

The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 3
Acceleration
BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Translation of parts 36–38 of the ‘Acceleration’ chapter and parts 1–2 of the ‘Rough Seas’ 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.

When news of the Mikawashima train crash reached Shin’ichi Yamamoto, he lost no time inquiring whether any Soka Gakkai members or their close relatives had been among the casualties.

As the figures of the dead and injured reported on radio and television steadily climbed, and the full scope of the accident became clear, Shin’ichi felt profound sadness and indignation. While doing everything he could to offer words of comfort and support to members affected, in his mind he kept turning over the question of what could have caused such a catastrophe.

At the time, the state-owned Japan National Railways (privatized in 1987 as Japan Railways) was embroiled in a protracted labor–management dispute, with its employees frequently going on strike or occupying signal stations to disrupt operations. Some critics claimed that these circumstances led to looser discipline among the workers — that this was ultimately to blame for the accident.

Shin’ichi reflected that the direct cause of the three-train pileup at Mikawashima was the freight train driver’s failure to notice the red light. In evidence both here and at the earlier Koga crash was extreme dereliction of duty that could not be merely excused as inattentiveness. Both, it is clear, were due to negligence on the drivers’ part.

Another troubling question with the Mikawashima accident was why, even in the few minutes that passed between the first collision with the outbound passenger train and the second with the inbound one for Ueno, no one had lit a flare, changed the signal to red or done anything to stop the approaching train. If the railway employees had taken such measures, the tragic loss of life could have been avoided. The fact that no one had done so suggested that they were insufficiently concerned with protecting passengers’ lives, that they had not been thoroughly trained to do so. Their emergency safety measures were totally inadequate. In that respect, the management also had to share a large portion of the blame.

Certainly, despite the most vigilant care and caution, lapses and slip-ups still occur from time to time. To err, after all, is human. But this is precisely why it is important to implement measures to prevent mistakes from happening in the first place. Or measures which, if a mistake is made, will prevent a mistake from leading to a major accident.

For example, to guard against the possibility of a train driver falling asleep at the controls, a warning device might be installed; there could be an automatic braking system that would be activated in the event a train went through a red signal light. Financially, it would be quite a burden to equip all train lines with automatic braking systems, but in view of the loss of life that could result from a single mishap it seemed only natural that this should be a high priority.

With the volume of rail traffic growing steadily, the responsibility and obligation that rested with the railway authority to step up its safety measures and prevent accidents also grew.

Around this time, Japan National Railways was beginning construction of the line for the new Tokaido Bullet Train, which had been dubbed the Dream Super Express. Once open, this line would significantly reduce travel time between distant points, making for much greater convenience. As wonderful as that would be, safety and protecting people's lives would still have to be the first priority.

With the 1964 Tokyo Olympics only two years away, construction of new roads and buildings was proceeding at a fever pitch. And the Japanese economy was booming. But Shin'ichi was deeply concerned that people were becoming so preoccupied with economic success that they were beginning to lose sight of the most essential concern: protecting human life.

When people value economic wealth above all and become obsessed with making money, the result is nothing more than an illusory prosperity, a castle built on sand. It is a far cry from genuine happiness. Shin'ichi feared the nation would fall into moral and spiritual decline, that it would be sacrificed on the altar of materialism and money-worship, that a hard, cutthroat society would emerge.

A society's prosperity or cultural maturity cannot be judged on the basis of material or economic development alone. The most fundamental measure of these things is the extent of concern and practical efforts directed toward safeguarding people's lives and basic rights. A philosophy that teaches the sanctity of life is an absolute requisite for building a country and society dedicated to this most elementary of goals.

At the general meeting, Shin'ichi had mentioned that Japan's greatest misfortune was the absence of a sound philosophy or ideals to guide society toward true happiness and peace. The Mikawashima train crash was an obvious manifestation of that deficiency. Shin'ichi clearly sensed that in their present spiritual void, most Japanese were completely at a loss when it came to what to base their lives on and what to set as their highest priority. If things were allowed to continue this way, the results would be catastrophic. He felt certain the train disaster was a warning for the future.

To contain the turbid waters of an age and society out of control, the building of a solid spiritual embankment was essential. If the human spirit were to triumph, Shin'ichi felt it imperative to widely disseminate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, a humanistic philosophy in the truest sense, without the slightest delay. He sensed the need to pick up the pace of the Soka Gakkai's advance toward that goal.

In the aftermath of the Mikawashima train crash, many Soka Gakkai members shared Shin'ichi's sentiments. Had the life philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism been more firmly rooted in society, they thought painfully, such a situation might never have occurred. This realization deepened still more their sense of mission and responsibility to work for kosen-rufu.

Shin'ichi's third year as president was off and running. And as the month of May progressed, the members' propagation efforts gained further momentum.

Shin'ichi put all his energy into strengthening the organization in Tokyo — the Gakkai's main force, on which victory in kosen-rufu would ultimately depend — attending leaders meetings for each of the metropolitan headquarters that month. In addition, he attended the Tohoku Headquarters Leaders Meeting, May 8; the Saitama General Chapter Leaders Meeting, May 10; the opening of the Hamamatsu Community Center, May 12; a Kyushu Headquarters Leaders Meeting, May 20; a leaders meeting for Kanagawa No. 1 and No. 2 general chapters, May 22; and a joint leaders meeting for Chiba, Gumma and Ibaraki general chapters, May 23. He worked nonstop, energetically devoting himself to giving guidance and encouragement to the members.

Wherever he went, so far as time permitted, he would also hold guidance meetings and

give Gosho lectures for district leaders and others on the forefront of activities. Among Nichiren Daishonin's writings he spoke on were "Kyo'o Gozen Gosho" and "Remonstrations With Bodhisattva Hachiman" in Tohoku, "The Izu Exile" in Hamamatsu and "Reply to Soya Nyudo" in Kyushu. Shin'ichi had decided to spend May and June, the beginning of his third year as president, traveling around the country, making a fresh start together with the members in each area.

To really inspire others, a leader must first make his or her life burn with passion and conviction. To inspire others to take action, one has to first thoroughly engage oneself. The Daishonin writes, "If the general loses heart, his soldiers will become cowards" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 196). The organization, ultimately, is a reflection of its leaders' determination.

Leaders have to constantly ask themselves: "Am I really determined to win?" "Am I praying strongly enough?" "Am I brimming with joy?" "Am I satisfied with everything I did today?" This was the art of leadership that Shin'ichi had learned from President Toda.

Shin'ichi and the members exerted their maximum effort as summer began to unfold, the trees gleaming with fresh foliage. At the Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Tokyo Gymnasium on May 27, it was announced that more than 108,000 households had joined the Soka Gakkai that month. The total membership goal for 1962, the Year of Victory, had been set at 2.7 million households — they had easily exceeded this target and in just five months! They were in the midst of an exhilarating, lightning advance. The pace of the kosen-rufu movement had accelerated. A membership of 3 million households was now within sight.

The participants' spirits soared. Everyone truly sensed the tide of kosen-rufu steadily rising, restoring life and vitality to the parched spiritual soil of Japan. And they savored the ineffable joy and excitement of playing a leading role in building a new society.

At the meeting's end, Shin'ichi led the participants in a chorus of "Song of the New Century." With a ceremonial fan in one hand, he moved with solemn dignity to the music, symbolic of his bold, majestic flight through the skies of kosen-rufu.

(This concludes "Acceleration," chapter 3 of vol. 6 of The New Human Revolution.)