

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION**  
**'AT THE HELM'**  
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*Shin'ichi Yamamoto prepares for a planned meeting with John F. Kennedy. 'What he most wanted to communicate to the American president was the spirit and content of his late mentor Josei Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, which Toda had left as his foremost, final guideline to his successors.'*

The members of Niigata and Uetsu chapters who had not participated in the pilgrimage to the head temple were engaged in their own struggle back home.

As soon as the call came through that the train carrying their fellow members was stranded at Miyauchi Station, many of the leaders got to work letting family members know. Only a few households in the area had telephones at the time, so the leaders made their way from house to house in the blizzard. They explained the situation to each family, sometimes offering words of encouragement, sometimes having to soothe irate non-practicing family members.

One man who was not a member but whose wife had gone on the pilgrimage exploded angrily at the woman who came to tell him about his wife's delay: "So much for that benefit you're always talking about! If your faith is as great as you say it is, surely the train carrying your members wouldn't be blocked—even if other trains were. My wife kept going on and on about wanting to visit the head temple, so I let her go. But when she comes back, I'm going to make her quit the Gakkai."

The woman apologized deeply. "I'm terribly sorry that this has happened," she said. "The Gakkai is doing everything possible to make sure that everyone returns home safe and sound, so please don't worry."

"Don't worry?! If my wife gets sick, what will you do then?! How can you possibly understand how I feel?"

"I do understand," she replied. "My husband is on the train."

"Your husband, too!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know. And in spite of that, you're walking around like this to inform each family. Well, I suppose the blizzard is not your fault."

Recognizing this member's sincerity, he started to calm down and become more pleasant. As the woman left, he even thanked her for taking the trouble to come over in the snow.

The Niigata and Uetsu members' efforts bore fruit, and when the stranded members finally returned home, they all received warm welcomes, including from their non-practicing family members. Not only that, when those families heard of the devoted efforts of the Nagaoka Chapter members, they were astonished and moved. Many who had been skeptical or critical of the Soka Gakkai became extremely supportive of its activities and ideals.

In addition, the Niigata and Uetsu members who had not participated in the pilgrimage had chanted daimoku in earnest for the safety of their stranded comrades. Some leaders had placed the names of those who had gone to the head temple in front of their Gohonzon and chanted daimoku through the nights. This trial, wrought by the heavy snowfall, further strengthened the unity of the Niigata and Uetsu members.

Twenty-six trains were stopped in Niigata Prefecture on Jan. 23 due to the snowstorm, and six of them remained at a standstill until Jan. 27. On many of the trains, panic ensued. Anxious and impatient, people grew angry. Quarrels broke out. When boxed meals were distributed, many scrambled to get to them first, and insults and curses were exchanged. Passengers fell ill one after another. The heating system failed on the Koshiji express train from Niigata to Ueno, which had stopped at Oshikiri Station on the Shin'etsu main line. Charcoal burners were brought on the train to keep the passengers warm, but the acrid fumes made some people sick.

At another station, stranded passengers on local trains rushed the stationmaster's office in anger, when they saw the express and special express trains moving out before their own. It is worth noting that the Soka Gakkai members on their chartered train, facing the same circumstances, behaved in a civilized, orderly manner—to the very end of the crisis. This, as well as the valiant relief efforts of the Nagaoka members, was without a doubt a testimony to the strength of their faith.

On Jan. 28, the day after returning from his overseas trip, Shin'ichi Yamamoto attended the first Study Department professors meeting of the year. The next day, he attended the monthly Headquarters Leaders Meeting.

At the same time, he was busy preparing for his upcoming meeting with John F. Kennedy, which was scheduled for February. There was much he wanted to discuss with President Kennedy, but their time together would be limited. He had to organize what he was going to talk about. What he most wanted to communicate to the American president was the spirit and content of his late mentor Josei Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, which Toda had left as his foremost, final guideline to his successors.

Shin'ichi could still hear Toda's resounding appeal at the Mitsuzawa Track and Field Stadium:

“Although a movement to ban the testing of nuclear weapons is now under way around the world, it is my wish to attack the problem at its root, that is, to rip out the claws that are hidden in the very depths of this issue. Thus I advocate that those who venture to use nuclear weapons, irrespective of where they are from or whether their country is victorious or defeated, be sentenced to death without exception.

“Why do I say this? Because we, the citizens of the world, have an inviolable right to live. Anyone who tries to jeopardize this right is a devil incarnate, a fiend, a monster.”

As a Buddhist, Mr. Toda was staunchly opposed to the death penalty, but his condemnation of nuclear weapons as an absolute evil made him go this far—to call for such punishment for anyone who would use them.

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