

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 27 SPEECH—PART 2 STRIVING ON A DAILY BASIS FOR ALL HUMANITY

‘We live in a world where many think only about themselves and forget those who are suffering,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Yet all of you are striving day in and day out for the sake of humanity and working for the welfare of society. This is why people the world over place their trust and confidence in you. This is why people the world over find hope for the new century in the SGI.’

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 4th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, March 27.

Let us now return to Italy and the city of heroes, Varallo. During World War II, its mayor, Giuseppe Osella, laid down his life in the struggle against fascism. Leaders must stand in the vanguard. They cannot wage a genuine struggle unless they do. They will not win the trust and confidence of others who would follow them.

The leaders of Italy’s partisan resistance also came from Varallo. And nameless heroes, ordinary men and women born and raised in this city, fought valiantly, resolutely for freedom, leaving behind an immortal history that is today known around the world.

It was the ordinary people who fought. It was the ordinary people who created a new age.

There is an episode that took place in the fall of 1944 — around the same time that first Soka Gakkai president Tsu-nesaburo Makiguchi died in prison, here in Sugamo, for his resolute stand against Japanese fascism. In the fierce resistance struggle that took place in Italy, a partisan from Varallo was captured by the brutal Nazi forces and executed without trial along with his comrades.

The man, who was in his 40s, wrote a letter to his family shortly before his death. This heartrending letter has been passed down through the family as a precious heirloom. The man writes to his wife and young daughters: “Don’t cry. Be proud of your husband and father. When I was 18, I spent 18 months in prison. Now at 41, I give my life for my ideals and my country’s freedom.”

He tells his family not to shed tears for him. Ready to go to his death, he asks them to be proud of him, for he is dying for the sake of his ideals and for freedom.

In the same letter, this hero also writes: “I say goodbye to you forever. But I will protect you from the world beyond... Stay in high spirits and uphold the great cause that I was prevented from achieving by the despicable Nazis and fascists.”

He tells his children that though not possible for him, he wants them to live long and see that justice is done. How lofty is the bond linking their lives!

Italy’s victories for justice and human rights were won through the repeated struggles of such uncrowned heroes who risked their lives for their beliefs.

Unless we fight evil and injustice, we cannot say we are working for good. The same applies to our struggle for kosen-rufu. Unless we defeat evil, we cannot realize kosen-rufu.

In Japan, corrupt, malicious forces band together to harass good, honest people. Driven by a cowardly, animal nature and narrow-mindedness, the Japanese ruling powers attacked Nichiren Daishonin, who was just and right. They also inflicted untold suffering on the citizens of China and Korea, countries to which Japan owes a huge cultural debt. It is the

Soka Gakkai that has fought head-on against the evils of Japanese nationalism.

The Soka Gakkai's history is one that has been pioneered by nameless ordinary people. You are all heroes of the people. Therefore I pray each day for your safety, health and longevity. I am also sending daimoku for the repose of our fellow members who have passed away.

I never forget those who have striven together with me for kosen-rufu. Even if I should forget their names, our lives are connected. Our life-to-life bonds are everlasting, spanning the three existences of past, present and future.

And those of you who have children, I hope that you will firmly pass on the spirit of kosen-rufu to them. When this noble spirit is passed on from parent to child, the continuous flow of kosen-rufu will be assured. I stress this for the sake of the future.

History can never change without an all-out struggle.

Dr. Aurelio Peccei, cofounder of the Club of Rome, with whom I published a dialogue, also fought against Italy's fascist regime and suffered imprisonment and torture. [Their dialogue, *Before It Is Too Late*, has been published in 17 languages.]

I have spoken with many intellectuals around the world, and those who strike me as truly impressive are usually those who have undergone persecution and imprisonment for championing the cause of justice. History cannot be made without selfless, all-out struggle.

I met Dr. Peccei several times — in Paris, in Florence and at the International Friendship Hall in Shibuya, Tokyo. He told me in detail about his heroic struggle against fascism. He talked for hours. I vividly recall how happy and relieved he seemed at having been able to leave a correct account of events for posterity.

After Dr. Peccei passed away, I met with his two sons, Roberto and Ricardo Peccei. I have fond memories of reminiscing with them about their father.

Speaking of Italy reminds me of the lecture I gave at the University of Bologna, one of the world's oldest universities, on June 1, 1994. I also visited Bologna City Hall on that occasion. I remember how its walls were adorned with the photographs and names of those who died in the partisan resistance struggle. Even then, many people continued to visit the city hall and lay wreaths of flowers in memory of their fallen heroes. I was deeply moved.

Life is a struggle. The lives of those who summon their courage when the crucial moment comes and fight resolutely for the sake of justice shine with indestructible triumph and glory.

On the proud front lines of our struggle, true revolutionaries stand with vigor and courage, burning with the passionate spirit of kosen-rufu. This is why we of the SGI are strong. This is why we are never defeated.

Those who live out their lives as true members of the SGI will enjoy great good fortune and benefit in lifetime after lifetime throughout eternity. Their noble names will resound far and wide throughout the universe. This is clear from the Goshō. It is the Daishōnin's promise.

Faith is the ultimate source of courage.

Where can we trace the Italian partisan movement's origins from? One of the movement's driving forces was the courage of mothers, the courage of women.

Vercelli Province, where the city of Varallo is located, is famous as one of Europe's largest rice-producing regions. In the past, there were many women rice workers, known as *mondine*, who worked in the paddy fields. Seeking to better the harsh conditions under which they toiled, the *mondine* waged a human rights struggle with courage and tenacity,

undaunted by persecution.

It is said that the signing of a contract in 1906 guaranteeing Italian workers an eight-hour workday was largely achieved as a result of the *mondine*'s efforts. The fighting spirit of the *mondine* also never wavered under fascist oppression.

They continued to press onward, singing as they went: "Although we are women, we have no fear. We have words, beautiful and good..." "Words, beautiful and good" refers to their voices, to the power of speech. The women workers fought by using their voices, by using speech.

Another song they sang went: "Prison, violence, nothing can stop me.... / If someone wants to make war, / all of us together will stop them. / We want peace on earth. / We will be stronger than any guns." Their courage is said to have spread like an underground stream—from heart to heart, life to life—until it gave rise to a great surging river of historic change.

"I am not afraid of anything! I will let nothing defeat me!"—those who have this inner strength are victors. The spirit of Italy's courageous women rice workers is mirrored by that of our SGI women.

We have faith. And faith is the ultimate source of courage. Let us bring the sun of courage to blaze in our hearts and use it to brighten our communities, our families and the lives of our fellow members.

Earlier this month, on March 3, the city of Varallo named me an honorary citizen at a ceremony held in the Palazzo D'Adda, one of the city's leading cultural landmarks. In his speech, Varallo's well-known mayor, Mr. Pier Angelo Pitto, said that people's spirit today has grown weak, and that they tend to leave issues like peace and human rights to others, such as the government or the bureaucracy. He deplored this development, saying that peace and human rights are issues that each of us must work for on a daily basis. In this regard, he said, he has great respect for my activities and those of the SGI for peace and human rights.

I have shared his thoughts with you today as an example of the support and understanding our earnest daily efforts are winning among leading figures around the globe.

We live in a world where many think only about themselves and forget those who are suffering. Yet all of you are striving day in and day out for the sake of humanity and working for the welfare of society. This is why people the world over place their trust and confidence in you. This is why people the world over find hope for the new century in the SGI.

The ground swell of international support for the SGI is now beginning to impact and change the perception of our organization in Japanese society. As the Daishonin writes: "The time will certainly come when, by the workings of Brahma, Shakra, and other gods, the entire Japanese nation will simultaneously take faith in the Lotus Sutra [the Mystic Law]. At that time, I am convinced, many people will insist that they too have believed since the very beginning" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 800). The times are dramatically changing, and the correct teachings of Buddhism will become widely sought after without fail. A tremendous opportunity now lies before us. As we ring in the next set of Seven Bells as exemplary global citizens of the 21st century, let us launch an even more powerful momentum to continue achieving victory after victory.

**If we fight against evil,
the forces working for good and for peace will spread.**

Petrarch is a famous 14th-century Italian poet laureate, whose work had a great

influence on the Renaissance. In denunciation of those who betrayed their homeland, he declares, “Against that kind — whom I would call wild animals rather than men — every severity is saintly, every mercy is inhumane.”

He calls to us: We must not condone traitors! They are animals! Fight rigorously against them!

Petrarch also says: “We have been born to do honorable labor. Why should we seek idleness? Many things, then, that may seem difficult on the first attempt become easier as we progress.”

Nothing happens unless we try. It may be hard at the outset, but if we keep persevering, the path will open up for us.

Emerson, the eminent American Renaissance thinker, says: “With [a friend], we are easily great.... How he flings wide the doors of existence!” When we meet with friends, talk with them and share our thoughts and feelings, our own hearts open wide, are broadened and enriched.

The other day, I received a precious photo from my friend Mrs. Sumi Yukawa, the widow of Japan’s first Nobel laureate, Dr. Hideki Yukawa. Showing Dr. Yukawa and other scientists talking with Albert Einstein, the photo is a treasure of the Yukawa family. It is a treasure of the entire world.

Sounding a warning against the dangers of nationalism, Einstein writes, “For the time being, our only satisfaction must come from the knowledge that the fight against evil will strengthen the forces working toward greater decency in society.” If we fight against evil, the forces working for good and for peace will spread. To shirk fighting against evil is cowardly and contemptible.

Mrs. Sumi Yukawa is 90 years old. She is still working for peace with youthful vitality and energy. [She is honorary president of the World Federalist Movement and president of the Japanese Women’s Conference on World Federation.]

Mrs. Yukawa says, “Possessing great hope is the secret to well-being.” There is no greater hope than world peace.

She also says: “World peace is not a subject that is remote from our daily lives. The wish of each one of us to be on good terms with our neighbors, to think about living not only for ourselves but to contribute to the welfare of others — these things lead to peace. This is where women have an important mission, I feel. We should not just stay in the house, as the word *housewife* implies, but instead go out and think widely about the world.” Indeed, we have now entered the age of women.

Mrs. Yukawa shares that her husband once said: “If you leave people to their own devices, they will quarrel. It takes hard work to be on good terms with others.” Neither peace nor solidarity can be achieved without unceasing effort.

Dr. Yukawa presented the following words to his junior high school alma mater: “We do not live alone in a vacuum. I would always like you to remember that we live together with many other people who are like us but are also very different from us. How can we enable all people, not just ourselves, to become happy? This is the most important question in life.” He says that ensuring that everyone becomes happy, not just ourselves, is the most important thing in life.

Dr. Yukawa’s motto was “Let each day be one step forward.” In the SGI, we have a similar philosophy — “Not advancing is regressing.” In accord with his motto, Dr. Yukawa led a life of continual advancement and growth.

I have introduced the words of Dr. and Mrs. Yukawa as an expression of my profound

appreciation for Mrs. Yukawa's generous gift to us of this historic photograph. [In the May 1, 2000, *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, Mrs. Yukawa said in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's inauguration of Soka Gakkai president: "Following the lead of President Toda, who advocated global citizenship, and President Ikeda, who is meeting with leading intellectuals around the world, the Soka Gakkai members are working energetically to pass on a safe, peaceful world to the next generation based on heart-to-heart dialogue." She also mentioned: "In order to carry out a momentous undertaking, it is not only important for the individuals leading it to have character and integrity, but for them to have people who will work at their sides and assist them. In that respect, as a woman, I find Mrs. Ikeda's behind-the-scenes support of her husband deeply moving."]

We are in the midst of the change of seasons, so please take care not to catch a cold. Please stay well, and look after yourselves. My most fervent hope is that all of you will lead the most wonderful lives, enjoying good health and longevity.

Thank you so much for today. I appreciate your traveling such long distances to be here.