

Part 3. True Intent Revealed

“I’ll Soon Dismiss Ikeda. Please Support Me.”

Jiro Oshiki, Kojoyun Takahashi, and Isao Dan met for about an hour and a half with Nikken Abe in the conference room of the Internal Affairs Bureau, the heart of Nichiren Shoshu head temple, Taiseki-ji, at 1 PM on December 25, 1990 — around the same time I met with Kawabe at Nissho-ji temple in Hokkaido. The topic of their discussion was how to attack the Soka Gakkai.

On the previous night (Dec. 24th), Nikken made direct phone calls to some anti-Gakkai activist priests throughout Japan. Nikken was under the illusion that disgruntled, undependable priests would make reliable, significant, and able allies.

“I’ll soon dismiss Ikeda. Please support me.” This was his message. While revealing his true intent to these priests on the evening of December 24, Nikken made sure that each one of them wouldn’t share this information with anybody else until December 28.

Priests who vehemently spoke ill of Honorable President Ikeda, a man of the great accomplishments in the history of kosen-rufu, must have seemed dependable to Nikken, who was ablaze with his own grudge against Mr. Ikeda. Despite his position as high priest, Nikken has indeed forgotten the goal and spirit of kosen-rufu.

At the routine communication meeting held on December 13, General Administrator Eido Fujimoto attempted to hand a document to Einosuke Akiya, President of the Soka Gakkai. This document was the Inquiry that contained Nichiren Shoshu’s questions about the speech given by Honorary President Ikeda at the 35th Headquarters leaders meeting. But Mr. Akiya refused to accept it, since the temple document came from a surreptitious source.

Nichiren Shoshu then mailed the Inquiry to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters on December 16, requesting that the Gakkai respond to its inquiry within a week. The priesthood maintained that the source of the document was legitimate.

In the Inquiry, Nichiren Shoshu criticized the Soka Gakkai members’ singing Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony’s “Ode to Joy.” However, in the document, Nichiren Shoshu had made various mistakes in the

transcription of the tape of Honorary President Ikeda's speech. According to the transcription, Nichiren Shoshu claimed that Honorary President Ikeda said, "(Nichiren Shoshu) does not use any wisdom to do shakubuku. No one in Nichiren Shoshu makes efforts in this regard. But the Gakkai does what is great." and "... the Shingon teaching ruins the nation, the Zen teaching is the function of the Devil King. You just degrade the Law." Quoting these alleged statements by Mr. Ikeda, Nichiren Shoshu took issue with them in the Inquiry:

"The honorary president gravely opposes Buddhism by denying the Daishonin's personality and way of teaching, because he cites as reasons (for failure in propagation) the Daishonin's own personality and candid methods to spread his teachings."

However, this contention by Nichiren Shoshu stemmed from a mistake committed in transcribing the tape. The actual statements made by the honorary president were:

"There is no other way than being ingenious in propagating the Daishonin's teaching. High Priest Nichijun was very aware of this point. And the Gakkai has been making every possible effort to propagate the Daishonin's teachings. Therefore, the Gakkai is absolutely wonderful."

"If you wake up in the morning and just parrot 'the Shingon teaching ruins the nation and the Zen teaching is the function of the King Devil' (part of the four axioms), without making any practical effort to propagate the Law, you will be only degrading the Law by parroting such words ineffectively."

In January 1991, the priesthood acknowledged that they had made mistakes in transcribing the tape. Since Nichiren Shoshu had already decided to stage a war against the Soka Gakkai, they could not let their own mistakes stand in their way.

The Soka Gakkai's response to the Inquiry reached Taiseki-ji on the afternoon of December 23. In its reply, the Soka Gakkai expressed its desire to have a dialogue with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, and they raised the following points: "It may be presumptuous for us to say the following, but you, the high priest, raised your voice in fury in response to remarks from President Akiya and Vice President Yahiro at the communication meeting on July 17. You shouted, 'You've shut me up. You're arrogant. You're committing the slander of arrogance!'

“Also, during the audience you gave President Ikeda and myself on July 21, you, the high priest, once again shouted to me, ‘You’re committing the slander of arrogance.’ Then, out of fury, you fiercely attacked the honorary president, exclaiming to him, ‘I’ve got something to tell you. We’ll have you impeached.’”

Thus the priesthood faced a setback at the very beginning of its campaign, as the Soka Gakkai struck back by taking issue with the high priest’s inappropriate words and actions as the leader of Nichiren Shoshu.

Nikken Admits Jiro Oshiki’s Danto Movement

Nikken was extremely busy on December 25, 1990, when he met with Jiro Oshiki, Kojoyun Takahashi, and Isao Dan. He had to meet with other executive priests on the same day to discuss how to respond to the Soka Gakkai’s rebuttal.

At that point, Nikken already had made up his mind to dismiss Honorary President Ikeda from the position of head of all lay societies of Nichiren Shoshu. However, he was not confident that his decision would produce a positive result. Nikken was concerned that those officers of the Administrative Office with whom he was discussing how to counterattack the Gakkai, might become faint-hearted and side with the Gakkai at a crucial moment, before Nikken could implement his decision. Nikken was secretly thinking that it might be necessary to sever Taisei-ji’s ties with Nichiren Shoshu, should the Administrative Office run counter to his intent and disapprove of his decision about the Soka Gakkai.

In the past, Higashi-hongan-ji temple, the head temple of the Nembutsu sect, had seen a conflict between its high priest and its lay members, which resulted in a confrontation between the high priest and the administrative office (which consisted of officers chosen by the assembly). Higashi-hongan-ji temple went through an internal mess, providing scandalous news for the tabloid press. Knowing about the example of this temple, Nikken put into perspective the idea that he might have to have Taisei-ji, a legal corporation, disassociate itself from Nichiren Shoshu, should the Administrative Office or the Assembly choose not to obey the high priest’s order.

Nikken encouraged the priests who had his audience on that day (Dec. 25), “From now on, you should be resolved to survive no

matter what, even if you have to do farming with a plow or hoe to secure your livelihood." Deep in his heart, however, he was worried about how other priests would react to his policy toward the Soka Gakkai. To achieve his end, Nikken acted the role of a man with no secular desires. He also secretly murmured to those thirsty for power, "I'll quit from the position of high priest after completing a series of actions against the Soka Gakkai," so they would stay with Nikken to benefit themselves later.

In this way, Nikken was very manipulative in an attempt to have the priests within the sect get in tune with his ambition.

During their meeting in the conference room of the Internal Bureau, Takahashi first introduced Dan to Nikken. Then, Oshiki and one more person were introduced to Nikken. In meeting with them, Nikken said [paraphrased]:

The Gakkai donated to us only a general lodging building at the time of the celebration of the 700th anniversary of the founding of the head temple Taiseki-ji.

We'll dismiss Ikeda from the position of the head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay societies at the session of the Assembly, the day after tomorrow.

According to the current rules of our sect, he will automatically become honorary head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay societies after being dismissed from the position of the head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay societies. We'll revise the rules this time so that he won't be able to assume that position either.

If we dismiss Ikeda and excommunicate the Soka Gakkai, it will take two years to deal with what will arise. If Ikeda should apologize to us after getting dismissed, we'll allow him to become a mere believer of Daigan-ji temple in Shinjuku. We won't accept any other recourse for him. Since I don't think that the Soka Gakkai likes our proposal, the Gakkai will definitely refuse to accept it. We'll then excommunicate both Ikeda and the Soka Gakkai.

We may encounter legal troubles should we get into a war with the Soka Gakkai. In that case, Mr. Oshiki, will you testify as our witness? Mr. Dan, please write good articles for us.

In response to Nikken's plea, Oshiki showed Nikken a document titled, "For the Establishment of a Group Supporting Nichiren Shoshu from the Outside," that his group had agreed upon two days prior to their meeting. Oshiki's group wanted their anti-Gakkai movement to be promoted to destroy the Soka Gakkai under the direction of the priesthood of Nichiren Shoshu. The document read:

"This group's utmost aim is to fulfill the lay believers' responsibility to protect the head temple. We are convinced that our efforts to distance as many Gakkai members as possible from Daisaku Ikeda and the Ikeda Sect will result in protection of the head temple.

"We'll correct and rectify faith in Ikeda-ism and Daisaku Ikeda's mistaken views that permeate Nichiren Shoshu and the Soka Gakkai."

Nikken could not resist an upsurge of joy at reading Oshiki's group's determination. And Nikken, as high priest, gave those present an order to break up the organization of the Soka Gakkai.

Nikken triumphantly said to Oshiki:

"When Ikeda comes to the head temple on January 2, I'll treat him as just a regular lay believer. I won't allow him to wear a *koji* robe; the robe that is supposed to be worn by the top leader of all Nichiren Shoshu lay societies. I won't prepare a special seat for him, either. I'll thrust upon him and the Soka Gakkai our severe position toward them. If they don't accept our proposition, we'll excommunicate them all.

"I want to finish the whole thing by January 15. And I'd like to move the Dai-Gohonzon of High Sanctuary from the Sho-Hondo to Hoanden."

Then, Dan commented on Nikken's idea of transferring the Dai-Gohonzon — as if he, as a lay person, were finding faults with the high priest's ideas: "If things go according to your plan about the transferring of the Dai-Gohonzon, your claim will be no different from that of Myoshinko, isn't that right?"

"Maintaining the Sho-Hondo is costly. It costs us hundreds of thousands of yen to maintain it every day," This was the excuse Nikken gave for his outrageous idea of moving the Dai-Gohonzon.

Dan is a freelance writer, who once claimed that Nikken did not receive the heritage of the Daishonin's Buddhism from the former high priest. Not only that, Dan warned Nikken that his idea of transferring the Dai-Gohonzon is no different than the idea of the Myoshinko group. In rebutting Dan's opinion, Nikken did not base himself upon the Daishonin's doctrine. All he could refer to was a secular reason, that is, the expensive fee for the maintenance of the Sho-Hondo. Nikken could not reveal his true thought, that it was unbearable for him to take the same seat once occupied by the former high priest, Nittatsu Hosoi. High Priest Nittatsu did not transfer the heritage of Nichiren Shoshu to Nikken and the Sho-Hondo was built due to the determination of Honorary President Ikeda. Nikken could not bear owing a debt of gratitude to these two individuals against whom he had schemed in so many ways.

Nikken then predicted, "If only one tenth (or 200,000 members) out of the 2,000,000 members of the Soka Gakkai should side with us after dismissing Ikeda, we'll be fine."

At the end of their meeting, Nikken was perhaps feeling a little embarrassed about his dramatic turnaround, after following the path of cooperation with the Soka Gakkai for many years. He said, "When I was study department chief, Mr. Ikeda acted to manipulate me to support him. After that, he lost my trust."

Before closing the meeting, Nikken attacked the personality of the honorary president, attributing to him all the problems that Nichiren Shoshu would be going through with the Gakkai. Nikken's meeting with Oshika, Takahashi, and Dan ended around 2:30 PM.