

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY A REVOLUTION DAWNS

The SGI president remembers 1990, the year that the priesthood tried to take control of the Soka Gakkai and started to negate Nichiren Daishonin's humanistic teachings. 'For the sake of kosen-rufu, we of the Soka Gakkai simply could not allow the Daishonin's teachings to be trampled in this manner,' President Ikeda writes. 'The Daishonin's Buddhism exists for all the world's people. We rallied to defend the Daishonin's spirit, and we rose as one. It marked the dawn of a new religious revolution.'

BY DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI PRESIDENT

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is the roar of the spirit of that great musical genius, who proclaimed, "At the end of suffering, there is joy!" It is a sublime, eternal hymn that links all humanity as brothers and sisters, a rousing paean of the people.

On Dec. 12, 1998, I was fortunate to enjoy once again the Soka University students' performance of the Ninth Symphony, which has now become an annual tradition. It was this same symphony that was performed on Oct. 3, 1990, as a song of victory celebrating Germany's reunification, which was finally attained after such a long, hard struggle.

It was a few months later, in mid-December 1990, that a document from the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office titled "Questions Regarding the Speech of Honorary President Ikeda at the 35th Headquarters Leaders Meeting" was delivered to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. Among other things, the document claimed that singing "Ode to Joy," the Ninth Symphony's choral section, was slander of the Law; it was tantamount to praising non-Buddhist teachings, to venerating Christianity. The priesthood took exception to the fact that I had suggested at the meeting in question that we put on a large-scale choral performance of "Ode to Joy" in the future.

The Nichiren Shoshu document criticized me for saying things I never said and was an attempt to brand me with the labels of slanderer of the Law and slanderer of the high priest. We sought to discuss these claims with the priesthood, but the cowardly priests hid and refused to come forth to talk.

Then, at the end of 1990, under the pretext of revising Nichiren Shoshu's regulations, they eliminated the position of head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations, the post I held, and effectively dismissed me.

Their aim was clear. They wanted to get me out of the way, to destroy the Soka Gakkai, and, under the cloak of priestly authority, to control all the Gakkai members as if they were their personal slaves.

The Nikken sect began propounding heretical doctrines found nowhere in the Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. They declared, for instance, that the high priest and the Dai-Gohonzon are "two indivisible entities of the object of fundamental respect." Their plan was to create a hierarchy of power and control, with the high priest at the apex, followed by the rest of the priesthood, who stood above the lay believers and dominated them.

This was in complete violation of the Daishonin's teachings, which uphold the princi-

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ples of the dignity and equality of all human beings and state that we are all treasure towers, we are all children of the Buddha.

Further, discriminating in this irrational way against the art and culture that is an expression of our shared humanity is no different from the Nazis' actions in Germany. It signifies a terrible kind of witch-hunt that totally rejects humanity.

If we had allowed the priesthood to do this, the Daishonin's Buddhism would have become a false religion that served only as an instrument of oppression and harm.

It also soon became clear that the Nikken sect was guilty of an astonishing number of violations of the Daishonin's teachings — for example, Nikken, high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, had erected a new ancestral tombstone in a Zen-temple cemetery. Stories of the greed of the clergy in selling their services at funerals and in memorial tablets for the deceased, along with an astonishing number of incidents of corruption and degeneracy — including profligate spending and licentious behavior — surfaced one after another.

For the sake of kosen-rufu, we of the Soka Gakkai simply could not allow the Daishonin's teachings to be trampled in this manner. The Daishonin's Buddhism exists for all the world's people. We rallied to defend the Daishonin's spirit, and we rose as one. It marked the dawn of a new religious revolution.

On Nov. 28 the following year, 1991, the Nikken sect excommunicated the Soka Gakkai. What madness!

It was the Soka Gakkai that had always upheld the Daishonin's teachings to the letter. The mask of the priests was ripped away by this action, and their true nature as the minions of hell was revealed.

But the Soka Gakkai members did not quail. We knew, from our reading of the Daishonin's writings, that this madness of Nikken was an example of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven having entered the body of a high-ranking priest in an effort to destroy Buddhism.

The Soka Gakkai is an organization of people completely dedicated to advancing the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, thereby carrying out the Buddha's will and decree. The Nikken sect, on the other hand, in excommunicating the Soka Gakkai with its own hand cut off the true lineage of faith and returned to the vile behavior it had exhibited during World War II, when it denigrated the Daishonin's spirit and utterly betrayed his teachings.

For the Gakkai, the excommunication released us from the chains by which the envious, scheming Nikken sect had sought to control the Daishonin's followers and allowed us to claim our true spiritual independence.

Seven years have passed since then. The outcome of the struggle of good and evil and the workings of the law of cause and effect have been strict and uncompromising. The decline of the crazed, destructive Nikken sect is clear.

The victims, unfortunately, are the lay believers who practice with the temple, who are not aware of the evil heresy of the Nikken sect and have been deceived by the priests.

We declare confidently to all: Look at the exciting, joyful activities of our comrades spreading the Daishonin's teachings throughout the world! Listen to their bright song of hope and life, filled to overflowing with benefit!

The new humanism of the Soka Gakkai, derived from the Daishonin's Buddhism, is linking people around the globe, transcending national and ethnic boundaries, and earning praise from all as the light of hope for the new century.

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Leaders of diverse fields who seek a philosophy of humanism and peace come to the Gakkai in a constant stream from all over the world. Isn't this brilliant proof of our truth and rightness?

Most despicable of all are those former Soka Gakkai members who have betrayed their comrades in the organization and the Gakkai itself, although they owe us so much, in order to curry favor with the priests. Simón Bolívar, the great liberator of Latin America, once said, "Forgetting one's debt is the greatest crime a person can commit." First Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi used to say, "The final fate of all traitors is a degrading story of suffering and ignominy."

Second President Josei Toda also took a harsh view of ingratitude and treachery. Though in one respect he seemed easygoing and an accepting man, he was very strict about the conduct and behavior of youth. He believed that the time of one's youth is vital in building the foundation for the rest of one's life. When it came to the essentials, he could be quite ferocious.

Once, one of his disciples told a lie. When Mr. Toda learned of this, he took the youth to task, thundering: "Are lying and deceit any way for a young person to behave?! Have you become a fox?" He was the epitome of paternal strictness.

He once told a young man who was always maneuvering and striving to look good in the organization without making any effort: "If you keep this up, you're going to come to a pitiful end in life. I can discern no desire on your part to live with decency and honor. You are deceitful, and in the end, you're the one who will suffer for it." He said this out of great compassion, out of a deep wish to prevent the young man from going farther astray and losing his faith.

How wonderful it is, in every age, for a person to have a true teacher!

Mr. Toda often used to say about traitors: "Leave those lowly losers be. Betraying the Gakkai is betraying the Dai-shonin. In the end, they'll receive the punishment of the Buddha [negative retribution in accord with the strict workings of the law of cause and effect], you'll see."

Right human conduct means fighting against evil and cutting it off at its root. The tri-color Soka Gakkai banner of victory waves in the skies of the new century, and a song of joy resounds throughout the heavens.

The grand march of a new year, of a new century of Soka, has begun.