

The Human Revolution Vol. XII By Ho Goku

The Human Revolution is a novel based on fact, written by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda under the pen name Ho Goku. It recounts the early days of the Soka Gakkai in Japan under the second president, Josei Toda, President Ikeda's mentor. The character of Shin'ichi Yamamoto represents Daisaku Ikeda. The theme of the novel is summed up in the foreword, as the author writes,

"A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind." The following is an excerpt from the "New Dawn" chapter, volume twelve.

New Dawn 5

THE era yearned for new leaders. The Soka Gakkai was like a great wheel rolling across the vast uncharted plains of kosen-rufu, and just as a wheel needs a solid axle on which to turn, the Gakkai needed a strong and reliable leader.

Takeo Konishi, who had served as general director during Josei Toda's presidency, had been pushing himself desperately to exercise leadership as a unifying force for the membership since Toda's death. Nevertheless, he couldn't help sensing his own limitations. Now that the Gakkai had a membership exceeding 800,000 households, the weight of its social responsibility had also grown dramatically compared to its early days. As a result, a vastly different set of qualifications and abilities were now required of the central leadership figure. In demand were not only absolute conviction in faith, but an ability to stay apace with the times; vision to develop detailed and far-reaching plans for the future; leadership that could win the members' heartfelt support; and a capacity for bold, dynamic action. These qualities were essential if a new phase of development in the realm of kosen-rufu were to be achieved.

But Konishi was all too well aware that he personally lacked such qualities and capabilities. Toda had often remarked that the next president of the Soka Gakkai would come not from among Mr. Makiguchi's direct disciples, but from among his, Toda's, disciples. And, in reality, Konishi had never received the training necessary to fulfill that responsibility. The person Toda had poured his entire life and being into developing and shaping for this role was none other than Shin'ichi Yamamoto. Toda had been twice as strict and demanding with Shin'ichi than with anyone else. However excellent or noteworthy Shin'ichi's achievements may have been, Toda had almost never praised him. He had treated Shin'ichi with the attitude that however difficult the assignment or problem that was given him, it was only natural that he should turn it into a success.

As Konishi witnessed the severe reprimands and scolding Shin'ichi received almost daily from Toda, he sometimes even pitied the young man. But he also knew that this treatment arose from Toda's stern love for his disciple, so that he could entrust the Gakkai's entire future to him. Once when Toda and Konishi were alone together, Toda had told him: "Shin'ichi is a man of enormous caliber, Mr. Konishi. We have nothing to worry about with regard to the Gakkai's future."

Title: The Human Revolution, Vol. XII, New Dawn 5-7

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.42 LB9703p42

Author: Ho Goku (Daisaku Ikeda)

Keywords: Dawn History Human Kosen-rufu Light Revolution Tranquil XII

Konishi himself clearly recognized Shin'ichi's abilities. Konishi had been chief of Kamata Chapter in Tokyo when Shin'ichi was assigned there as chapter staff to lead its propagation campaign in February 1952. Immediately, he had completely transformed the atmosphere within the chapter, paving the way to accomplishing an unprecedented 201 new households by a single chapter in just one month. There could be no doubt that this provided the impetus that eventually led to fulfilling Toda's dream of a membership of 750,000 households.

Later, after being installed as acting chief of Tokyo's Bunkyo Chapter, Shin'ichi had developed that organization in a short time from one of the last-ranked chapters in the Soka Gakkai to one of the first. And in 1956 in Osaka, he had led the members there to the unprecedented conversion of 11,111 new households in a single month. He also had helped propel Seiichiro Haruki, the Soka Gakkai candidate from that area, to victory in the House of Councillors (Upper House) election, while the Gakkai-backed candidate from Tokyo had suffered defeat.

New Dawn 6

WHEREVER Shin'ichi went, the banner of victory would assuredly unfurl and a new momentum toward kosen-rufu would arise. Yet he was never overbearing or coercive. Members who until the day before had been disheartened would suddenly come to life. Like new people, they would embark with undaunted courage on an intense and decisive struggle, filled with joy, confidence and pride.

Takeo Konishi was truly awed by this transforming power. Witnessing the brilliant achievements Shin'ichi had recorded in the annals of kosen-rufu, he sensed the young man's inestimable capacity for leadership. Konishi hoped and prayed that the day would soon come when Shin'ichi could assume the presidency and bear full responsibility for the Gakkai. Given that Shin'ichi was still a youth of only 30, however, they would have to wait until the time was ripe for him to do so.

Nevertheless, for the Gakkai to move ahead in its spread of the Daishonin's teachings, it needed Shin'ichi's ability above all. Konishi knew this better than anyone. Although he himself was now standing at the front of the organization as its general director, when he considered kosen-rufu's future development in practical terms, he felt there was no other way but to entrust the Gakkai's leadership to Shin'ichi. With this in mind, he conferred with the board of directors about creating the position of general administrator, which would oversee the actual running and administration of the entire Soka Gakkai, and assigning Shin'ichi to that office.

On June 30, the Headquarters leaders meeting for that month was held at the Toshima Civic Center. There, Shin'ichi's appointment as general administrator was announced—a position he would hold concurrently with his position of youth division chief of staff. Now, full responsibility for the planning and management of all the Gakkai's affairs and activities rested squarely on Shin'ichi's shoulders.

News of Shin'ichi's appointment brought fresh hope and courage to the members. At that time, the Gakkai was embroiled in what became known as the "cemetery issue," which caused great distress and suffering to many members.

In those days, only a very small number of Nichiren Shoshu temples had cemeteries, and the majority of Gakkai members had little choice but to inter the ashes of their deceased family members at cemeteries run by temples of the previous Buddhist denominations to which they or their families had belonged.

However, temples of these other established Buddhist schools were now denying Gakkai members the right to use their cemetery facilities, and in many areas, there had been incidents of members being forced to remove their deceased family members' ashes. In some cases, Gakkai members' family tombs had been sold without any notice or permission. Naturally, there was nothing in the law or anywhere else to support the idea that those converting to the Soka Gakkai forfeited their right to possess or use cemetery plots they had owned until that time. Such actions were clearly illegal, and could best be described as harassment by religious leaders who were afraid of the Gakkai's propagation activities and concerned about losing their parishioners. Exploiting people's sincere wish to honor their deceased relatives and ancestors, they were using private grave sites where the ashes of Gakkai members' loved ones were interred, as weapons to attack and undermine the Soka Gakkai. It was a lowly ploy perpetrated by religious charlatans attempting to brandish clerical authority to protect their own interests.

Shin'ichi was determined to overturn this injustice.

New Dawn 7

INCIDENTS of cemeteries administered by other Buddhist schools denying Gakkai members the right to inter family members' remains on their grounds had begun to occur several years earlier. But with Josei Toda's death, the frequency of such incidents increased dramatically throughout the country.

Behind this was the plotting of the established Buddhist schools to try to impede the Gakkai's development. Afraid of losing more followers to the Gakkai's energetic propagation activities, they had decided that the Gakkai's loss of Toda provided an excellent opportunity to launch a counterattack. Buddhist associations in each prefecture advocated making converts to the Gakkai remove their family members' remains from non-Nichiren Shoshu cemeteries, and spearheaded efforts to revise cemetery bylaws to make this mandatory. Accordingly, their temples implemented new regulations for the use of their cemetery facilities, and with these regulations as a pretext, began to coerce Gakkai members to move their family tombs elsewhere. It was a desperate strategy, aimed at guarding against the loss of adherents and at weakening the Gakkai's position.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto fought with undaunted fury against these unfair and unjust actions. He did not retreat a single step. While consulting with legal experts to map out a counterstrategy, he personally traveled around the country to deal with the problem in each area.

He had taken it as his foremost mission to safeguard the Gakkai members—the precious children of the Buddha—on President Toda's behalf. But within the organization, he had begun to notice leaders who were gradually succumbing to laziness and arrogance. In order to aggrandize their authority, such leaders often trumpeted their personal acquaintance with Toda. Yet without communicating Toda's spirit or putting his guidance into practice, they simply went about doing what they pleased, lacking any sense of responsibility for others. It truly hurt Shin'ichi to see such behavior.

If this continued, Shin'ichi thought, President Toda's spirit would die. Those who had been fortunate enough to receive training directly from Mr. Toda had a duty to transmit his spirit and guidance to their juniors in faith.

Title: The Human Revolution, Vol. XII, New Dawn 5-7

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.42 LB9703p42

Author: Ho Goku (Daisaku Ikeda)

Keywords: Dawn History Human Kosen-rufu Light Revolution Tranquil XII

For that reason, Shin'ichi had begun to compile and organize Toda's guidance, and to collect those articles and possessions of Toda that best communicated his spirit, with the intention of preserving them as treasures of the Soka Gakkai. He also proceeded with the production of phonograph recordings of Toda's lectures and question-and-answer sessions.

But above all, he endeavored to manifest Toda's spirit in his own life. Engaging in a bold and selfless struggle, he strove to demonstrate that spirit through his actions. This was because the true Gakkai spirit could be transmitted only through action, through coming into contact with the members and inspiring them through actual example.

Shin'ichi's dauntless struggle became a motivating force for fresh advancement. In 1959, out of the 287 candidates the Gakkai had sponsored in nationwide local elections, 261 were elected to office. And in the fifth House of Councillors (Upper House) election in June of that same year—in which the Gakkai sponsored Katsu Kiyohara as a candidate for the Tokyo metropolitan constituency and five other candidates, including Koichi Harayama and Hiroshi Yamagiwa, for the national constituency—all had won election. The members in the Tokyo area, having tasted defeat in the Upper House election of 1956, were particularly overjoyed at this victory.

Recalling how deeply concerned Toda had been by Tokyo's poor showing on that occasion, Shin'ichi now felt that he had discharged part of his duty as a disciple in being able to report such a decisive victory to his departed mentor.

(To be continued)