

The 11th Lecture

Part I

Overcoming Disaster With the Spirit of Judo

– A Report by the Ishinomaki Judo Association in
Miyagi Prefecture –

Part II

Japanese-Russian Exchange Through Judo

– From Prof. Shigeyoshi Matsumae to Prime Minister
Vladimir Putin –

Monday, December 5, 2011

Tokai University Club

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to attend this symposium. My name is Keiko Mitsumoto from the administrative office of the Solidarity of International Judo Association (SIJA) and I will be your host for today. SIJA Chairman Toshiaki Hashimoto will open the event with a few words of greeting.

Greetings from Chairman Hashimoto

My name is Toshiaki Hashimoto and I am the Chairman of the Solidarity of International Judo Association. I am grateful that so many of you have taken the time out of your busy schedules to participate in today's 11th symposium of our organization.

We always hold this second of two annual meetings at the end of year. This event will feature two major reports concerning our organization's activities: one about the relief volunteers we sent to the disaster area of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and another by President Yasuhiro Yamashita about the history of our relationship with Russia from the establishment of the SIJA to the present.

In Part I of today's proceedings, titled "Recovering from the Disaster with the Spirit of Judo", we will hear from two guests from Miyagi Prefecture: Mr. Kiyonori

Kimura, Chairman of the Ishinomaki Judo Association and Mr. Toyoshi Terasawa.

I read a book published by the Kahoku Shimpō newspaper, which some of you may be familiar with, called *The Longest Day in the History of the Kahoku Shimpō*. A chronicle of how the newspaper continued to print issues during the aftermath of the disaster, this book cannot be read shedding a few tears.

As a preamble to today's presentations, let me read an excerpt from the epilogue written by Mr. Isao Ota, chief editor of the paper. He begins by writing:

On March 11, 2011 an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter scale and a maximum intensity of 7 on the Mercalli scale struck off the coast of the Sanriku region at 2:46 pm. Triggering an enormous tsunami, a nuclear power plant accident and radioactive contamination, this earthquake left the Tohoku area in a state of devastation on an unprecedented scale.

He then goes on to write a passage which one can interpret as describing the current state of the area:

We who live in the Tohoku area are still living in the midst of the catastrophe.

Mr. Kimura and Mr. Terasawa will surely give us more details on the situation from their own perspectives.

A special report in the Kahoku Shinpo wrote, "Victims of the Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake started from zero with the slogan 'Ganbaro (Let's Work Hard) Kobe'. However, the victims of the earthquake that hit East Japan and the Tohoku area are starting from a place even before zero." From this observation, the report suggested a new slogan: "Hang in There".

Right now, our organization is thinking of ways to apply the sport of judo to express our solidarity and help the victims "hang in there". We will hear about some of those plans later today.

As you all know, SIJA humbly performs various functions under the spirit of judo, friendship and peace. Our activities, made possible by your regular support and cooperation, are about as consequential as a grain of sand. This can also be said about our contributions toward recovery from the recent disaster. However, we

will be grateful if we achieve our goal of accumulating enough grains of sand to make a hill and eventually a mountain of hope. SIJA is but a small nonprofit organization consisting for the most part of President Yamashita and myself as vice president, and operating out of a research office in a university, with the help of two ladies. In this sense, we are about as significant as grains of sand in the whole scheme of things, but we are able to pursue our activities thanks to the warm support of each and every one of you. Therefore, we ask for your continuing patronage and guidance in our humble efforts, through the spirit of judo, to build a hill and eventually a mountain of hope.

---Now we would like to begin Part I of the 11th SIJA symposium with a presentation from Mr. Toyoshi Terasawa. An alumnus of the Tokai University Judo Club, Mr. Terasawa is currently a senior advisor to the Toyosato Judo Club in Miyagi Prefecture.

Part I: Overcoming Disaster With the Spirit of Judo
– A Report by the Ishinomaki Judo Association in Miyagi Prefecture –

Toyoshi Terasawa

Prefectural Director of the Special Judo Renaissance Committee of the All Japan Judo Federation, CEO of Toyokura Corporation, Ltd.

Thank you for the kind introduction. My name is Toyoshi Terasawa. I travelled here on the Shinkansen Bullet Train, departing Miyagi at 3:26 PM. The season for autumn leaves is about to end in Sendai. I witnessed a very picturesque sunset when my train passed Fukushima, which was followed later on by beautiful views of Mt. Fuji when we approached Tokyo. The thought crossed my mind about whether the people of Fukushima are aware of how magnificent the sunset in their area is.

The cherry trees in Miyagi Prefecture blossom around the 10th of April every year, but I failed to notice them at all after the disaster on March 11. Although someone mentioned to me that the cherry trees were blooming, the flowers didn't generate any feelings within me. The heart is supposed to feel things

such as beauty and charm. As I travelled here on the bullet train, my mind was filled with thoughts of the suffering of the people of Fukushima and Miyagi.

My perspectives on life and the value of happiness has changed greatly since March 11.

I feel as if talking to you here in a brightly lit room and wearing warm clothing is a small blessing. During the disaster, there was no electricity, water or telephone service. After three or four days, I began receiving a ton of e-mails, and I wondered why people were making so much of a fuss. This is because we lived inland where all damage was due to the earthquake. We weren't able to watch television, so news of the tsunami reached us four or five days later. By chance, Hashimoto-sensei was able to contact us by phone, and I'll never forget the first thing he said: "Terasawa-san, are you all right? Please tell everyone that Hashimoto is okay, and then go help the others."

Minamisanriku-cho is town by the beautiful waters of Shizugawa Bay. A friend living there died. Many of the townspeople lost family members. Another friend of mine living there said, "I used to love the ocean, but now I hate it." Although he has to begin rebuilding his life at this very seaside town, his newborn hate for the ocean expresses his regret and emptiness at losing not only his house and his job, but his wife and his relatives as well.

Mr. Hashimoto just read an excerpt from a book published by Kahoku Shimpō. I would like to introduce you to another book about the disaster written by Kota Ishii and published by Shinchosha Publishing Co. titled *Corpses – Beyond the Earthquake and Tsunami*. This book is a collection of reports on the city employees, mortuary workers, firefighters, dentists, and military and coast guard officers who were in charge of collecting bodies in the town of Rikuzentakata. Let me read a passage from this book.

In the morgue, a dentist stood by as he watched a man collapsing in tears in front of the body of his wife who will never open her eyes, screaming, "Wake up already! I'm taking you home!" A social worker who was once a mortuary employee was talking to the body of a pregnant woman, saying, "You were able to keep your little baby warm, weren't you? You'll give birth to

this child in heaven.” He was relying on his previous work experience to apply makeup to the blackened corpse of this woman. A city employee of the lifetime sports department who was transferred to a body removal team witnessed family members wailing over lifeless bodies and painfully realized they wanted their loved ones to come home even if they were corpses.

The author who covered these people goes on to write:

Immediately after the disaster, media outlets raised the flag of recovery in unison with the phrase “Ganbaro (Let’s Work Hard), Japan!” However, as one living in the disaster area, I don’t believe the slogan is appropriate unless those who adopt it are willing to devote their flesh and blood to the cause because the people in the disaster area have seen an unimaginable number of deaths

On December 11, nine months will have passed since the disaster. Yet search and rescue bulletins are still being issued. Since I was born after World War II, I am only familiar with the notions of evacuation and the search for missing persons from what I’ve heard from my parents. However, these notions are an ongoing reality in the morgues of Miyagi Prefecture. Every page of the book I just mentioned is filled with tragic stories.

One section titled “The Victims: How are They Now?” talks about the current state of people in the disaster zones. The words of one 62-year-old victim epitomizes the reality of their present situation:

My only daughter died from illness two months before the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Then disaster struck while I was in the midst of mourning, and took away my husband and my home. Now I am living alone in a temporary housing facility in Kesenuma City. I am sad. I can’t sleep at night and I often break down in tears.

One of my judo students, who graduated Tokai University and is now a police officer, had a three-year-old child who went missing for 40 days and was finally found dead. Although I didn’t want to go, I attended the child’s wake. There I found the grandfather and other people actually rejoicing that they had found the body, which was later cremated

and buried. This struck me as absolutely surreal. However, the aftermath of the disaster is filled with such surreal situations.

During the supply shortage after the disaster, I learned firsthand about ration distributions, a concept I was only familiar with because of what my parents told me. The joy of discovering water running from the faucet, of finding electricity being restored, of having food delivered, of being able to fill my car with gasoline when I want to; each of these were events to be cherished. I began contemplating the meaning of happiness and came to the realization that

Yesterday, Prof. Kaori Yamaguchi of Tsukuba University held a judo class in Onagawa-cho. Before that, President Yamashita and Kosei Inoue held their own judo classes in the disaster zone. Many people have come to this area and our refugee facilities to offer moral support. They bring music, folk songs and what have you. I initially thought they’d be better off delivering supplies but then I began thinking.

Prof. Yamaguchi and I visited a refugee facility in Onagawa-cho during the heat of July. When Kimura-sensei called out to the seemingly bored and worried disaster victims living in sections partitioned off only by sheets of cardboard, crying, “The female Sanshiro is coming!”, people actually gathered around, taking pictures with this famous athlete and beaming with smiles. Witnessing this turn of events, I realized that encouragement could be brought by many different people coming to the disaster zone for many different purposes. I had to admit my initial convictions were wrong.

Supply requirements change as time goes on. The Tohoku region is still cold in March. The Japanese folk singer Aki Yashiro, who is originally from Kumamoto, donated thousands of tatami mats. Sayuri Ishikawa, another folk singer, raised spirits by performing traditional songs of the region in front of victims. These and other examples taught me the importance of various people trying to do something, anything, for the people in the disaster zone.

The schools in Miyagi are recovering. However, they are still in need of tatami mats. I hope you will continue donating mats and judogi to those who need

them.

I am currently the Prefectural Director of the Special Judo Renaissance Committee of the All Japan Judo Federation. Faced with a deteriorating situation where competitions were focusing increasingly on winning and losing and participants began ignoring basic manners, forgetting to clean up venues after tournaments and taunting referees, we created this committee ten years ago with President Yamashita as chair for the purpose of rediscovering the original spirit of judo. Having served its mission, the committee is disbanding this year but I feel that right now the idea of a renaissance is more important than ever.

Although we were witnesses to many a horrible scene after the disaster, I think we also saw many instances of people helping each other, confirming within us the truth that the people of Japan and human beings in general are inherently gentle and caring. This can also be explained in terms of judo. In other words, the essence behind such acts of kindness are akin to the judo spirit of “Mutual Welfare and Benefit” and “Using Your Energy for the Greater Good” that Master Jigoro Kano expounded when he first created this martial art. I have doubts about whether I have properly taught my students the spirit of helping each other to help ourselves during the 30 or more years I have been teaching judo. However, now more than ever, I strongly feel instructors including myself must take to heart that the fundamental philosophy behind judo will always be “Mutual Welfare and Benefit” and “Using Your Energy for the Greater Good”.

A friend living in Minamisanriku-cho said, “It’s time we made peace with the ocean.” I think this sentiment indicates people are ready to move on and start travelling the road to recovery. About a week ago, a newspaper conveyed the words of an 8th grade student from Sendai who said, “The earthquake was terrifying. The tsunami was terrifying. But even more terrifying is the prospect of forgetting the horrors of the East Japan disaster.” The fight for survival in the disaster zone continues. The prayers of each and every one of you become our energy, so I kindly ask for your ongoing cooperation. Thank you very much for your

kind attention.

--- Thank you very much. Next, we shall hear a report from Mr. Kiyonori Kimura, Chairman of the Ishinomaki Judo Association. Mr. Kimura owns a *dojo* which was swept away by the tsunami, but has now reopened. Before we hear from Mr. Kimura, we would like to present a five-minute segment from a DVD produced by Ishinomaki City.

Kiyonori Kimura

Chairman of the Ishinomaki Judo Association Director of the Kimura Dojo, Vice Chair of the Ishinomaki City Physical Education Association, Director of the Ishinomaki Boy's Sports Group

(Narration from the video clip)

...about 20 minutes after the earthquake hit, the water started to rise to the point where we couldn't see the bay. Ten minutes later the water began receding quickly. The channel was completely empty 40 minutes after the earthquake, and then the tsunami came roaring in and collided with the town in front of my eyes. My knees were shaking while I watched and I couldn't believe what was happening.

...looking toward the ocean from the balcony, I could see black waves rushing in with tremendous speed. I think it was around 3:50 PM when I saw what I think was the second or third wave. The black ocean, the white falling snow, the red flames and the dirty grey smoke: it was all like a scene from hell.

--- I apologize that due to time restrictions we can't show you more of the video. Mr. Kimura, please.

Thank you for the kind introduction. My name is Kiyonori Kimura and I am involved in judo and sports in general as a member of the Ishinomaki Judo Association and the City Physical Education Association. I have also managed my own dojo for 32 years. I would like to thank Yamashita-sensei for giving me this opportunity to speak to you today.

We just watched a video clip of the great tsunami and the disaster area on the coast of the Ishinomaki area. The major earthquake originating off the coast with a magnitude of 9 on the Richter scale that hit at 2:46 PM on March 11, and the immense tsunami that followed, resulted in catastrophic destruction over an

expansive area of the coastline centering around Ishinomaki and covering three prefectures in the Tohoku region. Within the coastal area of Ishinomaki, the township of Nishiyama was hit hardest, suffering 8,000 dead and missing. Many victims who lost their families and houses are now both physically and mentally at the end of their tether, feeling as if they have lost any reason to keep on living.

Consequently, reconstruction and resurrection of the affected areas has become the center of attention throughout the world and the global community has extended a warm hand of help.

Located inland at a certain distance away from the city center of Ishinomaki on the coastline, my home was hit by the tsunami about a couple of hours after the earthquake at around 5:00 PM in the evening amidst the descent of large snowflakes. The waves kept rolling in at a constant rate and failed to recede, I believe, throughout the night. Flooding on the road in front of my dojo reached a height of 1.5 meters, and although the foundation of the dojo is built rather high, the water level inside remained at about 60 cm above the floor for four days. I think it took about a week for the waters to recede. Many of my friends and my students and their parents who were concerned about the welfare of the dojo paid visits. One of them expressed the unimaginable scale of the tsunami by telling me, "I couldn't go any further on my way to your place because of the flooding."

All of my students and their family members fortunately survived the tsunami, but word of many casualties among other judo friends or their children or family members made me cry uncontrollably.

Two of my students were at Okawa Elementary School, which was covered extensively on television and in the newspapers. They were saved thanks to wise decisions by their mother who went to the school to take them home. The mother describes the situation in the following passage:

The earthquake hit at 2:46 PM on March 11. I reached the field of the school from my home, located in the upstream area of Kitagawa River, at around 3:10 PM. The road to the school was snapped broken by a large crack. More than 200 students and local

residents gathered on the school field. Teachers' heads were wet from heavy snowfall. I will never forget a scene where the assistant principle pointed to the mountains behind the school and asked the residents on the field, "Are those mountains safe for the children to climb? Or are they susceptible to landslides?" No one responded. Around 3:20 PM after I got the kids into the car and drove away, a police officer stopped me just before a crack in the road immediately across the Shin-Kitagawa Bridge and told me to return to the school. But I just wanted to go home. The officer, who wanted me to concede, and I got into an argument which ended with my being told to do what I like and the hell with it. It was just after I drove on and returned home when I heard people from the school shouting, "A tsunami! A tsunami is coming!" The shouts were coming from cars speeding up the road towards the upstream area of Kitagawa River. Hearing those warnings, we immediately headed by car for the mountains behind the school. Although the tsunami didn't reach the neighborhood where my home is located, we spent two nights inside the car in the mountains because of numerous massive aftershocks and perpetual tsunami alerts.

I learned about the tragedy at Okawa Elementary School from an acquaintance three days after the earthquake. Seventy-four students, or 70 percent of the entire school, were either dead or missing. A majority of the 34 survivors survived because their parents came to take them home. Ten of the 11 teachers were either dead or missing. Ninety-three residents who came to the school for refuge were either dead or missing. Students of different grades were playing together before the disaster, as they usually do because of the smaller enrollment population compared to other schools in the city. I have four children and our home is a gathering place for kids from other neighborhoods who come after school on weekdays. Our place becomes filled with smiling kids who sometimes turn rowdy and get bawled out by grandfather. But I haven't heard the voices of children at all since the disaster. Everywhere I look, there are no kids and the only young voices I hear are from my own children. I feel as if I'm still in a dream in which

I'm not yet ready to accept reality. My daughter's preexisting condition has worsened since the disaster and the doctor has prohibited her from participating in any strenuous exercise. My second oldest son still can't bear looking at pictures and watching DVDs of his friends. He was always a rambunctious boy, almost to the point of being unmanageable, and constantly the center of attention during play, but one day his friends suddenly died. What are we adults to do, witnessing the cruel reality that struck a child who hasn't even reached his tenth birthday? All we can do is look after him. Eight months have passed since the disaster, and the city is gradually returning to its previous state. This industriousness of human beings amazes me, but at the same time, when I'm encouraged by other people to hang in there and keep hope alive, I just don't know how to respond because I'm thinking of how the memory of Okawa Elementary School seems to have been left behind and forgotten. Sometimes I end up complaining, saying I have no idea what I'm supposed to do. But the parents and children who survived have no choice but to hang in there and move on. I do smile on a daily basis, but when I put my feeling to paper I am flooded with sad memories and the words turn out to be bitter. So I beg of you not to forget the children of Okawa Elementary School, three years, five years or even a decade from now...

That was a passage written by a mother of one of my students. The police officer who ordered her to return to the school was swept away by the tsunami. She also writes about other unbearably painful recollections such as the story of a person who survived the tsunami only to freeze to death in the cold weather.

Many children in the affected areas are still living with psychological wounds and suffering from extreme anxiety. In the midst of the chaos immediately after the disaster, the Ishinomaki Physical Education Association determined the safety of our board members and held a meeting in which we pledged to help revitalize the city through sports. We formed the Ishinomaki General Sports Club on April 27. Since almost all dojos and training facilities are still unusable, the Ishinomaki Judo Association resumed practices around the middle of March by using a dojo

at a local senior high school and organizing training procedures that supersede rank groups. Renovations at my dojo were completed by August, and we were able to install tatami mats and resume practice as usual on the first day of September. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who supported us and offered words of reassurance during our recovery.

President Yamashita managed to take time from his busy schedule to visit Ishinomaki in June and November. The sight of disaster victims pained him greatly. He made a courtesy call to the Mayor of Ishinomaki and also met with and offered encouragement to many other people including officials involved in physical education, people in the judo world and children in general. Furthermore, SIJA sponsored an event called "A Special Judo Program to Cheer Up the Children of Ishinomaki". In this event, President Yamashita talked about the spirit of judo, teaching everyone that judo begins with a formal bow and ends with a formal bow. Mr. Kosei Inoue also participated and together with President Yamashita, demonstrated world-class techniques in a practical training session. I believe the judo class emboldened and energized the children who attended. I am confident they will overcome the adversities of the disaster and work hard toward realizing their dreams, whatever they may be.

The Ishinomaki Physical Education Association received generous donations from the Qingdao Judo Association in China as well as from Russian athletes via SIJA. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them sincerely for their warm benevolence. We will invest these funds with due respect toward the restoration and recovery of Ishinomaki through judo-related activities.

We also received heartwarming aid from many Tokai University Judo Club alumni; for instance, Mr. Kazutaka Hayashida, a teacher at Tokai University Sagami Senior High School, travelled all the way from Kanagawa Prefecture to deliver tatami mats in person. Our city established the Ishinomaki Budo Council in October and declared Ishinomaki as "The City of Budo" in November. Media outlets from around the

world reported how the Japanese people, despite living under extreme conditions, managed to politely share limited food and water supplies without rioting or looting. I believe this is due to a uniquely Japanese spirit that has been quietly cultivated within all of us. It is said that at this core of this spirit is the budo tradition of beginning and ending events with a formal bow. The Ishinomaki Budo Council believes the era we live in makes it even more imperative for us to pass down our extraordinary spiritual culture, and has consequently adopted this task as our principle mission. The council is a cooperative effort between eight budo-related organizations participating in the Ishinomaki Physical Education Association, which have joined forces across different martial arts categories and styles to advance and endow to the children of the next generation a traditional culture valuing courage, hope, decorum and harmony.

Tokyo Prefecture is promoting its bid for the 2020 Olympics as a symbol of recovery from disaster. Ishinomaki is preparing to provide support and cooperation for Tokyo's bid. If the bid is successful, we may be able to construct a stadium symbolizing recovery of this region from catastrophic damage and host Olympic events there. Realization of this dream would greatly benefit the restoration of devastated areas in the Tohoku region.

I would like to end my report by extending my gratitude to President Yamashita of SIJA and many others. Thank you.

--- Thank you.

Now we will move on to Part II of this symposium. Thanks to your support and understanding, this will be the second time for SIJA to hold an exchange session.

In this session, President Yamashita will talk about a side of Russia he has been unable to divulge in the past. His lecture is titled "Japanese-Russian Exchange Through Judo: From Prof. Shigeyoshi Matsumae to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin". President Yamashita, please.

Part II : Japanese-Russian Exchange Through Judo: From Prof. Shigeyoshi Matsumae to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin

Yasuhiro Yamashita

President of the Solidarity of International Judo Association, Board Member and Vice President of Tokai University, Dean of the Tokai University School of Physical Education

Thank you so much for supporting our nonprofit organization on a regular basis. I am grateful that so many of you have taken time out of your busy year-end schedules to attend this symposium. I would also like to express my gratitude toward Kimura-sensei and Terasawa-sensei for their valuable presentations.

We held a judo course in Ishinomaki with the help of Kimura-sensei and Mr. Terasawa-sensei. Our association is committed to doing as much as possible to aid the victims of the disaster, and I kindly ask for your support in our efforts.

Kimura-sensei mentioned in his talk that a friend from Russia contacted me immediately after the disaster. This friend told me to open a bank account because athletes in Russia, especially those involved in judo, wanted to send donations. As with these Russian athletes, people around the world active not only in judo but in many other sports and fields such as culture and the arts offered their passionate support for recovery from the disaster. I sincerely hope that East Japan will recover as soon as possible, and I believe it is important for all Japanese to come together in heart and mind in order to take positive action.

Today, I would like to talk about Japanese-Russian relations. Thanks to our many association members and corporate sponsors, we have been able to engage in many activities to this day, a very important one being exchange with Russia. Normally, I would avoid talking about the matters I will describe today. However, since so many of you support our association it seems appropriate to be able to do so today.

Prof. Shigeyoshi Matsumae

One person who must be mentioned when we talk about our international relations is Prof. Shigeyoshi

Matsumae, the founder of Tokai University. Born in Kumamoto Prefecture, Matsumae-sensei loved judo dearly. I learned later on in my life that I was like a grandson to him; he indeed helped me experience many things.

Before he died, he frequently told me, “Yamashita, to this day I never wanted to encourage you just for the sake of helping you win competitions. I also wanted to see you promote international friendship and goodwill through judo, a martial art born and raised in Japan. And that’s not all. I want you to become a person who can contribute to global peace through sports. I’m saying this because I want you to understand the real intentions behind my encouraging you all this time.”

When I was young, I could understand things intellectually but I had no idea what I myself was capable of. But thanks to the support of many people, I’m now working actively as a member of this nonprofit organization I established. To this extent, I think I’ve been able to repay Matsumae-sensei’s nurturing fondness toward me and I feel as if his spirit is constantly looking after my well being. I sometimes wonder what he would do in times like these.

Matsumae-sensei would occasionally ask me, “Why do you think we have relations with Russia?” I obviously didn’t know the answer. He would then answer his own question by saying, “I’m against communism and socialism. They don’t conform to my own ideology. But across the Sea of Japan is a great big country called the Soviet Union. Right now in Japan, we’re always looking toward America for academics and culture. I think Japan will eventually hit a dead end if this situation continues. That’s why we need to have at least some connection with the Soviet Union through exchange in academics, culture, the arts and sports. Without doing so, Japan risks undergoing serious setbacks. Hence, I established the Japan Cultural Association to make small but significant connections with the Soviet Union.”

Another memory involves the Moscow Olympics held 31 years ago. Japan boycotted the Moscow Olympics. However, Matsumae-sensei asked me to come along with him to Moscow to observe the games, saying it would be a good way to prepare for the next

Olympics if I were to qualify. While we were in Russia, Matsumae-sensei was to attend a very important meeting with Mr. Ivan Ivanovich Kovalenko, the Soviet director in charge of Japanese affairs at the time, and he actually told me to come with him. Two of my mentors, Nobuyuki Sato-sensei and Isao Inokuma-sensei, had also travelled to Moscow with us to enjoy the games, and I assumed they were coming to this meeting with the Soviet official as well. To my surprise, the only people who went were President Matsumae, an interpreter, the president’s secretary and myself. Inokuma-sensei and Sato-sensei weren’t invited. Being only 23 years old at the time, I had no clue why I was there at that serious meeting, but afterwards the secretary explained the reason I was invited by saying, “Yamashita, do you know why you were asked to tag along? It’s because Matsumae-sensei hopes that one day you will play the role he’s in now by engaging in international relations through sports, and he wants you to start gaining experience of any kind. I think Matsumae-sensei’s intentions in letting you sit in on this important negotiation with the Soviets was to provide you with a chance to learn.”

I can clearly remember what actually transpired while I am talking right now. Since Matsumae-sensei was that kind of an international man, at Tokai University I was always hearing phrases such as “friendly international exchange”, “friendship and goodwill” as well as “exchange with foreign cultures”. Growing up in that environment, I never viewed my opponents as enemies when I was an active competitor and during my appointment as manager of the Japanese national team. Although they were rivals who I fought on the mat, I also connected with my opponents as colleagues who were striving toward the same goal in the field of judo.

When I was manager of the national team, we held a Japanese-Russian joint training camp. At the time, the Russian coaches invited me to come with them to a *banya*, a Russian sauna. After soaking in the *banya*, we bathed in the waters of the Yenisei River and enjoyed a conversation about sports over shots of vodka. This is an example of how, during my active years, I considered the opponents I fought on the

tatami mat to be comrades away from the mat.

I believe these kinds of relations with fellow judo athletes in my years as a competitor greatly benefited me in my interactions with Prime Minister Putin.

My first encounter with Prime Minister Putin

In 1998, I received a letter from my friend Mr. Vladimir Chestakov who was chairman of the Russian Judo Association at the time. In the letter, he asked me to send two judogis for him and someone named Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. I replied that a Japanese coach on the national team would bring the uniforms with him when the team travelled to Russia next January for an international tournament.

Since they had the same names, I thought Chestakov and Putin were relatives. I talked with the Japanese coach and gave him the two uniforms. Security was tight on the day of the tournament and there was tension in the air at the venue because Putin, who was then acting president, was coming to observe the competitions. When the opening ceremony began, there was an announcement that “a great world judo champion has delivered an important present to a great Russian politician.” The Japanese team members had no idea what was going on since the announcement was in Russian. When the Japanese coach was asked to step forward, they finally discovered that the recipient was acting president Vladimir Putin.

President Putin visited Japan in his official capacity in September 2000. His stay was only half a day, and under normal circumstances he would have been taken on a tour of some high-tech facility. However, President Putin insisted on going to the Kodokan. This was to be my first encounter with the president.

Putin was scheduled to fly from Haneda Airport to New York for a meeting after he left the Kodokan. The Japanese Foreign Ministry told us they didn't want President Putin to change into a judogi because of the possibility of sudden alterations in the schedule. Roadblocks and other preparations had all been set. We decided do what we could to heed the request of the Foreign Ministry, but when I welcomed the president I

found he was carrying his judogi.

His first words to me were, “Where do I change?” Now there was no way I could have told him he wasn't supposed to change, so I ushered him to the locker room. He was also planning to speak with Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori at our dojo. Later on, the president participated in an extremely memorable demonstration match with the Kodokan director who held the rank of *rokudan* at the time. Nobody there will ever forget what the president said.

He started out by remarking, “When I come to the Kodokan, I feel as if I have returned to my own house. I believe this sentiment is shared by judoka throughout the world. This is because the Kodokan is my second home. Although the fact that judo is now being practiced all over the world is impressive in itself, even more important is how Japanese culture is being conveyed all over the globe through judo. Today, I am not your guest. I am your colleague in judo. I heard that Mr. Mori right next to me is a ballgame person, so today he is actually our guest.” At the end, Kodokan director Yukimitsu Kano offered the president a *rokudan* rank certification and a red and white *obi*. President Putin was wearing a black *obi*, but official rules require *nanadan* and *hachidan* rank holders to wear red and white *obi*. However, when the president was asked to don this red and white *obi*, he refused and an awkward silence filled the room. Putin then explained, “I am a judoka and I thoroughly understand the weight of the *rokudan* rank. Unfortunately, I'm still haven't reach that level yet. I will return to Russia, practice harder and harder, and try to earn the right to wear this *obi* as soon as possible.” We were all stunned by his comment. I was left with the impression that as a first-class politician, he has the ability to win people's hearts with his words. Of course, he needs to back up his words with actions or else promise will soon turn into disappointment. In this manner, my first encounter with President Putin was astonishing.

The second time I met him was when he held an event called the Putin Cup in which he invited judoka throughout the world to come to Russian to compete. I headed the Japanese team that was invited. The president had been training fiercely, and although it

wasn't our intention to defer to the home country team, the Russians ended up beating us in the final match after a closely fought bout.

At the post-tournament reception, we waited and waited for the president to appear until we were ready to give up. He did eventually show up about an hour late. According to a Russian friend of mine, the president had to attend four parties that night. One was a wrap party for parking attendants and other production staff. Another was for Russian judo executives and referees. A third was with Russian VIPs. The last one was with the judoka from around the world who participated in the tournament. The president attended each party, with ours being the last.

I stood in a long line of people, waiting my turn to thank him for visiting the Kodokan in September. When I finally met him, I raised a shot of vodka and said, "*Za zdorovie!*" He grinned and he replied, "*Kanpai!*" in Japanese. I would have preferred to talk with him a while longer, if it were not for the many people waiting behind me. Our second meeting was short, but still left a strong impression within me.

Acting as a bridge between Japan and Russia

Later on, my work gradually took me in an unexpected direction.

It all started in November 2002 when two officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yasuo Saito, then Director-General of the European Affairs Bureau and current Japanese ambassador to France, and Mr. Toyohisa Kozuki, then Director of the Russian Division and current Deputy Director-General of the European Affairs Bureau, told me, "If possible we would like you to give us some advice on how Prime Minister Koizumi should deal with President Putin when he visits Russia next January. It's our understanding that the president is a devoted judo enthusiast."

I learned a while later from Former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, who took a great liking to me, that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's encounter with the president at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference did not go very well. Apparently, the former premier offered some advice to

the prime minister by saying, "It might be a good idea to raise an anecdote about judo, a sport which the president is fond of. Send someone to Yamashita to get some recommendations."

Talking over dinner, Mr. Saito, Mr. Kozuki and I came up with three ideas involving judo to help Prime Minister Koizumi bond with the president when he travels to Russia in January. The first was a proposal to hold a joint Japanese-Russian training camp in preparation for the 2004 Athens Olympics. The prime minister would tell the president that Yamashita will take care of arrangements for this initiative. The second idea was for the prime minister to take me to an event celebrating the 300th anniversary of Saint Petersburg to be held around the end of May 2003, so we could all talk about judo. This idea included holding a meeting of heads of state at the president's dojo. The third idea was to push for a Japanese translation of a book the president wrote titled *Studying Judo with Vladimir Putin*. Already translated into Italian and German, I would be in charge of writing a promotional blurb for the prospective Japanese version.

Concluding that judo would be a perfect conversational topic when meeting the president, the planned summit between Prime Minister Koizumi and President Putin finally took place at the president's dojo. The plan was for the two of them to drop in while I was instructing Russian athletes. Although many heads of state attended the festivities commemorating the 300th anniversary of Saint Petersburg, United States President George Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi were the only leaders granted the privilege of an individual meeting with President Putin. This was my third encounter with the president.

More unexpected developments continued to happen.

Apologizing in advance to Ambassador Gotaro Ogawa who is present today, I have to say the people at the Foreign Ministry are really ridiculous in some aspects. For instance, they selected me to be a member of a Japanese and Russian committee of senior advisors. This bilateral group was formed to discuss how our two countries should promote exchange through the Koizumi-Putin summit. The committee

was chaired by then Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and then Moscow Mayor Yuri Mikhaylovich Luzhkov. Among the six Japanese selected as senior advisors were then Keidanren Chairman Hiroshi Okuda and, for some inexplicable reason, me. I've always felt out of place in every important meeting I've attended. One judo expert remarked, "What? A senior advisor for Japanese-Russian affairs? I always thought you were a senior citizen from Kumamoto Prefecture." Any way you look at it, I just don't look like a senior advisor. However, I have to admit it was very meaningful experience.

I'd like to add a footnote to this story. On the day before the summit, an NHK program called "Good Morning! Japan" aired an interview of President Putin by a correspondent named Kazuo Kobayashi. The president's vacation home has an exclusive dojo, in which stands a bronze statue of Master Jigoro Kano, the father of judo. In the segment, Mr. Kobayashi mentioned he committed a terribly embarrassing error in etiquette. When ushered into the dojo by the president, Mr. Kobayashi just walked right in. However, when the president followed he bowed deeply before setting foot inside. Mr. Kobayashi said that failing to bow was the most embarrassing error he has made in his whole life. Leaving the dojo, Mr. Kobayashi performed the deepest bow he possibly could. An interesting anecdote.

Although judo is my sole instrument for assisting Japanese-Russian diplomacy, my involvement in such efforts increased at an alarming rate. President Putin returned to Japan in 2005. On this trip, I met him the day before his summit with Prime Minister Koizumi. In front of hoards of reporters from around the world, I offered the president one of my treasures: an original manuscript written by Master Jigoro Kano on the principles of judo titled Mutual Welfare and Benefit. When I bestowed this present, I said, "I am giving this to you in the hope that Japan and Russia will work together toward our mutual welfare and benefit." Although this manuscript is virtually meaningless to those who have no interest in judo, the president was astounded. His immediate reply was humorous: "This is a copy, right? It's not real, isn't it?"

I tried to look proud and said, "Yes, it's real." But catching me completely by surprise, he answered, "I can't claim such a thing as my own." The Russians invited me to a banquet they were hosting at a steakhouse in Roppongi Hills. It was small gathering with about seven people. The only dish the president ate was a special order of sushi. When I arrived, he was studying the menu earnestly while he ordered. While everyone else enjoyed champagne, the president sipped hot sake. I haven't witnessed many instances of foreigners drinking hot sake. I was later told that Japanese cuisine was gaining popularity in Russia, so I thought it might be fashionable to drink hot sake when the weather is cold in their country. I asked the president if he liked hot sake. Coming from a country much colder than Japan, he replied, "You know, Yamashita-san, hot sake really warms you up when it's chilly." The president sent me an invitation immediately after he returned home, I believe, to repay me for the manuscript I gave him. In his letter, he wrote, "I want to create an opportunity where you and I will wear judogi and instruct children. If we record this event on DVD, I think we can help popularize judo in Russia. By the way, you and I are both getting old, so I'll be grateful if you bring some younger judo competitors."

This is a picture of that event. We are at the dojo where the Koizumi-Putin summit took place, along with Kosei Inoue after the children's training session, and I am shaking hands with the president. Afterwards, the president invited us to an Italian restaurant. We were seated not in a private room, but at a table amidst the hustle and bustle of many other ordinary customers, making me concerned for the president's safety. An hour and a half after enjoying our food, I accompanied the president to the exit to bid him farewell and then returned to our table. To my surprise, the entire restaurant was suddenly empty. Maybe they were all fake customers.

The seven people who came to the restaurant were the president, four other Russians, Kosei Inoue and myself. I still clearly remember the talk the president gave. He said, "Yamashita-san, although many difficult issues exist in the relationship between Japan

and Russia, beyond these issues there are no more problems and I have absolutely no intention of creating other problems in the future., so please don't worry. If both countries put their heads together, we can solve these current issues and then there won't be any more problems. So let's make a toast!"

The person sitting next to me at the table was the current Russian President Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev, who at the time was First Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of Gazprom. When I described the dinner to the Japanese consul general in Saint Petersburg, he exclaimed, "Really!?! Medvedev is supposed to be the leading candidate for the next president!" I replied, "No, you must be mistaken. He didn't seem like that kind of person." President Medvedev was probably about 43 years old at the time, and kept smiling without saying a word all throughout the dinner. I just couldn't imagine him being the next president, but the consul general said he will be when I showed his photo to him the next day.

Being involved in many exchange efforts with Russia, it is my sincere hope that we can put our minds together to solve the issues between us and become trusting partners. I believe I was able to convey at the very least the essence of this hope to the president.

With the Olympic team that never was

In May 2008, SIJA began preparations to take six of the seven original members of the 1980 Moscow Olympics national judo team that never was, to Russia. We wanted them to see the stadiums they would have competed in and meet the opponents they would have faced. We were also willing to wear judogi and coach practice sessions if the Russian wished.

Pushing our aging bodies to the limit, we recorded our two-day coaching session in Moscow on DVD. I had a single, important request at that time which I made to a friend of President Putin. I said, "I've already met the president three times. Now I want to give the other members a chance to meet him, if only for a minute. Is this possible?" Although he constantly smiled when we talked, the president's friend suddenly frowned instead. He replied, "The timing is really bad because he's

changing position from president to prime minister. I'll try my best, but I don't think it will happen."

When we arrived in Russia, we were told we had an important message. The venue for the banquet scheduled for the following day had been changed. President Putin was instead going to host a banquet at the state guesthouse. As a result, the members of the national team that never was were able to mingle with the president and experience an enjoyable dinner.

The man who made this possible, Mr. Vladimir Chestakov, is not only the president's friend but his judo mentor as well. The two have even written a book together. The president was planning to release the names of the members of the new cabinet the next day. I marveled at how easygoing he was despite the serious responsibilities he had to deal with. In other words, attending a banquet the night before naming his next cabinet members is a completely unthinkable situation. The president displayed the same carefree attitude at the steakhouse dinner the Russians hosted in Japan. All of a sudden, he was saying, "Hey, let's call the Japanese ambassador." At the time, Japanese Ambassador to Russia Issei Nomura was supposed to attend a meeting to prepare for the summit on the following day, but at the behest of the president he abruptly left the Japanese prime minister's residence and came to the steakhouse. I don't believe it's possible to be so laid back under normal circumstances.

This is the president's book I was talking about, titled *Studying Judo with Vladimir Putin*. I never imagined he would become president of Russia when he first published this book. In 2000, there was talk of my writing a promotional blurb for the Japanese version. Although the book has been translated into Italian, German, French and English, finding the right timing to release the Japanese version was not a simple task. However, Asahi Shimbun finally published a Japanese translation under the title of *Putin and the Spirit of Judo*, which also included a section where Kazuo Kobayashi and I write about how we personally view Prime Minister Putin.

Officials at Mitsui and Co. pledged their cooperation, saying that if the publication party for the Japanese version is on the right date, Prime Minister

Putin will definitely come during his visit to Japan. The book was released in April, and the prime minister's first visit to Japan was to begin on May 11. This meant that if we held the party on May 11, the prime minister could attend without any problem. But I later learned that the prime minister was planning to stay in Japan for only 24 hours. He would arrive at Haneda Airport at 10:00 PM on May 11 and then depart for Ulan Bator, Mongolia, at 10:00 PM the following night immediately after a banquet with Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso. I received a message around the end of April asking me if the publication party could be held at 10:00 PM on May 12, because the prime minister wanted to attend. I had no clue how to respond so I consulted the Japanese Foreign Ministry. But the Ministry said they didn't know anything either, except for the fact that the prime minister would depart Haneda at 10:00 on May 12. At that point, I thought the date in the message was incorrect, but as it turned out Prime Minister Putin was going to depart Haneda for Mongolia at 10:00 AM on May 13.

The All Japan Judo Tournament was held on April 29, before the prime minister's arrival. At this event, I happened to come across the sumo wrestler Asashoryu who said, "What on earth are you doing, Yamashita-san? Thanks to you, Prime Minister Putin is coming to Mongolia one day late." I replied in surprise, "What? How did you know that?" "I'm a close friend of the president of Mongolia," he answered. In this manner, I realized I had to feel extremely fortunate that the prime minister was attending the publication party in the midst of his hectic schedule.

As one can imagine, the prime minister's security detail was under tremendous stress. We received gifts of many flowers for the prime minister, but when the security detail came to the party venue a couple of hours in advance of his arrival, they told us we had to get rid of the lilies because he probably won't like their strong fragrance. Therefore, we removed all lilies from the bouquets. In addition, Tokai University was planning to offer the prime minister a PhD degree at the party, but the security detail said that although they had heard of the plans the prime minister had yet

to decide whether to accept. If the prime minister failed to make a gesture indicating he would accept the degree, we had to assume he wouldn't take the diploma. In that case, I would receive the diploma as his representative. These are just a couple of examples of how the people surrounding the prime minister could almost be described as overprotective.

In the end, though, the prime minister turned out to be in a good mood at the party, even talking about Prime Minister Aso. In his final comment, he said, "I received an honorary PhD degree from Tokai University today, and I interpret this gesture to mean I have to toil harder in the days to come to promote relations between Japan and Russia. I pledge to give this goal my best effort." Again, I was impressed at how politicians are adept at winning hearts through their remarks.

The prime minister spent about an hour at the party. When I walked him to the exit, he asked if we could talk in private. To tell you the truth, I was under a lot of pressure from the Japan Olympic Committee to persuade the prime minister to support Japan's bid for the 2016 Olympics. I was ready to give up because I didn't get the chance to speak to him about this matter during the party, but now a perfect opportunity had arrived. The prime minister, the CEO of Gazprom and I talked for about half an hour through two interpreters, one of them being a student of mine named Asai and the other a member of the Russian delegation. Deciding my chance had come, I mentioned in a serious tone that I had one request. The prime minister who had been lounging in the chair abruptly leaned forward intently. "I would like to ask your support for Tokyo's bid for the Olympics," I said. The smile on the prime minister's face suddenly disappeared and his expression went blank. He then instructed the interpreter to take detailed notes. Although it might have only been a considerate gesture on the part of the prime minister, I was extremely thankful that he responded to my request with the utmost sincerity.

The intensifying relationship between Japan and Russia

I began to understand around then that people in Japan and elsewhere want to give good news to those at the highest levels. Things tend to go smoothly when those in charge are in a good mood. SIJA is able to operate thanks to support from our official members and corporate sponsors. News of anything we do that pleases Prime Minister Putin, even the most trivial of activities, reaches people in the highest level. Consequently, I believe our humble activities may have some beneficial effects.

When I offered him the manuscript written by Master Jigoro Kano, one of the first things then President Putin did was thank SIJA on behalf of the citizens of Russia for our plans to invite judoka from the city of Beslan of the Republic of North Ossetia, which had recently suffered from acts of terrorism, to Japan as a means of offering moral support. These plans were for December, but my meeting with the president was in November. "Wow, I wonder how he knew," I said to myself. This convinced me that judo can indeed help Japanese-Russian relations.

Last March, when Mitsui and Co. invited me to teach a flagship course at Saint Petersburg State University, the prime minister's office asked me to arrive in Russia one day early for a meeting. That was completely out of the question so I respectfully declined. Since the prime minister had to travel to India to deal with a nuclear power plant agreement, they suggested I meet with him during my lecture at the university after he returns. Again, I had to decline because I couldn't cancel the class. At that point, I was scolded for rejecting the prime minister twice. I was able to accept the third request, which involved meeting at the president's residence after I finished lecturing. Here is how that meeting transpired.

In order to get to the meeting on time at 9:00 PM, my transportation both in Saint Petersburg and Moscow was led by police cars that raced wildly through the snow-covered streets of the two cities. I managed to get to my destination on time, but then I had to wait two more hours during which Mr. Chestakov began to doze off, convinced that the prime minister had already gone home. But at 11:30 PM, someone told us it was time and we were guided to the

prime minister's room.

I learned afterward that the prime minister wanted to meet me after he had taken care of all his work. He is apparently very efficient at night.

Every time I had met him in the past, the only topic we discussed was judo. This time around, however, I decided we had better move on to different subjects and I was mustering up the courage to ask him what I could do to help Japan and Russia become true friends. But the words that subsequently came out of my mouth were, "There has been a change in administration in Japan, and hopefully this will lead to better relationships than before between our countries." Prime Minister Putin responded by lecturing passionately, but although the interpreter, a person named Ilichev, was very good at speaking Japanese, I couldn't understand what was being said. It may have been the case that the interpreter neglected to translate inconvenient details. Later on, I confirmed the contents of the conversation with Mr. Chestakov and contacted the Japanese embassy. The embassy asked whether they should release the news that I met with the prime minister to the media. I told them not to because I didn't want to be caught up in a hassle, but the following day a picture of the prime minister and myself taken on the previous night was posted on the prime minister's website.

For three years beginning in 2007, we invited people involved in the Russian judo world to Japan with help from the Japanese Foreign Ministry. From Beslan in the Republic of North Ossetia, we welcomed children who had lost their parents to terrorist gunfire or still had bullets from gunshot wounds stuck in their bodies. In our dealings with Saint Petersburg, we received an e-mail message saying they would like to invite judo competitors from Fukushima to Russia. I believe this gesture is meant to repay us for bringing the Beslan team to Japan and offering them with encouragement.

This is a school where more than 300 children were killed by an act of terrorism. The SIJA donation of tatami mats to this school was televised in Russia. In addition to me, Kosei Inoue-sensei, Katsuhiko Kashiwazaki-sensei and other individuals have

travelled to Russia to supervise training sessions. Furthermore, the lecture featuring Mr. Anatoly Rakhlin was very popular.

We will invite two Russian coaches to Japan from November of this year to May of next year. This program was originally planned for March, but had to be postponed due to slow progress in recovery from the disaster as well as in resolution of the nuclear power plant issue. The program originated from an idea from Mr. Rakhlin who said, "Even if you train coaches thoroughly in Japan, they soon forget what they learned when they return to Russia. That's why I think you should to accept female judo instructors who will lead the next generation, and give them lessons about various aspects of Japanese culture which they can apply back home." This program is a way of realizing Mr. Rakhlin's passion.

Finally, let me touch upon why the prime minister is so fond of judo and me. Many of you may think this is because I am a world-class judoka, but this is not the case. During the Cold War, many of the prime minister's judo colleagues visited Tokai University. Although they were treated with disrespect elsewhere in those days, Tokai University welcomed them with open arms, someone said, "with Yamashita playing a central role." My presence is rooted in the feelings these Russian judoka have toward Japanese and Tokai judo. I believe this is the main reason why the prime minister is so fond of me.

Russia is a huge country located next to Japan. I hope the day will come when both our countries can understand each other, cooperate and work together to bring peace not only to Russia and Japan, but to the entire world as well. Judo is a humble activity, but I hope it can continue to be a tool to promote exchange.

I apologize for my disorganized presentation, and extend my sincere gratitude for keenly listening to my talk. Thank you for your kind attention.

---Thank you very much. Today we heard different perspectives with different titles in Parts I and II. I hope the presentations will remain in your memories.

Since so many SIJA members have come to attend this symposium, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce coaches and athletes whose arrival was

postponed due to the effects of last year's disaster, but have now managed to travel from abroad to participate in training. We were finally able to accept them last December after the delay.

Next to me is Adyel Lezmi from Israel. He will stay in Japan until December 14 and study tournaments and other elements of judo. In the future, he wants to be a coach at the dojo his father manages in Israel. In the middle is Khaled Abu Remalah from Palestine. He is the senior coach of the Palestine national team, and possess an international referee license. Although he has visited many places around the world, this is his first time in Japan.

Finally, I would like to introduce a woman named Fahima Rezayee from Afghanistan. We first heard about her three years ago. Vice President Hashimoto read an article on her published in the morning edition of the Asahi Shimbun newspaper. The article described how Fahima began practicing judo in Afghanistan and working toward participation in the Olympics, but had to relocate to the neighboring country of Pakistan due to the adverse training environment in her home country. She says her dream is to bring peace to Afghanistan through judo and her hopes for being invited to Tokai University finally came true this year. SIJA is especially fortunate to have discovered Fahima; we searched hard for Fahima and finally found her. She will study at Tokai University along with two female Russian coaches until the end of May.

Again, I would like to thank all for you taking time out of your busy schedules to participate in this event. Please give a round of applause to Mr. Terasawa and Mr. Kimura. Although both of you will surely experience busier times in the days to come, we hope you will prosper in good health.