

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY SERIES  
WONDERFUL ENCOUNTERS  
DR. DAVID KRIEGER, PRESIDENT OF THE NUCLEAR AGE PEACE  
FOUNDATION**

***"Wonderful Encounters" is a series by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda recounting his meetings with people from a variety of fields and their discussions on issues of common interest.***

**NUCLEAR CONTAMINATION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT  
ONCE ACCUSTOMED TO ABNORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES,  
PEOPLE NO LONGER TREMBLE AT THEIR EXTREME SITUATION**

*If politicians had to fight the wars,  
they would find another way.*

*Peace is not easy, they say.  
It is war that is too easy—*

*too easy to turn a profit, too easy  
to believe there is no choice,*

*too easy to sacrifice  
someone else's children.*

(From *War Is Too Easy*, by David Krieger)

Spiritual paralysis is a terrifying thing. People can grow accustomed to even the most abnormal of circumstances; once accustomed, they no longer tremble at their extreme situation.

By conservative estimates, there are some 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. In 1945, the first of those weapons was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, instantly engulfing all living things in a horrific inferno. The presently existing stockpiles of warheads possess 300,000 times the destructive power of those two bombs! This is enough force to wipe out the human race ten times over — not to mention all other life on this planet.

**A Succession of Terrifying Mishaps**

Moreover, there have also been many incidents of nuclear weapons-related mishaps. According to a report released by the environmental group Greenpeace, from 1950 to 1993 an estimated fifty-one nuclear warheads belonging to the United States and Russia have accidentally been lost at sea. Most of those warheads have never been recovered. Among these incidents is the case of a thermonuclear bomb that sank nearly 200 miles off the coast of Okinawa in 1965.

Of course, as the number of nuclear weapons increases, so does the danger of nuclear weapons-related mishaps, along with the possibility of terrorists hijacking a nuclear device.

In 1979, duty officers at four U.S. command centers were mistakenly alerted that the United States was undergoing a full-scale Soviet missile attack.<sup>1</sup> They quickly proceeded with preparations for retaliatory strikes. Fortunately, the commanders quickly realized the error.

Nonetheless, the world was within a hairbreadth of disaster. A similar false alert occurred in the following year as well. In this instance, the fault lay with a computer malfunction.<sup>2</sup>

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and I have spoken about peace on many occasions, and we completely agree that humankind has no need for nuclear weapons. What motivated Mr. Gorbachev to advocate the abolition of nuclear weapons? When he became the top leader of the Soviet Union, he recognized the potential danger of some failure within the command and control systems that could result in the actual launch of nuclear weapons!<sup>3</sup> It is only by sheer luck that we have not yet witnessed an accidental nuclear attack.

The use of nuclear weapons was a considered option during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War. It has been rumored that India and Pakistan have come dangerously close to actually using nuclear weapons against each other. Doubtless many other nuclear weapons-related crises have occurred without the public's knowledge. These incidents directly involve the very survival of billions of people, yet politicians, military leaders and officials attempt to conceal this information.

Those who have brought humankind to such a predicament would say, "Nuclear weapons guarantee peace." This is the theory of nuclear deterrence. Its adherents consider "peace" to be a situation in which opponents aim horrific weapons of mass destruction at each other's throats, with each side too terrified to move. This is like shaking someone's hand while sticking a gun in his ribs with the other hand! Can leaders of nations who buy into such a dependence on violence tell their citizens and children that violence and killing are wrong and still expect to maintain any credibility? What hypocrisy! What immorality!

I call this the "nuclear contamination" of the human spirit.

### **Learning From Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

Dr. David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, has devoted his life to the cause of eliminating nuclear weapons. As an American, he was taught in school that the war with Japan was brought to an end because the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Raised in this environment, how did he come to be a person who denounces nuclear weapons? He underwent a dramatic conversion that led to his opposition to nuclear weapons and violence in general. The turning point occurred with the indescribable shock he received on visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1963, at the age of twenty-one.

In 1998, he revisited those cities for the first time in thirty-five years. On what was his second visit to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, he suddenly stopped in front of one of the exhibits. It was the same display that had made such a strong impression on him more than three decades before. "This is it," he said. "This is what moved me to take my stand for peace." He was looking at the bones of a human hand encased in glass that had been melted by the incredible heat of the atomic blast.

It is important to know the facts. It is important to make them known to others. We of the SGI have continued to present to the world our anti-nuclear weapons exhibits "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" and "War and Peace." Last year, Dr. Krieger's organization sponsored a U.S. showing of the "Message of Peace: Hiroshima/Nagasaki Exhibition," a traveling exhibit from the peace museums of those two cities.

### **A Conscientious Objector**

Returning to the U.S. in 1964, having vowed in Japan to work for peace, the young Dr. Krieger planned to join the Peace Corps. However, he instead found that he had been drafted into the army reserves! In 1968, while a graduate student at the University of Hawaii, he was called into

active duty with the U.S. Army Reserve's 100th Battalion/442nd Infantry. On the other side of the Pacific, the Vietnam War dragged on. "I suddenly found myself a second lieutenant and part of the military machine," he recalls. "But my new position made me a more active protester. I opposed the war with all my being and knew I would never take part in it."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Krieger became a conscientious objector. From the day he made that declaration, he refused to touch a weapon, and thus began his struggle with the army. He was prepared to go to prison, if need be. It was an age when those who refused to fight were attacked and harshly denounced as being cowardly and unpatriotic. Dr. Krieger faced criticism from many quarters. No one understood his convictions better than his wife, Carolee, who stood by him throughout the ordeal.

The army refused to grant the young peace activist conscientious objector status, so he took them to U.S. federal court. If he lost his case, he would be court-martialed and sent to prison, but to him that was preferable to killing Vietnamese people. In the end, Dr. Krieger finally gained his freedom from the military when his unit was deactivated and he was honorably discharged.

Since that day, he has devoted his life to waging peace.

### **We Can Choose Hope**

The blue skies over Okinawa on February 26, 1998, were breathtaking. The sun was so bright that it seemed as if the Okinawa summer had come even earlier than usual. On that day, I met David and Carolee Krieger at the Okinawa Training Center. It was about six months after our previous meeting at the Soka Gakkai World Youth Peace Music Festival in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan.

Outside the window, we could behold azure skies and a cobalt sea, with not a cloud in sight. It was a heavenly scene so typical of Okinawa. Dr. Krieger said that in his opinion people could choose despair, or they could also choose cynicism and anger. He stressed, however, that only when we choose hope will blue skies, blue seas and a new world stretch out before us.

On that occasion, Dr. Krieger and I agreed to publish our dialogue under the title *Choose Hope* (Kibo no Sentaku), the Japanese publication of which was realized this summer.

### **Cold War Thinking Continues**

In the years following the end of the Cold War, I had felt a sense of impending crisis due to what I saw as people's marked loss of interest in the threat of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that this threat remained unchanged. Around the world, there was a mood of momentary relief once the Cold War concluded. The nuclear age and the Cold War period seemed to be one and the same, but actually although the Cold War ended, the nuclear age continued — the reason being that the force of habit of "Cold War thinking" had not changed. Changes in awareness had not kept up with changes in the times. Had humanity lost its golden opportunity to abolish nuclear weapons?

Our situation can be compared to people who live in a house that is teetering on a cliff in a dangerous state of disrepair. The residents of this house suddenly come into great wealth, but instead of rebuilding their dwelling they simply redecorate it. In other words, after living for long years in a state of imminent danger, we received the unexpected boon of the end of the Cold War. However, instead of ridding ourselves completely of the danger posed by nuclear weapons, we have only made the cosmetic change of minor reductions in nuclear arms.

Furthermore, according to Dr. Krieger, far from feeling relief at the end of the Cold War, we should be aware that the dissolution of the Soviet Union has in fact increased the threat of nuclear disaster. "The world has reached a crossroads," he asserts, "where either we eliminate

nuclear weapons or they will proliferate to many other states and possibly to terrorists as well.”

## **Moving From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace**

Non-nuclear weapons states may look at nuclear proliferation in this way: “Why should the nuclear weapons states have exclusive possession of ultimate destructive power? What gives them the right to do so? Moreover, if the assertion that nuclear deterrence does indeed secure peace, then for the sake of deterrence and peace, why shouldn’t other states possess these weapons as well?”

The self-serving argument that nuclear weapons bring peace invariably leads to the proliferation of these weapons, as the above example illustrates. The nuclear tests in Pakistan and India are prime examples of this point.

In other words, we either abolish nuclear weapons entirely or else face the extreme danger of further proliferation. We either eliminate nuclear weapons or else we, the human race, will be eliminated.

Of course, reducing nuclear weapons is naturally an important step in the right direction. But that alone is not enough unless our goal is to remove them altogether. Simple reduction is absolutely insufficient. Why?

Think about it. If you take a bottle of alcohol away from an alcoholic, isn’t it just a temporary solution? Unless you cure his dependence on alcohol, he is bound to find another bottle somewhere else.

In the case of abolishing nuclear arms, the only solution is to remedy the prevailing culture of violence, to cure people of their dependence on violent weapons.

Some assert that even if we abolish nuclear weapons, the technology to build them will not disappear, and that whatever agreements are made, there will always be someone who breaks the rules, thus making complete abolition impossible.

However, the technology for manufacturing chemical weapons, just like that for nuclear weapons, will not disappear. And it is far easier to conceal the presence of chemical weapons than nuclear weapons. Still, international society has adopted a complete ban on chemical weapons.

Strict monitoring will be necessary to prevent violations. However, just because we possess the know-how and ability to produce something doesn’t necessarily mean that we will. Even if we have the knowledge and technology, the guiding values of the age will determine those that are used and those that are not.

Dr. Johan Galtung, the noted peace researcher, has made a similar point. When the pyramids of Egypt were built, they were the quintessence of high technology for their time, yet who is interested in building pyramids today? In the same way, when a culture of peace governs the age, no doubt we will look back on the nuclear age as a time of insanity, just as we now look upon the witch-hunts of centuries ago as madness.

It is crucial, therefore, that we abolish and dismantle not just nuclear weapons but the war system itself. We must move from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. The existence of nuclear weapons calls into question whether humanity can elevate itself to a level truly worthy of being called human.

For some, possession of nuclear weapons today is regarded as a symbol of national prestige. It is imperative to change people’s awareness so that the possession of nuclear weapons becomes a symbol of the barbarism of those who would wantonly endanger the lives of humanity. We must make people see that the possession of nuclear weapons is a badge of shame.

Our challenge is to shift people’s thinking and perceptions, to change their focus from brute force to wisdom, and from material possessions to life.

The examples of courageous women holding flowers out to armed soldiers during the anti-war protests in the United States and the People Power movement in the Philippines serve as an inspiration to us all.

### **Putting Funds Allocated for Military Spending to Better Use**

The Soka Gakkai's Okinawa Training Center is located on the site of a former nuclear missile base. I wanted to transform the site into a base for transmitting the message of peace, to show the truth that a change in our way of thinking can make a 180-degree change in the world.

Let's consider military spending, for example. According to one account, the United States alone has spent \$5.8 trillion (in constant 1996 dollars) on nuclear weapons in the fifty-six years from 1940-96. Stacked on top of one another, these dollars would reach the moon and nearly back.<sup>5</sup>

The world today annually spends approximately \$1 trillion on military expenditures. By comparison, it would cost \$8 billion a year to teach each of the 275 million illiterate children in the world to read and write. This is only three days' worth of global military spending.

The World Health Organization (WHO) spent \$313 million to eliminate smallpox. That's just three hours' worth of global military spending. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is trying to raise \$207 million to protect children around the world from starvation, contagious diseases and compulsory military service. This is only two hours' worth of global military spending.

My friend, the futurologist Hazel Henderson, writes in her book *Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics* that if for ten years a mere one-fourth of the world's military expenditures were devoted instead to such world problems as poverty, population growth and environmental destruction, they could all be ameliorated. Isn't this, I ask, the best possible security? She says that if only 0.25 percent of those military expenditures — twenty-two hours' worth — were made available, 250,000 children could be saved from blindness, and 607 million children could be vaccinated and spared an early death.<sup>6</sup>

Given these facts, one can only conclude that the human race has completely lost its sense of reason.

Enough! The time has come to stop spending money on slaughter and to start spending money on enhancing life! We must shift from a military economy to an economy that addresses true human need.

### **The Fallacy of Nuclear Deterrence**

It is not only a question of wasted money. Dr. Krieger notes that at the height of the Cold War, more than half the world's physicists were engaged in military research. And what did they produce after assiduously accumulating all of their funding, knowledge and technology? Nuclear weapons, capable of annihilating the human race many times over. What absurdity! What an incredible waste of human resources!

Various difficult and complex doctrines have been developed around the theory of nuclear deterrence, such as "flexible response," "mutual assured destruction" and "non-proliferation," in order to justify this colossal folly. But no matter what fine arguments they may use to defend this theory, it is still completely hollow.

Have nuclear weapons really prevented war? In fact, in the nuclear age following World War II, there have been more than 150 conflicts, in which some 25 million people have died. How many more people need to die to prove that nuclear weapons do not prevent war? And what of the hundreds of thousands of people who have become victims of radiation poisoning due to

exposure to radioactive fallout from nuclear testing or radioactive waste materials?

### **Placing People First**

It is not my intention here to engage in an in-depth doctrinal debate over the nuclear puzzle and the theory of nuclear deterrence. Nor do I feel it is necessary. “One of the great problems we face today is the perception that issues related to nuclear weapons are too complicated for average people, who therefore willingly defer to governments in connection with them,” said Dr. Krieger. But in fact, the truth is quite clear and simple. True scholars know this.

In the contentious debate surrounding the Vietnam War, the eminent historian Dr. Arnold Toynbee said that he made it a policy to always look at complex political issues from a human perspective. With regard to Vietnam, he said, his first consideration was the people of Vietnam, whose nation had been turned into a battlefield, and that whichever ideology governed the country after it was unified was of secondary concern to him.

Cannot the same be said of the struggle to abolish nuclear weapons? Seen from the perspective of humanity and life, we can see the fallacy of the theory of nuclear deterrence, which calls threatening other countries peace. It is clear that this is a contemptible policy on the part of nuclear weapons states, which attempt to maintain their own national security by taking the entire world hostage.

*Nuchi du takara* — “Life is a treasure.” Dr. Krieger smiled in agreement when I shared with him this phrase expressing the Okinawan spirit of cherishing the sanctity of life.

### **Japan Must Take the Lead in the Anti-Nuclear Movement**

The continuing protest against nuclear weapons by the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki derives from this same profound recognition of the preciousness of life.

“I doubt that any other people oppose nuclear weaponry as fiercely as the Japanese rightly do,” states Dr. Krieger. Nonetheless, he laments: “On the issue of nuclear weapons abolition, it is impossible for the Japanese government to be true both to the Japanese people and to the U.S. government. The Japanese government seems to believe that the American nuclear umbrella enhances Japanese security, when in fact, it makes the Japanese people accomplices in threats to destroy whole cities, as Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed.

“The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have made many eloquent pleas for the elimination of all nuclear weapons from Earth. The government of Japan, however, has shut its ears to these pleas and has gone on playing coy mistress to the United States,” he says.

Dr. Krieger continues: “In my view, the Japanese government’s position is unacceptable; and the people of Japan must demand that their government’s policies conform to the popular will. If they demand this and succeed in changing official Japanese nuclear policies, they could exert a powerful effect on the policies of the United States as well. I hope the people of Japan will take the lead in making these demands because their leadership might inspire Americans to demand changes from their government, too.”

If the United States were to change its nuclear policy, it goes without saying that the rest of the world would dramatically change as well.

### **The Trust of Asian Neighbors**

Among Japan’s Asian neighbors, there is a strong belief that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought about the end of the war and that Japan merely received just retribution for its invasion of their homelands. These beliefs have been a very strong impediment in the fight against nuclear weapons.

In order for Japan to take the lead in the movement to abolish nuclear weapons, it must courageously and directly face up to its responsibility for its wartime aggression against its Asian neighbors.

Moreover, some 40,000 North and South Koreans also died in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many of them had been brought to these cities as forced laborers. In the midst of the hell resulting from the nuclear detonation, an even more painful hell awaited them. Those of Korean descent who survived the blast were the last to receive medical treatment, only after all Japanese had been attended to. Their dead were buried last as well. In the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, there is a photograph of a crow picking at one such abandoned corpse, a heartrending testament to this tragic discrimination even in death. I heard that this picture also caused Dr. Krieger to stop and contemplate it for a long time.

How dreadful! To be discriminated against at a moment of life and death, and even after death! We Japanese must never forget the desperate cries that rang out over the scorched earth of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We must find the courage to confront this. Only when we do, will the message of peace from Hiroshima and Nagasaki reach the hearts of our fellow Asians and spread out to the rest of the world.

Just as many Japanese would like to try to ignore their country's past history of aggression against their Asian neighbors, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are a painful thorn in the sides of many Americans, something they would like to forget. But Dr. Krieger bowed his head deeply before the victims of the atomic bombings and said that as an American he wished to offer his deepest apology for what he called the "crime against humanity" that took place there.

### **Nuclear Weapons as a Violation of International Law**

Dr. Krieger founded the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in 1982 in Santa Barbara, California. He initiated the Abolition 2000 campaign and has been an active leader among the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working to abolish nuclear weapons.

In my proposal to the Second Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament in June 1982, I urged the non-nuclear weapons states to unite and move toward creating a global net of peace around the United States and the Soviet Union. Dr. Krieger and his foundation have been devoted to the same goal.

Dr. Krieger is also a steering committee member of the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI), an anti-nuclear advocacy group. Last year, with backing from non-nuclear weapons states, MPI played an important role in securing for the first time a clear commitment to the abolition of nuclear weapons from the nations that possess them.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice ruled that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is not permitted under international law, and Dr. Krieger worked hard in the action leading up to that declaration.

Ultimately, it is just as Dr. Krieger states: "There are many reasons to oppose nuclear weapons. They are illegal, undemocratic, hugely expensive, and they undermine rather than increase security. But by far the most important reason to oppose these weapons is that they are profoundly immoral."

The only reason nuclear weapons have not been abolished is that the nuclear weapons states have not been motivated to do so. World leaders are quick to gather together when the purpose is for economic growth, yet when it comes to the issue of nuclear weapons they are decidedly reluctant to move. It is simply a problem of a lack of political will.

What influences political will? Public opinion. The apparently huge and immovable

military-industrial-academic complex can only exist because each individual citizen accepts this state of affairs. The only course, therefore, is to change public opinion. It is necessary to create a global network of people for the abolition of nuclear weapons. “If the people lead, politicians will follow,” says Dr. Krieger.

The alliance of the people will be the new superpower of the twenty-first century.

### **Nationalism Leads to the Escalation of Violence**

Japanese society has recently been rocked by a succession of shocking violent crimes. I believe this upsurge in violence is related to the growth of nationalism in Japan. As Dr. Krieger stresses: “A culture that infuses education with militarism and nationalism is a failed culture.”

Nationalism places the nation above human life. From a nationalistic perspective, people exist to serve the nation, rather than the nation existing to benefit its people and humanity as a whole. The lives of people of other nations may be sacrificed and the lives of the nation’s own citizens may be used as a means to achieve “national interests.” It is not in the least surprising that people’s hearts become callous and violence escalates in a society where such disregard for life prevails. Those who go about inciting nationalistic sentiments have much to answer for.

Dr. Krieger states: “The only worthy education is one that teaches young people the sacredness of life — a gift we share with nearly 6 billion other human beings and many other species inhabiting our planet. With understanding of life’s sacred nature comes individual and collective responsibility for nurturing and protecting it.”

Peace will come when we educate young people to pledge their loyalty not to the nation but to humanity. Dr. Krieger highly praised the Soka Gakkai youth’s petition drive in support of the Abolition 2000 campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons, not only because the youth collected 13 million signatures, but because the drive itself was an important lesson in being a global citizen. The collected signatures represent a unified chorus of 13 million people demanding: “Abolish nuclear weapons now!”

### **Sowing the Seeds of Peace, Hope and Courage**

During our meeting in Kanagawa in 1997, Dr. Krieger presented me with sunflower seeds, and at our meeting in Okinawa he and his wife wore sunflower badges on their clothing. Why sunflowers?

In June 1996, in celebration of Ukraine’s official completion of nuclear disarmament, the defense ministers from the United States, Russia and Ukraine planted sunflower seeds on land that had once been a nuclear missile base.<sup>7</sup> From that time on, sunflowers have been a symbol of the nuclear weapons abolition movement. They are a symbol of the struggle for life against nuclear weapons that represent death, and a symbol of hope for humanity to counter the mistrust fomented among people by nuclear weapons.

If one plants sunflower seeds, sunflowers will grow. If one plants the seeds of violence, putrid violence will grow. The fruit of peace can never grow from the seeds of violence. Increasing our military armaments will never bring peace. That is why we must sow the seeds of peace, the seeds of hope, and the seeds of courage infused with the conviction that we can change the world. We must sow seeds of vision that inspire the creation of a new society.

We will never give up. We will never give in. Peace is a contest between hope and resignation, a contest between powerlessness and the belief that you can succeed.

Whatever obstacles he encounters, Dr. Krieger always maintains a bright countenance. “I believe in people. I believe in humanity,” he says.

*Someday it will not be this way.  
Someday we will teach our children*

*that they must not kill,  
that they must have the courage*

*to live peace, to stand firmly  
for justice, to say no to war.*

*Until we teach our children peace,  
our ugly ritual of war will go on.*

(From *War Is Too Easy* by David Krieger)

1. On November 9, 1979, duty officers at NORAD (North American Air Defense Command) Headquarters, the SAC (Strategic Air Command) Command Post, the Pentagon National Military Command Center, and the Alternate National Military Command Center simultaneously received false alerts reporting a full-scale Soviet missile attack. For six minutes they carried out emergency preparations for retaliation, which included the launching of various aircraft, before identifying the source for the false alert: an exercise training tape running on the main computer system.
2. Alan F. Phillips, “20 Mishaps That Might Have Started Accidental Nuclear War,” [www.wagingpeace.org/articles/accidental.html](http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/accidental.html) (September 1, 2001).
3. Jonathan Schell, “The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons — Interview with Mikhail Gorbachev,” *The Nation*, February 2 & 9, 1998, double issue.
4. Dr. Krieger’s quotes in this article are from his dialogues with President Ikeda.
5. Stephen I. Schwartz et al., *Atomic Audit: The Costs and Consequences of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Since 1940* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1998).
6. Hazel Henderson, *Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995).
7. In June 1996, Ukraine shipped to Russia the last of 1,900 strategic nuclear warheads, completing a three-year process to give up the nuclear arsenal it inherited from the Soviet Union. The defense ministers of Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. (Pavel Grachev, Valery Shmarov, and William Perry, respectively) symbolically planted sunflower seeds at the site of a former Soviet missile silo to mark the achievement.