

## AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA CONVEYING THE SPIRIT

*In this essay praising all the interpreters who have helped the SGI movement, President Ikeda says that ‘the secret to successful interpreting — and the quintessence of communication among people — is not simply the transmission of words. It is conveying the spirit, the essence. It is linking one heart to another.’*

The mission of interpreters is indispensable in our long journey toward achieving world peace. Interpreters are bridges linking people through language. They are also consummate diplomats, expanding circles of understanding and friendship around the world. You could say that they are the lifelines of true cultural exchange.

For 40 years, I have striven to spread the philosophy and ideals of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism for the sake of human happiness and lasting peace. I have been greatly assisted by many capable interpreters in my efforts to infuse people’s lives with deep spiritual joy. I remember each of them with great fondness.

Quite a few have not been Soka Gakkai members — for example, Leon Strijak, associate professor of Russia’s Moscow State University, and Lin Liyun, who was the interpreter for my meeting with Premier Zhou Enlai of China. Their faces shine in my mind like the silver rays of the morning star.

Vladimir Kanef, who interpreted for me during my 1981 visit to Bulgaria, also made a deep impression on me. Then a young man of about 30, specializing in physics, he was apparently called in to interpret as a last-minute substitute. Having studied in Japan and made friends with some Soka Gakkai members, however, he was well acquainted with me and my activities.

I had an extremely busy itinerary during my stay in Bulgaria, yet, throughout, Mr. Kanef kept his friendly smile. His voice resonated with brightness and warmth as he interpreted my words. I shook his hand with deep gratitude many times, and shortly before my departure, I presented him with my fountain pen as a token of my appreciation.

I was told that he shyly said to one of our members: “The weight of this pen is very heavy. The responsibility that comes with it is immense.” What precious words — like the glittering sparkle of a hidden star!

When I visited Brazil in February 1984, for the first time in 18 years, I met with President João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo in the nation’s capital, Brasília. My interpreter was actually only decided upon during my flight to Brazil. A Japanese gentleman working for the airline accompanied us on the flight, and as we engaged in friendly conversation, I asked him, having no interpreter lined up, if he would interpret for me during my meeting with the Brazilian president. He said that it would be a tremendous responsibility, but he gladly accepted.

The compassionate desire to widely convey the Dai-shonin’s teachings inevitably carries us out into the world. This has naturally presented us with the vital need for many skilled interpreters.

My dialogues tend to be philosophical and intellectual in nature. It is thus difficult sometimes for interpreters without a deep understanding of Buddhism to communicate my

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true meaning and intent.

In becoming a world religion, Christianity produced countless gifted interpreters. We of the SGI, too, in our task of propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the globe, have had to use our wisdom to find the best way to proceed.

I realized that I would need interpreters to help me in my work. I would find, train and produce a steady stream of them. I began to pray for this with a deep, powerful pledge.

One by one, I discovered wonderfully talented individuals, encouraged them and nurtured them. Today, the SGI has a fine team of interpreters of all languages.

Twenty-five years ago, I carried on a dialogue with Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee, the eminent historian. Great intellectuals tend to have little patience with inexperienced interpreters.

Time and time again, I broke out in a cold sweat as our interpreters couldn't keep up with our speed and the high level of what we were discussing. They still remember the pain and frustration they felt at their limited ability.

The existence of talented interpreters is directly linked to the progress of worldwide kosen-rufu. And many have heaped praises on our interpreters for their refinement and their knowledge of a wide variety of subjects.

I will never forget my third trip to Peru, which was in February and March 1984. On the last day of my visit, I attended a luncheon with Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde Terry. My interpreter was Rosa Kishimoto, who is now the SGI-Peru women's division guidance leader. A venerable pioneer member, Mrs. Kishimoto helped establish the SGI's foundation in Peru with her late husband, Víctor.

She was asked to interpret shortly before the event took place. The luncheon was an important public occasion; it would be attended by the president and first lady, the prime minister and his wife, members of the cabinet and leading cultural figures. Even the indomitable Mrs. Kishimoto was a bit tense — so much so, I told her to relax.

But once the luncheon began, she performed with perfect composure and dignity. The conversation touched on many subjects, from the president's visit to Japan to academic and cultural exchange between the two nations.

Mrs. Kishimoto did a sterling job. Her voice was refined and confident. The president's secretary-general expressed his appreciation for her superior interpreting skills, I was told. Her smile sparkled with relief and satisfaction, when I praised her, saying: "A fine job! Many thanks!"

Mrs. Kishimoto is a second-generation Japanese born in Peru. Because of straitened conditions inflicted on her family by the outbreak of World War II, she only graduated from elementary school. She never received specialized training as an interpreter. However, for many years, she read first-rate international magazines and in the process acquired a broad education.

In addition to her linguistic abilities, she truly understands the hearts of the Peruvian people. She continuously thinks about the best way to transmit the Daishonin's spirit to them.

The secret to successful interpreting — and the quintessence of communication among people — is not simply the transmission of words. It is conveying the spirit, the essence. It is linking one heart to another.

The great Leo Tolstoy writes, "For humanity, good and beauty is what unites human

beings.”

Today, the SGI’s mission of linking all humanity through the luminous beauty of peace and culture is shining brighter than ever before. I am moved by deep appreciation for our splendid interpreters.

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