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‘Shin’ichi Yamamoto knew that the corruption that had taken root in the hearts of the priests had not been severed. To prevent the priesthood from becoming the “one evil” that destroys Buddhism, he began to battle the demonic nature of authority that had clothed itself in priests’ robes.’

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda was always strict with priests who had fallen off the correct path. He gave no quarter to priests who had become spoiled and decadent. Sometimes he actually shouted at them. As a result, whenever he went to the head temple, priests with a guilty conscience would sneak away. But once he left, they would get together again and bad-mouth him over drinks: “He’s only a follower, but he’s constantly nagging us....”

Unable to put up with the abusive comments of the priests any longer, Soka Gakkai members working at the head temple would go to their leaders in tears and tell them what was going on.

President Toda fought against this evil trend among the priests because he wanted to protect Nichiren Shoshu. That is why he put tremendous effort into reconstructing the struggling head temple, which had lost many of its agricultural holdings in the post-war land reform of 1946. In addition, he led donation campaigns to secure a financial base for the temple, enabling it to repair its five-storied pagoda and to construct many new buildings, including the Hoanden and the Grand Lecture Hall. He also spearheaded efforts to build Nichiren Shoshu temples all over Japan.

He did all of this because he wanted the priesthood, as guardian of the Dai-Gohonzon and inheritor of the noble spirit of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin, to awaken to their original mission. He hoped that they would strive to create harmonious relations with the Soka Gakkai in order to carry out the sacred task of kosen-rufu. Toda’s main objective in working for the revival of the priesthood was a revival of its faith. That is why he so firmly and strictly rebuked “this one evil” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 15) of corruption among priests who were only too ready to defame the Buddhist Law for their personal interests. He acted in complete accord with the Gosho passage “If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, he is in fact his enemy” (WND, 286).

This is the way of religious reformation that will lead to the worldwide spread of the Daishonin’s teachings. It is for this reason that on his deathbed, President Toda said to his disciple Shin’ichi Yamamoto: “Fight adamantly against any corruption that takes root within the priesthood. Do you hear me, Shin’ichi? You must never retreat a single step. Never slacken in your resolve against such evil!” It was one of his final instructions.

Having been imprisoned for his beliefs, and fully aware of the school’s history, President Toda knew that these priests who draped themselves in the robes of authority but lacked any desire to develop themselves would become in a sense “possessed by demons” and cause the destruction of the kosen-rufu movement. However, he was firmly determined not to let this happen; he was utterly devoted to protecting the Daishonin’s teachings.

In the car on his way to the Fuji Community Center, Shin'ichi decided that if he were going to act in accord with the spirit of his mentor, he absolutely could not ignore the corruption of the priests and their abuse of the Soka Gakkai. But he also knew that if he pursued the issue relentlessly, he would be inviting a hostile reaction from many of the priests. Still, it was clear that if he overlooked the present situation, the corruption in the priesthood would continue and the problem would only be aggravated.

Shin'ichi was profoundly aware that he was the only one who could remonstrate with Nichiren Shoshu. He believed, too, that sensible priests would listen to his sincere protest and understand his intent. "I must fight," he thought, "for kosen-rufu, for the members and to protect the priesthood." He was firmly resolved. From the car window he could see Mt. Fuji rising majestically above the clouds in the sky.

When Shin'ichi arrived at the Fuji Community Center, he received a phone call from the priesthood official with whom he had spoken earlier. The official said that the priests whose behavior was in question would be individually censured, and he hoped things could be settled amicably.

Shin'ichi said: "I want to know what you think about the situation! We've heard you say this sort of thing time and again, but the same problem keeps arising! The priests and the Hokkeko have been attacking the Soka Gakkai, which has been practicing Buddhism just as the Daishonin instructed and working hard to spread his teachings. They have discriminated against Soka Gakkai members and bullied them. We in the Soka Gakkai have done nothing to deserve this treatment.

"I want Nichiren Shoshu to understand this and take a clear stand. I want you to stop trying to evade the problem. That will only be the cause for more trouble later. I am not satisfied with your response thus far." Before long, the priest replied: "I understand. We'll discuss it," and hung up the phone.

Shortly after 3:00 that afternoon, Shin'ichi attended the inauguration ceremony for Shizuoka Headquarters. Not long after the ceremony was over, the priest Shin'ichi had been talking to arrived at the Fuji Community Center. Shin'ichi reiterated his complaint, citing concrete examples of unacceptable behavior on the part of priests, of abuse hurled at the Soka Gakkai and of problems with the Hokkeko. He explained clearly and in no uncertain terms just how Soka Gakkai members had suffered and been abused.

The priest, however, acted as though it didn't concern him, simply repeating, "That's really unfortunate." Finally he said, "Mr. Yamamoto, please don't be so hard on me." He showed no sign of regret.

Keeping his anger in check, Shin'ichi strongly argued that unless Nichiren Shoshu fought against the corruption within, it would eventually be destroyed by it. "Next spring the Grand Reception Hall will at last be completed and three million members will visit the head temple in celebration," he said. "Soka Gakkai members are exerting themselves wholeheartedly in the spirit that the time has come for priests and laity to work together in harmony toward the realization of kosen-rufu.

"There is evidence, however, that some priests are harshly criticizing the Soka Gakkai and inciting Hokkeko members to do the same. In addition, there are priests who continue to act licentiously, becoming the objects of ridicule. Their shameful and decadent behavior deceives pure-hearted believers. It is also a betrayal of Nikko Shonin's injunction, 'My disciples should conduct themselves as holy priests.'

"If Nichiren Shoshu has anything it wants to say about the Soka Gakkai — whether it be

opinions, wishes or complaints—I would like you to tell me directly. The fact is, however, there are priests who vilify the Soka Gakkai in secret and pick on our members, without conveying a word to me. This is simply despicable.

“Soka Gakkai members have been verbally abused and even ostracized by society at large, yet they have continued to do their best to introduce others to the Daishonin’s teachings and to work hard for the prosperity of Nichiren Shoshu. The Daishonin would embrace these members, these noble children of the Buddha, for their sincere efforts. But the words and actions of certain priests, who call themselves disciples of the Buddha, are like a kick in the face.

“This is unacceptable. If the school administration says it can do nothing about this, you can be certain that I will!”

The priest hurriedly replied: “No—we will definitely take action. I will confer with the high priest and we will make sure such things never happen again.”

“I can really believe you this time?” Shin’ichi asked, looking intently at the priest.

“Yes.”

“All right. I’ll leave the details up to you. But I expect the administration to really take responsibility this time and not try to gloss over the problem.”

Shin’ichi escorted the priest to the entrance of the community center, thinking to himself, “The members don’t deserve this kind of treatment....”

The high priest issued the directives to Nichiren Shoshu priests and Hokkeko members a week later, on July 15 (see the Aug. 24 *World Tribune*).

After the high priest’s directive appeared in the July 25 issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper, the head of the Nichiren Shoshu General Affairs Office published his comments in the *Seikyo Shimbun* as well. He said: “As the directive states, it is due to the great power of the Gohonzon and the enthusiastic efforts of sincere Soka Gakkai members to share the Daishonin’s teachings with others that Nichiren Shoshu has become an international religion.

“In accord with the high priest’s wishes, the school administration is determined to proceed in unity with the laity. As the completion of the Grand Reception Hall approaches, we vow to uphold the high priest’s directive, as well as the instructions of the former high priest, and to work together with the Soka Gakkai.”

The president of the National Hokkeko Federation also published his remarks in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, stating: “Every member of the Hokkeko, without exception, accepts and is prepared to carry out the high priest’s directive. We are determined to respond to the high priest’s deep consideration by overcoming any obstacle that stands in the way of kosen-rufu, and to dedicate ourselves to practice for oneself and others, following the Soka Gakkai’s lead.”

He concluded by expressing his hope that, under the compassionate leadership of President Yamamoto, whom he referred to as a senior lay Hokkeko representative and a “great and unparalleled leader,” “each member of the Hokkeko would advance with strong faith toward victory in the struggle to achieve kosen-rufu and create a Buddha land.”

With the announcement of the directives, Rengeji temple in Osaka and Daijoji temple in Kochi, which had consistently harassed Soka Gakkai members, eventually seceded from Nichiren Shoshu. Criticism of the Soka Gakkai by some priests and Hokkeko members abated for a time, and there were fewer incidents of Taisekiji priests seen drinking and partying in Fujinomiya. But essentially nothing had changed. Behind closed

doors, verbal attacks on the Soka Gakkai continued, and the priests' profligate behavior just took place in less conspicuous locations. In later years, when Nikken Abe, who would prove himself to be the epitome of self-interest and hunger for power, assumed the school's top ranking position of high priest and chief administrator, Nichiren Shoshu would be completely reduced to a den of iniquity and degradation of the Daishonin's teachings.

Shin'ichi was relieved that at least the high priest had published these directives, but at the same time he knew that the corruption that had taken root in the hearts of the priests had not been severed. A look at history revealed that devilish functions would enter the priesthood, the very core of kosen-rufu, in order to halt the advance of that movement. To prevent the priesthood from becoming the "one evil" (WND, 15) that destroys Buddhism, Shin'ichi had picked up the jeweled sword of faith and begun to battle the demonic nature of authority that had clothed itself in priests' robes.

(This concludes "Jeweled Sword," Chapter 2 of Volume 8 of *The New Human Revolution*.)

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