

**THE ULTIMATE LESSON
A RECORD OF MY LIFE
BY DAISAKU IKEDA**

SGI President Ikeda remembers what he learned from President Toda near the end of his mentor's life: 'We must be prepared in our future activities for kosen-rufu for every imaginable kind of persecution and attack, and be determined to overcome them. This is the ultimate lesson for a practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.'

The old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, was always filled with the sound of members' chanting and the buzz of conversation and animated discussion. The president's office was in a corner on the second floor.

In the days leading up to the youth division sports festival held at the Mitsuzawa Stadium in Yokohama on Sept. 8, 1957, Mr. Toda could be found sitting in his office busily making notes. He would write something, then, through his thick glasses, peer closely at what he had written. Every time he wrote, he would stop to look over his notes again.

His mentor, Mr. Makiguchi, made it a practice to always jot his thoughts down. He called it "storing up thoughts." Now Mr. Toda was doing the same.

When Mr. Makiguchi was active as a teacher, he accumulated an enormous quantity of notes on the importance of education and its practical methods. These notes, through Mr. Toda's efforts, were compiled and published as Mr. Makiguchi's masterwork, *The System of Value-Creating Education*.

As the sky outside the window began to take on shades of evening, Mr. Toda would pause in contemplation and say, "Ah, it's time to go." Then he would head off to that night's meeting. His mood of intense concentration continued for several days. I was always nearby, and I sensed that he was preparing to make a very important announcement. This was how Mr. Toda's epoch-making Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons was born.

Closing my eyes, I can still see the Mitsuzawa Stadium in Yokohama as it was on that day, Sept. 8, 1957. The day was perfectly clear, without a cloud in the sky. The evening newspapers the day before had forecast heavy rain, as Typhoon No. 10 made its way toward Eastern Japan. This only increased the joy of the festival's participants when they awoke Sept. 8 to the bright blue skies left in the wake of the typhoon's passing.

The heavenly deities—the protective functions of the universe—must surely have provided the fine weather to celebrate this event, the stage from which Mr. Toda launched his landmark declaration, an occasion that would be remembered down through the generations.

The youth division sports meet, dubbed Festival of Youth, began with a Cessna flying overhead and dropping a congratulatory message. I then opened the event by firing a starter's gun, the signal for a hundred doves to be released into the sky.

I can still see Mr. Toda's vigorous figure that day. He declared: "Today's Festival of Youth has been blessed with clear skies, free of any trace of yesterday's storm, as if the heavenly dragon has responded to your enthusiasm. I am overjoyed with all my heart by your spirit—both those of you on the ground, who fully demonstrated the Soka Gakkai spirit, and those of you in the stands who cheered them on."

Chinese legend has it that heavy rains are caused by a dragon that resides in the heav-

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ens. It was just like Mr. Toda, with his great fondness for the Chinese classics, to open his speech this way.

He continued: “Nevertheless, for all the joy we feel today, it is quite likely that the Soka Gakkai may encounter persecution again in the future. And I am sure that we shall be destined to meet all kinds of attack. Having said that, I want now to share with you what I hope you will regard as the first of my final instructions for the future.”

And indeed they were final instructions, as if he knew in advance the limits of his life — that just six months hence his health would fail him, and he would die. At the same time, it was an indication to us that we must be prepared in our future activities for kosen-rufu for every imaginable kind of persecution and attack, and be determined to overcome them. This is the ultimate lesson for a practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. How fortunate we were to have such a great mentor as Mr. Toda!

Josei Toda declared that the use of nuclear weapons was an absolute evil.

Mr. Toda continued speaking with powerful conviction to the 50,000 young people assembled, his voice shaking them to the core of their beings: “The responsibility for the coming era will be shouldered by the youth. There is no need for me to tell you that kosen-rufu is our mission.... But today, I want to clearly state my stance toward atomic testing and the testing of the hydrogen bomb....

“It is my hope that, as my disciples, you will inherit the declaration I am about to make and, to the best of your ability, spread its intent throughout the world.”

He spoke simply and clearly, but the faith and expectations he held for the young people who would carry on the work of kosen-rufu were apparent — as were his love for them and the extraordinary depth of his determination in making this declaration.

He went on to declare that he wished “to rip out the claws that are hidden in the very depths” of the issue of nuclear weapons. At the time, there was mounting public opinion against nuclear weapons. Three years earlier, in 1954, a Japanese fishing vessel, the Lucky Dragon V, was exposed to radioactive fallout from a hydrogen bomb test blast conducted on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific, and the ship’s radio operator, Aikichi Kuboyama, died of radiation poisoning.

Mr. Toda began to approach the crux of his speech, the portion that he had recorded in his notes, the fruit of his intense and prolonged thought: “We, the citizens of the world, have a right to life. Anyone who tries to jeopardize this right is a devil incarnate, a fiend, a monster.... Even if a country should conquer the world through the use of the atomic bomb, the nation and the persons that use that weapon must be viewed as devils, as evil incarnate. I believe that it is the mission of every young man and woman in Japan to disseminate this idea around the globe.”

Mr. Toda declared that the use of nuclear weapons was an absolute evil that violated people’s right to life, and he exposed the “claws of the demon” that lay hidden behind all arguments for their use. In other words, he pursued the issue to the profound level of human life itself, condemning the demonic nature within humanity that produced nuclear weapons and sought to justify their use.

Dr. Linus Pauling once said to me: “I believe that there is a greater power in the world than the evil power of military force, of nuclear bombs — there is the power of good, of morality, of humanitarianism. I believe in the power of the human spirit” (*A Lifelong Quest for Peace—A Dialogue*, p. 72). These words are very similar to a sentence from the Russell–Einstein Manifesto: “We appeal as human beings to human beings: remember

your humanity and forget the rest” (Ibid.). Both statements strike a resonant chord with my mentor’s words.

Mr. Toda’s declaration set a clear course for the Soka Gakkai’s future activities for peace and culture. So many of our activities have been born from its spirit, including the youth division’s petition to the United Nations with 10 million signatures for the abolition of nuclear weapons in the 1970s; the more recent Abolition 2000 campaign, in which 13 million signatures were collected; the “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World” exhibition, which opened at the U.N. Headquarters in New York and has been shown in Moscow, Beijing and other leading cities around the world; and the “War and Peace” exhibition, among many others.

Two in a series

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