

The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 3
Acceleration
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Translation of parts 27–29 of the ‘Acceleration’ 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.

Though Shin’ichi Yamamoto spent only two days and one night in Hokkaido, he was active every moment he was there, using even mealtimes as opportunities to converse with local leaders.

In what little free time he had between commitments, he busied himself writing encouraging messages on the flyleaves of books and other items to present to members. Wherever Shin’ichi traveled around Japan his schedule was extremely hectic. He was determined to meet, encourage and inspire as many people as he could; he didn’t want to waste even a second.

On his return to Tokyo, Shin’ichi attended the first youth division-sponsored judo and kendo¹ tournament, held in the Shinjuku Ward Gymnasium on April 17.

The road that lay before these youth, the leaders of the future, would be long and challenging. A strong mind and body would be necessary to traverse it.

The youth division members hoped the sports tournament would give them a chance to train and strengthen themselves mentally and physically. Shin’ichi sat watching the spirited competition — their intrepid forms conjured images of young eagles soaring into the skies of the coming century.

On April 20, Shin’ichi attended the completion ceremony for the Tachikawa Community Center in Tachikawa, the site of a U.S. military base on the outskirts of Tokyo. The Tachikawa members had been working earnestly to realize a peaceful world, not through military might but through the power of the human spirit. Shin’ichi was pleased that the Gakkai had established a center for their activities. He offered silent prayers for their continued endeavors.

The second anniversary of Shin’ichi’s inauguration as third Soka Gakkai president was fast approaching. The 24th General Meeting was scheduled to be in the Nihon University Auditorium, in Ryogoku, Tokyo, on May 3. The members brimmed with the determination to celebrate the occasion with a great victory in propagation. Like a rising tide, the joy of sharing the Daishonin’s teachings created an ever-growing surge of propagation.

Members brought guests to discussion meetings in an endless stream; applause for new members resounded constantly at meeting places throughout the country. These new members would then enthusiastically bring their friends to the next discussion meeting. A chain reaction of joyful propagation swept the country as the organization continued on its course of dynamic growth.

The Gakkai’s directors were unabashedly overjoyed at the organization’s great advance. When meeting with Shin’ichi, General Director Koichi Harayama or one of the others would make boastful statements like “Kosen-rufu has become the tide of the times! I never imagined such an amazing time would come. Now the Gakkai is rock-solid. Nothing can shake it.”

Shin’ichi could only grimace at their simplistic and rather irresponsible optimism.

With the general meeting marking the second anniversary of his inauguration just around the corner, Shin’ichi thought back to all that had been achieved over the past two years. In

that short time, he had opened a succession of new frontiers for kosen-rufu. While on the one hand it had seemed like an eternity, it had also felt like only a moment.

At 2.6 million households, the Gakkai's membership had almost doubled from 1.4 million two years earlier. In tandem with that growth, the number of chapters had expanded from 61 to 259. The youth division membership, meanwhile, had surged from 300,000 to 750,000.

Furthermore, this rising tide of kosen-rufu had spread to the world. Shin'ichi had made four trips abroad to encourage members living overseas, visiting a total of 24 countries and territories in North and South America, Southeast Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The seeds sown there had now sprouted: The Gakkai had established two general chapters and seven chapters overseas (excluding Okinawa).

Not only had the Gakkai's overall membership increased, but its Study Department had grown more than sixfold, from 17,000 members two years earlier to more than 110,000. Their enthusiastic devotion to Buddhist study marked the start of a broad grass-roots philosophical movement that would shape a new era.

It had unquestionably been a most successful two years. The movement for kosen-rufu was progressing in accord with the targets Shin'ichi had set. But he was constantly thinking about what kind of leadership would be needed to consolidate that progress and pave the way for ongoing development.

Many of the members, he reflected, had taken faith to overcome problems such as illness, financial hardship or family discord, and were earnestly striving to introduce others to the Daishonin's Buddhism. But the Soka Gakkai's movement for kosen-rufu did not stop at solving personal problems; each member developing a broad social awareness and working to usher in an age of true victory for humanity was fundamental to its goal. Each individual's Buddhist practice had to contribute in some way to building a peaceful society based on Buddhist ideals and to the flowering of a humanistic culture around the world. A genuine religion doesn't concern itself only with personal spiritual salvation, but is committed to enlightening and empowering individuals — awakening them to their social mission.

Shin'ichi decided to use the general meeting as a forum to reconfirm with the members exactly what the Soka Gakkai's goal of kosen-rufu meant, and to start afresh with all sharing an awareness as key players in the shaping of society. He was confident that this would inspire them with new hope for the future and show them the course along which to advance.

Everyone looked excited and happy. Every face was glowing. The fresh leaves of the trees lining the street fluttered gaily in the breeze, as if sharing the members' joy.

In the early morning hours of May 3, 1962, long lines began to form near the Nihon University Auditorium. People began entering the hall at 6:20 a.m., filling it in no time. Eventually, members from the United States, Southeast Asia and Europe arrived. The auditorium thundered with applause as they entered.

At around 8:00, the chorus, Brass Band and Fife and Drum Corps launched into a vigorous round of Gakkai songs as the overcast skies cleared and bright sunlight flooded into the auditorium through its high windows.

Just before 10:00, as the entire audience sang the "Song of Indomitable Dignity," President Yamamoto and the Soka Gakkai directors entered the hall, preceded by the Soka Gakkai Headquarters flag. And so, the 24th General Meeting got under way.

After Youth Division Chief Eisuke Akizuki delivered opening greetings, Vice General Director Hisao Seki reported on the past two years of progress under President

Yamamoto's leadership. Shin'ichi then presented chapter flags to the overseas chapters in Bangkok, Hong Kong and other areas. The participants keenly perceived how the Mystic Law was now steadily spreading throughout the world.

Next, Eiji Kawasaki, the central contact person in Europe, took the podium to offer greetings on behalf of the overseas members. Kawasaki exuded a dignity and maturity beyond that of six months earlier, when President Yamamoto and his party had visited Europe. It was clear that he had grown as a leader of kosen-rufu.

Filled with emotion, Kawasaki began: "It is an unsurpassed honor for me, as a representative of the European members, to attend today's significant general meeting, commemorating the second anniversary of President Yamamoto's inauguration.

"Also attending today's meeting are 126 members from the America General Chapter, six members from the chapters just formed in Bangkok and Hong Kong, and six members from Taiwan. All of us are ecstatic to be here.

"To be perfectly honest, most of us practicing overseas thought it would be a long time before President Yamamoto would visit our shores. But just five months after his inauguration, he traveled to North and South America. And in the past two years, he has journeyed from one part of the world to another, visiting Southeast Asia, Europe and the Middle East, encouraging members everywhere."

(To be continued)

1. Kendo: Japanese fencing with bamboo swords.