

Paving the Way for the Victory of the People

SGI President gave the following address at the 15th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, in conjunction with the 7th Tohoku General Meeting and the 3rd Shizuoka General Meeting, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Sept. 25.

I have just received a certificate naming me an honorary citizen of the Province of Sorsogon in the Philippines. Gov. Juan G. Frivaldo, who traveled specially to Japan to make the presentation, once said, “Among all the governors of the Philippines, I am the oldest and the poorest, but I am proud to say that I am the one who listens most to the voice of the people and who has worked hardest for their happiness.”

Gov. Frivaldo, who enjoys the overwhelming support of the citizens in his province, will turn 82 this October. Since 1955, he has served eight terms as governor.

Gov. Frivaldo has held office continuously from 1955 to the present, with the exception of nine years spent in forced exile in the United States during the Marcos regime, which lasted from 1966–86.

Unselfish and Active Concern for People’s Welfare

Although Gov. Frivaldo has realized many important achievements for the people of his province during his terms in office, he has never built a house for himself. He says: “I don’t own a home in Manila or in Sorsogon or in my hometown. My only home is the palm-thatched hut of my parents.”

Gov. Frivaldo’s numerous accomplishments include constructing a hydroelectric plant and an irrigation dam, establishing a tuberculosis sanatorium, completing a state dairy combine, improving the condition of national parks in Sorsogon Province and laying a network of paved roads.

Gov. Frivaldo is down-to-earth and unpretentious. He is a rare politician and deserves to be commended most highly. He always makes a point of meeting with people one to one. “I go on my own two feet to visit and talk with the needy and disadvantaged,” he says. He is steadfastly committed to the important work of grass-roots dialogue.

For a politician to actually make the effort to go out and meet individually with residents living in his or her constituency in this age of television and mass communications might sound extremely old-fashioned. Compared to the ease of presenting the public with a slick screen image, such laborious footwork might seem tedious and ineffectual. But Gov. Frivaldo says that long experience has shown him that his hands-on approach is actually the most practical and effective method of communication. And, indeed, through his patient efforts to go from house to house, Gov. Frivaldo has won the great support and trust of residents in his province.

So highly regarded is he, in fact, that one resident even proudly declared, “We will always vote for Frivaldo, even if he is dead.”

The governor has twice been the target of assassination attempts. After the first attempt in 1971, during which he sustained a gunshot wound to the leg, he was offered shelter by a family who declared themselves ready to protect him from the assassins even if it meant

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risking their lives.

I have constantly stressed how important it is for leaders to personally go to the front line of activities, to see things for themselves, to meet with people. Wherever leaders have done so, there has been tremendous growth. Where leaders have grown arrogant and failed to make such personal efforts, however, there has only been stagnation.

Champion of Justice and Liberty

Moving along to South America, my dialogue with the philosopher-statesman Patricio Aylwin, the former president of the Republic of Chile, is now nearly completed and ready for publication.¹

Today [Sept. 25], incidentally, is the centennial of the signing of Japan's first treaty of friendship with Chile, our neighbor across the Pacific. I am delighted that Mr. Aylwin and I can mark this deeply significant anniversary with steady progress on our upcoming book, the crystallization of our heartfelt friendship.

In recognition of his contributions to world peace and efforts to foster friendship between Chile and Japan, the South American republic has to date presented President Ikeda with the Order of Merit of Chile in the Grade of the Grand Cross, and Santiago, the Chilean capital, has honored him as an Illustrious Visitor.

For 16 years from 1973, the people of Chile lived under a cruel and repressive military dictatorship. Some 2,500 people are said to have been murdered by the state on false charges. A thousand people simply "disappeared" and were never seen again. As many as 170,000 people were unjustly arrested and detained by the authorities, while some 300,000 people were forced into exile. What a tragic history!

There isn't anyone who can say with certainty that Japan will not one day veer off in this same direction. Any such ominous flow toward nationalism must be stopped at the source while it is still only a trickle.

Mr. Aylwin was a key figure in efforts to oust Chile's dreaded military regime and bring about the country's democratization through peaceful channels. With all objectivity, we can say that his outstanding leadership has had a profound impact on the course of human history.

In the foreword to our dialogue, I have written:

I respect those who have struggled against tyranny. And I particularly respect the path in life chosen by one such courageous individual, Patricio Aylwin, a reformer who from his youth has championed the causes of justice and liberty.

There are many people who live ordinary and conscientious lives untouched by storms of hardship. While such an existence is noble in its own right, it is those who fight for justice at the risk of their lives to create a better society, a better future, a better way forward, whom I respect most highly and for whom I feel the deepest understanding.

A Clamor for Freedom

During our discussions, Mr. Aylwin recounted many precious, little-known episodes about Chile's recent past.

For example, in 1983, the Chilean people embarked on a very original way of protesting against the authoritarian regime. Any street demonstration or protest gathering was dispersed quickly and ruthlessly by the authorities, and participants were summarily

arrested. People lived with the constant menace of government repression. Nevertheless, on a prearranged day at dusk, they stood in doorways, courtyards or at windows and started beating on pots and pans and other metallic objects as hard as they could, raising a tremendous din that lasted from 30 minutes to an hour. By sending out the clamorous sound of metal ringing through the city as evening settled, they sought to give voice to their anger.

This is an example of wisdom — the wisdom of the people. Such wisdom is needed to win.

We, too, have to make ourselves heard. We have to speak out for what we believe in. When we, the people, boldly state our true convictions — never losing our optimism or sense of humor — the times will change. When it comes to speaking out for justice, there isn't any need for restraint. On the contrary, to be reserved or hesitant under such circumstances is wrong.

The participants in this first attempt to sound the bell of protest were relatively few. But the next time, several days later, when they again made their evening din, many more took part.

These efforts were a small courageous step forward that rose from the wisdom, courage and unity of the people.

Despite various setbacks, the popular will for change continued to grow stronger until in 1988 there came the day that the world will long remember: In a national ballot, the people of Chile overwhelmingly rejected the military government. "No more tyranny!" they declared.

It was a brilliant victory of the people.

Ingenuity and Resourcefulness

A question we must constantly ponder as SGI leaders is how we can generate fresh energy and momentum for *kosen-rufu*. That is our responsibility as leaders, and wisdom is essential for this task. Ingenuity and resourcefulness are important hallmarks of a leader. To simply go about activities — whether it be meetings or some other challenge — in the same old way, out of force of habit or laziness, is a disservice to everyone. There is no sense of freshness, and all progress grinds to a halt.

Currently, Japan and the world remain unable to formulate a bright vision for the 21st century. What is necessary for us to realize fresh progress and unleash new energy? The first step must be to take action ourselves; to begin something ourselves; to create some kind of drama. That is the only way. And those who take the initiative will be victorious.

The philosophy and approach to life expressed by Mr. Aylwin throughout our dialogue are most admirable and worth dwelling on. At one point, he says: "What is the purpose of life? My answer to this question is very clear. We don't exist to be served but to be of service to others." He's right on the mark. Leaders exist to serve the people. When people are made to serve the leaders instead, society is plunged into misfortune. The former Chilean president also says: "I think I can say I have always viewed life as work ahead, as a constant challenge to fulfill my vocation. For me, this vocation can be summed up by the word *justice*."

"Always set your sights on the future," President Toda would tell us repeatedly. "Life means eternal challenge. It is a never-ending struggle." Final victory, therefore, is true victory.

What is one of the most important qualities of a leader? According to Mr. Aylwin, it is to always be truthful. This attests to Mr. Aylwin's greatness. He cannot abide lies or deception. During the military dictatorship, he worked tirelessly to expose the human rights

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abuses of the authorities, who used the state-run media to cover up their actions with lies. And he succeeded in bringing the truth out into the light of day.

Mr. Aylwin declares: “Where lies reign, there is no peaceful coexistence — be it in the home, in a country, or the international community. Lies breed mistrust.... Mistrust breeds hatred, and hatred engenders violence.” He observes that lies are an “anteroom to violence” and stresses that the “reign of truth” is the foundation of democratic coexistence.

Refuse To Tolerate Tyranny

Mr. Aylwin has expressed concern over the consequences of any resurgence of Japanese nationalism. He is also aware of Japanese intellectuals’ sad tendency to remain silent in the face of the bullying and high-handedness of those in power. Even among Japanese who appear critical of such abuses, hardly anyone dares speak out to the point where it might place them under fire themselves. That is cowardice. As a result, many ordinary, unsuspecting people are led astray and victimized by those in power.

Mr. Aylwin says he fears what might happen if Japan’s leaders were to embark on a course like the one that led to the unfortunate militarism of times past. For this reason, he has repeatedly expressed to me his profound trust in the Soka Gakkai, a body of people united for justice and truth. Please remember that there are outstanding intellectuals and leaders such as Mr. Aylwin in the world.

In our dialogue, we have discussed a wide range of topics, including the future development of the Pacific region and the post–Cold War world order. We have also exchanged views on such subjects as education, human rights, the environment and our expectations for today’s youth. Both Mr. Aylwin and I have worked earnestly on this dialogue in the hope that it might provide some direction or useful guidelines for the 21st century and future generations.

Say What Needs To Be Said

I warmly welcome the members who have joined us here today from some 20 countries, including such distant places as Brazil and Italy! I know many of you must have worked hard and saved so that you could realize this visit. Each of you is infinitely noble.

Yet here in this tiny country of Japan, or even within a small community, there are those who will moan and complain about the “long distance” they have to travel to get to a meeting! One cannot carry out Buddhist practice with such an attitude. In fact, by complaining, such people only destroy their good fortune. Buddhist practice means taking action. We will be victorious only to the extent that we exert ourselves.

The first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, declared that one of the most important factors in the Soka Gakkai’s development is that “we propagate the Daishonin’s teaching by speaking out forthrightly, saying what needs to be said.” When something needs saying, it is our duty to speak out. When something is right, we should say so. And when something is wrong or mistaken, we should likewise point it out. Cheating, lies or scheming should be denounced with alacrity. It is precisely because we have done this that the Soka Gakkai and the SGI have developed to the extent they have.

To say what must be said — that is the spirit of propagation and the essence of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI.

Victory Depends on the Power of Youth

This is the era of youth. Youth do not depend on anyone. Nor do they hang on someone else’s coattails. “I will open the way myself. I will advance kosen-rufu. I will see to it that

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the SGI is victorious.” This is the spirit of youth and the attitude of true successors who love and cherish the SGI.

In the early days of my Buddhist practice, I found that I just could not bring myself to like the Soka Gakkai as the organization then was. Many leaders behaved in an arrogant, authoritarian manner. I felt strong dislike for those leaders who not only neglected to practice earnestly themselves but failed to support or treat with respect those who were younger than them in faith. I could only conclude that these people utterly failed to understand President Toda’s spirit.

President Toda knew how I felt. At one point he asked me, “If that’s how you feel, Daisaku, why don’t you make the Soka Gakkai into an organization that really appeals to you?” His advice was perfectly clear.

I fully exerted myself just as he directed. Because I had a strong sense of responsibility, I would occasionally come into conflict with people who had been longer in the organization or had longer experience in life than I. A young person should have such earnestness. Therefore, I call on the youth of the SGI: “Advance! Surpass your seniors! Accomplish kosen-rufu!”

Journeying for Peace Around the Globe

At present, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper, the *Seikyo Shimbun*, is featuring a second collection of essays I have written about my meetings with leaders in various fields around the globe.

The subject of the next installment will be former Japanese prime minister and Nobel laureate Eisaku Sato (1901–75). In the installment after that, I hope to offer a more complete and detailed portrait of my friendship with former Chinese premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) than I have chronicled to date. That essay will conclude this second collection. I have, however, made a determination to embark on writing a third collection of essays in this series next year.

At this stage, I am contemplating doing pieces on the late Deng Xiaoping (1902–97), President Jiang Zemin and the late Communist Party Secretary Hu Yaobang (1915–89) of the People’s Republic of China. I also want to write about His Majesty King Azlan Shah of Malaysia; President Kocheril R. Narayanan of India; former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali; President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana; former President and Nobel Peace Prize-recipient Oscar Arias Sánchez of Costa Rica; President Carlos Saul Menem of Argentina; Brazilian poet Amedeu Thiago de Mello; Kyrgyz author Chingiz Aitmatov; former President Virgilio Barco of Colombia; President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle of Chile; former President Lech Walesa of Poland; former President François Mitterrand of France; and many more of the finest leaders of contemporary times.

As a private citizen, an ordinary person, I have actively pursued dialogue with world leaders. My sole reason for holding candid discussions and forming friendships with such people has been a fervent wish to move the world in the direction of peace, toward the creation of a truly humane society. Many people around the world have observed my actions impartially and have extended their understanding and recognition.

Cut the Roots of Evil

In the Gosho, Nichiren Daishonin comments on the nature of the Japanese nation. He writes: “According to the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha had enabled everyone to attain enlightenment by teaching the *Juryo* [Life Span] chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Yet, alas, when he illuminated the 136 hells underground, instead of finding them empty, he saw that the slanderers of Buddhism who were people of incorrigible disbelief were still being confined

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there by the guards of hell. They proliferated until they became the people of Japan today” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 38). He also says, “If those priests who abuse me, Nichiren, should pray for the peace of the country, they will only hasten the nation’s ruin” (MW-3, 74).

Hence, it is absolutely essential to cut evil off at the root.

The Daishonin instructs his disciples: “Nichiren’s disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly” (MW-4, 128) and “Do not expect good times, but take the bad times for granted” (MW-1, 242). He also tells us, “One should regard meeting obstacles as true peace and comfort” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750).

If we correctly practice the Lotus Sutra, just as the Daishonin teaches, difficulties are sure to arise. The very appearance of obstacles, however, is proof that we are genuine practitioners. In the modern age, the successive presidents of the Soka Gakkai have borne the full brunt of persecution for the sake of Buddhism.

I hope that each of you, too, will advance with the strong conviction that “many evil forces are vanquished by a single great truth” (MW-1, 154) and that “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion” (MW-1, 119).

Become Strong!

It has been decided that the Soka Gakkai’s theme for next year will be the Year of the Victory of the People for the New Century.

President Toda once said gravely: “Nothing is more frightening than human jealousy. Nothing is more fearful than the evil and destructive forces that reside in the human heart. Therefore, develop and forge yourselves! Develop strong personal convictions so that you can live without any regrets.” I sensed he wished to have this thought passed on for posterity.

The more tumultuous the times, the more important it is that each person develop greater ability and strength. Then each person will be victorious, and all collectively will triumph. That is the principle of the victory of the people.

Let’s continue to bring forth the wonderful inner strength and energy of the SGI as we set our sights on the 21st century! Let us advance cheerfully and joyously!

Friends throughout the country and the world, please take care to stay well at this time of seasonal change. I look forward to seeing all of you again in high spirits and excellent health. Thank you!

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1. The dialogue is scheduled for publication only in Japanese at this time.