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'EARLY SPRING'
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'Times change,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells the Taiwan members, who are facing many difficulties. 'And you can change things through your prayers. Until spring arrives in all its glory, please be patient, and send the roots of your faith deep into the earth of life.'

Smiling, Shin'ichi Yamamoto told Zhu Qianxun: "I got off the plane, and there was this group of people calling: 'Sensei! Sensei!' They turned out to be Soka Gakkai members. But how did everyone know I would be here?"

"We have all been chanting for weeks," Zhu replied, "in the hope that you would come. We were so sure our prayers would be answered that we decided to gather at the airport to wait for you."

"I see," said Shin'ichi. "We weren't originally scheduled to stop in Taiwan, but our flight was delayed, and we had to switch flights. Even we didn't know that the plane would be landing here. Isn't that amazing? We must have been drawn here by your daimoku."

"Sensei," said Zhu, "can you wait here just a moment?" He headed for the airport terminal.

Zhu asked the airport officials if he and the other members might be allowed in the transit area. Responding to Zhu's earnest plea, they agreed to let three people in, making it possible for them to converse with Shin'ichi with no barrier between them.

Shin'ichi asked about Soka Gakkai activities in Taiwan.

The Taiwanese Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion, assembly and association, but Taiwan was under martial law; these freedoms had been severely restricted. In order to carry out any group activities, an organization had to register with the government.

Zhu had contacted the Soka Gakkai Headquarters' Overseas Department and, with their assistance, applied to the Taiwan Ministry of the Interior for registration, but it had not been granted. There was still strong anti-Japanese sentiment in Taiwan, and the government authorities were probably suspicious of the Soka Gakkai's Japanese origins. In fact, police officers had raided a number of the Taiwan members' discussion meetings.

Shin'ichi said, "So what you're saying is that unless the government officially recognizes the Soka Gakkai in Taiwan, it will be difficult to carry out our activities as an organization.

"It is of course very important to adhere to the laws of the nation. But here in Taiwan, the right of individuals to practice their religion of choice is guaranteed. It's therefore vital that you don't grow cowardly or backslide in your faith just because the circumstances are difficult. Please have courage.

"No matter what happens, no matter how hard things become, for the well-being of the Taiwanese people, I hope that you will not allow the flame of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to be extinguished. True victory will be apparent 30 or 40 years down the line. You will definitely triumph in the end."

Nodding with quiet resolve, Zhu replied: "I understand what you are saying. I will not give up."

Members continued to arrive at the airport one after another until about 50 had gathered.

Zhu wanted all the members who had come to the airport to receive encouragement from President Yamamoto. He went to speak with the airport officials again and implored them to allow Shin'ichi to come into the airport lobby, where they could all meet with him. One of the men he spoke to was kind and sympathetic, and though he seemed a little hesitant, he gave his permission when he learned that a large crowd of people had come to the airport to see Shin'ichi.

When Shin'ichi entered the lobby, the crowd greeted him with cheers.

“Thank you all for coming!” he said.

Looking intently at each member, he addressed them with a powerful voice: “I know that you are currently facing many difficulties as you pursue your Buddhist practice here in Taiwan. But winter never fails to turn to spring. The fact that there are so many members in Taiwan who have the Gohonzon is itself a sign that spring has already arrived.

“Yet it is only the first glimmerings of early spring. The wind is cold. If it were Japan, there might still be frost or even snow. But spring will definitely come in full force, with its fragrant blossoms, singing birds and gentle breezes of peace.

“Times change. And you can change things through your prayers. Until spring arrives in all its glory, please be patient, and send the roots of your faith deep into the earth of life. I pray for the success of your valiant efforts, for your health, and for the happiness of you and your families.”

After he finished speaking, Shin'ichi posed for photographs with the Taiwan members. Even while the shutters were clicking, he continued talking with each member, saying: “Throughout your life, never forsake the Gohonzon” “You must never be defeated!” He encouraged them with his whole life, wanting to do everything possible to prevent even one of them from abandoning faith.

The time to depart came. “Let’s meet next time in Japan,” called Shin'ichi. “Take care of yourselves!” As he headed for the plane, again and again he turned around to wave back at his beloved members.

Sent off by the Taiwan members, Shin'ichi’s plane took off with a great roar and soon disappeared into the clouds.

Shin'ichi felt that the kosen-rufu movement in Asia was still in its early spring, and that dark clouds hung low. But he knew that if they could break through that layer of cloud, the spring sun would be shining brightly.

“My friends, bravely take flight—high into the sky of your mission!” Shin'ichi prayed fervently in his heart, as he and the other leaders made their way back to Tokyo.

(This concludes “Early Spring,” chapter 3 of Volume 7 of *The New Human Revolution*.)

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