

The New Human Revolution, Volume 5, Chapter 4
Lion
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Translation of parts 13–18 of the ‘Lion’ chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

In the course of their activities as elected representatives, the Soka Gakkai-backed Diet members had also come to clearly sense the need to establish some kind of political organization. When Josei Toda sent the first of his disciples into the political realm, he had felt that it was fine for them to affiliate themselves with whichever political party they preferred; he had no particular bias toward any political party. Toda’s wish was that these Diet members would work in their respective positions or roles to clean up politics and restore sovereignty to the people.

But once the Soka Gakkai-backed representatives actually began to pursue their activities as Diet members, they found that they could not wholeheartedly agree with or support the policies and tactics of any of the established parties. At the time, global tensions stemming from the conflicting ideologies of East and West were also reflected in Japanese party politics, deepening the rift between capitalists and socialists.

And though each party made a show of advocating policies that responded to the people’s diverse needs, they in fact either stood on the side of the propertied class or on the side of the working class and based their activities on that affiliation. The conservative parties protected the interests of large corporations, and the progressive parties favored policies advantageous to organized labor.

Between these two extremes, there were also centrist parties, but they lacked any clearly articulated political ideals. This vagueness was contributing to their decline.

The Soka Gakkai representatives had no choice but to continue their activities as independent, nonpartisan members of the Diet. In the House of Councilors they joined other independents in a political club for unaffiliated representatives. They aspired for a government truly committed to improving people’s lives and for peace, without being influenced by the petty maneuverings of party politics.

But the only thing this group’s members had in common was their lack of affiliation with any political party. Their opinions differed widely and when it came time to announce a concrete position on a matter before the House, it was often very difficult to arrive at one that everyone could support.

The Soka Gakkai-backed representatives were especially concerned with unorganized labor — those workers in small factories and businesses who were not represented by big unions — and strove to turn the government’s attention to this group’s lot and protecting its livelihood. They also believed that world peace depended upon transcending the ideological differences between East and West and upon working from the standpoint of global citizenship, which Josei Toda had advocated. To achieve this, they believed that the world’s nations should be united, centering around the United Nations.

But they were unable to make their voices heard in the government. Of course, there were only nine Soka Gakkai-backed representatives in the House of Councilors at that time. And the fact that they had formed no autonomous political group compounded their difficulty in gaining a forum for their ideas.

The unaffiliated representatives were not only handicapped in making their policies and

opinions known within the government, but also lacked the power to make their case effectively to society at large. The public paid attention to the policies and positions of parties rather than to those of individual representatives. The Soka Gakkai-backed representatives had come to feel that in the world of politics, it was necessary to have a political organization to provide them with a platform to speak from.

The same was true in the local assemblies. It was with considerable frustration that Soka Gakkai-backed assembly members had been pursuing their duties as elected representatives — frustration that led them to call for the formation of a political organization of their own. Many of the representatives had expressed this opinion to Shin'ichi Yamamoto.

Shin'ichi and the Gakkai-supported representatives had first discussed forming a political organization the previous spring, in 1961. Shin'ichi had told the group of elected representatives and Gakkai directors gathered at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters on that occasion: "I agree with you about forming a new political organization. I am sure all of you have come to feel the need for such a body or club through your political activities. I, however, think we'll eventually have to form such an organization from the perspective of the future of our kosen-rufu movement.

"The Soka Gakkai's goal is all people's happiness. To achieve that, we must bring peace to the world and create social prosperity. It is therefore only natural that we must be active on many different fronts — in politics, business, education and activities for peace — all of which promote culture's advancement in the broadest sense.

"The religious organization of the Soka Gakkai nurtures and fosters human beings, the driving force that creates culture, thereby cultivating the soil upon which a healthy society can develop and flourish. It is my belief that people who have been nurtured by the Soka Gakkai should be active in all realms of human endeavor and, if necessary, form groups and institutions that will assist them in contributing to society.

"I believe this holds true not only for political activity, but in the fields of music, art, science and academia, as well as of education and peace studies. Forming a political body may signal the first of many area-specific organizations we will establish."

Then Shin'ichi added sternly: "But don't misunderstand me. This political organization you wish to form should not exist for the sake of the Soka Gakkai. I do not view it in such a limited way. I'm talking about a new type of political organization, dedicated to the happiness of all the Japanese people, an organization that will serve them with a spirit of great compassion."

The representatives listened intently to Shin'ichi Yamamoto's words. "I hope that if you are going to start a political organization," he said, "you will become self-reliant as soon as possible and win the great trust and support of the people. The Soka Gakkai will continue to support you in the elections, but as far as actual policies are concerned, I hope you will all discuss them carefully and decide amongst yourselves.

"I look forward to the day when a great majority of the Japanese people will find themselves in full support of the policies and achievements of this new political organization, when each of its representatives will have earned a broad base of trust and support so that each will be elected easily even without the Soka Gakkai's support."

When Shin'ichi finished speaking, Minoru Suzumoto, a director of the Soka Gakkai and a representative of the Kanagawa Prefectural Assembly, asked, "Should we regard this political organization's formation as the founding of a political party?"

"No," Shin'ichi said. "I haven't thought as far as forming a political party. At this point, we don't have any members in the House of Representatives. So instead of founding a full-

fledged political party, I think it's better to regard this as something less formal, a sort of political club. Mr. Toda often said that monitoring the government's actions was of first importance and that it was sufficient to have representatives in the House of Councilors who could correct any improper government policies."

Hisao Seki then offered his opinion: "Mr. Toda certainly did say that. But our supporters — both members and non-members alike — have told us that to achieve the ideal of *rissho ankoku* [peace and prosperity based on the philosophy and principles of the Daishonin's Buddhism] we espouse, we will need to elect people to the House of Representatives, too, in the future. I also believe that to be the case."

Shin'ichi nodded and replied: "I, too, have heard that opinion expressed. That is an important topic for future discussion, but for the time being, let's address the issue of the House of Councilors. The Upper House today no longer functions as it should to correct the excesses and make up for any shortcomings of the House of Representatives.

"This is because its members act only according to party interests. Party dictates rule how they will vote on a bill. An Upper House member may personally judge that a bill passed by the Lower House ought to be rejected, but that judgment is overruled by the party's imperative. I think that restoring the Upper House to its original function as the legislature's 'conscience' is a task of pressing importance in order to return government's power to the people."

Having said this, Shin'ichi looked directly at each of his listeners.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued: "At any rate, why not start by forming a political organization for interested representatives in the House of Councilors and the local assemblies who are Soka Gakkai members? And if any representatives feel a need for it, they can establish a political club in their respective assemblies."

The politicians nodded in agreement with Shin'ichi's proposal. Shin'ichi looked intently from one person to another. "With regard to supporting candidates for the House of Representatives," he said, "let's discuss it further. Also, should you all agree to form a political party in the future, let's think about it carefully and work together closely on the matter." While Shin'ichi certainly felt the need to establish a political party and sponsor candidates for the House of Representatives, he had not yet come to a final conclusion on these issues.

When viewing the state of Japanese politics from the perspective of *rissho ankoku*, he felt that these may indeed be unavoidable issues they would have to confront and come to a decision on. But establishing a political party and sending representatives to the Lower House and the Upper House would, at the very least, impose a great burden on the Soka Gakkai, the primary supporter of such endeavors.

Shin'ichi also clearly foresaw the possibility of these steps embroiling the Gakkai in a tempest of political contention, exposing it to even harsher criticism than it was already receiving from the established parties. Still, he was well aware that the time to make a decision about supporting candidates for the House of Representatives was approaching — although, of course, the choice was not his alone.

Discussions on forming a political organization continued. On one such occasion, Katsu Kiyohara asked, "What do you think we should name this group?"

Hisao Seki pounced on the question as if he had been anticipating it.

"In July 1956," he said, "after the first election in which Soka Gakkai ran candidates for the Upper House, Mr. Toda told the elected representatives, 'I don't care what political party you join, but if you should form a political club of your own in the future, let's call it the Komei [Clean Government] Caucus.' He also said that the Soka Gakkai's political

movement was to be based on fair, honest elections that didn't rely on expensive campaigns and vote-buying. It is our mission, he said, to reform Japan's corrupt money politics, back-room deal-making and lavish entertaining where political favors are bought and sold.

"I think using the word *komei* would show that we are determined to uphold Mr. Toda's spirit."

Shin'ichi Yamamoto nodded in assent as he listened to Hisao Seki's proposal. "That's right," Shin'ichi said. "I remember the time very well when President Toda spoke of using the name Komei Caucus. But if we use the word *caucus*, it will sound like a political club. How about the Komei Political Federation? Then the members in each respective legislature can use the name Komei Caucus for the political club they establish."

Shin'ichi then began to share his personal convictions about politics: "In Japanese politics today, political parties and leaders behave like paid lobbyists for vested interests such as industry, business and labor unions. Far too many politicians think only of their own interests, presenting legislation and promoting policies that favor the groups that supported their election campaigns. Moreover, their supporters also expect and demand special favors. This makes impossible a government that is truly for the people.

"In contrast, the Soka Gakkai has fully, energetically supported members such as yourselves who have run for office. But it has never asked for even a single political favor in return. We have shown a genuine commitment to truly clean, honest elections and clean, honest government. This is something that will never change."

Politicians alone do not determine the quality of government. The political awareness and will of the voters who support and elect politicians are major factors in moving them and determining government's course. That is why true government reform cannot be achieved without developing the people's conscience and awareness. The Gakkai had been awakening the people, empowering them with knowledge and opening their eyes to the direction their society is heading.

Shin'ichi addressed the representatives with almost prayer-like vehemence: "You have no need, as politicians, to ever do special favors for the Gakkai. None whatsoever. I want you to make the happiness of all Japan's people your top priority — without worrying about anything else. Be great political leaders with a vision that looks 100 years into Japan's future, or rather 1,000 years into the future of the world. And work to make that vision a reality.

"In the local assemblies, please remember that you are the servants of the people; help them in every way you can. I want you to be models of service, winning everyone's praise for your tireless efforts for the welfare of your constituency's residents. Please be lion-like in defending the people — that is my wish and hope. I am sure that your fellow members who supported you in your campaign feel the same way."

With each discussion, the shape of the Komei Political Federation became more clearly defined. One day, some of the representatives brought drafts of the organization's guiding principles and basic platform to Shin'ichi to review. He immediately began to pore over them. The platform was as they had discussed and agreed upon: opposition to nuclear weapons, protecting Japan's peace constitution and a call for clean politics.

But Shin'ichi spent some time mulling over the draft of the group's basic philosophy. It, too, contained ideas that had been discussed and arrived at by the consensus of all involved. But something about the wording of the third principle bothered him: "Our political ideals are founded in Nichiren Daishonin's spirit of *rissho ankoku* — the realization of a peaceful and prosperous society based on Buddhist ideals. With this unsurpassed philosophy and its

unbounded compassion as our guide, we pledge to apply these ideals in a contemporary fashion and, as the most democratic of political organizations, to demonstrate an unwavering opposition to all injustice.”

He looked up from the paper and said quietly, “I think the phrase ‘Nichiren Daishonin’s spirit of *rissho ankoku*’ is going to be difficult for many to understand. Most people don’t know what it means. It may only lead to a misunderstanding that the Komei Political Federation is seeking some kind of unification of church and state. Wouldn’t it be better to reword it in a way that even non-members can easily understand?”

Hisao Seki replied, “Yes, but, I wonder if there is any other way to express this?”

“How about, for example, the ‘principle of the sanctity of life’ or ‘true humanism’ or some similar phrase?” Shin’ichi suggested.

Everyone thought about it quietly until finally Koichi Harayama, Soka Gakkai general director and a representative in the House of Councilors, said: “It is true, as you say, that non-members may misunderstand our intent. And I think we could phrase it differently. But I also think that this wording makes a clear distinction between the Komei Political Federation and other organizations. It expresses our unique character.

“We believe that part of our job as representatives is to let people know that the spirit of *rissho ankoku* has nothing at all in common with the unification of government and religion — it falls upon us to promote a proper understanding of its true import. We are all committed to this. Therefore, we really want to retain this statement as it is, if at all possible.”

Shin’ichi had no intention of vetoing a decision that the others had arrived at after long, careful thought and serious discussion.

“I see,” he said. “So this is what you all want. All right, then, let’s go with it!”

(To be continued)