

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 28 MESSAGE—PART 1 THE FACTORS THAT DETERMINE VICTORY

‘Theory or calculation does not win a struggle,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘The factors that determine the outcome are energy, perseverance, capable people and single-minded action.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's message to a representative regional leaders conference held in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, March 28.

Thanks to all of you, our representative regional leaders from across Japan, for your hard work.

Putting the finishing touches on our lives is very important. When a plane lands, it gradually reduces altitude, but as we enter the final chapter of our lives, we should try to keep flying at the same high “spiritual altitude.” We should keep moving forward without reducing our “spiritual speed”—right up until our final moments.

When we have this spirit, we can foster youth who will solidly shoulder the future and pass the baton of responsibility firmly on to our juniors. This point is very important. It is crucial that leaders maintain their fighting spirit right to the end.

All will be lost if our youth become conceited, spoiled and superficial.

Theory or calculation does not win a struggle. The factors that determine the outcome are energy, perseverance, capable people and single-minded action.

It is crucial to foster and develop new people, to allow them to play a full, active role. Leaders must not hold back their juniors.

We have now entered the age of women. And the spotlight is on the young women. It is a time when the women's division members, too, should give greater play to their potential.

Let us also thoroughly train the youth. All will be lost if our youth become conceited, spoiled and superficial. All growth will stop.

I say to our youth: Create your own proof of victory in your daily lives. Take pride in hard work and challenging difficulties. Boldly construct a great monument of achievement in your youth.

On March 27, I visited the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo for the first time in a long while [for the 4th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, May 3 and 11 *World Tribune*]. It was on April 2, 43 years ago, while the cherry trees were in full bloom, that my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, died. From that time on, there has not been a single day that I have not thought of him.

**Of all President Makiguchi's disciples,
President Toda alone stayed true to him.**

In November 1950, on the occasion of the 7th memorial (6th anniversary) of the death of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, President Toda reminisced: “When Mr. Makiguchi was being moved to Sugamo [to the Tokyo Detention House from the Metropolitan Police Department in September 1943], I was permitted a brief meeting with him. I said to him, ‘Please take care of your health.’”

“I have been told that on the way to the car after we parted, he asked, ‘Where is Toda?’ ‘What has happened to Toda?’

“I chanted earnestly with the prayer ‘I am still young, but Mr. Makiguchi is old. May he be released as soon as possible. I do not care how long I remain here, but please let Mr. Makiguchi be released as quickly as possible.’ But perhaps because my prayers were not strong enough, he died in prison the following year [in November 1944].

“When I was told, ‘Maki-guchi’s dead,’ I was devastated. I wept all night long in my prison cell.”

[Both Makiguchi and Toda were arrested in July 1943. After a period of detention at the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, Makiguchi was transferred to the Tokyo Detention House in Sugamo first, and Toda followed a short time later.]

President Makiguchi died at the age of 73. Of all his disciples, my mentor alone felt a deep sense of gratitude to be able to accompany him to prison, chanting fervently for President Makiguchi’s safety. When his mentor died, as you just heard, President Toda blamed himself, saying that his prayers had not been strong enough. As for President Makiguchi’s other disciples, as soon as the Soka Gakkai encountered persecution, they did an abrupt about-face and cursed and abused their mentor.

Only a small handful of Soka Gakkai members attended President Makiguchi’s funeral. President Toda also commented on this at his mentor’s 7th memorial: “I later learned that Mr. Kobayashi [an employee of one of Makiguchi’s relatives] carried Mr. Maki-guchi’s body home on his back from Sugamo Prison.

“You cannot imagine the bitter anger and intense sorrow I felt [when I heard this and that so few disciples came to their mentor’s funeral]. Those were difficult times [because of the government’s crackdown on the Soka Gakkai], I admit, but I could not help wondering bitterly: Did they not come because they did not know of his death? Or did they know but still not come [because they were afraid of persecution]? I vowed then and there: ‘Right! I will, without fail, hold a memorial service for Mr. Makiguchi!’ From that time, I felt a powerful reason for living surge inside me.”

This was the vow of an indomitable champion of kosen-rufu. Herein lay the true Soka Gakkai spirit of mentor and disciple, and the triumphant spirit of justice.

Women played a decisive role in Italy’s resistance movement.

On March 3, as a representative of our members in Italy and all around the world, I received an honorary citizenship from the city of Varallo, Italy. [This was the 160th honorary citizenship bestowed upon President Ikeda.]

Varallo was the birthplace of Italy’s partisan resistance movement against fascism. I also spoke about this at the 4th Headquarters Leaders Meeting (May 3 and 11 *World Tribune*). Some of the Italian members who attended that meeting have written to me in response, offering valuable historical information about that time. With their permission, I want to share some of their remarks with you today.

Maurizio Tosi, a vice headquarters leader in Turin, had this to say: “As I listened to your guidance, President Ikeda, I was deeply moved, and I also remembered my grandmother’s story. Her name was Maria Falcetti, and she was born on Feb. 7, 1900. She was killed by the Nazi-fascists on Sept. 14, 1944.

“Women played a decisive role in the victory of the partisans in the World War II. My grandmother, like my aunts and many other women, supported the partisans. They carried provisions and information to their husbands and sons fighting for freedom, either

traveling on foot or by bicycle for many kilometers to do so.

“During one of these trips, she was caught and arrested by the Nazi-fascists. For two days she was tortured and then killed. But she never breathed a word about where her husband, son and their comrades were hiding.

“My grandmother’s story is part of the history of many brave Italian women during that period—a history in which we find not the slightest trace of cowardice.

“When you, President Ikeda, spoke of Varallo, you brought to life once more the history of these women and the partisans who gave their lives for freedom and are today the symbol of the city of Varallo. I feel that my grandmother, together with her comrades who fought for freedom at the risk of their lives, participated joyously in today’s leaders meeting.”

Let me now share the words of Mauro Deretti, a headquarters leader in Milan: “Listening to your speech on the partisans, a powerful feeling of respect for my parents welled up in me. They were persecuted by the fascists. My mother, who has now passed away, used to talk about it often. Because her father was opposed to the fascists, she and her sister had their heads shaved and painted red, after which they were paraded through the town. This happened many times and always took place after the fascists had almost beaten my grandfather to death. And countless other families suffered similar persecutions.

“It was my mother [who was also an SGI member], as a matter of fact, who enabled me to develop a closer connection with you, President Ikeda. When you were visiting Italy in 1992, she insisted that I go to Florence where you were, in spite of the fact that she was very ill. Mysteriously, while I was in Florence, her condition improved, and I was able to cheerfully carry out my responsibilities as a staff member for your visit.

“Four days after you left Italy, my mother died peacefully. She had a serene expression on her face. She unfailingly chanted one hour of daimoku every day, and she used to say, ‘When I chant, I feel as strong as a lion.’

“Thank you so much for speaking today about the resistance movement and the partisans, which are an important part of the history of many Italian families.”

I chanted sincere daimoku in memory of all of Italy’s courageous freedom fighters who have passed away.

As the ancient Roman philosopher Seneca says: “Whome’er thou shalt see brave, call him not wretched.” “Dauntless mother-love admits no fears.”

I offer these words with the greatest respect and reverence.

To be continued in an upcoming issue.