

DISCUSSION HELD WITH DR. JOSEPH ROTBLAT

SGI President Ikeda praises Dr. Joseph Rotblat, a pioneer of the anti-nuclear movement, for living the life of a bodhisattva.

SGI President Ikeda held a discussion Feb. 10 with the noted British physicist and Nobel laureate Dr. Joseph Rotblat, 91, their first meeting in 11 years. The two talked at the Okinawa Training Center in Onnason, Japan, about Dr. Rotblat's pioneering efforts in the ant-nuclear movement and his lifelong dedication to peace and science. Earlier that day, in commemoration of the centennial of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's birth (Feb. 11), the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research conferred its first Toda Prize for Peace Research on Dr. Rotblat.

The SGI leader said that he was impressed by Dr. Rotblat's acceptance speech, in particular by the powerful commitment and will for peace that resonated in his words. Thanking Mr. Ikeda, Dr. Rotblat stressed that it is imperative for the world to find a way out of the grave situation it finds itself in today. He called on the SGI president to lead the way.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Rotblat recounted that in 1957, shortly after the first Pugwash Conference was held, he visited Hiroshima to see for himself the scars inflicted there by the atomic bomb and to give a lecture in Tokyo. He noted that this was around the same time that Josei Toda made his Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons at the Mitsuzawa Stadium in Yokohama, Japan.

Dr. Rotblat said in his speech that he regretted not having had the opportunity to meet the Soka Gakkai's second president, who died the year after he made his declaration. The peace activist also stated his determination to work with President Ikeda toward the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons and war in the 21st century.

Born on Nov. 4, 1908, in Warsaw, Poland, Dr. Rotblat is presently a professor emeritus of the University of London. Growing up in poverty, he educated himself and later gained admission to the Free University of Poland. There, he studied under Dr. Ludwik Wertenstein, a physicist who had been a student of Marie Curie, the Polish-born French physicist famous for her work on radioactivity.

After finishing his doctorate in physics at the University of Warsaw in 1939, Dr. Rotblat went to study at the University of Liverpool in Britain. Meager scholarship funds, however, forced him to leave his wife in Poland. And when Germany invaded the country, it became impossible to obtain an exit visa for her. Tragically, she perished in the Holocaust.

President Ikeda asked Dr. Rotblat whether he had suffered harsh repercussions as a result of his departure from the Manhattan Project, under which he worked on building the first atomic bomb. Admitting that this was indeed the case, the physicist explained that he was suspected of being a spy for the Soviet Union. These accusations were very difficult to refute.

Wanting to work for the benefit of humanity, Dr. Rotblat returned to the University of Liverpool in early 1945 to research radiation therapy for cancer patients. Eight months later, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From that point, Dr.

Rotblat, who describes this event as altering his entire view of life, began working to generate dialogue among scientists.

His medical research opened the way for radiation therapy to begin in the United Kingdom. The radioactive element cobalt 60 that he discovered in 1934 is still used today in treating malignant tumors.

President Ikeda praised Dr. Rotblat for living the life of a bodhisattva and presented him with a lengthy poem paying tribute to his tireless struggle for peace. The SGI leader also expressed his wish to plant a cherry tree dedicated to Dr. Rotblat and his late wife in the garden of the Kansai International Friendship Center, where he and the physicist first met.

The new Toda Prize for Peace Research has been inaugurated to honor individuals who have made distinguished contributions to peace studies and the realization of world peace. Dr. Rotblat, president emeritus of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, a forum for researchers devoted to abolishing nuclear weapons and finding peaceful solutions to international conflicts, was chosen because of his many peace activities.

Dr. Rotblat distanced himself from the Manhattan Project when it became known that Nazi Germany would never manage to build a competing bomb. Of all the scientists involved, he was the only one to withdraw before the atomic bomb was tested.

Dr. Rotblat spent the next five decades speaking out on the dangers of nuclear weapons. He has visited some 100 countries in his crusade for the elimination of nuclear weapons. He is the last surviving member of the 11 original signatories to the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, an anti-nuclear appeal launched by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein. The manifesto led to the inception of the Pugwash Conferences in 1957. In 1995, Dr. Rotblat and the Pugwash Conferences were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.