

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
‘AT THE HELM’
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Shin’ichi Yamamoto realizes that ‘the Soka Gakkai had entered a period of rough sailing. Having set sail into society and out onto the open seas of the world, it was inevitable that the great ship of the Soka Gakkai would encounter raging waves.’

After it had been disbanded, the former central leaders of Taipei Chapter were summoned to the Taiwan Garrison General Headquarters and made to state in writing that they would no longer carry out religious activities.

This was not the end of the Taiwan members’ troubles, however. In fact, it was just the beginning.

The police stepped up its surveillance and crackdown on members. Some members had their homes raided and their Gohonzon seized. Others had their copies of the Nichiren Daishonin’s writings and other Soka Gakkai publications, as well as their Soka Gakkai pins and other items, confiscated.

Still others were threatened with imprisonment if they continued practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism. In some cases, people were denied promotions at work when it was learned that they were members. Others were demoted or laid off.

Although the freedom of religious belief of the individual was constitutionally guaranteed, the reality was that the members in Taiwan were robbed of even that right once their organization had been disbanded.

This daunting trial was to clearly reveal whether or not the members’ faith was genuine. Fearing persecution, those who had been practicing solely for personal recognition and profit quit practicing one after another. But Chapter Leader Zhu Qianxun and the other members with genuine faith regarded this hardship as an honor, and they rose to the occasion like courageous lions.

Zhu was a mid-level manager with a promising future at a large cement manufacturer. When the police began watching him, the company management pressed him to give up his Buddhist practice. Of course, Zhu’s determination never wavered. As a result, not only was his future advancement at the company blocked, he was removed from his managerial post.

Forced into a position where he had little real work to do, Zhu could now leave the office earlier than usual and make use of his vacation days. Taking advantage of this extra time, he began translating the Daishonin’s writings into Chinese. Moreover, he chose to translate them into classical Chinese in order to achieve the highest degree of accuracy. Having decided to make this work his personal mission, he went about it with quiet diligence.

In 1997, this undertaking would finally be completed, 34 years after Taipei Chapter had been ordered to disband. It was published as the first Chinese-language edition of the Daishonin’s writings.

Zhu also formed a harmonica corps for young people during that time. This was prompted by his belief that if culture and the arts are inextricably linked to religion, then the Buddhist spirit of humanism could be passed on to the next generation through cultural activities.

It was Zhu’s firm conviction and resolve that one can uphold one’s faith and live a life dedicated to kosen-rufu under any circumstances.

Zhu frequently made time to visit and encourage his fellow members. He wanted to see them gain great benefit and develop unwavering conviction in their Buddhist practice. Those he encouraged chanted daimoku in earnest and experienced the benefit of faith.

They could not help sharing their joy with others, and some of those they spoke to began to chant daimoku as well. Even during this wintry time for the Soka Gakkai in Taiwan, the correct teaching of Buddhism steadily and naturally took deep root in society.

Eventually, Taiwan began moving toward democratization, and a more tolerant attitude toward religious activities was adopted. Martial law was lifted in 1987, and in 1990 the Soka Gakkai was at last registered officially in Taiwan as a Buddhist association. Some 27 years had passed since the dissolution of Taipei Chapter.

In the years to come, the Soka Gakkai organization in Taiwan would win high acclaim for its contributions to society through its many cultural and other activities, and would be recognized on successive occasions by the Ministry of the Interior as one of the most outstanding civic organizations in Taiwan.

When Shin'ichi Yamamoto learned that the organization in Taiwan had been forced to disband, he keenly understood that the Soka Gakkai had entered a period of rough sailing. Having set sail into society and out onto the open seas of the world, it was inevitable that the great ship of the Soka Gakkai would encounter raging waves.

It was clear, for example, that once the Komei-kai parliamentary groups embarked in earnest to bring about political reform in Japan, the Soka Gakkai, as the groups' main supporting body, would come under attack by the established political parties. It was also evident that governments around the world would begin to keep a watchful eye on the organization.

The Soka Gakkai advocated global citizenship, and its goal was peace and happiness for all humanity. However, any effort to open channels of communication and exchange with socialist nations would attract criticism from the democratic nations of the West, and vice versa. The Soka Gakkai had to be prepared for this.

In this context, the Soka Gakkai's movement for worldwide kosen-rufu—an undertaking to link human hearts in a bond transcending differences in ideology, nationality and ethnicity, and to realize lasting peace—was a momentous experiment in the history of humankind.

No matter how rough the waves or how fierce the winds that pounded against the great ship of the Soka Gakkai, Shin'ichi had no choice but to keep steering with all his might toward the landfall of a new century in order to plant a flag of victory for all humanity. The future of kosen-rufu depended entirely upon the helmsmanship of the youthful 35-year-old president.

On the horizon lay May 3, which would mark the third anniversary of Shin'ichi's inauguration.

This concludes the “At the Helm” chapter and Volume 7 of The New Human Revolution.

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