

Why Protest?
By FRED M. ZAITSU
SGI-USA General Director

Nikken's destruction of the Grand Main Temple has apparently begun. Despite protests from SGI members and prominent architects and citizens around the world, Nikken is going ahead with his plan to level this monument of peace and masterwork of architecture. Unconfirmed reports from Japan say that several demolition companies from Osaka have started dismantling the building from within, detaching the marble panels from the walls. The plan is, supposedly, to sell these valuable panels to help pay the demolition costs.

That Nikken would do this, of course, is not surprising. Ever since he began his attacks on the SGI, his behavior has been characterized by an inability to empathize with the feelings and sincere wishes of millions of people. And his destructive nature is clear to anyone who is aware of his cutting down of cherry trees and his tearing down of the Grand Reception Hall.

This latest development, however, in no way lessens the significance of the voices of protest and outrage, and the calls for common sense that have been raised. These voices, representative of the people, have been and will continue to be recorded in the balance sheet of history.

In the past few weeks, from the *World Tribune's* first report on the demolition plans, SGI-USA members have reacted in various ways. I have heard many opinions and have considered the issue from many perspectives. Some members have gotten very angry at Nikken and are asking what we are doing to stop this travesty. Rallies and letters to Nikken are not enough, they say. After all, the Main Temple was meant to become the third of the Three Great Secret Laws. One person even suggested we try to buy the building.

Other members, though understanding that Nikken is wrong, ask me why we should care so much about what Nichiren Shoshu — now a separate organization — does with a building that, although a gift from SGI members mainly, is legally theirs. And others have expressed confusion over the entire issue and asked for clarification. It *is* a complex issue.

To restate my view: Destroying the magnificent structure called the Grand Main Temple is an affront to the members who donated the money. It's also a tragic, unnecessary loss of a significant building for the ages. In short, I think it's wrong.

Nikken has offered a number of dubious reasons for destroying this building. First, through one of his magazines, he floated the idea that the building was structurally unsound, a position he has never personally, publicly stated in the face of overwhelming contrary evidence. Then he claimed that the building must be destroyed because it had been petitioned for by someone he considers a slanderer, a line of reasoning that, if followed to its logical conclusion, would require that Nikken destroy the hundreds upon hundreds of other temples and facilities that SGI President Ikeda suggested and the SGI eventually donated to Nichiren Shoshu. He has also now claimed — in a letter to a U.S. congressman who protested the destruction — that the building is uneconomical and too costly to maintain, hence justifying the \$35 million demolition price tag.

Despite all these claims, I firmly believe Nikken is doing this merely out of spite and jealousy. And I further believe that even the priests and their followers know it.

We in the SGI-USA are taking action to protest and try to end the demolition. We are in the midst of a letter-writing campaign and are investigating and pursuing various public, media and legal avenues. Architects around the world are joining the cause (their motivation is not religious but based on an acute awareness of the waste and tragedy of destroying such an architectural treasure). Please be confident that the SGI-USA is looking

Title: Editorial: Why Protest?
Subject: World Tribune 06/19/98 n.3196 p.2 WT980619p02
Author: Fred Zaitzu
Keywords: Editorials Issue Opinion Protest Temple Tribune World

for every practical and effective way to delay or stop this destruction.

In light of the fact that the demolition has already begun, our voices of protest may seem dampened or no longer significant. Yet it is important to continue to speak out. Only those who continue to speak out against a grave injustice can leave a clear and indelible historical record of what is right and what is wrong. This record will stand as a monument to the sincerity of those who dedicated their energy, sweat and tears to building the Grand Main Temple. It will also serve to highlight, for the future, the true destructive nature of Nikken and his priesthood — which we have seen over the last eight years in their efforts to undermine and hinder the SGI's efforts for peace and culminating in this final ridiculous act.

The Grand Main Temple was built with the intention that it would, at the time of kosen-rufu, become the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism, the third of the Three Great Secret Laws. These Secret Laws derive from the three types of Buddhist learning — precepts, meditation and wisdom. The high sanctuary is equated with precepts. This indicates our vow of faith in the Gohonzon and our promise to spread the compassionate teachings of this Buddhism throughout the world. Without people who embrace this vow, there can be no sanctuary. It can only exist where those with faith and a profound determination to accomplish kosen-rufu gather.

Sad as it may seem, because priests who have subverted the Daishonin's precepts have usurped the Grand Main Temple and slated it for destruction, it has lost its significance as the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism. Even if Nikken succeeds in his plan to destroy the Grand Main Temple, he can never destroy the true high sanctuary; it exists only in the lives and faith of SGI members and is impervious to the destructive acts of those of base designs.

The Daishonin's Buddhism will never be destroyed so long as the SGI is grounded in his spirit to accomplish kosen-rufu and to secure the happiness of all people. Failing to shake us, Nikken has finally lashed out at an inanimate structure, one that in his mind symbolizes all that he envies and despises about the SGI.

There are three points I would like us all to keep in mind:

- We are protesting Nikken's actions, not begging him to stop. We're not giving him the satisfaction of seeing us, the people he hates the most, lose our dignity, hope or determination. Rather, we should transform our anger into a motivating force for us to continue our work to widely spread the Daishonin's teachings and prove the justice of the SGI.
- Nothing is wasted in our efforts for the sake of Buddhism. There is absolutely no way that the sincere efforts of those members who contributed to building the Grand Main Temple could ever be wasted. The results of the great causes we have made through our contributions will shine eternally. Nikken cannot destroy the law of causality. While the Main Temple stood as a monument to the sincerity, faith and compassionate practice of the members of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI, Nikken's act of destroying it will stand forever as proof of his true nature.
- The Daishonin's Buddhism is a philosophy of building. Of building lives, of building culture, of building peace. Those who use the name of Buddhism to serve their personal lust for fame and power will end up tearing down these things. They will continue until there is nothing left to destroy but themselves. Those with the Daishonin's spirit will continue working for the happiness of all people.

WT

Title: Editorial: Why Protest?

Subject: World Tribune 06/19/98 n.3196 p.2 WT980619p02

Author: Fred Zaitso

Keywords: Editorials Issue Opinion Protest Temple Tribune World