

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 8

THE Gakkai continued to press ahead in its broad-ranging propagation efforts: a great ship crossing a vast sea, breaking through surging swells and weathering storms without a president at its helm.

By December 1959, the Gakkai's membership surpassed 1.3 million households. But General Director Takeo Konishi was still deeply concerned. In the eighteen months or so since Toda's death, he had grown painfully aware of the limitations of trying to move ahead without the leadership of a president.

One day toward the year-end, Konishi shared his innermost feelings with Koichi Yamadaira, chief of the guidance department, in a conference room at the Gakkai Headquarters.

"Mr. Harayama, the Gakkai has made it this far through everyone's united effort. But frankly speaking, I cannot see where to go from here...."

"I know, I feel the same," admitted Harayama in frank simplicity. Working alongside Konishi, he, too, had come to harbor a kind of hopelessness about the future of a Gakkai with no president.

Konishi nodded when he heard Harayama's response. Looking somewhat relieved, and began to speak his mind:

"An organization needs a solid central figure. Especially for a group devoted to kosen-rufu as the Gakkai is, a leader who is selflessly dedicated to spreading the Law is indispensable as a center of unity. Why was the Gakkai able to achieve such dynamic progress during President Toda's time? There is only one reason: President Toda's powerful inner determination. Mr. Toda was determined to accomplish a membership of 750,000 households even if he had to do it alone, and devoted his entire life to achieving kosen-rufu. Inspired by his determination and taking his guidance as our source of energy, we fought and made tremendous progress, eventually achieving that 750,000 household goal.

"Everything depends on the leader. In no way can we expect kosen-rufu to advance if we place just anyone as the central figure. I feel that if we continue as we are, the members won't be able to bring forth their true ability and potential."

"Honestly speaking, I've been thinking the same thing," Harayama concurred. "The Gakkai without a president is like a train without a locomotive."

"That's exactly right," agreed Konishi. "Since President Toda died, it has been as if Mr.

Yamamoto has been pushing the 'train' of the Soka Gakkai from behind. So far, I've simply been doing as Mr. Yamamoto has been telling me. You might say we've come this far because of that and due to the fact that we've been running on the residual energy from President Toda's era.

"But from here on, we have to have someone who can act as a new locomotive to pull the Gakkai forward. It was for this reason that President Toda trained Mr. Yamamoto for a period of ten years to be the leader who would carry on his work. Mr. Yamamoto is the only one who really knows what we need to do to accomplish kosen-rufu. I think it is just about time to ask him to become president."

"I've been thinking the same thing," said Harayama. "In fact, the time has already arrived. Why don't we of the board ask him?"

"The members are all sincerely looking forward to having a new president. No, more than just a president—they're looking for a mentor in faith to replace President Toda."

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GENERAL Director Takeo Konishi, his arms folded in front of him, gazed thoughtfully at Koichi Harayama and said: "The question is when to ask. I personally feel it imperative to ask Mr. Yamamoto to assume the presidency sometime next year. We'll have to exercise prudence, though, in how we go about this. It's an issue that should be handled with great care and discretion."

Harayama looked at Konishi and nodded, happy that his colleague had been thinking along the same lines.

With the start of 1960, which the Gakkai had designated the "Year of Advancement," the members' desire to see a new president gained further momentum.

None held greater hopes for a new president to lead the way in a new era than the youth division members. They were determined that Josei Toda's legacy of kosen-rufu never become an empty dream.

Toda had taught the youth that widely spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism meant building a society that respected and contributed to the welfare and happiness of human beings. Nevertheless, despite the Gakkai's dramatic surge in membership, the youth had no concrete vision of how to go about creating a new era grounded in humanism, especially in the spheres of education and culture. Nor did they have any idea how best to proceed with expanding their movement to the rest of Asia and the world.

From time to time, the youth division leaders would ask General Director Konishi to share his vision for the development of kosen-rufu into the future, but Konishi always gave the same standard answer: "You'll have to ask General Administrator Yamamoto; he's the only one who can tell you that." It was an honest reply on his part, but very unsatisfying for the youth leaders. They longed for someone to head the Gakkai whom they could look to as a personal mentor—someone who could give clear answers to their questions and illuminate for them the course along which to advance, just as President Toda had done while he was alive.

More and more youth began to share the opinion that Shin'ichi should become president. They were hesitant to interfere in the leadership appointment process, especially regarding the position of president, on whose shoulders would rest full responsibility for kosen-rufu. Yet whenever a tight-knit group of youth division leaders met, the topic of

Shin'ichi becoming president would invariably arise.

Likewise, the board of directors, including Koichi Harayama and Hisao Seki, also began to discuss the issue seriously. It would soon be April 2, the second anniversary of Josei Toda's death—the occasion of the third memorial service honoring his passing.¹ Takeo Konishi wanted to see Shin'ichi's appointment as president formally decided by the board of directors immediately after the completion of the memorial service, and to have the presidential inauguration take place at the general meeting on May 3. If this were to happen, he would have to obtain Shin'ichi's acceptance before the anniversary arrived.

On the afternoon of March 30, Konishi and Shin'ichi met in a small conference room at the Gakkai Headquarters. Konishi's expression was unusually tense.

"Mr. Yamamoto, today I have a very blunt request to make of you. Indeed, it is something that many of our fellow members have been thinking about."

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TAKEO Konishi spoke with firm resolve: "In three days, we will be observing the third memorial of President Toda's death. I think the time is finally ripe. I would like to ask you now, Mr. Yamamoto, to take full-fledged leadership of our movement for kosen-rufu as president of the Soka Gakkai."

Shin'ichi Yamamoto gazed at Konishi in silence.

While trying to gauge Shin'ichi's reaction, Konishi continued: "The Gakkai can't go on indefinitely without a president. Being general director, I felt it unavoidable that I should assume central responsibility for running the Soka Gakkai until the third memorial service for President Toda had passed. But I've now reached the limit of my capacity. The Gakkai will experience no fresh development if things continue as they are. Calls for you to assume the presidency have been growing louder throughout the organization. I would very much like to see you inaugurated as the new president at this year's spring general meeting."

Shin'ichi appreciated Konishi's sincere intent. He was well aware that calls from among the membership for a new president were intensifying every day. But he still thought the time was premature.

"I'm very sorry," Shin'ichi replied, "but I cannot accept the presidency. I am only 32 years old. That is far too young to be president. Mr. Toda himself did not become president until after the seventh memorial service for Mr. Makiguchi. So I'd like to ask that we continue as we are until at least after we observe President Toda's seventh memorial."

Konishi leaned forward, and said in all earnestness: "Mr. Yamamoto, the Gakkai has somehow managed to develop this far, but the way things are now, something crucial is missing. There is no one for the members to rely and depend on in a real sense. The reality is that most harbor a sense of insecurity in their hearts, but they are valiantly struggling on with the belief that you, Mr. Yamamoto, will become president."

"I understand what you are saying," Shin'ichi responded. "But I, like yourself, am a defendant in the Osaka Incident trial. According to the lawyers, while you are almost certain to be found innocent, chances are very high that I will be found guilty. If I become president and a guilty verdict is handed down, people will perceive the Gakkai as an antisocial religious organization and this will greatly impede the progress of kosen-rufu. I'm sorry to be so selfish, but I would ask you to wait at least until I am exonerated."

Shin'ichi's refusal was polite but firm. Konishi's expression clouded with

disappointment.

Shin'ichi was also concerned about his weak health, which could incapacitate him at any time. Should he take leadership as president and collapse from illness while in office, it would be unfair to the members. He felt as if Josei Toda and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose pictures hung on the wall of the conference room, were intently watching his exchange with Konishi.

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THE third memorial service for Josei Toda, marking the second anniversary of his death, was conducted against a backdrop of blossoming cherries on April 2, 1960. By that time, the Gakkai's membership was close to 1.4 million households.

While Toda's disciples offered prayers of appreciation for their departed mentor and silently promised to repay the profound debt they owed him, they also reflected with emotion on the progress they had made since his death with General Director Takeo Konishi taking the lead. They renewed their pledge to further develop the kosen-rufu movement, aiming toward the seventh memorial ceremony of their mentor's passing as their next milestone. Nevertheless, they felt somewhat ill at ease at the prospect of moving ahead without the proper focus only a president could provide.

On the evening of April 7, a few days after Toda's third memorial service, directors Hisao Seki and Koichi Harayama called on Takeo Konishi at his home. They had come to advise the general director of their opinion—arrived at after giving careful thought to the Gakkai's future—that Shin'ichi Yamamoto should be inaugurated as president at the upcoming spring general meeting.

"So, you both feel the same as I do!" Konishi said. "Actually, sometime prior to the third memorial service, I discussed this very matter with Mr. Yamamoto. But he said he would like us to wait until after the seventh memorial ceremony. I was really disappointed. But now, hearing both of you express the same opinion, I am very encouraged. Let's discuss together what our next step should be." Konishi beamed with delight.

Seki then quickly added: "Everyone on the board of directors fundamentally agrees with the idea of Mr. Yamamoto becoming president. I think our problem now is how to make it actually happen." Then addressing Mr. Konishi, he said, "Why don't you start by talking with each member of the board to gain a consensus among all of the top leaders?"

"Yes, all right," Konishi responded. "I'll get to work on it first thing in the morning. Let's call the directors together for a meeting the day after tomorrow to decide on the issue of proposing a new president. After that, we can convene an official board meeting, have Mr. Yamamoto attend, and then have the board make a direct request to him to become president. How is that for a plan?" Konishi looked from Harayama to Seki.

"Very good," responded Harayama. "At any rate, time is of the essence. Still, I feel a little guilty about the board proceeding on this matter behind Mr. Yamamoto's back."

Konishi laughed and quickly put his fears to rest: "Nonsense! There's nothing to feel guilty about. Could anything be more right? As far as I'm concerned, it's the greatest good deed of my life!"

All three broke into laughter.

The next day, General Director Konishi met with each board member and discussed the matter of recommending Shin'ichi as president. All expressed their immediate and unreserved assent, as if it was a question they had been long awaiting. Some expressed

their joy with great animation, while others did so quietly with tears. One director simply said with a look of excitement: "Is it really true? Thank you very much!"

Everyone was hoping and waiting for Shin'ichi to become president.

New Dawn 12

THE directors met on April 9. Late into the night, they discussed appointing Shin'ichi Yamamoto as the third president of the Soka Gakkai, finally reaching a consensus that his inauguration should take place at the spring general meeting on May 3. Takeo Konishi phoned Shin'ichi at home and told him that because the entire board was considering appointing him as president, they were requesting his presence at a board of directors meeting on the 11th.

Shin'ichi had just returned that day from attending the wedding reception of Toda's son Kyoichi, and was feeling under the weather with a slight fever. Over the phone, Shin'ichi again politely declined Konishi's request. But Konishi told him that if he wished to express his opinion on the matter, the entire board would like to hear it from him firsthand; in any event, he should attend the next board meeting. This said, Konishi hung up the phone.

While serving under President Toda, Shin'ichi had become deeply and keenly aware of how awesome a responsibility the position of the Soka Gakkai president was and what an extremely important and profound mission it represented. That mission meant leading not only the members of the Gakkai but all humanity toward the destination of peace and happiness. It meant a duty to protect the members, to shield them from all criticism and attack, and to personally bear the full brunt of any such onslaughts. Moreover, the entire responsibility for achieving kosen-rufu, the mandate of the original Buddha, rested squarely on the Soka Gakkai president's shoulders. It was a sacred calling that accorded with the Buddha's will, a mission that could not be fathomed by intellect alone. Hence, the reason for Shin'ichi's cautious stance toward becoming president.

Shin'ichi was ready to give his very life to kosen-rufu. In fact, this had been the spirit with which he had come thus far. He was aware that he would eventually have to take leadership of the movement and bear full responsibility for the Soka Gakkai, and he knew that this, too, was the wish of his late mentor.

Nevertheless, he was hesitant about taking on the presidency at the young age of 32. Society, too, would view him as too young to be president. If they waited until after Toda's seventh memorial, he would still be only 36, not too late for him to be president. In addition, though the charges were groundless, Shin'ichi worried about his being a defendant in the Osaka Incident trial. If the president of the Soka Gakkai were to be found guilty, then it would cause irreparable damage to this most precious organization.

Beyond that was the matter of his health, which was so poor that his survival thus far was something of a wonder, and which he had only exacerbated by driving himself relentlessly. So when he thought of taking on the arduous responsibility of president in his present state, he couldn't help feeling some hesitation.

If possible, Shin'ichi wanted to carry out his activities without overexerting himself, at least just until the observance of Toda's seventh memorial. Exhausted and worn-out as he was, he wondered if there might be someone else who could take over leadership of the Gakkai in his stead. Yet Shin'ichi realized only too well that there was no one else he could ask to shoulder such a responsibility. He agonized painfully over his dilemma, now without a mentor with whom to discuss his concerns.

In his fevered state, Shin'ichi sat quietly waging an internal, solitary struggle. His wife, Mineko, silently looked on, her own heart aching to see her husband in such torment.

New Dawn 13

AT the Soka Gakkai board meeting convened on April 11, the directors presented their unanimous, earnest request personally to Shin'ichi Yamamoto, asking him to accept the position of president. While he deeply understood their sincerity and enthusiasm, he demurred. But the directors were extremely determined, and showed no sign of backing down.

"You're the only one who can be president. We're doing a disservice to our members if we continue as we are. Please, Mr. Yamamoto." They all tried their best to persuade him.

But Shin'ichi would not concede to their request nor would the directors withdraw it. Shin'ichi even felt guilty for insisting so strongly on having his way, wondering if perhaps he didn't sound selfish. Finally, being left no alternative, he opted to end the momentary stalemate, saying, "It's a matter of grave importance. Please allow me one night to think it over."

That evening, Shin'ichi gave the matter a great deal of thought, but his wish to postpone becoming president until after Toda's seventh memorial remained unchanged.

When the time came, he would rise to the challenge. But if he was to adequately fulfill the immense responsibility of president, he would need some time now to ready himself.

The next day, May 12, Shin'ichi gave his answer to directors Hisao Seki and Koichi Harayama, forthrightly sharing with them his feelings on the matter and again declining their request. But neither Seki nor Harayama accepted his response. They adamantly asserted again that prospects for further development in the Gakkai's movement for kosen-rufu were dim under the present circumstances.

Still Shin'ichi would not be dissuaded, so Seki finally said, "All right. I will communicate your response to General Director Konishi. But please be aware that no one will accept your decision."

Another board meeting was convened that day. As Seki had predicted, when told that Shin'ichi had again declined the presidency, none of the directors were happy.

Katsu Kiyohara strenuously implored them all, "We must not give up now! We've no choice but to summon even greater resolve and insist even more strongly that he accept the presidency."

Harayama looked at the assembled directors and said, "I agree. The reason that Mr. Yamamoto hasn't accepted the presidency is that we haven't sufficiently communicated to him how serious and earnest we are that he do so. If we make a truly heartfelt and impassioned plea, he'll surely accept the presidency."

By mutual agreement, the directors decided to ask Shin'ichi again.

On the 13th, the following day, General Director Takeo Konishi and Director Harayama went to see Shin'ichi on behalf of the board. They came with an intractable resolve: No matter what it took, they would obtain Shin'ichi's consent.

"Sensei, we will not go home until we have gained your agreement...." Konishi then began to earnestly recount how much everyone was hoping for Shin'ichi to become

president.

Their appeal lasted some four-and-a-half hours, and though Shin'ichi keenly understood the board of directors' frustration, he still couldn't accede to their request. But given their persistent and tenacious entreaties, he felt he had no choice but to tell them, "In that case, please allow me another night to think it over."

Illustrations by Teikichi Miyoshi

(To be continued)

1. According to Japanese tradition, the first memorial service is held immediately after a person's death, i.e., the funeral memorial service, with the second memorial service held upon the first anniversary of that occasion, and so on.