

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
'AT THE HELM'
VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 25–26

Shin'ichi Yamamoto encourages an elderly woman who waited for hours in front of the Kyoto Headquarters to meet him.

The consideration President Shin'ichi Yamamoto showed the elderly woman warmed the hearts of all who had been waiting in the snow to greet him.

Inside the building, the members were happy and smiling. Seeing them rejoice at the completion of their new Headquarters made Shin'ichi think of the Kyoto Community Center, located near the famous Nijo Castle. Until now, the old wooden building had been the center of all the Kyoto organization's activities. All the rooms, including the main hall, had wooden floors. The roof leaked, and the wind blew through the building's many cracks and crevices.

Kyoto is packed with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. There are a number of time-honored Buddhist temples and headquarters of many long-established Japanese Buddhist schools.

Much hostility and opposition, therefore, existed toward the Soka Gakkai members, who, determined to carry out a religious reformation, questioned the nature and practice of religion and who strove to correct the erroneous teachings of other Buddhist schools. Nevertheless, the Kyoto members would gather at the Kyoto Community Center to hold meetings, study Nichiren Daishonin's writings, chant daimoku and then go out to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Shin'ichi had visited the center in early spring three years before. At that time, the members had been enthusiastic and energetic, but the building itself was cramped and shabby. Shin'ichi felt that the members deserved better, and so he resolved to build a new Kyoto Headquarters for them.

As Soka Gakkai president, he made every effort to treasure the members, who embraced the Daishonin's teachings, and he gave constant thought to how to support and protect them. All those who had come together as fellow members of the Soka Gakkai with the mission to accomplish kosen-rufu were Bodhisattvas of the Earth, Buddhas committed to working for the people's happiness. It was Shin'ichi's personal philosophy and conviction that the only way to serve the Buddha was to serve these members.

The completion ceremony for the new Headquarters was a joyous, festive occasion. In his speech, Shin'ichi called on the members to advance with fresh determination toward the next 10 years, with the new Headquarters serving as the driving force for the flourishing of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

After the ceremony, a meeting of chapter leaders was held at the Kyoto Annex, a short distance away. There, one leader told Shin'ichi about a member, an elderly woman, who wanted to meet him. She was 73 and had waited near the new Headquarters since the morning. Worried about her health, the chapter leader persuaded her to return home.

Because of the limited space inside the new building, only those who were district leaders and up could attend the completion ceremony. The elderly woman, unfortunately, was ineligible to attend.

But she was determined to meet President Yamamoto and insisted on going to the Headquarters anyway. Her family members sympathized, but they tried to make her

understand that uninvited members would only cause confusion. However, she refused to listen.

It seems that the elderly woman feared that if she didn't meet President Yamamoto that time, she might never meet him. Early that morning, she left her home in Kyoto's Fushimi Ward, making her way to the neighborhood where the new Headquarters was located. If she waited nearby, she thought, she would surely meet him.

After she stood around a couple of hours, her chapter leader happened by. When he heard what she was doing and how long she had been waiting, he persuaded her to go home, saying that it wouldn't do for her to catch a cold or cause trouble to the neighborhood. She reluctantly decided to do as the chapter leader suggested but said to him, "All right, I'll go home, but I want you to give my very best regards to President Yamamoto."

"I will. I promise to give him your message," he replied.

To keep his promise, the chapter leader told President Yamamoto about the woman.

When the chapter leader finished, Shin'ichi said: "I see. So she waited in the cold all morning to see me. I feel terrible. But I'm glad to hear that she is all right.

"Please give her this message from me: 'Thank you. And please stay in good health for all your days.' And let's give her a copy of the *Collected Lectures of the President*. What is her name?"

"Mrs. Terasaki," the chapter leader answered.

"And her first name?"

"Uh...Aki. Aki Terasaki."

"And what are the Chinese characters for her name?"

"I think it's just written phonetically."

As a matter of fact, the chapter leader had gotten her first name wrong. It was actually Tomi, and her daughter-in-law, who lived with her, was named Akiko. Confusing the two, the chapter leader had mistakenly given the woman's name as Aki.

Shin'ichi took out a copy of the fifth volume of his collected lectures, which he had brought from Tokyo, and wrote on the flyleaf, "On the occasion of the Kyoto Headquarters Completion Ceremony, to Aki Terasaki, from Shin'ichi Yamamoto." He then asked one of the vice directors accompanying him to deliver it to her.

When Tomi opened the book from Shin'ichi, she was puzzled to see the name Aki Terasaki. She thought about it and decided that President Yamamoto had written Aki because someday her daughter-in-law would inherit the book. A few days later, the chapter leader realized that he had made a mistake, and he went to Tomi's house to apologize. He was relieved to hear Tomi say, "Some day the book will pass on to my daughter-in-law, so I don't mind." At the same time, he felt the heavy responsibility that leaders bear.

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