

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 3 MESSAGE FORGETTING IS THE EASY WAY OUT

**In this message to a recent leaders conference, the SGI president talks about Dr. Simon Wiesenthal, survivor of the Nazi concentration camps and world-famous Nazi hunter. Dr. Wiesenthal says that forgetting is the easy way out, and President Ikeda echoes his message. Explaining that Dr. Wiesenthal sees his true enemy as humanity's inclination to forget past injustice, President Ikeda emphasizes how important in kosen-rufu it is to never stop fighting for justice — to never forget justice.**

Thank you for gathering for this prefecture leaders conference. First, I want to quote a passage from Nichiren Daishonin: "If a boat is handled by an unskilled steersman, it may capsize and drown everyone aboard. Likewise, even if someone has great physical strength, if he lacks a resolute spirit, he cannot give full play to his abilities. In this country, there are many wise persons, but they cannot utilize their wisdom because they are governed by foolish leaders" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 198).

Leaders have an important responsibility. They are the motivating force that makes things happen. They are the heart of a movement. Everything depends upon them. Whether people's potential is given full play or wasted, whether opportunities are taken or lost — it all depends upon the leaders.

I hope that you will be wise, courageous leaders.

From Jan. 26, an exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of my appeal for the restoration of diplomatic relations between China and Japan is being held at the Soka Gakkai Toda Peace Memorial Hall in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan.

*The exhibition, which will run through April 18, commemorates the 30th anniversary of President Ikeda's Sept. 8, 1968, call for the normalization of relations between China and Japan. Based on his belief that "world peace is not possible without friendly China-Japan relations," he suggested several practical ideas to be put into action, thus opening the way, which had been blocked for so long, to restoring diplomatic ties between the two nations. His appeal is highly regarded in China and known as "The 1968 Proposal."*

The friendly relations that exist today between China and Japan are the result of the efforts of many, many ordinary people working together at the grass roots.

Among the items on display at this exhibition are Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's ivory paper knife, given to me by his wife, Deng Yingchao, and her own beloved jade pen holder, which she presented to me.

A very important essay that Deng Yingchao, "mother of the Chinese people," wrote in April 1988 at age 84, has recently been made public for the first time. It is a recollection in the form of a letter to her late husband Zhou Enlai, who had died 12 years earlier. Madame Deng reminisces about their life together, a life devoted to a shared cause. I want to introduce a portion of this essay today.

*Madame Deng recalls the time before she married Zhou Enlai, when she was about 20.*

*Zhou was a foreign student in Paris, and she was a teacher at a girls school in Tianjin, as well as a leader of a youth group that she, Zhou and others had formed.*

“Following the elimination of the Gang of Four,” she writes, “flowers of reform and openness are blossoming in our nation today, growing more beautiful, large and sturdy with each passing day. Rich fruit is appearing, making our nation prosperous and bringing happiness to our people.

“Do you still remember, oh so long ago, the letters that passed between us?” she asks. “They flew across the Eurasian continent, across the seas, from the famed city of Paris to Tianjin on Bohai Bay. I was always so grateful when the messenger in the green uniform (the mail carrier) would place one of your letters in my hand.

“Once, quite unexpectedly,” she goes on, “I received a postcard bearing the image of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg that you sent. On the postcard you wrote a heroic revolutionary’s pledge: ‘It is my wish that we might someday, like these two, mount the steps to the execution block together.’

Karl Liebknecht was a German revolutionary who opposed militarism, and Rosa Luxemburg was also an antiwar revolutionary, of whom I have spoken many times in my speeches. Liebknecht and Luxemburg fought as comrades, went to prison for their cause and were both killed by counterrevolutionary forces in January 1919.

The youthful Zhou Enlai called out to Deng Yingchao: Like Liebknecht and Luxemburg, let us give our lives to the revolution!

What a proud, noble vow of youth this was!

Madame Deng continues: “When we took our oath [to join the revolutionary movement], we made a firm resolve to die willingly for the revolution; we did not balk at shedding our blood and laying down our lives....

“Over long decades,” she writes, “we devoted ourselves to the revolution, we lived through untold dangers, faced privations and hardships, went through thick and thin together, shared grief and joy. Sometimes we fought side by side, sometimes far apart, but always without fear or thoughts of self-interest. In our life dedicated to the revolution, we have always fought with unswerving purpose, with perfect composure and calm.

“All through these many decades, our love never waned,” she states. “The advance of the revolution, the progress of construction [of the New China] is certain to be infinitely bright and glorious.”

These are the words that Madame Deng left us. She and Premier Zhou lived their life together as fellow soldiers, as comrades in arms. They cared nothing for fame or profit.

It is noble to be a true comrade. True comrades never betray one another.

When I think back to my own wedding, President Toda didn’t offer my wife and me the usual sort of wedding congratulations. He said just one thing: “I want the two of you to work together and strive unceasingly for kosen-rufu!”

Revolution demands selfless commitment: Those who devote their lives — with this spirit — to a just, noble cause have no regrets.

**We of the SGI value and respect each and every individual to the highest degree.**

Soon, spring will be here. A new cemetery, the Okinawa Peace Commemoration Memorial Park, was recently completed. Where it is located is famous as the first place in

Japan where the cherry blossoms bloom each spring. I hear that the cherry blossoms are now in full bloom there.

In April last year, we held the 20th annual Zhou Enlai Cherry Tree Viewing Celebration at Soka University in Hachioji. Close to a thousand guests attended this special event. Yuichi Hayashi, who made a tremendous contribution to friendly China–Japan relations, was among them. A former diplomat, he served as minister at the new Japanese embassy in China after diplomatic ties were restored. He has spoken with great feeling of his encounters with Zhou Enlai [in an interview in *The Japan–China Monthly*].

From spring 1973, the leaders of various African states began to make official visits to China. Mr. Hayashi said that Premier Zhou always went out of his way to treat the representatives of these nations, which still had only a small international presence, with great respect and courtesy. The premier was already quite ill, yet when it came time for these African guests to leave, even in the depths of the harsh Beijing winter, he always accompanied them to the airport and cordially saw them off, remaining until their planes disappeared into the sky.

He was not simply following empty formality. No, he was always thinking about how to be more considerate, more welcoming, more sincere in his dealings with others. Through these painstaking efforts, Premier Zhou contributed to the construction of the New China, making friends and allies of his visitors.

In addition, he always made certain that his young successors were with him when he was engaged in diplomacy. He used those opportunities to teach them the art of diplomacy through his own example, showing them how to win people’s hearts with sincerity, personal integrity and finely tuned courtesy and consideration.

Kosen-rufu is a movement of unsurpassed humanism, a movement that values and respects each and every individual to the highest degree. We must always strive to exert utmost concern and consideration for others and always think what we can do to be of service and assistance to others. We must act with such sincerity and integrity that people are moved — and astonished — by our example. This is the very life of the SGI.

I want to quote another passage from the Daishonin: “If mentor and disciple pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as trying to kindle a fire on water.”

Being in rhythm is very important in the mentor–disciple relationship. This is also true in sports: A team can’t win unless its members are in rhythm, united in purpose. This accords with reason.

And how much more this applies to Buddhism, the realm of many in body, one in mind! A person out of rhythm with everyone else, a person who destroys the beautiful atmosphere of camaraderie and shared purpose, commits an offense tantamount to disrupting the unity of the *sangha*, the community of believers — a grave offense in Buddhism.

## **Unless evil is removed at its roots, it will come back again and again in the future.**

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles is an organization dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. The center invited me to speak at its Museum of Tolerance [in June 1996] about Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai’s founder, and how he laid down his life for his beliefs in the struggle against Japanese militarism. Recently, representatives of the center visited Japan in connection with the exhibition “The Courage to Remember: Anne Frank and the Holocaust” [cosponsored by the Simon

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Wiesenthal Center, Soka University and the Soka Gakkai, continuing an extensive tour of Japan].

The center is named after Dr. Simon Wiesenthal, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. Dr. Wiesenthal, who is now 90, lives in Vienna, where he continues his crusade against the evil committed by the Nazis. His reputation as a Nazi hunter strikes fear into those he pursues. To date, Dr. Wiesenthal has discovered and brought to justice some 12,000 Nazi fugitives.

His struggle has led to an international consensus that the Nazis' acts must never be forgiven. Due to his efforts, former Nazis who remain at large are unable to sleep peacefully, living in constant fear of exposure.

No matter where they have hidden, Dr. Wiesenthal has ferreted them out. He has left no stone unturned in his search, painstakingly gathering and analyzing information from all over the world and conceiving of every possible means to hunt them down, and bring them to justice.

In these unremitting efforts, he has had no support from any public or government institution. He has remained a private citizen, and his efforts have been supported by the contributions of other private citizens.

His enemies have thrown up roadblocks in his path, threatened his life and spread foul rumors about him. He has received awards and honorary doctorates from places across the globe but has been a target of criticism at home.

Dr. Wiesenthal says that his true enemy, the thing he has been fighting for decades, is people's inclination to forget the past. As the years went by, even those who had burned with anger at the Nazis after the war began to think that maybe "enough is enough." Even some of the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, he says, declared that they just wanted to forget about those terrible times.

There had even been moves to establish a statute of limitations on claims against ex-Nazis, and such a statute had come within a hairsbreadth of being made law. But Dr. Wiesenthal has always insisted that there can be no statute of limitations on our moral obligations, no statute of limitations on realizing justice.

*Through Dr. Wiesenthal's activities, Germany and Austria have abolished their statutes of limitations on murder and accessory to murder.*

Dr. Wiesenthal believes that unless evil is completely removed at its roots, the tragedy it can spawn will be repeated in the future. Will we permit that? The Nazis murdered 6 million Jews. Dr. Wiesenthal himself was transferred from concentration camp to concentration camp, and he only survived by a miracle. He feels it is his duty as a survivor to continue fighting, to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

While on a totally different plane, we must remember that the sincerity of some 10 million Soka Gakkai members has been trampled on by scheming, self-serving priests and corrupt ex-Clean Government Party (Jpn Komeito) politicians. How hard all those Gakkai members worked to support those priests and politicians!

There were even people who lost their lives in tragic accidents while campaigning for Clean Government candidates. They are martyrs. Their sacrifice alone makes it impossible for us to accept the betrayal of trust committed by those self-seeking former representatives. Nor can we ever forgive those corrupt priests who have inflicted suffering on our members.

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Dr. Wiesenthal says that forgetting is the easy way out. He imagines himself and his fellow survivors of the Nazi concentration camps going to heaven after they die and being greeted by their comrades who did not survive. They will no doubt congratulate us, he says, for having escaped their terrible fate and ask us what we have done with the wonderful gift of those extra years of life we enjoyed. One person might reply that he had been successful as a merchant, another as a lawyer, another as a teacher. But Dr. Wiesenthal declares that he wants to report, "I have never forgotten you."

In Japan today, we see a growing pressure to forget the tragedy of the World War II, to bury Japan's past history of aggression against its Asian neighbors. This is an extremely dangerous trend. It is crucial that we take a stand and fight against it.

Dr. Wiesenthal is often criticized for his relentless pursuit of Nazi war criminals. People say that he should drop it and stop obsessing about it. They say that going after individuals is going too far.

But these criticisms don't stop him. His answer is simple: He is not looking for personal revenge, only justice. If people who have committed such evil acts are allowed to lead easy lives, can justice be said to exist in this world? The very foundation of social justice would collapse. Dr. Wiesenthal believes that evil cannot be ignored, if we are to restore our faith in humanity.

### **For justice to triumph, we must thoroughly, persistently defend it.**

And if we are to realize kosen-rufu, it is essential that we thoroughly repudiate those individuals who have turned against the Daishonin and the SGI members. The Japanese practice of overlooking differences or putting them aside may seem compassionate, but really, it is only a lack of anger at evil — a moral weakness. Soft-pedaling moral questions is the beginning of moral collapse.

Neither the Daishonin nor his direct successor, Nikko Shonin, would accept even the slightest evil. Buddhism is not a teaching of sentimentality; it is a fierce struggle for justice and truth.

Mr. Toda often used to laugh that the Daishonin could be more scathing than anyone. The Dai-shonin publicly denounced Ryokan of Gokuraki-ji temple, a highly respected priest of the day, likening him to "a mosquito, a gadfly or a toad," and justified his words by saying that Shakyamuni says similar things in the sutras.

*In the "Letter of Petition from Yorimoto," in which the Dai-shonin writes on behalf of Shijo Kingo (also known as Yorimoto), he declares, "Even if I, Yorimoto, should compare Priest Ryokan to a mosquito, a gadfly or a toad, because such assertions are clearly based on the sutras, you would have no reason to find fault with me" (MW-5, 231).*

Nikko Shonin never forgave the five senior priests, who turned their backs on the Daishonin's teachings. Forty years after leaving these slanderous priests and Mount Minobu behind, Nikko Shonin had one of his disciples write the treatise "On Refuting the Five Priests."

In the "26 Admonitions of Nikko," written shortly before his death, Nikko Shonin also strictly refutes the legitimacy of the five renegade priests, stating, "The doctrines of the five senior priests differ in every regard from the teachings of the late mentor [the

Daishonin]” (Article 2; *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1617). To the very end, he never let up in his repudiation of these aberrant priests.

For justice to triumph, we must be thorough and persistent in our defense of it. A half-hearted struggle only makes those who would subvert justice happy.

**If an organization is to grow and change, its leaders must first of all grow and change themselves.**

I want to cite another famous passage from the Daishonin’s writings: “If a commanding general is fainthearted, his soldiers will become cowards. If a bow is weak, the bow-string will be slack. If the wind is gentle, the waves will not rise high. All this is in accord with the principles of nature” (MW-5, 157–58).

I recently met with Dr. Lester C. Thurow, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a world-famous economist. In our discussion, our views on leadership struck a chord. These were some of our conclusions: Leaders must change themselves first. All change must come from the top. To change the whole, those at the top must change. If organizations are to grow and change, their leaders, first, must grow and change.

Mahatma Gandhi says: “Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant in spirit glory in fighting alone.” José Martí, hero of Cuban independence, says, “Triumph belongs to those who are willing to sacrifice themselves; the heart of the people belongs to those who take daring action.” I dedicate these words to all of you.

Please take care not to catch cold! And when you return home, please give my regards to all your fellow members.

I conclude today’s message with my prayers that all of our members will enjoy long, healthy lives filled with boundless good fortune.

*SGI President Ikeda’s message to the February Soka Gakkai Prefecture Leaders Conference, held at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, Shinanomachi, Tokyo, Feb. 3.*