

Yasuhiro Yamashita

**“A Look at the Last Four Years of NPO
Solidarity of International Judo Education”**

**Monday, June 14, 2010
The Tokai University Club**

In my capacity as Executive Director of the NPO Solidarity of International Judo Education, I would like to thank you so much for coming in this bad weather.

This lecture meeting of the Solidarity of International Judo Education marks the 8th in the series. The first meeting was held in December 2006, when Mr. Hiroshi Okuda, former Chairman of Toyota Motor Corporation (currently senior adviser and board member of the company) took time from his busy schedule to join the meeting and proposed that the Solidarity of International Judo Education be launched as an organization, no matter how small it might be.

Now, Solidarity, as an NPO, has been developing its activities with support from its sponsor companies and its members, many of whom are here today. Today, I would like to talk about the history of our organization, looking back on our activities over the past four years. I am not a good speaker, but let me begin with a brief description of why the Solidarity of International Judo Education was established as an NPO.

Background to the NPO's establishment

I have dedicated my life to pursuing my judo career and promoting sports and education. So, representing the sports world as a member of the National Commission on Education Reform and the Central Education Council, I developed a closer relationship with the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, more so than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, until the Solidarity of International Judo Education was formerly established as an NPO.

In the autumn of 2002, however, I received a phone call from the Japanese Foreign Ministry, requesting me to arrange a time to meet with them. I met with Mr. Yasuo Saito,

then director-general of the Foreign Ministry's European Affairs Bureau and currently Japanese ambassador to France, and Mr. XXX, then director of the Russian Division, European Affairs Bureau and currently Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Japan in Russia. My encounter with them prepared the way for me to get seriously involved in activities to promote international exchanges.

They talked to me, while dining, about the summit meeting scheduled for January 2003 between then Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and then Russian President Vladimir Putin. The two leaders had already met each other at the APEC summit, but at that time there was not a very friendly atmosphere between them. Considering that President Putin is a judoist, the two Japanese government officials decided to ask me to give a hand to please President Putin.

After mutual consultation, we worked out a three-point agreement. The first was to hold a joint training camp for Japanese and Russian judo teams as part of preparations toward the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. That meant that if Russian team members were willing to join the camp, I would take responsibility for accepting them to the camp for the Japanese judo team. Another agreement was about taking me to an event to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the foundation of St. Petersburg, where leaders from around the world would gather.

The third agreement was to translate *Learn Judo with Me, Vladimir Putin*, a book written by President Putin, into Japanese and release it in Japan. The book had already been translated into English, French, German, Italian and other languages. I promised to give some comments for the book jacket if President Putin agreed on the publication of his book in Japan.

As a result, the talks between Prime Minister Koizumi and President Putin progressed smoothly. So, I traveled to St. Petersburg in late May 2003 to visit the judo hall in which Putin used to practice in his younger days, and in front of the Japanese and Russian leaders, I coached young Russian judo wrestlers. Afterward, I had a chance to talk with the two leaders. These are photos taken at that time.



Later on, the two leaders headed for the G8 summit scheduled in Evian, France. As it turned out, only Mr. Koizumi, except for then U.S. President George W. Bush, who was able to have a private meeting with Mr. Putin, although many world leaders were there to celebrate the anniversary of St. Petersburg's founding. They included British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Jacques Chirac, and Chinese President Hu Jintao.

Another fact I learned later is that the late former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto was the first to propose such a move. When Mr. Hashimoto was very active, I often met him because Mr. Hashimoto was a very good player of *kendo*, the martial art of Japanese fencing, and I am a judo expert. Mr. Hashimoto suggested to Mr. Saito, former director-general of the Foreign Ministry's European Affairs Bureau, that since Putin loves judo, Yamashita can play a role in establishing a better relationship with the president.

On June 1, 2003, when there was a summit meeting between Japan and Russia, an interview with the Russian president by Mr. Kazuo Kobayashi, then Moscow bureau chief of NHK, Japan's national broadcast service, was aired on the NHK news program "Ohayo Nippon." Please listen to it.

[Video dialog]

Kobayashi:

Thinking that President Putin's flexible approach may have something to do with judo, I asked the Russian government for an interview with the president about his relationship with judo. Just three days before the interview date, my offer was accepted so I quickly flew to Moscow to conduct the interview. When I visited his official residence in the forest outside Moscow, I

discovered a bronze statue of Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo in the facility where he practices the sport. I conducted the interview focusing on his statement "Judo changed my life."

Putin:

"... I was not from an affluent family. Many people probably can't imagine it, but when I was young, I wandered about the streets with other hooligans. I trained physically in order to be a tough kid. I had tried boxing and wrestling, but finally discovered judo. The encounter with judo was a turning point for me. Judo changed my way of thinking, my view of life, and my interactions with other people. Judo helped me to get to where I am now. First, I didn't understand judo's basic idea to take advantage of your opponent's force. As I practiced over and over, however, I gradually began to understand it. It means that to overwhelm him it's necessary to know what your opponent is trying to do and the special skills he has. You can keep the edge by taking full advantage of your opponent's weight, physical features and skills..."

Kobayashi:

In the area of diplomacy, you also take advantage of others' forces, don't you? You were even brave enough to go to Germany and display your competent abilities by having most of Russia's debt to Germany cancelled. By contrast, though, initially owed over two years, you paid the debt back all at once in September 2002 when Germany was hit by a devastating flood. I think this is an approach only you are capable of taking.

Newscaster:

You also give an impression that you are a cold-hearted leader.

Putin:

"... I had a rather short temper, and was the type of person who gets mad easily. But I learned through judo that this never brings desirable results. It's important to control your mind and keep a cool head. When you're calm, you can deal with any situation more quickly and effectively. This is a valuable lesson that I learned from judo..."

Kobayashi:

President Putin seems to be a very formidable rival to Prime Minister Koizumi. However, Mr. Putin loves judo and respects Japanese culture because judo is part of Japanese culture. I hear that his two daughters also practice judo. Such a person has been in power for a long time. Mr. Koizumi is well known for his intimate knowledge of Russian music. I believe that the two will be worthy rivals at the summit meeting.

[Video end]

June 1, 2003 was my 46th birthday. After returning to Japan, I watched the interview and was very surprised. It had been decided that I would be appointed Director of Education at the International Judo Federation in September of that year. This interview with President Putin firmly convinced me that it is important to consolidate relations of friendship and trust with the rest of the world by promoting activities to convey the Japanese spirit through judo, as often told by the late Dr. Shigeyoshi Matsumae.

After that, I was chosen by the Foreign Ministry as a member of the Japan-Russia Eminent Persons' Council in recognition of my contribution to the success of the summit meeting between Mr. Koizumi and Mr. Putin. In those days, I used to be made fun of by my fellow judoists about my appointment as a member of such an eminent-person group.



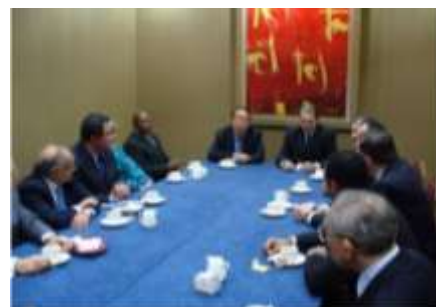
This photo shows people participating in the first meeting of the Japan-Russia Eminent Person's Council. I should have been at the foot of the table, but since President Putin talked to me in a friendly manner, my seat was set near him. At the meeting, I met Mr. Okuda of Toyota Motor Corporation. Since then, I have owed him many obligations. Partly because Mr. Okuda practiced judo when he was a student at Hitotsubashi University, a close relationship gradually

developed between us.

At the ordinary congress of the International Judo Federation (IJF) held in September 2003, I was appointed as the education and coaching director of the IJF without a vote because there were no rival candidates. What I can take pride of in my life of judo is that I've never been defeated by any foreign competitors. But I was completely defeated in the IJF Board reelection in 2007.



This photo shows me struggling to make a presentation in English, a language I'm not good at. The task of the education and coaching director for the IJF is to enhance the educational value of judo by promoting the sport throughout the world, especially in developing countries. I have been engaged in various activities with cooperation from the All Japan Judo Federation, the Kodokan, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, international cooperation funds, private companies, and many other organizations.



This photo shows a board meeting held in South Korea.

Thanks to cooperation from various quarters, the International Judo Federation was able to hold its first Women's Coaching Seminar in Fukuoka. Moreover, we have held seminars on judo education around the world and been engaged in the preparation of materials for judo education. This is a material for judo as the art of self defense. This one is about judo education at schools in Japan. And this material is designed for beginners of judo, especially children. Thanks to financial assistance, some of these

materials were translated into English, French and Spanish, contributing to the promotion of judo throughout the world.

Mr. Okuda, whom I met through the Japan-Russia Eminent Persons' Council, asked me to jointly publish a book, and in August 2005, we released a book titled "Bushido To Tomoni Ikiru" ("Live in the Spirit of the Samurai Warrior") (Kadokawa Shoten).



At that time, Mr. Okuda gave me a suggestion. He said, "Your activities are wonderful, but I think you're spending more time raising money rather than doing what's good for people and nations. How about forming an organization and getting other people to cooperate widely and shallowly, so that you can spend your limited time more effectively. To that end, you can use my name anytime." I was very surprised to hear that because I had never thought of that until then.

To be honest, it was hard to do everything all by myself. But I worried that creating an organization to gain understanding and cooperation of many people would put much greater responsibilities on me. I went to talk to Mr. Toshiaki Hashimoto and Ms. Keiko Mitsumoto, and we decided to launch an organization even though we weren't really sure how much we could do. Finally, in April 2006, we established an NPO, the Solidarity of International Judo Education, with the cooperation and support of many people. Mr. Hashimoto and Ms. Mitsumoto are currently serving respectively as assistant executive director and executive secretary of the Solidarity of International Judo Education.

Support for judo in developing countries: Judo uniform recycling project

A major activity of the Solidarity of International Judo Education is to donate used judo uniforms to developing countries. Until our organization's establishment, this activity

had been carried out under a joint project of the All Japan Judo Federation, the Kodokan, and the International Judo Federation, but this project was taken over by our organization. Since I became Executive Director of the Solidarity, second-hand judo uniforms are now being sent to 143 countries, including Zambia, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Honduras, Mongolia, Madagascar and India.

At present, the International Judo Federation has a membership of 199 nations and regions, many of which are in poorer parts of the world. I have heard from JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) volunteers that in such countries many people are practicing judo wearing shorts and T-shirts, not judo uniforms. That's something that you would never find in Japan, but a single judo uniform is often shared by many people in poorer countries.

Another major activity of our organization is to dispatch instructors, student volunteers and graduate students to foreign countries. So far we have sent a total of 14 people abroad as part of efforts to promote judo.



This photo shows a judo lesson I gave in Paris under a Japan Foundation project to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Cultural Institute in Paris.



This is a photo showing President Putin and me coaching children. Although it has only been for limited periods, I have traveled to various areas, such as Moscow, Qingdao and Nanjing, for judo coaching.

In St. Petersburg, workshops were held for judo teachers, with the participation of Mr. Kenji Mitsumoto, Mr. Katsuhiko Kashiwazaki, who won the world title in 1981, and Mr. Hidetoshi Nakanishi as lecturers. In May this year, Kosei Inoue also visited the city for coaching. In addition, many student volunteers have been sent for coaching to many countries, including Indonesia, China (Qingdao), Denmark and Laos.

I don't think we have sent a sufficient number of judo coaches, but at the same time, we have also accepted coaches and athletes from abroad. Most prominent is China, where we provided special support for its men's judo team in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Grand Master Jigoro Kano's letter as a bridge between Japan and Russia

Next, I would like to talk about exchanges between Russia and Japan.

In November 2005, then Russian President Putin came to Japan. This was his first visit to Japan since 2003, when Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi met him in Moscow. Despite many people's urging, his visit to Japan had not been realized until then.



Before Mr. Putin's visit, I asked that the Japanese Foreign Ministry make time for me to meet with him, because I had something to give him. I was able to meet him on the first day of his trip to Japan, and I presented him the calligraphy "Jita Kyoei" (Mutual Prosperity) written by Jigoro Kano, Grand Master and founder of judo. Mr. Nobuyuki Sato, my former judo teacher, had given it to me, saying "You, rather than I, are the right person to keep this calligraphy." The calligraphy was one of my few great treasures. I presented

Mr. Putin with the calligraphy in the hope that it could be of some help in resolving a longstanding territorial dispute between Russia and Japan.

At the time, we were working on a project to invite children wounded in the school siege by terrorists that took place in 2004 in North Ossetia, Russia, to the World Judo Championships for Junior High School Students, an event held in December every year. When I met President Putin, I was surprised because his first words were: "I've heard that you're planning to invite children wounded in the North Ossetia terrorist attack to encourage them. On behalf of the people of Russia, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to you."

It was in November that I met President Putin. I was very impressed by the fact that the busy president had already known about our plan to invite children from Beslan in December.

However, as our exchanges were being promoted, I gradually realized that in any organization, information that pleases the boss of the organization is conveyed quickly to him or her. That's why the president had known about even such a small-scale exchange activity with Russia.

I handed the calligraphy written by Grand Master Kano directly to Mr. Putin, saying "I hope Japan and Russia work together for further development and prosperity of our two countries." With an expression of surprise, he asked me, "Is this the real thing?" (Laughter) I can still see him in my mind's eye. I said with confidence, "Yes, of course." Then, he told me that this should not be kept only by himself but shared by all. Although those who've never practiced judo may not know, calligraphy written by Grand Master Jigoro Kano is a very valuable thing for those who love judo.

This is just an aside. When I led the president, who had completed all the tasks of the day, to the elevator, he invited me to go to dinner. There, news reporters from around the world were closely watching us and they asked me to tell what we talked about. So, I told one of his aides that I would join him after giving a brief explanation of our meeting to the mass media, but I was told, "Just leave them and then come as soon as you can." (Laughter) When I was at the restaurant, the president was checking out the menu and then ordered *sushi* and hot *sake* even though we were in a steak house.

Sitting next to him, I talked a lot over *sake*.

As part of our activities to promote cultural exchanges, I often have dinner with foreign guests. But this was my first experience to talk over hot *sake*. So, I asked him, “President, do you love hot *sake*?” He said to me, “In the cold season, *sake* is nice because it warms me up.” I wondered if November in Japan is cold for the president, who’s from Russia. (Laughter) In that way, we had a good time together the night before the summit meeting.



This photo shows the scene of the September 2004 Beslan school siege tragedy in North Ossetia. We invited children wounded in the terrorist attack with the cooperation of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. From Russia, a television sports news crew came to Japan to cover the story. They told us that they wanted to convey to the Russian people this act of kindness by Japanese people, who have invited children wounded in a terrorist attack to Japan to encourage them through judo.

To support children in Beslan, we, as an NPO, presented them with used judo uniforms and judo mats. These photos show the presentation ceremony held in Beslan and children in uniforms practicing judo on the mats we presented to them.



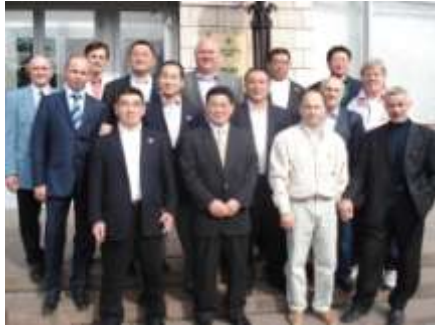
Regarding the calligraphy I presented to Mr. Putin, there is more to it. Shortly after the president’s return to Russia, I received a letter from him inviting me to Russia in December,

when he planned to teach children judo. The letter also said that the president and I were not young enough, so it would be appreciated if I could take an active judo athlete with me. So I asked Kosei Inoue to go to Russia with me, and he canceled his plans to join me. These photos show a judo lesson we gave there and the president shaking hands with us after the lesson.



As I mentioned earlier, I suffered a major defeat by an African competitor in the 2007 IJF Board reelection held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. On the following day, the IJF ordinary congress started, and on the second day of the ordinary congress, Anatoly Rakhlin, Putin’s first judo teacher, came to me and said, “Mr. Yamashita, look at judo today. It has significantly changed from the traditional style of Japanese judo.” He enthusiastically continued, “The traditional attitude and spirit of judo have gradually diminished. Believing that judo is a sport that plays a significant role in people’s character formation, I have devoted myself to teaching judo. I want to promote the Japanese traditional style of judo as well as its true spirit back in Russia. I need your help.”

Our first specific cooperation was realized in May 2009. Members of Japan’s national judo team in the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games—in which they weren’t able to participate because the event was boycotted by many countries including Japan—visited Moscow to hold a workshop for Russian judo teachers. This is a commemorative photo taken in front of the venue in which the national team members would have competed with their rivals if they had participated in the Olympics.



The Russian delegation consisted of six members. Except for me, none of the members had ever met President Putin before. I asked my Russian friend to create an opportunity for them to meet the president, even for a few minutes. My friend took on a thoughtful expression and told me that he would try but that it would be quite difficult because this is the busiest time of year for the president. When we arrived in Moscow, however, we were very moved because a dinner hosted by the president at the state guest house was waiting for us. This is a photo of President Putin and the Japanese Olympic judo team that was to participate in the Moscow Summer Games in 1980, which was taken after enjoying the dinner.



To my surprise, the following day President Putin announced the members of his new cabinet. A Russian official told us, “Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda was the first Japanese to meet President Putin, but you are the first Japanese to meet Prime Minister Putin.” We were all really impressed by Prime Minister Putin’s warm-heartedness.

This photo shows Mr. Shozo Fujii, a four-time world championship title winner, coaching people with enthusiasm. The other members of the delegation—Messrs. Katsuhiko Kashiwazaki, Tsukio Kawahara, Yasuhiko Moriwaki, and Kiyoto Katsuki—are all former national team players and former world champions. Among them, I am youngest, and Mr. Kawahara is eight years older than I. Despite their ages, all the members worked hard coaching Russian judo athletes

for two days, which was recorded on DVD and has been used as material for judo education in Russia.



In 2008, a year before our visit to Russia, the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit was held. On July 9, one day after the summit ended, Asahi and Yomiuri newspapers carried a headline saying that Russian President Medvedev shows willingness to resolve the territorial dispute. The moment I saw the news, it reminded me of the dinner that Kosei Inoue and I had with Mr. Putin after our judo coaching.

At the beginning of that dinner, then President Putin said to me, “Mr. Yamashita, as you know, there is a longstanding issue between Russia and Japan. Except for that, there are no major problems between our two countries, and we don’t intend to create any bilateral issues in the future. So, don’t worry and you can put your mind at ease. I believe that the issue can be resolved if Russia and Japan work together and rack our brains. Shall we make a toast?” At that time, only six or seven people were at the table. Next to Mr. Putin was Mr. Medvedev, then first-deputy prime minister and chairman of gas giant Gazprom. I remember that he didn’t speak but had a smile on his face at the dinner. That night, I talked to the Japanese Consul-General in St. Petersburg about the dinner. He was very surprised and said to me that Medvedev was the front runner to succeed Putin as president. So, that’s why when I looked at the headline in the newspapers, it reminded me of what Mr. Putin had said to me and the expression on Mr. Medvedev’s face at the dinner.

Publication of the book “*Putin to Judo no Kokoro* (*Putin and the Spirit of Judo*)”

In April 2009, a book titled “*Putin*



to *Judo no Kokoro*” (Putin and the Spirit of Judo) (Asahi Shimbun Publications Inc.) was published, of which I and Mr. Kazuo Kobayashi, a journalist who had also interviewed then President Putin, were coauthors. The book comprises two parts. The second part is devoted to the judo manual authored by Mr. Putin, while the first part is about the “real face of Vladimir Putin” that I and Mr. Kobayashi saw.

When I recently saw Mr. Kobayashi, he told me that he felt ashamed of himself when he visited then President Putin’s private judo hall for an interview for an NHK TV program. He was urged to enter the hall so just walked in, but Mr. Putin bowed deeply toward the hall before entering. Mr. Kobayashi said to me that as a Japanese, he felt ashamed of himself and so he bowed deeply toward the hall when leaving. Referring to his experience there, he also asked me to teach people such manners, as well as the importance of becoming tough through judo, improving judo skills, and winning a world championship title.

In May last year, Mr. Putin visited Japan in his capacity as Russian Prime Minister. He joined in the party to celebrate the publication of this book, which was held at a Tokyo hotel from 10:00 p.m. on May 12. As it turned out afterwards, Mr. Putin was scheduled to stay in Japan only for 24 hours. He arrived at Haneda Airport at 10:00 p.m. the night before. And he was scheduled to leave Japan at 10:00 p.m. the following day, soon after a dinner party hosted by Prime Minister Taro Aso. However, Mr. Putin suddenly changed his schedule to stay with us for about an hour at the launch party.

I wanted to warm up the party more by inviting other Solidarity members as guests, but due to a possible visit by Mr. Putin, we were asked by the Foreign Ministry to strictly limit the number of participants. So, NPO Assistant Executive Director Hashimoto, Executive Secretary Mitsumoto and I joined the party as staff members.



This photo shows me extending my greetings to Mr. Putin

at the Russian Prime Minister’s Office on March 15. After meeting with him, I contacted the Japanese Embassy in Moscow to keep my meeting with Mr. Putin secret from the mass media. The following day, however, this photo was posted on Prime Minister Putin’s website. (Laughter)

Construction of judo halls to promote Japan-China friendship

I would like to mention exchanges between Japan and China briefly here. In 2004, before the establishment of our organization, the Board Meeting of the International Judo Federation was held in Shanghai. At the social gathering following the meeting, the president of the Chinese Judo Association said to me, “While women’s judo in China is strong enough to rival that in Japan, our men’s judo is still weak. We have only four years until participating in the Beijing Olympics.” He squeezed my hand and continued, “Thinking of our men’s judo, I can’t even sleep well. Can you help us improve our national men’s judo team?”

In those days, the Solidarity NPO has not been established yet, and I said to him, “I’ll offer as much cooperation as possible.” Afterward, I had a chance to meet Mr. Okuda because of the publication of a dialogue between the two of us. I talked with him about what I was asked by the president of the Chinese Judo Association, and Mr. Okuda said, “It’s a good chance. You should give them a hand. How much money do you need?” With assistance from Mr. Okuda, I was able to gain the cooperation of three companies—Toyota Motor, Nippon Steel, and All Nippon Airways—to help the Chinese National Men’s Judo Team build on their strengths. This photo shows a welcome party held for the Chinese National Men’s Judo Team.



Later on, the Japanese Foreign Ministry suggested to me that I should take action to further promote friendship between Japan and China through judo, from a mid- and long-term perspective, rather than a short-term project

focusing on the Beijing Olympics alone. I remember it being around 2006, when the relationship between the two countries was deteriorating and anti-Japan protests were spreading in China, with some escalating to subversive activities.

In response, I proposed the idea of creating a judo hall in China to promote bilateral friendship through judo. In rural areas, a school can be constructed for only about 10 million yen.

In November 2006, I went on a study tour of Qingdao, where judo has been more popular than in other areas of the country. It was my first negotiation with China. On the flight from Japan to China, I met Mr. Togashi of the Japan Foundation, who is present with us today. Since then, he and his organization have provided full support for our activities. At the negotiation conducted in Qingdao there were some troubles, such as a letter of agreement whose content was totally different from what we had negotiated. Eventually, though, our negotiation was steered in the right direction, and we chose a construction venue for a judo hall, after consultation with officials from the Chinese government, the All-China Federation of Sports, and the Chinese Judo Association.

Meanwhile, I began to have questions about our activities. The original purpose of our activities was to spread the spirit of judo, or the traditional spirit of Japan, to developing countries through the sport of judo. However, neither Russia nor China is a developing country, with more rich people than Japan. I was wondering if promoting exchanges with such nations agreed with the original purpose of our activities.

When I was in Qingdao for the negotiation to construct a judo hall, I heard that after the Sino-Japanese war (1894-95), which devastated China, its government sent many young people to Japan aiming to foster excellent human resources. And I learned that it was Grand Master Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, who was the first to accept young people from China. He built a school called the Kobun Gakuin for them, and over 13 years accepted a total of more than 7,000 Chinese to study. Among those students were the great writer Lu Xun and the father-in-law of Mao Zedong. I also learned that Mr. Jigoro Kano had a significant influence on the

perspective of Mao Zedong on sports.

Honestly speaking, it really is a shame that I didn't know such information even though I'm a judo specialist and was going to teach judo in Qingdao. In Japan, however, many of those involved in judo also don't know that. After returning to Japan, I had to study hard to confirm what I learned there.

International exchange through judo, an important task for Japanese people

When it comes to exchanges between Japan and Russia, Dr. Shigeyoshi Matsumae was very active in promoting exchange activities with the former Soviet Union through Tokai University. Quite some time ago, Dr. Matsumae asked me, "Do you know why I have promoted interactions with the Soviet Union?" He continues, "I'm against communism and can't accept the ideas or principles of the Soviet Union. But the problem is that politics and the economy in Japan today are centered on the U.S. There is the big power called the U.S.S.R. across the Sea of Japan. As everyone looks toward the U.S., it is important for Japan to develop relations with the Soviet Union, even at a grassroots level, which could help avoid the worst-case scenario. That's why I've been working on promoting international friendship through Russian culture, arts and sports."

Both Russia and China are far from developing countries. They are rather major powers. However, as long as members of the Solidarity NPO support our activities and international exchanges are promoted through judo, I believe this is an important task for Japan. Based on this belief, I have been committed to our activities over many years.

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Ambassador Gotaro Ogawa, we were able to invite those playing a leading role in the future of Chinese judo to Tokyo in 2008. They were Mr. Xu Dianping from Qingdao and Mr. Liu Junlin from Nanjing. We now have a request from China to construct another China-Japan Friendship Judo Hall in Beijing. The person responsible for judo in Beijing is Mr. Xiong Fengshan.



In November 2007, the Qingdao Japan-China Judo Friendship Center opened. This photo shows the opening ceremony. At the Center, a lecture meeting was also held.



I visited Qingdao again one year after the Judo Friendship Center opened, and received coverage from the state-run China Central Television. I was also interviewed by a popular TV anchor at the Center, which I heard received high viewer ratings. This is a photo of that interview. The anchor had not practiced judo, but he seemed to have adequate knowledge of Grand Master Jigoro Kano and my judo career. On the day of the interview, the anchor wore a Chinese judo uniform and I was in a judo uniform with a Japanese flag. The interview was broadcast throughout the country.

[Interview video]

The interview continues, but I have to stop it now because time here is short.

This interesting 45-minute interview in the video above was aired throughout China, with a population of 1.2 billion people, with the name “Japan-China Judo Friendship Center” in the background, capturing high viewer ratings. I believe that our efforts as an NPO to promote friendship between Japan and China have been accepted with sincerity and Chinese people’s willingness to do something to foster bilateral friendship eventually led to this TV interview being

realized.

In 2008, my efforts toward a realization of peace in China through judo were reported in the official People’s Daily newspaper. I think this also shows that Chinese people have been accepting our efforts.

Construction of a Japan-China Judo Friendship Center in Nanjing



This is an article that appeared in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on August 15, the anniversary of the end of the war. When we launched a project to construct a Japan-China Judo Friendship Center in Qingdao, we were also requested by Nanjing to construct a center there.

At the time, I reacted coolly to Nanjing’s request. I told them that taxpayers’ money was to be used to construct the center and that a second center shouldn’t be built until the first center had proved useful in promoting friendship between Japan and China.

To tell the truth, I was hoping to build a second center in Nanjing. So, I was surprised to see that article appearing in a newspaper on the day marking the end of the war. I then asked Ambassador Ogawa for advice, and he talked about the matter with the Japanese Foreign Ministry. I was then advised to take this opportunity to promote dialogue with Nanjing. So in 2008, I flew to Nanjing to have talks with the local sports federation and the authorities concerned.

I also gave a lecture at Nanjing University, where students listened earnestly to me. At the end of the lecture, a student asked me a question: “We understand how enthusiastic you are, but why did you choose Nanjing as the construction venue for the center?”

I answered the question candidly, saying that I never

thought of any other place than Nanjing for the construction of the second center of its kind, after that in Qingdao. Then there was a lot of applause from the students. At that moment, I felt that we had conveyed our thoughts and feelings, and that they'd been accepted.

In March this year, the Nanjing Japan-China Judo Friendship Center was completed with cooperation from the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects division of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I visited Nanjing to join in the opening ceremony, and it was reported favorably by the mass media. However, there was something disappointing to me. Due to the issue of the Nanjing Massacre, few Japanese people have ventured to Nanjing.

There are few Japanese companies there, and there are also few interactions with Japan. However, the city of Nanjing is willing to foster exchanges with Japan in economic and various other aspects. I've never had a bad experience in Nanjing. Other Japanese people living there say the same thing. Even when anti-Japanese riots broke out throughout the country, there was no rioting in Nanjing. When our Center's opening in Nanjing was reported in Japan, all the Japanese broadcasters, except for NHK, and all the newspapers described Nanjing as a city with a strong anti-Japan sentiment.

It seems pointless for us to have worked so hard with the cooperation of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. This matter is discussed in detail in my book to be published by Chuokoron-Shinsha Inc. next year. I would like to take this opportunity to stress the fact that Nanjing is very open to promoting exchanges with Japan.

Pursuit of the spirit of "Judo, Friendship and Peace"

The Solidarity of International Judo Education holds lecture meetings. This is the 8th lecture meeting for our organization. There are booklets covering the speeches of Mr. Okuda and Ambassador Ogawa at the 1st lecture meeting. If you are interested, please read them.

Thanks to the cooperation of all the Solidarity members, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, the Japan Foundation, and many private companies, we have been able to develop our activities to promote international friendship. Taking this

opportunity, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you.

It is expected that we will play a greater social role. With invaluable advice and support from all of you, we at the Solidarity of International Judo Education are determined to advance toward an even greater goal in accordance with our basic philosophy of "Judo, friendship and peace."

Thank you very much for your kind attention.