

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION**  
**'EARLY SPRING'**  
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*In Lebanon, Shin'ichi Yamamoto says: 'Everything is a drama, with all sorts of twists and turns. But isn't that what makes it all interesting? If everything always went exactly as planned, life would be pretty dull!'*

Shin'ichi Yamamoto chose his words carefully: "Here in the Middle East, and in Europe as well, religion has a much greater significance and social influence than it does in Japan. When conflicting political and social interests compound religious differences, the problem only gets more complicated. I think dialogue is essential, but I am talking about dialogue among human beings, dialogue that transcends religious distinctions.

"In other words, I think the most important thing is, as fellow citizens, as fellow human beings, to first of all frankly discuss issues of common interest. And from there to build a base of shared empathy.

"This requires eliminating the idea that people can be divided according to their beliefs or religious affiliations. I think it is a mistake to regard people as abstract groups, to identify them in terms of ethnicity, religion, nationality or class, rather than seeing them as individuals. Such thinking only divides people and will never bring about real dialogue or true friendship.

"In the case of Lebanon, dialogue must begin first and foremost with the assumption, the principle, that all citizens have equal rights, are worthy of respect and have a right to life. More than dialogue among religious groups, there is a need for dialogue among people.

"This dialogue should focus not on religious beliefs but on human life. This is of course not easy, but if people do not communicate on this level, things will only get more difficult. I have decided to devote the rest of my life to promoting such life-to-life dialogue around the world.

"Buddhism originally had no different denominations or schools. Nor was it intended for any specific ethnic group or social class. It was a teaching expounded for human beings, for all humanity.

"Nichiren Daishonin's only concern, as well, was how to bring happiness to all human beings. President Toda once said that the Soka Gakkai should distinguish itself as a 'human religion.' Everything should always be based on concern for the human being. Let us also always act with that big-hearted spirit.

"There are many different religions, peoples and cultures in today's world. The only way for humankind to join together in harmony amid such diversity is to return to the starting point: our shared humanity. This is the teaching of Buddhism. A Buddhist is someone dedicated to achieving peace and happiness for all people."

Shin'ichi's words stirred a new awareness in his listeners.

The afternoon of Jan. 23, Shin'ichi and his party visited the ruins of the ancient city Baalbek, once known as Heliopolis, or City of the Sun, located in the Al Biga Valley northeast of Beirut.

Late that night, Shin'ichi and his group were to catch a 1:10 a.m. flight to New Delhi, India, by way of Teheran, Iran. But when they arrived at the airport, they learned that

strong winds had forced their plane to land on Cyprus, delaying its Beirut arrival. An airline representative said that while no new departure time had yet been scheduled, their flight would probably be delayed at least 10 hours.

Shin'ichi and the others returned to their hotel and tried calling the airport again the next morning, but there was still no definite departure time.

As they ate breakfast at the hotel, Kiyoshi Jujo said with some irritation: "There's always trouble when you try to get around overseas. You just never know what's going to happen."

Shin'ichi laughed and replied: "We can say the same about life in general and about the path of kosen-rufu. Everything is a drama, with all sorts of twists and turns. But isn't that what makes it all interesting? If everything always went exactly as planned, life would be pretty dull!

"Whenever I encounter a trial or obstacle, I just regard it as another of life's dramas, and I face it head-on. We are all the protagonists in the drama of our own lives, so we may as well play our role as hero to the fullest.

"It's especially important for young people to have this attitude. If we react to everything that happens with surprise, panic, complaint and sadness, we can't be heroes. We'll just end up ruining the whole drama."

Shin'ichi's words expressed his philosophy on life.

The group finally flew out of Beirut at 5:00 p.m. on the 24th. They were 16 hours behind schedule. Originally, they had planned to spend one night in New Delhi, but because of the delay they decided to cancel their stay there and proceed to Hong Kong, their next destination. When they arrived in New Delhi by way of Teheran, it was the middle of the night. They reached their next stopover, Bangkok, the following morning.

Shin'ichi had planned to meet with some of the Thai members at the airport during their Bangkok layover. Entering the airport lobby, he saw some 50 people waiting to greet him.

On his visit to Bangkok in February 1962, the year before, when the first chapter in Thailand had been formed, there had been a membership of only 20-some households. Now there were nearly 200.

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