

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
The First Step in Global Peace
By HO GOKU

On Jan. 8, the first volume of *The New Human Revolution* was published [in Japanese], and it has received a very warm response, for which I am both appreciative and humbled. With profound gratitude to all his readers, Ho Goku is determined to keep writing with all his heart and being.



This volume describes my first overseas visit, which took place in October 1960. Today, some 16 million Japanese travel overseas every year, but back then there were severe restrictions on international travel, and it was relatively rare. According to official government statistics, in 1960 only 76,214 Japanese traveled overseas — excluding trips to Okinawa, which was then under United States administration.

I remember that when we applied for travel documentation, the officials seemed to be wondering what on earth the Soka Gakkai would want to do overseas.



On the morning of Oct. 2, Shin'ichi Yamamoto set off by taxi for Haneda Airport from his modest little home in Ota Ward. He waved good-bye cheerfully to those who came to see him off and said, "I am taking the first step toward world kosen-rufu." He sincerely hoped that fellow Bodhisattvas of the Earth would continue after him and his party, taking subsequent steps.

Several days later on Oct. 5, the headline of the *Seikyo Shimbun* boldly proclaimed "The First Step Toward Worldwide Kosen-rufu!" This was the first time that the words *worldwide kosen-rufu* appeared in the paper's front-page headlines. Although it was a theme that was constantly spoken of, for some reason the editors were still hesitant to run it as a heading. The fact was, many people could not yet really conceive of our movement spreading around the world. The world outside Japan seemed very distant from their daily lives and concerns.



At 29, Shin'ichi wrote in his diary, "Sometimes I am gripped by the desire to cross the seas, fly through the air, and begin kosen-rufu overseas without delay."

And finally that eagerly awaited moment to soar beyond Japan had come — the time to fulfill his vow to realize the call of his beloved mentor, Josei Toda, to take the Soka Gakkai's message to the world.

When he left Japan that day, Shin'ichi carried a photograph of President Toda in his breast pocket. It was a journey in pursuit of peace, the crystallization of the indivisible aspiration of mentor and disciple.



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From start to finish, it was a new experience for all of us. There were many surprises and crises. Neither I nor my companions on the trip spoke English well. In those days, to make a long-distance telephone call, one would dial the operator and ask, “Could you give me — ?” But none of us could master that short phrase clearly enough for an operator to understand.

Finally, Yasu Kashiwabara, Soka Gakkai women’s division chief at the time, shouted out in joy: “I got through! I got through! You just have to say ‘Kujukuri’ before the telephone number!” (Kujukuri is the name of a well-known beach in Chiba, Japan, and apparently it was close enough in sound to “Could you give me — ?” to work.)

We also strove to save as much money as possible on our food, so that whatever funds we had could be put toward meeting with the members in each city we visited. Wherever we went, President Akiya — at that time, Soka Gakkai youth division chief — would find a Chinese restaurant for us where the food was cheap but nutritious and filling. We were all impressed with his keen “scouting” ability.

Looking back, those times have become wonderful golden memories.



A 24-day trip visiting nine cities in three countries. Nearly 25,000 miles traveled — enough to circle the globe.

Shin’ichi would gladly go to the ends of the earth, no effort too great or demanding, if it were to visit and encourage even one fellow member.

Shin’ichi was confident that, just as a river grows from one small spring, a mighty river for peace could grow from each such individual.



Since then, 38 years have come and gone. The seeds of the Mystic Law have spread to 128 nations and regions around the world, taken root and blossomed.

Signing the attendance book at the meeting in Guam at which the SGI was formally inaugurated on Jan. 26, 1975, Shin’ichi wrote as his nationality “World.”

Shin’ichi holds high the banner of global citizenship passed to him by President Toda. There are no borders in his heart.



Our steps ring out with even greater vigor as we of the SGI stride confidently toward world peace, working to bring humanity closer together and scaling the mountain peak to the 21st century.

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