

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
'AT THE HELM'
VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 41–42

As the chief priest of Heian-ji temple, Shinno Abe—who will later become the 67th high priest, Nikken—upsets the Kyoto members by indulging in expensive amusements.

In spite of their daily struggles to make ends meet, the members in Kyoto continued to make sincere offerings to Heian-ji temple, believing that kosen-rufu in the city would advance through the efforts of chief priest Shinno Abe [who would later become the 67th high priest, Nikken].

But no matter how many years went by, they saw not a single temple in the area convert to Nichiren Shoshu. Abe never made any attempt to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. What *did* he do then?

It was not long before Abe was seen indulging in expensive amusements, such as frequenting exclusive Japanese restaurants and hiring geisha for entertainment.

In Kyoto, it was not unusual for chief priests of the temples of established Buddhist schools to enjoy such high living. This was a glaring example of the corrupt, decadent state of Japan's Buddhist establishment.

But the Soka Gakkai members were certain that Nichiren Shoshu priests would not stoop to such conduct, and they confidently proclaimed this to people around them. They believed that, having inherited the legacy of Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's true successor, these priests adhered to the tradition of being devout priests who "desire little and yet know satisfaction" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 747).

Of the diverse membership in Kyoto, some were employees at the city's most prestigious Japanese restaurants. The shock they felt on seeing Abe's dissolute ways was profound. He was the epitome of "an animal dressed in priestly robes" (WND, 760).

It came as such a betrayal to these members that some were dumbstruck, while others trembled with indignation and fought back bitter tears of disappointment. However, they kept what they knew to themselves.

Given that the priesthood and laity were striving to advance in harmonious unity toward kosen-rufu, they felt it would be wrong to stir up controversy. They decided it best to just turn a blind eye to these activities.

Abe's true identity was not merely as "an animal dressed in priestly robes." He would ultimately reveal himself as the devil king of the sixth heaven, attempting to destroy the Soka Gakkai, a gathering of the children of the Buddha, and to bring about the ruin of the Daishonin's Buddhism itself.

Following the opening and Gohonzon-enshrinement ceremony for Heian-ji, Shin'ichi Yamamoto also attended the openings of two new Soka Gakkai facilities—the Nishi-Yodogawa Community Center in Osaka and the Wakayama Community Center in neighboring Wakayama Prefecture—on April 6 and 7, respectively. Nishi-Yodogawa Ward and Wakayama City had both suffered great damage in the second Muroto Typhoon, which had struck the Kansai Region some 18 months earlier.

In the aftermath of the disaster, Shin'ichi promised to build two new community centers in these areas to encourage the members and give them a target to aim for as they set rebuilt their lives and communities. Shin'ichi took it as his personal responsibility to

inspire, cheer and encourage those who were suffering.

Wherever he went here in Kansai, as he did everywhere, Shin'ichi went among his fellow members, among the people, to offer encouragement. In such action one finds the practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging and the way of the bodhisattva in the modern age.

April 17 was Election Day for Japan's 46 prefecture assemblies and the major municipal assemblies of Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe. These made up the first round of nationwide local elections taking place that spring.

The Komei Political Federation fielded 95 candidates—57 in the prefectural elections and 38 in the five city elections. All the Komei candidates put up a good fight. With the exception of one who finished as runner-up in the Ibaraki Prefecture Assembly election, all of the federation's candidates in both the prefectural and municipal elections were elected to office.

With this victory, the Komei Political Federation announced that it would set up local Komei-kai groups—which would serve as negotiating bodies in each of the local assemblies where its members held office—and that all of its local assembly representatives would henceforth be collectively known as the Komei-kai.

A few days later, on April 20, came the official announcement of ward assembly elections in Tokyo and nationwide city assembly elections (excluding Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe), marking the start of the second phase of nationwide local elections. The Komei Political Federation fielded a total of 740 candidates.

On the 23rd, nationwide town and village assembly elections were announced, and 157 Komei candidates also ran in these campaigns. A fierce struggle leading up to the polling day for both elections on the 30th ensued.

The Komei Political Federation achieved a resounding victory in these elections as well. With all 136 of its candidates in the Tokyo ward elections winning, the federation surpassed by 12 seats the Japan Socialist Party, which had long been the second largest party after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. And in other local assembly elections across the county, an astonishing 97.8 percent of Komei candidates were elected. Adding the winners in these elections to the already existing Komei incumbents, the Komei Political Federation now included a total of 1,079 local legislators.

Good government begins with local government that is closely linked to the community and is directly concerned with the lives of the people. Policies promoted in one local district could ultimately inspire new policies on the national level.

In reality, however, many local assemblies at the time were controlled by “town bosses” who had gone into politics simply to gain fame and personal advantages. There was little, if any, citizen participation. This state of affairs engendered a deepening sense of disappointment and distrust toward politics.

Consequently, Shin'ichi was overjoyed that there were now more than a thousand local Komei representatives. He was confident that with so many legislators seeking and working for the happiness and welfare of their local citizens, a new era in local government would surely dawn. He hoped that these representatives would go out among the people, listen to their opinions and personally involve themselves in their problems and concerns. And that they would also rack their brains to find ways to serve the people and wage a valiant struggle on their behalf.

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