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‘The Flower of Culture’
By HO GOKU

Festivals of Youth continued to be held around the country. On Sept. 10, a youth division judo and kendo contest, the second of its kind, was held at the Tokyo Gymnasium, and on Sept. 12, a swim meet was held at the Meiji Jingu Pool in central Tokyo. Shin’ichi Yamamoto attended each event, cheering on the youthful contenders with all his might.

On Sept. 16, he attended the Kyushu area sports meet at Suizenji Athletic Stadium in Kumamoto City, and the next day participated in a guidance meeting with leaders in neighboring Oita Prefecture. The climax of all the Gakkai’s regional sporting events was the Tokyo athletic meet, held on Sept. 22 at the Mitsuzawa Athletic Stadium in Yokohama. In addition to the track and field events, dance performances and group calisthenics of previous years, team sports such as volleyball, tennis, basketball and soccer had been added, making for a much more diverse program.

On Sept. 23, the day after the Tokyo athletic meet, an all-Japan Soka Gakkai athletic meet was held at the same venue. Teams representing each local Gakkai headquarters around Japan competed with great energy in the sporting events, and the young men’s division put on an especially lively showing in a game of Topple the Pole. Among the participants were several overseas members residing in Japan, giving the occasion the flavor of a sort of Soka Gakkai Olympics.

The meet also included such events as a group gymnastics performance by the young men’s division, a dance by the young women’s and women’s divisions, a parade of the Brass Band and Fife and Drum Corps, choral singing and folk dancing representing various regions of Japan. All in all it made for a brilliant opportunity to demonstrate the beauty of unity created through the faith and joy of ordinary people.

At the time, Japan was preparing to host the Olympic Games in Tokyo two years hence [1964], and the construction of stadiums and related facilities, as well as roads and highways, was proceeding at a fever pitch. The true spirit of the Olympics was to promote world peace and cooperation through sports competition, but in the past the Games had been exploited for nationalistic purposes far removed from the founders’ ideals. The example of the Berlin Olympics, which Hitler had used to try to showcase the ascendancy of the Third Reich, is famous. And since World War II, the Games had often become a contest between the major powers, who battled to collect the most Olympic gold medals as a matter of national prestige.

In contrast, the Soka Gakkai athletic meets were festivals in which young men and women celebrated their own strength and enthusiasm. These youth had awakened to their mission of building world peace and, determined to realize the global citizenship articulated by Josei Toda, they worked hard day and night to bring fresh vitality to people’s lives. They needed and they deserved an opportunity to celebrate and express their joy and sense of mission, and that was the purpose of these outdoor events. The Soka Gakkai sports meets may have been small in scale, but they were the purest expression of the Olympic spirit — of the hope for world peace.

Five years earlier, on Sept. 8, 1957, Mr. Toda had made his Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons at this same stadium on the occasion of the Soka Gakkai’s 4th East Japan Athletic Meet.

On that day, Mr. Toda declared that people all over the world possess the right to life, and any force that threatens that right is demonic, satanic and monstrous. He proclaimed: “Even

if a country should conquer the world through the use of nuclear weapons, the conquerors must be viewed as devils; as evil incarnate. I believe that it is the mission of every member of the youth division in Japan to disseminate this idea throughout the globe.” This was the foremost lesson that Mr. Toda had bequeathed to the youth of the Soka Gakkai, and Shin’ichi was firmly determined to devote his life to making it come true. He continued to think long and hard about what practical steps were needed.

The sporting events at the 4th All-Japan Youth Division Athletic Meet on the 23rd were over by 1:15 p.m., after which the awards ceremony got under way. When the awards had all been presented, Shin’ichi rose and addressed the gathering in a warm and strong voice: “I am very happy, as I know all of you are, that we have held such a lively and enjoyable national athletics meet here at Mitsuzawa Athletic Stadium, where our beloved late president, Mr. Josei Toda, made his Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. Thank you all for making today such a brilliant success.

“How should we, the disciples of Mr. Toda, realize the ideals set forth in his Declaration? I will mention some key points. The first, naturally, is that Nichiren Daishonin’s great life philosophy, teaching as it does the nobility and supreme value of life and the oneness of life’s spiritual and physical aspects, is the philosophy that can make the abolition of nuclear weapons a reality.

“I am convinced that the only essential way to rid our world of nuclear arms is by making the ideals and principles of the Daishonin’s Buddhism known throughout the world. I declare here and now that the elimination of nuclear weapons will only become possible when a citadel of peace is built in the heart of every single individual, when each person is committed to the principle of the dignity and sanctity of life.

“The second point has to do with the kind of movement that is necessary to achieve that transformation in each individual. We saw how opposing factions of the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs caused an uproar at the 8th World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs held in Tokyo recently. We cannot look to such politicized groups to bring an end to the use of nuclear weaponry. What is needed is a movement that transcends ideology and politics and concentrates on the individual, trying to awaken and change individuals at the most profound level of life itself.

“So although spreading the teachings of humanism through one-on-one dialogue may seem like a circuitous route, sharing the philosophy of Buddhism with others is in fact the most meaningful action we can take toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.”

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