

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 1 SPEECH — PART 2 WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM NAPOLEON'S LIFE?

The exhibition “Napoleon Bonaparte: The Man” is currently being held, to great acclaim, at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum in Hachioji. It features nearly 500 extremely valuable items, including French national treasures on display for the Japanese public for the first time.

The Tokyo exhibition will run through Aug. 1 and then travel to various cities throughout Japan until the year 2001.

Standing as we do at the brink of a new century, I believe that this exhibition gives us a glimpse of what a single individual can achieve when he or she stands up with unyielding commitment to an ideal and how he or she can write history and change the times by doing so.

Dr. Jules Brassner, director of the Napoleonic Society of America, is the honorary chair of the exhibition executive committee. I offer my humble thanks for his efforts in making this exhibition possible.

What precisely can we learn from Napoleon's life? The great American thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson — whom Mr. Toda encouraged me to read — had this to say of Napoleon: “The lesson he [Napoleon] teaches is that which vigor always teaches — that there is always room for it.”

In their efforts toward this May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, the vigor and courage of the members throughout Japan have opened the way to the 21st century. Congratulations! Your victory is admired by all; it is a victory that could only have been achieved by the organization directly linked to Nichiren Daishonin. It is a miraculous victory. I am confident that the Daishonin is praising you all.

Emerson also made this observation about Napoleon: “His victories were only so many doors, and he never for a moment lost sight of his way onward, in the dazzle and uproar of the present circumstance.”

When Napoleon achieved one victory, he immediately looked to the next. He wasn't satisfied with the present triumph; he didn't allow himself to relax, he didn't give up the larger struggle. This is the secret to winning a battle. It is important to make one victory the cause for the next. This is the smart way to fight. the way that leads to successive victories.

Those who bask in their triumphs will grow arrogant — that will eventually lead to defeat. The moment of triumph is the very moment to start working toward a new, larger goal. In this way, the next victory is assured.

This spirit of ceaseless advance is the “brave and vigorous exertion” referred to in the “Expedient Means” chapter (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 23). If we look at each of the Chinese characters that make up this term in Japanese, *yumyo shojin*, *yu* means courage, *myo* (vigorous) means applying one's wisdom and resourcefulness to the limit, *sho* (pure) means unadulterated, concentrated and perfect, and *jin* (effort) means ceaseless advance. Brave and vigorous exertion produces a person who always triumphs. It forges and strengthens us, so that our lives are ever victorious.

The Napoleon exhibition includes many rare personal items from the last six years of Napoleon's life, which were spent in exile on the island Saint Helena. Among these are five French national treasures, including Napoleon's last throne. Many of the pieces have

never been shown outside France until now, and a memoir in Napoleon's own hand is being exhibited for the first time anywhere. Four sabers of Marshal Murat [one of Napoleon's most celebrated marshals] — again, French national treasures — are also in the exhibition.

I have always believed that there would be a new interest in Napoleon and his life, and I have been working on realizing this exhibition for several years. When one acts in earnest, one finds wisdom and strength. On the other hand, if those who have high positions and a degree of power do not work in earnest, they betray the people who made them what they are.

Failing to be dedicated and sincere is nothing but arrogance. In the famous words of Cervantes from *The Adventures of Don Quixote*, "Ingratitude is the daughter of pride."

In the SGI, our revolution is our faith.

"From this place and this time forth commences a new era in world history." These are the words of the great German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, as he observed with admiration the victory of the people during the French Revolution. The specific incident Goethe is referring to is the Battle of Valmy, which took place in 1792.

Valmy was the name of the hill on which the battle was fought, just a few years before Napoleon made his appearance on the main stage of history. The nations of Europe were attempting to overturn the rising tide of the French Revolution. They had crossed into French territory and were heading toward the capital of Paris. The Battle of Valmy took place in the midst of this.

Historians offer many different interpretations of this battle. The attacking forces were led by Prussia, at that time the strongest military power in Europe. The Prussian army was made up of aristocrats and it very well armed. It was completely confident of its victory.

The French army, by contrast, included a large number of volunteers. The Prussians looked down on their opponents as an army of "rabble," sure that these volunteers would flee at the first threat. They made light of the French and were arrogant, just as the graduates of top universities might look down with scorn upon those with no college education.

The Prussians fired mercilessly on the French, but the French forces did not budge. They knew that if they were defeated, their revolution would be crushed, the aristocrats would rule once more, the people would be exploited again and their ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity would be dashed to dust. That would be unbearable — no doubt, such thoughts stirred them to fight bravely. These heroes of the people were armed with revolutionary spirit.

For us in the SGI, our revolutionary spirit is faith. Everything is determined by our faith, by our hearts. I call to you: Never forget to arm yourself with this revolutionary spirit! The SGI is also a volunteer army of the people, armed with faith. Justice and truth fuel our fighting spirit. We possess genuine, faithful comrades. Therefore, we're strong. This is what makes us invincible.

The type of leader who just gives orders while seeking personal glory is the lowest of the low.

At first, some of the untrained French troops, frightened by the unaccustomed gunfire, quailed and were about to flee. But their experienced commander, 57-year-old François-

Title: What Can We Learn From Napoleon's Life? (2)

Subject: World Tribune 06/11/99 n.3246 p.6 WT990611p06 Hachioji, Tokyo, Japan 05/01/99

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 05/01/99 Daisaku Encouragement Gakkai Guidance Hachioji Headquarters Ikeda Japan Leaders rs Leadership Learn Life Major Meeting Military Napoleon People Political President Soka Speech Speech

Christophe Kellermann, called to them not to retreat a single step. “I am here beside you!” he shouted. Rallying the troops, he regrouped them and led them in a new advance.

Looking down on others does not make you a leader. You must encourage others and fight at their side. Leaders must call to them: “Let us fight together!” “Let us die together!” Only with this kind of leadership can people be inspired to fight for a cause.

But there is another type of leader — those who give orders from above and exploit the people, meanwhile cleverly acquiring personal rank and glory. When the crucial moment comes, these leaders foist all the hard work on others and make certain that no harm comes to themselves. Such cowards are the lowest of the low.

The Battle of Valmy was called a battle between the nobility and the ordinary people. The volunteer soldiers, now roused and fired up, shouted in the very midst of the battle with voices that made the earth shake: “Long live the nation!” “Long live the people!” Over the sound of the explosions and the roar of the gunfire, they repeated this intrepid cry, like crashing waves, like thunder.

The enemy was startled. They were shaken. They stopped in their tracks.

The fearless spirit and cheer of the people were the sources of their victory. The Prussian troops, afflicted with bad weather, sickness and short provisions, were finally forced to retreat.

“One’s voice does the Buddha’s work” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). Our voice can be a weapon, a powerful force.

Another of the reasons that the Prussians were defeated, it is said, is that their leaders lacked the will to fight and win. There were probably many reasons for this, but it is generally true that people who cling to rank and power are, in fact, cowards. They are so concerned with protecting themselves that they cannot give themselves wholly to their cause. That is their weakness.

The Battle of Valmy was not that large, but it has been remembered and valued as an important victory for the people. I think the same can be said of the great struggles that all of you as SGI members are making in your local regions, and I am sure that the Buddhas and heavenly deities — the protective functions of the universe — are applauding you.

The French have *esprit* or spirit. They have spiritual strength. That, in a sense, makes them stronger than people of any other nation.

The late French art historian René Huyghe often spoke in our discussions of *esprit*. After his death, his wife wrote to me that Dr. Huyghe always had the fondest memories of me. She also said that she wanted to present me with some of his personal effects as keepsakes.

Dr. Linus Pauling, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist and peace activist, also left me many of his personal effects. Because these are a precious legacy for all humankind, they are now on display in the “Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century” exhibition currently traveling the United States.

Behind my resignation as Soka Gakkai president 20 years ago was a dark conspiracy initiated by forces jealous over the burgeoning power and influence of the people our movement represented. Among those involved were unscrupulous individuals willing to sell out their mentor. There were pitiful people always ready with fine-sounding words but, when it came to the crunch, who did nothing.

At that time, some friends said to me: “President Ikeda, please come to France. We have a castle to put at your disposal, from where you can lead the kosen-rufu movement.” These friends were Philippe Moine, present director of the Victor Hugo House of Literature [in

Bièvres, on the outskirts of Paris] and his wife, Masako.

I was touched by their sincerity. Outside Japan, there are people who are strong and daring. Of course, I couldn't accept the castle. I politely turned down their kind offer, thanking them deeply for the spirit behind their gesture.

There were others who suggested that I bid farewell to Japan, a land driven by envy and spite, and move overseas. But my wife pointed out to me: "There are still students in the Soka schools. They need the founder of their schools here." I tell you this because I want to leave a record of what actually transpired then.

To not advance is the same as to retreat.

"La Marseillaise," the French national anthem, was composed by a passionate youth and sung bravely by the people during the French Revolution. A general of that era said he had been victorious in battle because "La Marseillaise" had helped him in leading his troops.

The heroes of the French Resistance, which battled against the Nazis during World War II, also sang "La Marseillaise." I remember fondly once, at my suggestion, the SGI-France youth division members and I marched along singing this song.

Our Soka Gakkai songs, too, rouse us to victory. I recently proposed that we compose new songs of advance, new marches and triumphant tunes to carry us into the 21st century. I look forward to the appearance of fresh songs that all members can easily relate to and enjoy.

This year marks the 250th anniversary of Goethe's birth [Aug. 28, 1749]. In one of his works, Goethe writes the following lines hailing the creation of a new age:

*Brothers, rise to liberate our world
Heralded by comets, a time of greatness has come
Let us cut in two and discard
All the ploys of tyranny
Forward, advancing, to the heights
Let us make a success of this great work.*

If we interpret Goethe's words in terms of our own activities and ideals, to "liberate the world" means to realize world peace. "Heralded by comets" means that the heavens are watching us. "Cutting the ploys of tyranny in two" means cutting the arrogance of the authorities in two. "This great work" means, for us, making a success of the momentous undertaking of kosen-rufu.

In another verse, Goethe writes:

As we advance thus boldly

* * *

*Nothing can halt our progress.
Forward, advancing, to the heights
Let us complete this great work.*

We mustn't stop. To not advance is to retreat. Forward, ever forward — this is the secret to victory.

Title: What Can We Learn From Napoleon's Life? (2)

Subject: World Tribune 06/11/99 n.3246 p.6 WT990611p06 Hachioji, Tokyo, Japan 05/01/99

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 05/01/99 Daisaku Encouragement Gakkai Guidance Hachioji Headquarters Ikeda Japan Leaders
rs Leadership Learn Life Major Meeting Military Napoleon People Political President Soka Speech Speech

The SGI tricolor flag of victory waves bravely around the world. Whenever I see our flag while driving somewhere, I send my daimoku to the members there. I want to travel all around Japan, all around the world, as we enter the period for consolidating the foundations for kosen-rufu, as we head into the 21st century.

Crucial to our future are well-rounded people.

In his last years, when he was exiled to Saint Helena, Napoleon reflected on his turbulent life, during which he had endured a constant stream of criticism and abuse.

Napoleon writes: “A victory, a monument — here is the best and truest reply. Falsehood fades and disappears, but the truth endures. Wise people, especially in future ages, pass their judgments based on fact.” Such was his faith in the future. Wild, false accusations disappear with time. Only the reality of victory remains in the end.

Here is another well-known remark he made: “March at the head of the philosophies of your time, and you will find these philosophies following and supporting you.”

A fierce struggle is now under way to determine what philosophy, what force, will lead the 21st century. What will determine the outcome of this struggle? Talented people, talented individuals.

Crucial now are well-rounded people, who have both character and strength — whole people. Fostering just such people is the SGI’s goal.

One can be very bright but lack integrity. One can be famous but lack a personal philosophy. One can have passion but lack intelligence or endurance. One can be tremendously popular but lack sincerity. Such people cannot be called well-rounded. Their qualities are separate, fragmented, not seamlessly integrated to form a sublime whole.

The wholeness I speak of is the special quality of those who practice the Daishonin’s Buddhism. That’s because Myoho-renge-kyo contains everything: virtue, life force, intelligence, good fortune, philosophy.

Napoleon’s philosophy was to give opportunities to talented individuals. Mr. Toda called on us to educate and train our juniors to surpass us. Capable people will determine victory. They will create our future.

That is why the SGI concentrates on nurturing capable individuals. The SGI will triumph because of this focus.

In an editorial Mr. Toda wrote 45 years ago for the May 1 issue of the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal, he says that those who carry out kosen-rufu are emissaries of the Buddha; they are carrying out the Buddha’s work. These emissaries are infinitely superior to heroes like Napoleon and Alexander the Great, he says.

Those who propagate the Mystic Law and participate in SGI activities are the true heroes, the noblest people of all.

Part 2 of President Ikeda’s speech at the 33rd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, May 1. Part 1 appeared in the May 21 World Tribune, and the conclusion will appear in next week’s issue.