

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION**  
**'AT THE HELM'**  
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*A Diet member threatens Shin'ichi Yamamoto that the ruling party will use its political clout to stop him from meeting with John F. Kennedy.*

Whenever Shin'ichi Yamamoto contemplated the state of the world, with humanity forced to live in fear, the threat of nuclear weapons dangling above its head like the sword of Damocles, he was reminded of this passage from the “Simile and Parable” chapter of the Lotus Sutra: “There is no safety in the threefold world; / it is like a burning house, / replete with a multitude of sufferings, / truly to be feared” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 69).

As Shin'ichi traveled the globe, he closely observed the lives of ordinary people. In every country, he saw serious social contradictions, such as poverty and discrimination amid economic wealth and prosperity. In some countries, he saw the shadow of conflict.

Nevertheless, the people of every country, irrespective of their circumstances, wished for peace and happiness. They bravely struggled to survive.

If an all-out nuclear war were to erupt, it would have a harmful effect on all nations and even bring with it the potential of total annihilation. And, as the Cuban Missile Crisis had unintentionally driven home, the possibility of a nuclear war was fast becoming a reality.

Shin'ichi was deeply aware that the time had come to unite the world with the ideal of global citizenship that his mentor, Josei Toda, had advocated, thereby realizing lasting peace. He had great expectations for his dialogue with John F. Kennedy, hoping it would serve to open a way toward world peace. In fact, he was counting on it.

But events took an unanticipated turn.

At President Kennedy's request, preparations for the meeting were conducted under extreme secrecy. But by the time Shin'ichi returned from his overseas trip, news of the meeting had got out, probably because various arrangements had to be made for him to travel abroad again.

Suddenly, word arrived that a member of the Diet, a veteran politician known to be a powerful player in Japan's ruling party, wished to meet with Shin'ichi. Thinking it would be rude to simply refuse, Shin'ichi decided to meet him, and personally went to visit the Diet member at his office.

After the briefest exchange of pleasantries, the Diet member began to speak in a patronizing, overly familiar tone: “Mr. Yamamoto, I've heard you're going to meet with Kennedy. There is strong opposition to this among the members of my party. The bottom line is that they're saying, ‘This can affect the relations between our two countries, so we can't just let him go ahead and do as he pleases.’”

“In fact, it seems that some people in the Foreign Ministry, too, are nervous about your actions. As things stand, there's certainly going to be an uproar. And if a substantial number of my party's members become firmly opposed to your meeting, well, I'm afraid it will become highly unlikely that it will ever take place.”

The Diet member was trying to intimidate Shin'ichi with threats that his party could use its political clout to stop his meeting with President Kennedy at any time.

Shin'ichi felt a surge of anger, but he listened quietly to what the politician had to say. The representative cast an upward glance at Shin'ichi, gauging his response. “Now I know,”

he continued, “that a meeting with Kennedy would bring you prestige as Soka Gakkai president and be an ideal opportunity to gain a favorable impression for your organization in society at large. But it’s an extremely tough situation. Both our party and the Foreign Ministry are very concerned. We fear that your conduct in such a meeting could have a negative impact on Japan–U.S. relations.

“However, I want to help you. As the youthful president of the Soka Gakkai, you have a long future ahead of you. I think you are going to become an even more important figure than you are now. That’s why I want you to have this chance.

“So I’m thinking about going out on a limb for you. If I take up your cause, I can keep the opposition in my party quiet. Just chalk it up to a kind of fatherly affection for you. I’m saying this in all sincerity.

“I’m not necessarily asking for anything in return, but there is something I want you to help me out with. I think that we can work together very well. And if we do, I can promise there’ll be a lot in it for you.

“For example, the Gakkai has formed the Komei-kai parliamentary group in the Upper House, but, to be quite blunt, its influence is still negligible. If you were to join forces with me, I could see to it that Komei-kai gains more political pull.”

Shin’ichi listened silently, but his mind was moving at lightning speed. He thought: “The aim of this Diet member is crystal clear—he wants to make me feel indebted to him and use that to exploit the Soka Gakkai for political purposes. We must never allow the pure world of the Soka Gakkai to be thrown into disarray by the dirty hand of political power. But if I ignore his proposal, he will no doubt set about blocking my meeting with President Kennedy. If he succeeds, his party will make a great show of its power and, gloating, continue again and again to try to force me to capitulate to their will.

“No! I won’t give them an opening! Although it is regrettable, I will have to cancel my meeting with President Kennedy this time. Protecting the Soka Gakkai is the most important thing. It was not for my own benefit that I wanted to meet the president. It’s not so crucial for me to see him that I should have to beg these politicians to be allowed to do so.”

Shin’ichi swiftly steered a new course.

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