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In Hong Kong, Shin’ichi Yamamoto reflects on how the Soka Gakkai should not become politically involved in any country outside Japan.

After talking with Anne Miyako Raiz, Shin’ichi Yamamoto pondered deeply how the Soka Gakkai should conduct its activities around the world.

He reflected on where possible causes for misunderstanding of the Soka Gakkai might lie. First, the unfamiliar Japanese name Soka Gakkai might give people the impression that it was a strange, mysterious religion. People tend to be afraid of things they don’t understand.

It was therefore crucial, Shin’ichi thought, to clarify that the Gakkai was a Buddhist organization based on Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, and that the Daishonin’s Buddhism was the essence of the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. In other words, it would be necessary to let people know that the Soka Gakkai was a group striving to achieve peace and happiness for humankind, contribute to each country’s development and cultural prosperity, and create value by bringing the true spirit of the more than 2,000-year-old philosophy of Buddhism to flower in society.

Shin’ichi suspected that some might also be under the impression that the Soka Gakkai was a religious group seeking political power, due to its role as the main supporting body of the newly established Komei Political Federation in Japan. But the decision to send members into the field of politics had been made only to open the way for a fresh approach to government in Japan’s confused political situation. There was no need for the Soka Gakkai to become politically involved in any other nation.

The political involvement of Soka Gakkai members as groups outside Japan would most likely have a negative effect on the promotion of their religious activities in their respective countries. Since other religious groups and the political establishment in Japan were making a big fuss over the Soka Gakkai’s involvement in national politics, using that to stir up concern about the organization overseas, it would be important to state unequivocally that the Soka Gakkai had no intention of becoming politically involved in any other country.

It would also be crucial to make people aware that the religion upheld by the Gakkai was not one restricted to the Japanese—that it was in fact a world religion intended for all humanity. It would be increasingly important, therefore, for the Soka Gakkai organizations in each country to incorporate locally and pursue their own activities uniquely suited to the circumstances and situation there.

Buddhism teaches the principle of adapting precepts to the locality. As long as the fundamental spirit of Buddhism is upheld, the customs and traditions of the region or the times should be abided by. It would be vital for Soka Gakkai members around the world to understand this principle and to put down firm roots in their communities and societies while working for their countries’ prosperity and their fellow citizens’ happiness.

For his part, he determined to meet with the leaders of other nations to help them appreciate the true nature and goals of the Soka Gakkai to protect the members living in those countries.

At the hotel, Shin'ichi and the others discussed the Hong Kong organization. A number of districts were to be established at the Hong Kong Chapter meeting the following day, Jan. 26. It was also necessary for them to consider whether they needed to appoint a new chapter leader, since the current Hong Kong Chapter leader, Ikuyo Oka, had returned to Japan in June 1962, just four months after the chapter's formation, her husband's work having called them back.

Participating in the discussion with Shin'ichi were Kiyoshi Jujo, Eisuke Akizuki, Shoichi Tanida and Yoshihiko Ohya, who were traveling with Shin'ichi, as well as Fukuyasu Takami, Okinawa General Chapter leader and Southeast Asia General Chapter vice leader, and Tamako Uema, Okinawa General Chapter women's division leader, both of whom had come from Okinawa for the occasion. Shin'ichi regarded Okinawa as the gateway to Southeast Asia, and he had asked Takami and Uema to be responsible for the Soka Gakkai's activities in Southeast Asia.

The group decided to establish three districts in Hong Kong but agreed to put off selecting a new chapter leader until they had considered the matter further.

The next day, prior to the chapter meeting, an oral Study Department examination was held at the Lap Sun Building in Kowloon, which was also the venue for the meeting. When the examinees arrived at the building, they found Ikuyo Oka, who was supposed to be back in Japan, waiting to greet them. She had heard about the meeting and that President Yamamoto would attend, and had flown from Japan. Learning that a Study Department examination would be held the same day, she decided to wait in front of the examination site to coach the participants on study points in the short time available before the test began.

Mrs. Oka lived in Japan, but as Hong Kong Chapter leader she strongly wished to do whatever she could to assist and support the Hong Kong members. She explained to the examinees such terminology as the Three Great Secret Laws and the principles for judging the validity of various Buddhist teachings, all the while encouraging them to challenge the exam with confidence. At this "special lecture session" by their chapter leader, whom they thought they'd never see again, the members made a fresh determination and went into the exam with enthusiasm.

In the afternoon, Shin'ichi took Ohya and Uema, who were visiting Hong Kong for the first time, on a brief tour of the city. He wanted them to gain a better understanding of the conditions in Hong Kong and to see how the people there lived. It was Chinese New Year's, and the city was bustling with families celebrating the holiday. They even witnessed the famous Chinese lion dance.

The walls of shops were covered with celebratory New Year's prints of a plump baby holding a large peach as well as prints of carp or goldfish. There were also red paper banners emblazoned with the Chinese character for fortune in gold. The festive sound of firecrackers filled the air.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the
novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto.
The events take place in 1963.