need me. Today or tomorrow may be the last day of my life. That is why I want to leave something eternal behind."

Serving those who need us — this is the spirit of the Soka Gakkai since its founding. ☸

Photo by LISA HOLLIS



'It is important for couples to forge bonds of love and trust while they are still healthy and strong,' SGI President Ikeda says.

AGAINST THE POWERFUL

In Kansai in May, SGI President Ikeda encourages youth to fight the abuses of authority. He uses episodes from Gandhi's campaign for human rights to illustrate his point.

Hello and welcome to everyone! I hope you are in high spirits. Congratulations on today's Headquarters Leaders Meeting and Kansai Youth Division General Meeting!

Our organization in Kansai is strong because the Kansai members are down-to-earth and unaffected. They're content to be themselves, which leaves them free to give full play to their potential as human beings. That is the source of their strength.

Alexander the Great once said that life is not valued by one's years, but by one's triumphs. These are words of profound import. We must triumph. In life's victories lie true value and meaning.

A victor is one whose life shines with faith. Emerson, a leading exponent of the American Renaissance and one of the favorite writers of my youth, once said, "That which befits us...is cheerfulness and courage,

and the endeavor to realize our aspirations" ("New England Reformers"). To advance toward our dreams cheerfully, to courageously work toward achieving them — this is what gives the most sublime meaning and value to our lives.

Battle the Powerful, Arrogant and Authoritarian

Supported by your prayers and good wishes, I recently visited South Korea. I participated there in the unveiling of a magnificent statue of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of India's independence movement, at the SGI of Korea Headquarters in Seoul. The statue depicts Gandhi walking purposefully, staff in hand, during his famous Salt March of 1930. It is truly impressive.

At the time of the Salt March, India was still under British colonial rule. The government had a monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt, on which it levied a high tax. It was illegal for ordinary citizens to make their own, and Gandhi challenged this oppressive restriction head-on.

Great individuals fight abuses of authority. The truly strong do not lord it over the weak. People of genuine strength and courage battle against the powerful, the arrogant, the authoritarian, the evil

and the corrupt — all who look down on the people with contempt.

Gandhi embarked on the Salt March with 78 of his followers, their destination the sea, their goal to make salt. In the course of 24 days, they walked 240 miles.

All of you in Kansai are also on a great march — a march for kosen-rufu.

Gandhi took the issue of salt, an essential commodity, and made it a symbol of Indian independence. His message was clear and easy to comprehend, and with each passing day more and more people joined him in his march. Soon they numbered in the thousands. He stated his case simply, in a way that could be readily grasped by all. Moreover, the issue he was protesting had great relevance to people's daily lives.

Nikken Uses 'Faith' To Make Believers Serve Him

The SGI's strength, too, comes from its close involvement with people's daily lives. This is poles apart from fine-sounding yet empty rhetoric.

Take, for instance, the Nikken sect priests, who mouth the importance of faith to others but are totally indifferent to faith as it concerns their own lives. In testimony to their authoritarian nature, the priests do

the exact opposite of what they urge others to do. Their sole intent is to use faith as a tool to make believers subservient.

The Soka Gakkai is fundamentally different. It respects and treasures the people and has always advanced with the conviction that faith manifests itself in daily life, and faith manifests itself in society. The greatness of the Soka Gakkai's first and second presidents, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, was that they continually stressed these points and wholeheartedly cherished the people.

Gandhi Asks About Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

Gandhi, incidentally, is known to have read the Lotus Sutra with immense reverence in his later years. He possessed a Sanskrit copy of the sutra edited by a Japanese and a European and printed in Russia in 1908. Four years ago, I received a volume of the same edition from Dr. Lokesh Chandra, director of the International Academy of Indian Culture. I understand that it is an extremely rare volume.

Gandhi received his copy of this Buddhist text from none other than Dr. Chandra's father, the noted scholar of Eastern Studies, Professor Raghuvira.

Dr. Chandra said in a letter that he wanted to present me with this same version of the Lotus Sutra because "this edi-

tion is the eternal and returning rhyme of an out-of-heaven grace of Gandhi and Ikeda." To have my name linked with Mahatma Gandhi's in such a poetic manner and to think that our lives pulse with the same rhythm is a great honor indeed.

Dr. Chandra also shared with me a very significant but little-known fact: "In the mid-1930s, Mahatma Gandhi introduced the mantra *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* in the hymnal of his ashram. He knew that it was a dream of man's cosmic power, life itself borne upon the dream of sound."

I find this most significant. And I think Gandhi had a correct understanding.

Gandhi apparently asked Professor Raghuvira the meaning of the term *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, so the latter read a book about Nichiren Daishonin by a Japanese scholar of Buddhism. He then explained to Gandhi the historical background of the daimoku and the meaning of the seven Chinese characters that comprise it. According to Dr. Chandra, his father told Gandhi that *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is "the germinal core [of all universal phenomena] that subsequently expands and takes form."

A Deep Sense of Satisfaction

How incredible it is to chant this wonderful daimoku each day! Nichiren Daishonin writes,

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



At the May 26 youth division meeting in Osaka, Japan, SGI President Ikeda tells members that 'Nothing is wasted in Faith.'

"There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The sutra [Lotus Sutra] says, 'The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease'" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 161). There is no joy, happiness and ease surpassing what we can attain through chanting daimoku. No matter how much you may pursue the things you love, and skip gongyo to have a good time — all such fleeting, worldly pleasures pale beside the deep sense of satisfaction that comes from chanting daimoku.

The Daishonin also states: "When Bonten, Taishaku, the deities of the sun and the moon, the Four Heavenly Kings and the others hear this sound [of our voices chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo], how could they fail to take on a healthy color and shine with a brilliant light? How could they fail to guard and protect us? We should be firmly convinced of this" (MW-7, 188).

Here, the Daishonin assures us that if we chant daimoku we will definitely be protected by the Buddhist gods, the protective forces of the universe. He urges us to have confidence in this. I hope that all of you will practice with this unshakable conviction.

At Last, a True Friend of the People

Gandhi declared: "I have traveled all over India as per-

haps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to an extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes..."

Gandhi tirelessly traversed the length and breadth of India. This parallels what we are doing in our respective countries for kosen-rufu.

As one human being, Gandhi went into the midst of the people, personally meeting and speaking with them. Disappointed and disillusioned by their leaders time and again, the Indian people at last found a true friend in Gandhi. They found a spokesperson who could make their voices, their true sentiments, heard.

Genuine communication and understanding come from personal contact and dialogue. People will place their trust in those whose words are genuine and relevant, and be inspired to work with those individuals, confident that together they will realize peace and build a better, happier world.

We have to go out and meet with people, not keep ourselves aloof and observe their lives from a distance. This was Gandhi's firm belief.

It has also always been the guiding policy of the SGI and the reason why our movement has grown and developed to

this extent. Let us work always among the people and in society, with positive, joyful, tenacious commitment, based on our resonant daimoku. Unless we strive to benefit individuals and society as a whole, our ideals — no matter how lofty — will be nothing more than empty words.

Failure will be the only outcome. This applies to business and all other areas of social endeavor.

It is important that we conduct ourselves in a bright, pleasant manner. Many have learned about the greatness of the Daishonin's Buddhism as a result of coming into contact with the warmth and humanity of SGI members. In particular, the smiling courtesy and common sense that the women's and young women's division members bring to their activities and daily affairs have won widespread praise. Those who act with discretion and speak with sincere concern for and interest in others will leave a deep, lasting, positive impression on people and steadily gain the trust and confidence of many.

Activities such as introducing people to the Daishonin's Buddhism or promoting our newspaper, for example, are not easy undertakings by any means. They are actually quite a challenge. It is thus a true accomplishment when we succeed.

Challenging ourselves in these activities, even if we

don't always achieve as much as we'd hope, is itself most respectable. The Daishonin would undoubtedly hail all of us striving devotedly for kosen-rufu as "the foremost people in the world." Winning the praise of the original Buddha, the Daishonin, who perceives the past, present and future, is the highest honor.

Let us continue to work unceasingly for the sake of kosen-rufu with courage, zest and joy.

You Never Lose in Faith

Buddhism views all phenomena in terms of the eternity of life across the three existences of past, present and future. From the standpoint of the eternity of life, all whom we meet and form a Buddhist connection with will share profound ties with us in lifetime after lifetime. All whom we help and support will in turn function as protective forces, Buddhist gods, to safeguard and aid us. Those who have assisted many people will definitely be reborn as great leaders in future existences. They will not only enjoy happiness themselves but will lead the way to happiness for all whom they have helped as well.

In addition, all the places where you conduct your activities for kosen-rufu will form the

bedrock of your indestructible happiness.

Nothing is wasted in faith. One never loses out. Please be confident that all your efforts to help others and promote Buddhism are accumulating immense treasures of good fortune in your life. This is what is meant by inconspicuous benefit.

I hope you will thus advance with youthful vigor. Youthfulness is an unsurpassed source of strength, a precious treasure, the greatest triumph. Demonstrating again the blazing force of your vibrant energy, please create a fresh groundswell that will spread from Kansai to the rest of Japan and the world. May you expand Kansai's ever-victorious march of the people as you continue to advance in boisterous, joyful harmony.

Nothing is stronger than the people. Nothing shakes the times more than the march of the people. As a great Chinese philosopher once said, "The people are emperor."

This is part one of the speech that SGI President Ikeda gave at the 22nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held in conjunction with the 3rd Kansai Youth Division General Meeting, at the Kansai Toda Memorial Auditorium in Osaka, Japan, May 26. Part two will appear in next week's issue. ☐

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SPEECH

Authoritarian power must be boldly challenged with the power of speech and the written word.

This is also the spirit behind propagation, as taught by Nichiren Daishonin. Failing to speak out is to care only about protecting your own interests; it is a sign of cowardice.



What [Victor Hugo] endured can be called a true struggle. In contrast, to be spoken ill of and have one's name maligned are insignificant things. We still have a home to return to, food to eat and time to relax and take a break when we feel like it. How leisurely this is compared to the grueling demands of a genuine revolutionary struggle! Nevertheless, we cannot attain Buddhahood if we do not wage an earnest struggle for kosen-rufu.



President Toda often told the members of the youth division: "If there is just one person who can continue to fight even if threatened with imprisonment or exile, then kosen-rufu will advance. My goal is to foster such a person of genuine commitment."



The powerful may appear great, but in reality they are not. Greatest of all are the ordinary people. If those in power lead lives of idle luxury, it is because the people are silent. We have to speak out. With impassioned words, we need to resolutely attack abuses of power that cause people suffering. This is fighting on the side of justice. It is wrong to remain silent when confronted with injustice. Doing so is tantamount to supporting and condoning evil.



I have witnessed the miserable end of many who clung to power and authority. How empty and wretched their final days are. The winds of praise and censure are impermanent. Faith is the only realm that is eternal.



Not a single enemy must go unchallenged. This is the same spirit that Mr. Toda expressed in his injunction: "You must never let up in your struggle against evil." This is the meaning of a real struggle.

VOICE, FROM PAGE 1

Buddhist practice, and we attain immense benefit as a result. When we participate in such activities, our spirits are lifted and rejuvenated. Those who know such moments of fulfillment lead truly profound lives.

Spending our time doing what we please may bring momentary pleasure, but it will not bring us true and lasting joy. We cannot become great artists or great actors of life — we cannot become great human beings. Literature, music and drama are all to be found in our activities for faith — in our prayers, our challenges to develop ourselves through SGI activities, and our efforts to educate others. All value is encompassed in these activities. This is the profound realm of Buddhism.

Open the Way for the People

The novel *The Eternal City* by the British author Hall Caine contains the passage, "The people are the true sovereign, and the only rebels are the classes who oppress them." The people — not politicians or celebrities — are the true "sovereign" of society. Anyone who suppresses the people, therefore, is guilty of treason against that sovereign.

Caine also writes, "Our duty as men, in the face of injustice and oppression, is to assert the sovereignty of the people." Injustice, oppression, misgovernment — to denounce these evils and arrogant outrages is our duty as human beings. We must not remain silent.

The author further adds, "Our duty as men is to remove every obstacle in the path of the people." True humanism is opening a path along which the people may progress. The SGI is doing just that; it is advancing in the vanguard of the people. Those who persecute the people are enemies of democracy. To lose sight of this point is to invite disaster.

My mentor, the Soka Gakkai's second president, Josei Toda, made me read *The Eternal City*, and I know why he did. Its contents are etched and ever alive in my mind.

The book also contains the line, "Public opinion is the most powerful force in the world, and no evil can live long in the face of it." "Public opinion" is the voice of the people. And the voice of the people, the author says, is the most potent impetus that none can long

resist. Therefore, I hope all of you will speak out and take up your pen. Authoritarian power must be boldly challenged with the power of speech and the written word.

This is also the spirit behind propagation, as taught by Nichiren Daishonin. Failing to speak out is to care only about protecting your own interests; it is a sign of cowardice. Even in my youth, whenever there was the slightest sign of unwarranted attack or criticism of the Soka Gakkai, I would immediately confront the perpetrator and defend the justice of our actions.

Now, putting my faith in all of you, I fight on, confident that you will carry on this spirit.

Thirteen Million Voices for Peace

Recently, a petition of 13 million signatures collected by the Soka Gakkai youth division calling for the abolition of nuclear arms was submitted to the United Nations European Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Preparatory Committee Meeting of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. The petition has elicited tremendous response. I commend once again your historic efforts to bring together so many voices for peace.

The petition was in support of Abolition 2000, a campaign sponsored by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation calling on governments to sign by the year 2000 an international treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world within a time-bound framework. Some 13 million signatures were collected throughout Japan by the youth division in three months and presented to the U.N. secretary-general on April 27. Its submission to the U.N. European Headquarters was reported on by four newspapers in Germany, Switzerland and Spain.

A Genuine Revolutionary

The other day, the prestigious French photography association, Val de Bièvres Photo Club, located in Bièvres on the outskirts of Paris, named me the first non-French honorary member. Later this year, the club will be holding a special photography exhibition in Paris to commemorate its 50th anniversary, and I was invited to submit several items for inclusion in the showing.

Speaking of Bièvres, the illustrious French author Victor Hugo was a frequent visitor to this area.

The Victor Hugo House of Literature, founded by President Ikeda, is located in Bièvres.

In addition to writing novels, Hugo was also a photography buff and artist. One of his paintings is titled *Ma Destinée* (My Destiny). How did he depict his destiny? He boldly painted a scene of a ship being tossed on a billowing wave. A fierce gale blows, giant waves crash down as the ship forges ahead into the raging storm, into tumultuous seas. "This ship is me!" — this is how Hugo saw his life. What a heroic spirit!

When Hugo painted this work, he was living in exile from France as a result of opposing the despotic Napoleon III. His struggles abroad lasted 19 years, from 1851 to 1870. The surging waves of oppression pounded relentlessly. His two sons were imprisoned by French authorities. A price was put on Hugo's head, and a number of attempts were made on his life.

What he endured can be called a true struggle. In contrast, to be spoken ill of and have one's name maligned are insignificant things. We still have a home to return to, food to eat and time to relax and take a break when we feel like it. How leisurely this is compared to the grueling demands of a genuine revolutionary struggle! Nevertheless, we cannot attain Buddhahood if we do not wage an earnest struggle for kosen-rufu.

Hugo's sons no doubt were unable to stand by in silence while their father fought alone in exile and so resolved to join him in his fight.

Hugo was driven from his beloved Paris. Those who love their land the most are driven away; those who love the people the most are separated from them — the pattern of persecution is the same now as it was in the past. I can deeply relate to how Hugo felt. I understand well the sentiments of this noble champion of the people.

One Person of Commitment

It is not simply a matter of enduring persecution. The question is how do we continue fighting even in the face of it?

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



'Something on which we can depend — that is friendship; that is the bond among comrades. As SGI members, we have countless such bonds with one another.'

VOICE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

How can we come out victorious? That is what matters. Hugo also gave deep thought to these questions.

President Toda often told the members of the youth division: "If there is just one person who can continue to fight even if threatened with imprisonment or exile, then kosen-rufu will advance. My goal is to foster such a person of genuine commitment." Determined to live up to these words, I have shouldered all and devoted myself unstintingly to our cause.

How to foster individuals of genuine commitment — everything comes down to this crucial point. I therefore take every opportunity to speak to youth in order to do just that. I am always addressing those individuals. "People will definitely carry on my work. Even one is enough. The future will unfold from there!" This is my spirit.

Hugo possessed indomitable courage. He never stopped fighting for justice, even while enduring the constraints and inconveniences of life in exile. Without rest, he continued to wield his pen of censure; he never stopped writing.

My spirit is the same. Every day, I write something — for my fellow members and for posterity. Though my eyes

grow tired and my shoulders stiff, I push myself on to write.

Boldly Challenge Injustice

While he was living in exile, Hugo published a monograph castigating Napoleon III, titled *Napoléon-le-Petit* (Napoleon the Little). He criticized as "petty and base" this authoritarian ruler who cloaked himself in his uncle Napoleon Bonaparte's glory, ascribing to him the epithet "Napoleon the Little."

Wrote Hugo contemptuously: "Ah, Frenchmen! Look at this swine, covered with mire, who is wallowing in the skin of a lion!" He denounced the French ruler who had risen to his exalted status by exploiting the fame of the intrepid Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon III was not the least concerned about the people but preoccupied solely with personal comfort and safeguarding his own interests. Hugo's words are harsh; they are a scathing condemnation.

I hope that all of you in the youth division will be courageous like Hugo and boldly speak the truth. We must strive to warmly embrace and work on behalf of those who are suffering and vulnerable. Yet, at the same time, we must fight vigorously against arrogant authoritarians.

The powerful may appear

great, but in reality they are not. Greatest of all are the ordinary people. If those in power lead lives of idle luxury, it is because the people are silent. We have to speak out. With impassioned words, we need to resolutely attack abuses of power that cause people suffering. This is fighting on the side of justice. It is wrong to remain silent when confronted with injustice. Doing so is tantamount to supporting and condoning evil.

Hugo also produced a collection of biting satirical poems titled *Les Châtiments*. In them, he judges, condemns and rebukes injustice. Hugo declares, "I will pitch my tent among those who are amid tribulations." There are many people in the world, not least refugees and exiles, who are undergoing severe sufferings and trials. It is among these suffering people, Hugo says, we should go, setting up camp and fighting alongside them. What dauntless composure he possessed! Not once did he cower in the face of adversity or seek a peaceful existence for himself. Rather, he asserted that those experiencing extreme hardship are most noble, and that we should live among the people who are subject to the harshest persecution.

The Soka Gakkai spirit is exactly the same.

It was Hugo's belief that the

more chaotic the times, the greater the opportunity for the solidarity of the people to shine. In this connection he wrote, "In times of social crisis, the last word that is left to me is...*friendship*." Something on which we can depend — that is friendship; that is the bond among comrades. As SGI members, we have countless such bonds with one another.

Japan today is experiencing a period of social crisis. We have entered a very difficult and uncertain time. In a public opinion poll conducted in Japan this past May concerning people's outlook for the future, more than 72 percent of the respondents — a record high — said that they felt the country was declining. That's nearly three out of every four people. Meanwhile, an unprecedented low of only 12.6 percent of respondents said that they felt Japan's situation was improving.

Many thinking people are dismayed by the state of affairs in Japan today. Some suggest that the outlook for the future is growing dimmer. For precisely this reason, the unity of our youth division shines all the more brightly. I want to strongly impress upon you that the future of the world in the 21st century rests squarely on your shoulders. The youth of the SGI are the only hope for the future. There is no one else to turn to. Please work joyously

to expand our brilliant network of friendship that is a foremost model for the world. There is nothing more respectable, beautiful or solid.

Returning After 19 Years in Exile

Authoritarian rulers always come to a pitiful end. The dictator who persecuted Hugo gradually became deadlocked as a result of the country's escalating economic recession. In 1870, 19 years after Hugo went into exile, Napoleon III was ousted, and with that the period of tyranny suddenly came to an end.

On Sept. 2, 1870, Napoleon III surrendered to Prussia after defeat in battle and was taken prisoner at Sedan. On Sept. 4, the establishment of the Third Republic was proclaimed in Paris, doing away with the imperial regime.

I have witnessed the miserable end of many who clung to power and authority. How empty and wretched their final days are. The winds of praise and censure are impermanent. Faith is the only realm that is eternal.

The day after the new republic was declared, Hugo jubilantly returned to Paris. Although it was late at night when he arrived, a multitude of people gathered at the station to meet his train and lined the roads as he passed. They welcomed him with thunderous cheers, as though he were a general returning from a victorious campaign. "Hurrah for Hugo!" they cried. "Long live Victor Hugo!" This was the crowning triumph of a person of justice who had been forced into exile. What a difference from the end that met his oppressors, who for a time had appeared invincible and spent their days basking in pomp and splendor! Those who fight for justice will ultimately prevail.

In all likelihood, Hugo was not clad in fine garments on his return from exile. But he radiated with true magnificence as a human being. The victorious cheers of the people rang out with even greater fervor as he appeared before them. In response, Hugo went through the streets of Paris, stopping four times to address them. He called on them not to let up in their struggle against would-be oppressors, saying in effect: "I have returned triumphant. But we must not become compla-

PLEASE SEE VOICE, NEXT PAGE

VOICE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

cent. We cannot be halfhearted in our fight. Let us continue our struggle until the republic has won total victory!"

I think that the Japanese people, who tend to content themselves with ambiguous outcomes, have much to learn from Hugo's tenacity of spirit. When fighting evil, we cannot desist until its roots are completely destroyed.

I am reminded of a poem by President Toda:

*Death awaits
All of us one day;
Thus, be fearless,
Leaving unchallenged
Not a single enemy of the
Buddha.*

Not a single enemy must go unchallenged. This is the same spirit that Mr. Toda expressed in his injunction: "You must never let up in your struggle against evil." This is the meaning of a real struggle.

To realize decisive victory, Hugo appealed to his compatriots to unite solidly: "Unite! Then, you will be invincible." Everything comes down to unity.

At the end of his exultant parade through Paris, Hugo expressed his deep gratitude to the people: "In a single hour, you have repaid me for 19 years of exile." This was his famous declaration of victory.

Nineteen years — that is also how long it has been since I stepped down as Soka Gakkai president. Even after that, schemes to do away with me and all manner of persecution have continued unabated. Yet, I celebrated May 3 of this year, 19 years later, in high spirits supported by the cheers of the youth division and of 10 million members throughout the world.

Youth Is an Invaluable Treasure

Hugo completed his famous novel *Les Misérables* while he was in exile. I read this book many times in my youth, even going to a local cemetery if I had nowhere else quiet to read. One passage in this work says:

The poverty of a young man is never miserable. Any lad at all, poor as he may be, with his health, his strength, his quick step, his shining eyes, his blood circulating warmly, his black locks, his fresh cheeks, his rosy lips, his white teeth, his pure

breath, will always be envied by an old emperor.

Nothing can equal the splendor of youth. To be young is to possess a treasure of infinite worth, far greater than any person of power. This is all the more true of you who possess the eternal treasure of the Mystic Law. Those who live based on this supreme Law are bodhisattvas and Buddhas.

To fail to make the absolute most of this precious treasure of youth is a terrible waste. Please live so that your lives shine brilliantly. That is the purpose of faith and the reason for our Buddhist practice and SGI activities. Without such practical efforts, this treasure that you are so fortunate to possess will tarnish and fade. Your spirit will die. You are all youthful champions of the SGI. I hope you will take pride in that fact and adorn your lives for your own sake with a bright history of courageous struggle and intrepid advance.

Refute Misguided Views and Slander

In a letter to the Ikegami brothers, who dauntlessly persevered in faith despite the many plots against them, Nichiren Daishonin writes: "No matter what should occur, you must not waver [in faith] in the slightest. You should attack [the enemies of the Buddha] even more vigorously. Though your very life may be in danger, you must not falter" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1090).

Refuting misguided views and slander of the Law is the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism. It is a battle — a battle that must be won. That is why President Toda proclaimed, "Not a single one of the Buddha's enemies must go unchallenged!" This is the ultimate conviction of Buddhist victory.

The American poet Edgar Guest (1881–1959) writes:

*The only happy time of rest
is that which follows
strife
And sees some
contribution made unto
the joy of life.
And he who has oppression
felt and conquered it is
he
Who really knows the
happiness and peace of
being free.*

In other words, true peace and tranquility can be found

only in carrying out a relentless struggle.

The German philosopher Nietzsche says: "If you want to rise high, use your own legs! Do not let yourselves be carried up, do not sit on the backs and heads of strangers!" Nietzsche is a philosopher whose works I have studied since my teens. He is famous for certain ideas that he developed, such as that of the "Superman," but it seems that he is not read very widely these days.

To truly "rise high" does not mean achieving status or fame or some immediate goal but to win as a human being. It is not using other people as stepping stones but lifting ourselves up through our own hard work. Only through laboring and striving in the task of construction can we create lives filled with indestructible and eternal happiness. Each of you is leading such a noble youth.

Shakespeare wrote, "The harder match'd, the greater victory." The more formidable one's enemies, the more splendid the victory over them. The more powerful the enemies we vanquish, the more brilliant our triumph.

The 21st Century Belongs to You

In any event, the 21st century belongs to you. It will be you who shoulder the future. From your midst, the leaders of every sector of society will emerge. The grand stage of the new century is yours. I see all of you as the bright light of hope for the next generation. Each of you is infinitely precious.

You are the only ones who can spread the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the world. As such, you enjoy the protection of the Gohonzon and Nichiren Daishonin, of all Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe.

I cherish each and every one of you and am wholeheartedly sending you my daimoku. I hope you will grow into outstanding and cultured leaders of the new century.

Please convey my sincere regards to all the members in your respective areas.

Thank you very much! Take care, and let's meet again soon! ☸

SGI President Ikeda gave this speech at the Soka Gakkai Nationwide Youth Division Leaders Meeting, held at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Tokyo, May 8.

Together Again

**CLEARLY A
Parent**

A COLUMN ABOUT PARENTING

By NELLDA GALLAGHER
DALLAS CORRESPONDENT

In my early practice, I was always negative about having to do five prayers in the morning. My thoughts were: "Why don't we just do the whole book once? You cover both 'Expedient Means' and 'Life Span' chapters, then you can spend the rest of your time chanting."

When I realized the SGI wasn't going to change the practice of gongyo for my sake, it was time to adjust my attitude.

I began by reading the paragraph explaining the silent prayers in my sutra book before I did morning and evening gongyo.

The last sentence in particular gave me the mental alignment I needed: "Therefore, it is not the specific wording of the silent prayers, but rather what we have in our minds while performing the prayers that is most important."

What I had on my mind during the first part of the fourth prayer changed when I had my children. Praying "and that the Soka Gakkai International to develop eternally" to me meant to pass this great philosophy on to my children. To raise them to respect the efforts of SGI members, past and present, and to encourage them to be a part of the noble mission of our organization.

I feel that it is no coincidence that we, as an organization, have so many children now. I also feel it's no coincidence that they chose us to be their parents.

My daughter Emily confirmed that for me.

It came out of nowhere. It was Saturday morning. I was at the stove making pancakes when my 5-year-old came into the kitchen, still

with her "wake-up" hair and puppy breath.

She gave me her pitiful face and said, "Mommy, I don't want you to die!"

Whoa! "You can't say that now," I thought. "I haven't had my first cup of coffee much less done gongyo."

Well, raising children isn't like getting on the freeway — you can't just sit on the entrance ramp waiting for the perfect opportunity to open up. So I addressed her concern. I couldn't minimize her feelings by telling her, "Oh, don't be silly" or "Everybody dies." Instead I swelled with gratitude that I was a Buddhist. I could tell my daughter: "Oh honey, we will *always* be together. We've been together before and will be together lifetime after lifetime. You chose me to be your mother."

After some serious discussion and the usual questions, she got that I'm-gonna-have-to-think-about-that look.

Since you can never be sure what gets into their active little brains, I could not tell just how satisfied she was. The rest of the day she was a silent ankle magnet. Whatever I was doing, she was right there with me. I would leave the room to retrieve something, turn around, and there she would be.

That afternoon we went to the grocery store, which was very busy. The check-out lines were three people deep and all were open.

As I stood there blocked in with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide, my daughter breaks her silence. At the top of her voice (children don't know how to whisper), Emily puts her hands on her hips and shouts, "Well, I know one thing, I love you more than my mommy in my last life!"

Enough said. ☸

If you're interested in contributing to this section, please call us at (310) 451-8811 or e-mail us at wt@sgi-usa.org.

By **DAISAKU IKEDA**
SGI PRESIDENT

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY

NOTHING FAKE ABOUT THE KANSAI SPIRIT



**Why are the SGI members in Kansai so remarkable?
Because they don't just wait for instructions — they take the initiative.
Their personal commitment to work for kosen-rufu is what motivates them.
'People from Kansai don't trust show-offs, phonies or big talkers,'
SGI President Ikeda writes in this essay.**

Ever-victorious Kansai is the star of the Soka Gakkai. Being ever victorious is the eternal and indestructible tradition of Kansai, and the Kansai spirit is known throughout the world as the finest example of the Soka Gakkai spirit.

Why is the Kansai organization so strong? Why has it been able to continue writing a history of unending victory over the decades? Let us examine these questions as we approach July 17, Osaka Day.



On July 17, 1957, I was released from the Osaka Detention House. A by-election for an Upper House seat in the Osaka district had been held in April that year. I had been in charge of campaign activities for the Soka Gakkai-backed candidate in that election.

A year earlier, the victory of a Gakkai-backed candidate from the Osaka district in the Upper House elections had taken the nation by surprise. The political establishment began to fear the appearance of people power.

During the campaign, there were some individual Soka Gakkai members who violated the election law. The authorities decided to use this as an opportunity to attack the Soka

Gakkai. They set their sights on me, arresting me on July 3. But as the trial would later prove, the charges they pressed against me were completely false.

While in custody, I was subjected to extremely harsh interrogation. Though I presented myself to the authorities voluntarily for questioning, they handcuffed me and paraded me in public. They questioned me relentlessly day after day, for hours on end, far into the night. They threatened me, too, saying that unless I admitted to the

charges against me, they would arrest Mr. Toda, who was very ill and weak.



The day I left prison, I attended, with Mr. Toda, the Osaka Rally held at the Nakanoshima Chuo Civic Hall. I was determined to prove my innocence in court, and I knew my battle had just begun. It was raining very hard that day. Thunder roared and lightning ripped savagely through the dark clouds. My words to those gathered that day were very brief. I simply called on them to fight with me against this injustice with absolute confidence that those who sincerely practice the Daishonin's Buddhism will triumph. Actually, Mr. Toda had cautioned me quietly beforehand not to talk too long or get carried away by the heady emotion of the moment.

Kosen-rufu is a struggle that we must win without fail. It is a struggle of good against evil, right against wrong. My brave fellow members, who spent many sleepless nights — taking my arrest as if it were their own and filled with anger and resentment toward the actions of the authorities with their insidious motives — came to realize this keenly.

They responded to my cry with wholehearted applause, and they vowed in their hearts: "Buddhism is a struggle to win. We mustn't lose. We cannot allow ourselves to be defeated!"

And that was the beginning of the indomitable, ever-victorious Kansai spirit.



Once these courageous members made a firm resolve to win, they never complained or grumbled, no matter how tough the situation became. The greater the difficulties they encountered, the brighter their fighting spirit burned. They overcame every obstacle in their path and continued on to their moving victory.

The rain-drenched Kansai Culture Festival held in the midst of a storm at the Koshien Baseball Stadium in Osaka [1966] is another symbol of that invincible spirit. The Kansai members treated the pelting rain as part of the performance, and their mud-splattered uniforms became the robes of majestic champions alight with the golden flame of a powerful determination to win.

That same Kansai spirit has been passed on from parent to child, elder to youth. No other region places such great value on its own tradition.



The Kansai members do not wait for instructions and then simply do as they've been told. The personal commitment and resolve of each individual member to work with me for kosen-rufu is what motivates them. This inner-motivated spirit is what makes them so strong.

Nothing stands between us, no barrier separating our hearts. That is how the Soka Gakkai should be. No matter what tribulations I have faced over the years, the love and support that the Kansai members have always so generously extended toward me — the affectionate bonds of mentor and disciple —

have never wavered.

When I became honorary president of the Soka Gakkai in 1979, when a band of schemers were trying to destroy our organization, it was the Kansai members who were the first to spring to action. At a Nov. 18 meeting they designated the 1st Kansai General Meeting, they declared their determination to join me in my struggle. And it was from Kansai that a new tide of kosen-rufu began to sweep the land, vanquishing the oppressive forces that sought our downfall.



The Kansai members are strongly unified. Kansai is one. While making the most of the unique features of each area within the Kansai region, they are like one big family that shares a pride in being ever victorious.

What is the key to this unity?

Humanism. People from Kansai don't trust show-offs, phonies or big talkers. Our leaders in Kansai never succumb to authoritarianism or bureaucracy. They are always themselves, real people who are deeply involved with the members, sharing their sorrows and joys. And when the time comes to fight for their beliefs, they head straight into the fray without a moment's pause.

This network of trust links each district, chapter and headquarters, and embraces all of Kansai.



This July marks exactly 20 years since I wrote the lyrics to the Kansai Gakkai song, "Ever-victorious Skies." Over the years, my fellow Buddhists in Kansai have sung this song enthusiastically and kept the banner of victory waving on high.

Our fellow members outside Japan say, "Look to Kansai to learn about faith!" Kansai is now a model for the world. The 21st century will be the century of Kansai.

Kansai, let us join together again and embark on a new struggle for human rights, a new struggle for the human spirit, and work toward another brilliant victory.

May the Kansai spirit live on forever! May Kansai, the golden citadel of the world, endure for all time!



Photo by DIXON HAMBY

The Pacific Northwest Region holds a Rally for Justice, July 1, at the Seattle Culture Center. A petition is signed to record for history's sake the members' opposition to the destruction of the Grand Main Temple.

This series is published as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

We Can Still Change the World

PERSPECTIVE



Sure there were problems, Gia Preston

recalls about the early days of our organization, but at the same time it was 'so alive.' Don't throw out the baby with the bath water.

By GIA PRESTON
OVERLAND PARK, KAN.

When I was a teenager, I was sure that my parents, my friends' parents, and just about anyone else older than 20 had lost touch with the "true reality" of life. I was fired up. I was ready to change the world. I had all the answers.

Then I left home. Phrases like *electric bill*, *phone bill* and *auto insurance* took on new meanings. Laundry no longer magically appeared done on my bed, and I seemed always to be hungry. I didn't sleep enough and made many bad choices, which only

served to further enhance this new learning curve.

Then, I got married. Then, I had kids of my own. *Holy cow* doesn't cover it.

Now I realize that I have become much like all those people I thought were so wrong, so out of it and so full of mistaken views. I appreciate them now. I long for them now. Man, I was dumb!

After 15 years or so of hardcore reality checks, I wonder, can I regain some of those "I'll change the world" feelings and ideas I used to have? Could I use them to motivate me to do things a little bit better for my kids and the world we live in today? At least if I try, I might repay some of what I owe all those people who took care of me while I returned very little other than complaints, criticisms and protests.

I feel this same way when I think about the SGI-USA (formerly NSA).

To me, NSA and all of our leaders back in the '70s and '80s were like parents and, well, I for one was certainly the teenager. I feel that when SGI President Ikeda came in 1990, we all kind of "left home," so to speak. Boy, were we happy to leave! Yeah, we knew everything. Yeah, "they" (our older pioneer leaders) didn't understand us — they didn't un-

derstand the American way! We knew all the faults and problems our "parents" had and *every little tiny thing* they did wrong in "raising us." Yeah, they didn't know how to handle anything right. Yeah, we could do better.

Now I find myself longing for them. Longing for the attention I used to receive that brought my Buddhist practice where it is today. Longing for all of what the SGI-USA used to be.

Sure, there were problems. Yes, there are things we can do better. But what about all the good things we had? NSA was so alive. The activities were so compelling. The youth division was so vibrant. The women's division was so supportive and seemed so tightly woven together, like a large blanket that would wrap you up when you came back from activities.

Yeah, remember that? *Came back from activities*. We used to go out and make something happen at meetings.

Much like my real parents, I now understand a lot more about why certain things were done, and I see the value it created for me personally. I am benefiting today from the experience I received from them. No matter what else I can say about it, *that* is the final reality. I believe this is because my "parents" had the de-

termination to make NSA and me personally grow, develop, flourish and stand up.

I feel it is time to repay those "parents." We must "make happen" what we all spoke of in the early days: a better organization, a more democratic structure, a more "culturally American" based SGI-USA. We must also take what was good, infuse what was enriching and stand up with at least half the courage that our "parents" had by teaching our juniors. It's time to take this organization over from the core outward and repay President Ikeda and all of our pioneer "parents" by creating a vibrant, progressive, democratic and growing SGI-USA for kosen-rufu.

We have to fight for the proper foundation in this country so that more of our people can have the Gohonzon and manifest benefit like we do. We have to fight, sometimes our own selves, to teach others how to use this practice to overcome their problems. You know the drill. We all know the drill, but it's only a drill if we make it one. If instead we put our hearts and "American" minds to work, we can make the SGI-USA happen...for us individually, for our prospective communities and for the world that will follow America in the future. **WT**

Buddhism American Style

PERSPECTIVE



In Joe Newman's opinion, talking and thinking

about Buddhism in a manner that reflects American cultural values will allow our movement to speak to the hearts of more people.

By JOE NEWMAN
VENICE, CALIF.

Whenever a mind is simple and receives a divine wisdom, then old things pass away — means, teachers, texts, temples fall; it lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present hour... If therefore a man claims to know and speak

of God and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the oak which is its fulness and completion? Is the parent better than the child into whom he has cast his ripened being? Whence then this worship of the past? — "Self-Reliance," by Ralph Waldo Emerson

The people who brought Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to America were Japanese, and the debt of gratitude we owe them is immense. It was only natural that these pioneers would communicate to us in a way that reflected their cultural values. I feel, however, that most of us assumed that these values are inseparable from Buddhism. Most of them are not. Even so, I feel many of us have built Japanese cultural values into the way we think and talk about Buddhism, and into the SGI-USA. During the past four years I

have found great value in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, particularly his essay "Self-Reliance." It speaks to me about many of the core beliefs of Buddhism in a language that is powerfully American, powerfully my own.

Emerson was one of the United States' first philosophers. He is also the father of the first entirely American literary movement, Transcendentalism. Some Transcendentalist authors who followed included Thoreau, Whitman and Melville. Transcendentalist writings express some of the most important and deeply felt American cultural values and ideas. What's more, many Transcendentalist ideas mirror those of our Buddhist movement. For instance, Transcendentalism holds that the essence of life and the universe expresses itself in all things and all people — nothing is separate from this life force.

Emerson speaks about life and belief in a language that reflects cherished American values: independence, non-conformity, di-

rectness and self-reliance. Using these values as his base, Emerson teaches us how to recognize, think and live the belief that divinity/God (Buddhahood) is seated at the core of our own lives.

By contrast, Japanese cultural values, from what I've experienced, are different, emphasizing conformity rather than individuality and maintaining harmony rather than making waves.

I don't mean to suggest that one set of cultural values is better than another. I do assert, however, that if we wish to truly communicate Buddhism in America, we must learn to do so in a manner that reflects American values.

When we do so, we will make the SGI-USA more powerfully effective and attractive in America because it will speak loudly to the heart of those values that we appreciate most.

I believe that studying our American philosophers will help us do just this. **WT**



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The World Tribune welcomes reader submissions. If you are interested in contributing an article or photograph, please contact us for guidelines. Together we can make a great newspaper.

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Inspiring Story

Thank you so much for the wonderful story of Tony Goodlette (July 10). Such an inspiring story. At one time or another we have all suffered from the same fate as he, and it's wonderful to be able to see another grow out of it with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

— BARBARA RILEY-CATLETT,
via e-mail

Wonderful Voices

Thanks so much to Chrys Cohen for her "Perspective" — "We Will Be Children" in the July 10 *World Tribune*. The first time I read the article my heart was deeply touched and filled with appreciation for my two children, who are a never-ending source of encouragement and inspiration. Although they are only 7 and 4, their wisdom-filled lives always send me back to the Gohonzon to challenge myself one more time to pull out my Buddha nature.

The second time I read the article was at the urging of a friend to read it with my children. As we read, tears ran down my face. So often we view our children as simply an extension of ourselves; we look to them to become everything we didn't become. Reading Chrys' poignant viewpoint made me realize the wonder of having the opportunity to participate in the lives of two very special bodhisattvas with missions and karma all their own. My 7-year-old daughter, Olivia, asked me why I cried, and I told her I was so full of joy to have her in my life. She reached over and kissed me, hugging me tightly. I smiled, saying: "Look! You just fulfilled your mission!" And we laughed....

Thank you for all the wonderful voices of the members who share in the "Perspective" section. It is truly my favorite part of the *World Tribune*!

— CHARLOTTE A. MADLOCK,
San Diego

More Pride and Prejudice

As an African-American member of the straight community, I was pleased to read Lisa Jones' article "Pride and Prejudice"

("Worldview," June 19). As we in the SGI-USA attempt to struggle with our own diversity issues, it is important to remain aware of the struggle for dignity and equality in all areas of the human experience.

The history of such struggles is also important as SGI President Ikeda often reminds us and as Ms. Jones rightfully points out by referring to the Stonewall Bar incident as a seminal event toward galvanizing the Gay Rights Movement.

However, the article made a common omission that was compounded by the accompanying photograph. If my memory serves me correctly, many of the gays who were harassed, attacked and persecuted in the Stonewall Bar incident were black and Puerto Rican. In order to convey history correctly and give credit where credit is due, this needs to be acknowledged.

Perhaps this is another example of how far too often people of color have had their vital part in history excluded, distorted or misinterpreted while others reaped the benefits. We of the SGI, proud to identify ourselves as being in the vanguard of laying a foundation for everlasting peace, must determine to become the most vigilant in correcting such errors.

— ROBIN AZI, Richmond, Calif.

I, too, would like to say "Bravo!" for the *World Tribune's* article on the spirit of Stonewall. My non-practicing partner was also greatly encouraged to see such an article in a Buddhist newspaper.

I would like to address Robin Beck's response to that article in the July 10 "Mailbox." Robin speaks out against the *World Tribune* becoming "an arm of the anti-family coalition — the Gay & Lesbian Alliance, the Children's Defense League and the National Organization of Women." What a strange combination of movements. Sounds like he is categorically denying all those with whom he disagrees.

This is precisely the attitude and behavior that breed division, mistrust and, ultimately, war. Only when we open our hearts to the incredible diversity of human life and respect people based on the Law and their own unique missions

can we truly bring about a peaceful society.

As the sutra states, "Since hatred and jealousy abound even during the lifetime of the Buddha, how much worse will it be after his passing?"

If being "out of touch with the world" means choosing not to play those games of "hatred and jealousy," then, yes, I am out of touch with the world.

— DON ROSS, San Diego

I'm replying to the "Mailbox" letter of Robin R. Beck from the *World Tribune* of July 10. Mr. Beck, I fully respect your right to voice your opinion concerning issues you consider "anti-family," but as a woman with a 17-year marriage, two great children and tremendous career success, I felt we needed a different perspective. The organizations mentioned in your letter are fighting for tolerance, the rights of women and the protection of children. These are family values and Buddhist values.

After the conservative, free enterprise, moral-value-holding people (like yourself) successfully eradicate those gay/children/women supporters, what is the next step? Maybe the next wave of intolerance will include those holding different religious values? Maybe our children will be ostracized at school for not participating in the Lord's Prayer at the morning assembly. Maybe we will start losing our jobs and homes when the SGI-USA's values are labeled anti-family and anti-Christian. Intolerance comes and goes in waves; please be aware...we could be next. By all means you should have a dialogue with Pat Robertson. His views seem more in line with yours than Daisaku Ikeda's.

— TONI-LESLIE JAMES,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Regarding Robin R. Beck's letter in the July 10 *World Tribune*: I heartily agree. The world is moving faster and further from the liberal left than many choose to accept, and hopefully the SGI-USA doesn't get left behind. (Being left and behind is another issue.)

Notwithstanding, if the SGI-USA is truly committed to dialogue, it should not be confined to left-wing and liberal

groups such as those mentioned by Robin Beck; it should be across the board.

I think that it's time for the SGI-USA to wake up and take stock of reality. This would be the more Buddhist approach.

— STAN KLEMANOWICZ,
Torrance, Calif.

For Robin Beck, who seems to think that "the world is moving toward conservatism," I would like to quote a writer named Ken Wilber, who recently stated in an interview in the *Utne Reader* that the "general liberal notion is based on a global concern for fairness and justice regardless of race, creed, color, sex or gender." Those sound like Buddhist ethics to me — ideals that we, as Buddhists, ought to support. Furthermore, the Soka Gakkai has always been on the side of the people, and that includes people whom society has neglected or persecuted for one reason or another.

I also wish to thank Craig DeRousse for sharing his most revealing experience at the head temple ("Breakfast at Nikken's" — June 26). I found the article well-written and extremely interesting.

Finally, as one who very recently wrote an experience for the *World Tribune* ("Riding the Crest" — June 5), let me add that having an experience published with an e-mail address is an experience in itself. I am truly amazed at the profundity of our movement for peace and individual happiness — I received e-mail from all over the world, including members whom I encouraged or who encouraged me as long as 20 years ago. It felt so wonderful to know that someone I helped to introduce to Buddhism would still be practicing and receiving benefits today! Some of my friends in Bellingham, Wash., also pointed out to me that I failed to mention the name of their town — a city of which they have every reason to be quite proud, since I am sure their efforts have been fundamental in creating fortune for this wonderful place where I began my practice. Congratulations are also due to my ex-wife, Linda, who has continued to pursue her dreams and realized incredible benefits by having a never-give-up spirit to practice and struggle.

— PETER BANNE,
Pacifica, Calif.



Our Purpose: The SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA) promotes peace and individual happiness based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Peace is inseparably linked with each individual's happiness; SGI-USA members, through their faith, seek to become happier and contribute to society. The SGI exists in 128 countries and was founded in Japan in 1930.

Our Practice: The basic practice is chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, our object of devotion. According to Nichiren Daishonin, chanting this phrase allows us to be in harmony with the universe and create great value. Faith in this principle is gained through practical experience.

Nichiren Daishonin, a 13th-century Japanese priest, championed the Lotus Sutra, which teaches that the Buddha nature is inherent in all living things — thus, all people can become Buddhas. He introduced the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which is the essence of the Lotus Sutra. The Gohonzon is the mandala expressing this essence.

For more information, contact the SGI-USA community center nearest you or call (310) 451-8811.

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LISBETH GANT-BRITTON, KALAMAZOO, MICH.

What One Person

CAN DO

I think the main thing that differentiates young people from adults can be summed up in one word — *hope*. When we're very young, we usually have unlimited hope. Anything is possible! But after we get a little older, and life beats us up a bit, we start to lose that all-encompassing hope. We become practical and realistic.

But SGI President Ikeda has said that "youth itself is hope, passion and freedom. I hope that you will live your entire lives with a youthful spirit. Please become more youthful as the years go by. Wherever the flame of youth exists, there is no stagnation."

Four years ago, I made a determination to embody his youthful, fighting spirit in my little corner of the world.

The first part of my experience began in 1990: President Ikeda came to the United States and challenged us to show actual proof of the power of the Gohonzon in our daily lives. In the two years following his visit, I overcame many obstacles, including a gang of drug dealers that moved in across the street from my house. I also went on to write a new kind of black history book, which was soon published. It won the Los Angeles Mayor's Award and Toyota Motors paid for me to travel the country and give copies of the book to dignitaries and civic and political leaders in a number of cities.

After that, I knew that I wanted to spend as much time as possible encouraging young people. So I decided to leave journalism and go back to higher education — but this meant that I would have to go back to school and get my doctorate so that I could teach at the university level. If I wanted to complete the degree as fast as

possible, I would need a full scholarship, which is something very hard to come by, particularly for someone returning to school after a number of years.

I began to chant — for one, two and three hours a day. I was first accepted to the University of Southern California but not with enough scholarship money to quit my job and attend full time. I was really discouraged.

I went to see Ted Fujioka, one of our senior leaders, for advice. He calmly told me to just keep chanting and refuse to give up. But give up is all that I wanted to do! *After all*, I thought, *I've already shown actual proof!*

When I went home, I remembered all of the young people I wanted to teach and encourage. I knew Mr. Fujioka was right: I couldn't give up. But I literally did not know what to do next. So I opened the *Daily Guidance*, volume 4, and the page I read became my inspiration as I fought and overcame one obstacle after another. It's from Sept. 16:

"Even though you practice faith, you may encounter an unfortunate incident. But meeting with misfortune does not mean your prayer to the Gohonzon will not be answered. You may see something that makes you wonder why it happened, but as you persevere, you will later see that everything is moving in a positive direction for your happiness within the protection of Myoho."

I read that guidance every day, and every time life knocked me down, I would double my determination, just as I imagined President Ikeda would. Each day, I'd get up and struggle twice as hard again. I did this day after day, chanting and chanting, for a solid year.

At the end of that year, UCLA informed me that they were awarding me their most prestigious graduate fel-

Lisbeth Gant-Britton's life was successful by every measure, yet she had a dream to become a college professor. Without knowing exactly how to accomplish her goal, she vows that 'somehow' she'll do it....



lowship: tuition and all expenses paid for four years.

Then my challenges really began — I had to withstand the curriculum for the top degree at one of the country's top universities! I chanted to show actual proof to my classmates, many of whom were much younger than me. I instituted a team-study system, and our department became known for cooperation (whereas in other departments students were often very competitive and back-stabbing). I helped organize a series of forums for graduate students of color, many of whom felt alienated on campus. All this while preparing for a series of extremely rigorous written and oral examinations.

Eventually, the time came for me to take my last, most important exam, an oral exam in front of a panel of top professors, who could ask me anything they wanted about my field. I launched a weekend chanting campaign along with other members who were also students.

Just days before the oral exam, I got a call saying that my mother had had a stroke in Chicago. The news was so overwhelming, I decided that I couldn't possibly go through with the test. But my father urged me to do so. I dragged myself to the Gohonzon and read that guidance again about not giving up. My wonderful husband, Glenn, took off from work and chanted the entire time that I was in the exam. I passed the oral and was on a plane to Chicago the next morning to see my mother.

As if all this weren't enough... next, I had to write a dissertation (which is the length of a small book) and then find a teaching job to get to those students I had been chanting so much about.

I found out that to be hired as an English professor, I had to participate in a national job search. All of the colleges in the country basically hire once a year, so I had to attend a national conference in Washington, D.C. By the way, I had to be invited to attend, just to get interviewed. One school told me that I had beat out 350 other candidates from around the country just to receive an invitation.

At this conference, I was interviewed by teams of top professors — whom I had never met — from colleges across the country. And again, they could ask me any question about American literature, and I had to answer on the spot. This went on for 18 hours a day for three-and-a-half days straight. After this conference, each college then selected only three people to fly out to their school for yet another round of interviews, after which the candidates had to teach a class with a team of professors sitting in the back of the room watching.

It was worse than the NBA draft! The pressure was so intense, people were having nervous breakdowns. Including me, almost. But every time I wanted to give up, quit, commit suicide — anything to get out of the enormous pressure — I would think of the resolution I made to show actual proof.

At the end of this struggle to keep doubling my determination, I was completely flabbergasted with the result. I was offered an incredibly good teaching position at, of all places, my alma mater: Kalamazoo College in Michigan. It's one of the most prestigious private colleges in Michigan, like the Claremont Colleges in Southern California.

But here's the *amazing* part: The president of the college personally called and told me that I had been awarded a trustee professorship. This is something like an endowed chair. It is an honor normally reserved for older, very prestigious faculty members who have been at a college for many years. No one at the college had ever made such an appointment for a new assistant professor before!

But the president said that the school had picked me because they were so impressed with the kind of person I had become since I graduated. And that it was thought I would be just the kind of role model desired for the students — exactly what I was chanting to be.

So I am now the Marlene Crandell Francis Trustee Professor of the Humanities in the English Department at Kalamazoo College.

In closing, I encourage everyone to challenge and re-challenge themselves to show actual proof of what a person can do with the Gohonzon — with the never-give-up spirit. ❏

If you're interested in contributing to this section, please call us at (310) 451-8811 or e-mail us at w1@sgi-usa.org.

COMING NEXT WEEK

Boys and Girls Group's 'Friends for Peace'