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Shin’ichi Yamamoto was concerned with how the members of Toyama Chapter would react to the death of their chapter leader, Toshiharu Takamatsu. But when he saw the faces of the members who filled the hall, he was relieved. They had overcome their sadness and appeared firmly resolved to carry on Takamatsu’s spirit of dedication to kosen-rufu.

In his speech, Shin’ichi encouraged the members to uphold the Mystic Law throughout their lives and become true winners. He could see that they fully grasped his message. Even in death, Takamatsu’s strong determination continued to influence the members of his chapter and was beginning to have an impact on the entire region.

On Aug. 24, the 16th anniversary of his joining the Soka Gakkai, Shin’ichi visited Hokkaido, where his mentor, Josei Toda, spent his youth. He attended a leaders meeting at the Hokkaido Headquarters building that day, and on the 25th went to the 5th Soka Gakkai Hokkaido Sports Festival, held in Sapporo.

This “Festival of Youth” was the first of the year. Similar events would follow across the country, culminating in a national gathering on Sept. 22. In fostering youth, it is important to provide a stage on which they can exercise their talents. The sports festivals offered just such an arena as they presented these young people with an excellent opportunity to give full play to their strengths and abilities.

Shin’ichi carefully observed how the youth in each area were preparing for these events, watching what they were planning and how they were growing as a result. He wanted to see if they would concentrate simply on putting on a show, or if they would give the occasion a special meaning and come up with something original and unique that would launch them toward further progress. Depending on their effort and attitude, the sports festivals would have very different meaning and value.

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The Hokkaido sports festival overflowed with youthful energy and passion. Individual events were unique and well thought out. When the word *trailblazing* was spelled out with hand-held cards on the field, a thunderous cheer rose from the audience. In preparation for this day, the members had worked very hard to introduce their friends to the practice. They wanted to celebrate this occasion with proof of their efforts to blaze a great trail of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism throughout Hokkaido.

Shin’ichi was overjoyed to see the growth of the youth in Hokkaido, where just six years earlier, during the Yubari Coal Miners Union incident of 1957 [a case of blatant religious discrimination, in which miners were threatened with losing their jobs on account of belonging to the Soka Gakkai], he had fought with all his strength to protect the many ordinary citizens who had joined the Soka Gakkai there.

On Sept. 1, a day of bright sun and beautiful blue skies, a grand chorus of joyful voices rang through the Nihon University Auditorium in Ryogoku, Tokyo. The 26th Headquarters Leaders Meeting was being held to commemorate the completion that day of the long-awaited new Soka Gakkai Headquarters building in Shinanomachi. This facility was to be an energy source from which an important new movement in the essential phase of kosen-rufu would be launched.

The meeting started just past 9:30 a.m. Beneath the clear autumn sky, members who had gathered from all over Japan rejoiced at the building's completion and cheerfully exchanged vows to make a new start in their activities.

In his speech at the meeting, Shin'ichi related that High Priest Nittatsu had happily told him: "President Yama-moto, kosen-rufu is here! The time has arrived at last!" Shin'ichi also announced that the Soka Gakkai had realized President Toda's goals of 3 million member households and of opening the way for the spread of the Daishonin's teachings throughout Asia.

In fact, the Soka Gakkai now had more than 3.6 million member households, and seven chapters had already been established in other parts of Asia, where President Toda had so desired to shine the light of happiness. The foundation for worldwide kosen-rufu was steadily being built.

Shin'ichi declared that, based on the Daishonin's Buddhism, the Soka Gakkai would without a doubt lead all the people of Japan to happiness. He closed by saying: "My sincerest wish is that all of you will put faith first and enjoy wonderful benefit in your lives. I hope our leaders will do their utmost to serve the members toward that end. We must never grow arrogant or negligent because of the Soka Gakkai's tremendous growth.

"Let us be humble about our victories and continue to advance in high spirits one step at a time as allies of the people."

After this joyous leaders meeting, the completion ceremony for the new Head-quarters building was held in Shinanomachi at 1:30 p.m. The pristine white structure sparkled against the cloudless sky. The site measured 14,639 square feet, and the building itself covered 10,226 square feet of that. With four stories and a basement, it boasted a total floor space of 41,355 square feet. Its surface was plain concrete inlaid with pieces of marble. The solid diagonal pillars gave the building a feeling of simple fortitude and grandeur.

The members' eyes glistened and their faces beamed as they took in the splendid edifice. They were excited to think of the fresh surge of progress that would arise from this place.

Nothing could have made Shin'ichi happier than to witness his fellow members' joy at the completion of the new Soka Gakkai Headquarters building in Shinanomachi. Thinking back, he recalled that for the first eight years after President Toda had been released from prison on July 3, 1945, the Soka Gakkai had no place of its own. During that time, President Toda was busy rebuilding the organization, and the second floor of his business offices in Nishi Kanda, Tokyo, served as the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. It was here that he held his lectures on the Lotus Sutra and established the young men's and young women's divisions.

This was also where the Soka Gakkai's Joju Gohonzon bearing the inscription "For the Fulfillment of the Great Desire for Kosen-rufu Through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law" was enshrined. From here, the organization had launched its colossal

effort to introduce 750,000 households to the Daishonin's Buddhism.

During those eight years, whenever a senior leader would propose constructing a Headquarters, President Toda would flatly reply: "We don't need a building. That's just an outward form. Wherever I am is the Headquarters!"

In fact, however, no one felt the need for an independent Headquarters building more than President Toda. At his offices in Nishi Kanda, only two rooms were available for Soka Gakkai use, and both were quite small. People coming for meetings or to receive guidance would often overflow the building out into the street. President Toda felt terrible about those members who could not enter, and it pained him to no end to see them standing in the cold and rain.

Since he could not afford to build a Headquarters on his own, doing so would require asking the members for donations. At that time, however, most Soka Gakkai members were so poor that they could barely make ends meet. Not wanting to increase their burden, President Toda decided to hold off on the construction of a Headquarters building until a later date.

When he was alone with Shin'ichi, President Toda often shared his true feelings. "Shin'ichi," he would say, "let's build a magnificent Headquarters building someday. I'd like the Soka Gakkai to have other great structures, too."

Plans for a Headquarters building finally took shape in the summer of 1952. Things were going smoothly when the Soka Gakkai purchased a lot measuring 15,096 square feet at 25 Shinanomachi, Shinjuku Ward, near the Nishi Kanda Headquarters, but soon they hit a snag. The five-story pagoda at the head temple had sustained weather damage, and repairs were urgently needed. President Toda gave first priority to maintenance of the head temple and set about repairing the pagoda.

Repairing the five-story pagoda depleted the Soka Gakkai's funds for building a Headquarters. As a result, in 1953, they sold the land they had bought a year earlier and purchased instead an old Western-style building with an area of 7,353 square feet at 32 Shinanomachi and refurbished it. In November that year, the Soka Gakkai Headquarters moved to this building in Shinanomachi.

For the next nine years, this was the base camp for kosen-rufu activities. Many members received guidance and encouragement from President Toda here. It was a training center for the nurturing of new talent. The ceremony officially recommending Shin'ichi as the third president of the Soka Gakkai after President Toda's death also took place in this building.

Plans for tearing down the old building and putting up a new one on the same site had been under consideration even while President Toda was alive. After Shin'ichi became president, however, the Soka Gakkai's movement experienced such great progress as well as a dramatic increase in membership that the need for a new Headquarters building became urgent. The project was therefore undertaken at last.

Stones from 42 nations around the world, from locations such as Egypt and the Ganges River in India, were encased in the concrete base of the altar where the Joju Gohonzon was to be enshrined. Shin'ichi had collected these stones on his overseas travels, and he had them placed there to symbolize the prayer for world peace.

The basement of the new Headquarters contained the control room and electric facilities, a cafeteria and storage space. The first floor had a lobby, offices and reception rooms. On the second floor were more offices, meeting rooms, reception rooms and rooms

for each Soka Gakkai division. On the third floor were a large main Gohonzon room and the president's office, and on the fourth was a large conference hall.

The completion ceremony took place in the Gohonzon room on the third floor. Amid the joyous voices of members reciting the sutra and chanting daimoku, Shin'ichi vowed that from this new Headquarters he would continue giving his all to leading worldwide kosen-rufu.

Addressing the participants, Shin'ichi said: "For the first time in the 35 years since President Makiguchi took faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism and began to spread its teachings far and wide, the Soka Gakkai has built a real Headquarters. This Headquarters is a castle of the Law dedicated to kosen-rufu. It is a castle of champions who work for the people's happiness. Though there is a room for each Soka Gakkai division here, I hope you will make the most of all the facilities in your respective activities.

"I hope all of you will take full responsibility for our movement, becoming allies to those who are suffering and courageously taking the lead in spreading this Buddhism throughout Japan and the world." The sunlight streaming in through the large windows of the new building illuminated the faces of all present.

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