

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI
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The story of one of Germany's SGI pioneers: a coal miner from Hokkaido who, inspired by Shin'ichi Yamamoto's guidance that youth should go abroad, moves to Germany to dedicate himself to worldwide kosen-rufu.

That winter, Europe was hit by a severe cold wave. But the joyous flame of kosen-rufu burned brightly, as if to melt away the ice and snow.

On Jan. 12, 1963, the day that President Shin'ichi Yamamoto had attended the America West General Meeting in Los Angeles, a new chapter was formed in West Germany. Preparations for this event had been conducted by Eisuke Akizuki, Shoichi Tanida and Yoshihiko Oya, members of the Europe delegation that had been dispatched in concert with Shin'ichi's overseas trip.

They had flown from Tokyo's Haneda International Airport, leaving around 10:00 p.m. on Jan. 9 in Copenhagen, Denmark, after a stopover in Anchorage. In Copenhagen, they met up with Eiji Kawasaki, the Soka Gakkai's contact person for Europe, who traveled with them on to the Swedish capital of Stockholm, where they arrived around 9:00 a.m. on Jan. 10. There, a shimmering world of white greeted them.

Kiyoko Ohara was practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in Stockholm, where she lived and worked as a maid. The visiting leaders conducted an oral study exam for her at the hotel where they were staying, and that evening held a discussion meeting there. It was a very small gathering: the three leaders from Japan, Eiji Kawasaki, Kiyoko Ohara and a guest she had brought along, a young British man, an engineer. At that humble meeting, Ohara's friend decided to join the Soka Gakkai.

After the discussion meeting, the leaders made plans for the Swedish organization, and the following morning, Jan. 11, they announced to Ohara the formation of Scandinavia District and appointed her district contact person.

Their mission in Sweden completed, the group made their way to Düsseldorf to encourage members who worked in the coal mines of West Germany's Ruhr industrial district. Many Japanese had come to this region to work as coal miners, and there were eight or nine Japanese Gakkai members employed at mines in the cities of Castrop-Rauxel and Gelsenkirchen.

A young man named Koichiro Sada was the central figure among the members who were miners in Castrop-Rauxel. Sada was born on Hokkaido's Rishiri Island. He lost his father at age 7, and his mother was left to raise him and three younger children alone. From a very young age, Sada worked to support his family. As a result, he was unable to regularly attend elementary school.

When he turned 18, he got a job at a coal mine in Kushiro, in southeastern Hokkaido. But a short time later, his mother died. She was only 41. Sada then suffered a serious work injury when a mine car ran over his left leg.

Sada cursed the miserable destiny that seemed to doom him to one misfortune after another.

The doctors told Koichiro Sada they might have to amputate his left leg, and his future appeared to him as dark as a pitch-black mine shaft. He saw not a single ray of hope.

It was then that a fellow miner told him about the Daishonin's Buddhism. Hearing the miner's confident assertion that he could change his destiny through practicing Buddhism, he decided to join the Soka Gakkai. That was in April 1957.

Luckily, his leg was spared, and his injuries healed completely. Sada joyfully engaged himself in Gakkai activities as a young men's division member.

His first dilemma as a member was his inability, due to his lack of schooling, to read the Chinese characters employed in Japanese writing. He was unable to read such works as "Precepts for Youth" or "Youth, Be Patriotic!" that President Toda had dedicated to the YMD. He was forced to ask members often younger than himself how the Chinese characters were read and to jot down the pronunciation in simpler Japanese script.

Soon it was 1960, and Shin'ichi became the third Soka Gakkai president. Starting with his first visit to cities in North and South America in autumn that year, Shin'ichi had embarked on travels for peace throughout Asia, Europe and the entire world.

Inspired by Shin'ichi's guidance that youth should venture abroad, Sada came to dream of going to Europe and there dedicating his youth to worldwide kosen-rufu. But he thought it was an impossible dream for someone who didn't even know a word of any foreign language.

Then he learned that coal mines in West Germany's Ruhr district were recruiting foreign workers with coal-mining experience. Although he felt he had little chance of being selected, Sada decided to give it a shot and applied. Contrary to his expectations, his application was accepted — he was offered a job.

Sada was amazed. He reflected that it must mean he really had a mission to work for kosen-rufu in Europe.

In October 1961, just before his departure for West Germany, Sada paid a visit to the Overseas Department at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo. While he was there, a staff member took him to see Shin'ichi at the Seikyo Shimbun Building. Shin'ichi had just returned from an overseas trip, and he greeted Sada with a warm smile.

"So you're the young man who is going to West Germany and will be working for kosen-rufu there!" he exclaimed. "I appreciate your stopping by before leaving. Please set your mind at ease — I've just been to Europe to open the way for the spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism there. There are Bodhisattvas of the Earth waiting there, and many more members from Japan will follow in your footsteps in the future. So there is no need to rush things. Please move ahead surely and steadily, as if climbing a staircase one step at a time."

To be continued