

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION**  
**'AT THE HELM'**  
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*Shin'ichi Yamamoto remembers John F. Kennedy's famous speech to the 16th U.N. General Assembly, in which he likened the arms race to 'living under a sword of Damocles.'*

In 1957, when Josei Toda made his Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, the major world powers were putting increased energy into the development and manufacture of nuclear weapons. The justification for the possession of nuclear arms was a theory called nuclear deterrence, which held that the fear of the human race's utter annihilation by full-scale nuclear war would serve as a deterrent to war. But this very theory nurtured the “demonic claws” that Mr. Toda warned were hidden within humankind. This theory held hostage the inherent right to live of all human beings, and it was premised on fear. Toda's declaration aimed to destroy this demonic nature of humanity at its root.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto recalled the Cuban Missile Crisis, which took place in October 1962, the previous year. This terrifying incident, which deeply shocked the world, clearly revealed just how fragile, risky and illusory was the idea of preserving peace by means of a balance of fear—the essence of nuclear deterrence.

In September 1961, the year that John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as president, he was invited to address the 16th Session of the U.N. General Assembly. He then likened the circumstances in which humanity found itself to “living under a sword of Damocles.”

Damocles was a Greek courtier, who was always speaking extravagantly of the good fortune of his sovereign, Dionysius. Growing tired of his subject's flatteries, Dionysius one day at a banquet had Damocles sit in his throne. Above Damocles' head hung an unsheathed sword suspended by a single horsehair that could snap, sending the sword falling down, at any moment. Through this harrowing experience, Damocles learned that the throne he had thought so glorious was in fact always exposed to mortal danger.

President Kennedy asserted that humankind, living as it did with the threat of destruction by mass quantities of nuclear weapons, was in the same boat as Damocles. The Cuban Missile Crisis took place a little more than a year after the president's speech.

The use of hydrogen and atomic bombs would be suicidal for humankind and for their planet. Placed in a situation where his decision could possibly lead to the complete annihilation of humanity, President Kennedy no doubt experienced the great anguish and loneliness of sitting directly under this terrible sword of Damocles. The situation was extremely tense, but President Kennedy persevered with a strong will and levelheaded judgment, doing all in his power to avert nuclear conflict.

Shin'ichi was certain that President Kennedy would completely understand the spirit of Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, and that there would be much in common between a person of Kennedy's integrity and Toda, who had been dedicated to peace and happiness for all humanity.

Shin'ichi believed that in order to establish world peace, it was necessary to realize the spirit of Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons in society, and he thus wanted to propose to President Kennedy an early resumption of talks between U.S. and Soviet leaders.

The Cuban Missile Crisis must have given the leaders of both countries a sobering taste of the real danger of full-scale nuclear war. Now was the perfect opportunity, Shin'ichi felt, for those leaders to meet directly and carry out open, honest dialogue, striving to improve their relations and move from opposition to peaceful coexistence. The time had also come, he believed, for them to substantially rethink their positions on nuclear weapons and to work for these weapons' elimination.

As well, he felt that the first step toward stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons around the world would be for the United States and the Soviet Union to agree to a total ban on all nuclear testing. If the leaders of the Eastern and Western blocs were to halt all testing, it would curb the development of nuclear weapons in other nations.

That, in turn, would serve as a basis for the next step: a combined effort to find a way to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether. This, if anything, was the superpowers' duty.

Wanting to see nuclear weapons abolished and a tide toward lasting peace created, Shin'ichi also intended to propose, the holding of a global summit where leaders from all nations of the world could sit together and speak frankly about the issues of nuclear weapons and war. He was certain that it was the true desire of every nation not to have to pour such a large part of their national budget into maintaining nuclear arsenals.

But as the number of nuclear powers increased, many other nations felt it necessary to possess their own nuclear capability to keep up with the rest. It was their anxiety and fear that drew them into the quagmire of the nuclear arms race.

Behind all this was a deep rift formed by mutual distrust and suspicion. The only way to close that rift was for the leaders of each nation to sit down and talk openly with one another.

Shin'ichi knew, of course, that distrust would not turn into trust overnight. He was also well aware of the harsh, complex reality of international politics, with the various competing expectations of the different nations. But none of this would ever change without an attempt at dialogue. Such a course might at first seem long and circuitous, but Shin'ichi was convinced that in the end it would actually be the shortest, most direct route to peace.

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