

## **Demand for the Priesthood's Immediate Apology for Its Support of War**

Nichiren Daishonin states: "One may make use of my counsel, but if I am not given due respect as the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the country will perish" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 190).

Through the series of the recent incidents, it has become clear that over the last 700 years the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin has dissipated gradually within the priesthood. Especially since the Edo period [1600-1867], the priesthood developed a tendency to cater to national authority.

During the Pacific war, the priesthood's nature to curry favor with authority while forgetting the salvation of the people became all the more obvious. The priesthood ingratiated itself with the military regime by supporting Japan's aggression and justifying the massacre of World War II. This has been recently revealed to us all and is now as clear as day.

The priesthood easily submitted to pressure from the military regime. It revised the silent prayers to support the nationalistic beliefs based on Shinto and deleted important Goshō passages [in order not to offend the government]. The priesthood thereby committed treachery against the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin. Furthermore, it committed an unprecedented slander by not only accepting the talisman from the Ise Imperial Shinto Shrine but also forcing lay believers to do the same.

Japan was defeated exactly as stated by the founder because of these grave slanders involving the entire sect—an event that had no precedent in the sect’s history. Two months prior to Japan’s surrender, the major buildings on the head temple grounds—including the Reception Hall, the Mutsubo Hall, the Study and the High Priest’s Residence Hall—burned down, dearly indicating retribution [for the priesthood’s slander]. What do you, High Priest Nikken, think of these facts?

You and your proteges have been trying to justify the priesthood’s position by saying, “[The priesthood supported the military regime] in order to protect the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary and avoid risking the extinction of the lineage of the Law.”

The Daishonin states:

If you quail before the threats of the rulers of this little island country and abandon your faith, how will you face the even more terrible anger of Emma, the King of Hell? You have proclaimed yourselves to be the messengers of the Buddha. But if you falter, there will be no one more despicable than you  
(MW-1, 177).

In light of this strict admonition, it is clear that your explanation is nothing

but the feeble excuse of those who cannot believe in the DaiGohonzon's great power.

In light of the priesthood's having supported war, shouldn't all Nichiren Shoshu priests—young and old alike—naturally have a sense of remorse and self-reflection as the Daishonin's disciples and as human beings?

Yet we have seen no apology or self-reflection from you regarding the priesthood's error during World War II. Your irresponsible and shameless attitude disgusts us. Moreover, your recently revealed ignominy in Seattle, during the first overseas *gojukai* trip, is indicative of your lack of qualifications as a religious practitioner. You seem to have no sense of responsibility for the priesthood's war efforts.

As you are jealous of the Soka Gakkai—which continues to advance toward the accomplishment of world peace while upholding the ideal that Buddhism exists for the sake of people—you have been insanely trying to destroy it, ranting and raving about “excommunication” or “expulsion.” Furthermore, you even pleaded with government authorities to dissolve the Soka Gakkai. [Nichiren Shoshu sent a notice to the governor of Metropolitan Tokyo dated March 28, 1992, under the names of High Priest Nikken Abe, General Administrator Nichijun Fujimoto and Executive Advisor Nichiji Hayase. The notice reads in part: “We would like you to be aware that [the Soka Gakkai] clearly lacks competency as a religious corporation. Please be notified of this point.” The notice has no legal implications.] Your insidious, merciless character is in no way close to the spirit of Buddhism, which

teaches the dignity of life.

It may be useless to ask a destroyer of Buddhism like yourself about an issue regarding the fundamental attitude of a religious practitioner such as the priesthood's responsibility for its war efforts. Yet if you continue to insist that you are the successor to the orthodox lineage of the Daishonin's Buddhism, it is at the very least your responsibility as the priesthood's chief representative to accept responsibility for the sect's actions during World War II, and for you to apologize as a minimum effort toward making amends.

Today the fifteenth of August—the anniversary of the end of the Pacific war, we, the members of the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu, reaffirm our pledge against war based on our awareness as Nichiren Shoshu priests. Furthermore we oppose the priesthood's war efforts during World War II as well as your impudence in handling this matter. We thus strongly demand the priesthood's official apology as well as your immediate resignation.

## **I. The reality of the priesthood's war efforts**

First we must condemn the following statements in the document titled "Nichiren Shoshu and Its Responsibility for War" issued by the [Nichiren Shoshu] Committee on Current Affairs, which represents the position of the current priesthood, including yourself.

In the document, the Committee on Current Affairs states:

It cannot be said that Nichiren Shoshu's support of war was more aggressive than the average sentiments shared among general public....

The priesthood followed the government policy on surface in order to protect the Dai-Gohonzon—the fundamental object of worship for the salvation of the people—and transmit the correct faith for all people as well as not to allow the secret doctrine that had been transmitted from Nichiren Daishonin to be destroyed and defiled by the military regime's oppression and the Minobu sect's ambition. In reality, however, the priesthood nullified the government policy.

This is dearly a revision of historical facts.

To begin with, whether or not these statements are factual, it is preposterous for any religious practitioners to say that their war efforts were no more aggressive than the average sentiments shared among general public” or they “followed the government policy on surface.”

How could anyone who claims to be a genuine disciple of Nichiren Daishonin, who upheld absolute pacifism based on the dignity of human life, justify his behavior to cater to the trend of the times on the pretext of the public sentiment to glorify war and severe oppression from the military regime? The priesthood's behavior contains not a trace of conscience or integrity befitting a clergy.

It is unbecoming for any Nichiren Shoshu priest worthy of the name to

ingratiate himself with national authority and support war for any reason whatsoever. This is gravely slanderous behavior that goes against the founder's spirit to remonstrate with national authority.

Examining the priesthood's official publication *Dai-Nichiren* from that period, it is obvious that the publication was designed as a "weapon" to arouse public sentiment for war. Also, judging from the contents and tone of the priesthood's official documents, clearly the priesthood supported war from the nationalistic viewpoint and intended to spread propaganda for the military regime.

A typical example is High Priest Nikkyo's following communiqué issued on Dec. 8, 1941 (Dec. 7 in the United States)—the day on which Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, starting the Pacific war:

Today His Majesty [Emperor Hirohito] declared war on the United States of America and the United Kingdom. I can hardly suppress my awe and joy at this....

I ask that all believers summon forth the faith and practice they assiduously developed thus far and ensure victory in this great, unprecedented battle, through their resolve to endure any hardship and exert their utmost in their respective positions and capacities.

Highs Priest Nikkyo's communiqué is filled with expressions longing for the outbreak of the Pacific war; his attitude can in no way be described as the priesthood's *unwilling* support for the military regime.

As a proof of its aggressive, prompt support of war, the priesthood received the following certificate of commendation from the Navy minister in recognition of its financial contributions to the military prior to the Pacific war.

### Certificate of Commendation

Upon receiving the financial contributions for the repletion of national defense at the time of the War of the Great East Asia, we hereby express our profound appreciation.

December 1941

Hantaro Shimada  
Minister of the Navy

To Nichiren Shoshu

Thereafter, as the military regime's minion, the priesthood started its aggressive campaign to support war. Examples of its war efforts are too many to enumerate.

After the outbreak of the Pacific war, each year all priests at the head temple led by High Priest Nikkyo prayed for Japan's "victory in the War of the Great East Asia" and the "eternal good fortune" of the Japan's Imperial

Army at the New Year ceremony to worship the Dai-Gohonzon. The priesthood also started a special service to pray for Japan's victory on the eighth of every month—the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor bombing.

The priesthood made special efforts to glorify those who died in action, describing them as “those who preserved the honor of this school's believers” or “the supreme honor and model for the rest of this school's believers.”

In November 1942, the priesthood established the “Organization of Nichiren Shoshu Believers Dedicated to the Support of the Nation” nationwide to support the religious branch of the government-sponsored nationalistic movement. The Organization, as recorded in the *Dai-Nichiren*, solicited financial contributions for national “defense,” indoctrinated priests and lay believers with the nationalistic beliefs “to crush and eliminate the Americans and the British,” sponsored the lecture series and even established the “Marriage Counseling Service” to respond to the government's policy to increase population.

The Nichiren Shoshu's two major ceremonies—the scroll-airing ceremony and the *otaiya* ceremony to honor the Daishonin's passing— also became the opportunities to “pray for the nation” and hold a nationalistic lecture series sponsored by the Organization of Nichiren Shoshu Believers Dedicated to the Support of the Nation.

For example, the *otaiya* ceremony held in November 1943 was named “the *otaiya* ceremony to crush and eliminate the Americans and the British and to



arouse conviction in [Japan's] sure victory.” During the ceremony to worship the Dai-Gohonzon, priests prayed for “the increase and spread of the nation’s majesty,” “the eternal good fortune of [Japan’s] Imperial Army,” and “the recovery of wounded and ill soldiers.” The ceremony was followed by nationalistic lectures by the military officials and senior priests in charge of the Organization of Nichiren Shoshu Believers Dedicated to the Support of the Nation. For example, National Support Section Chief Teiryō Aoyama gave a lecture titled “On the Intrigue of the Jews.” General Affairs Department Chief Jikai Watanabe delivered a speech titled “The Just Path of Japan.” The ceremony, which was supposed to express appreciation and gratitude to the founder, was turned into a war support rally.

Next year the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office issued the following memorandum regarding the scroll-airing ceremony:

To All Nichiren Shoshu affiliates:

Instead of conducting the scroll-airing ceremony, this year the head temple will hold the Grand National Ceremony to pray for victory in the sacred war, the increase and spread of the nation’s majesty, the eternal good fortune of the Imperial Army, and the defeat of the American and British enemies during the week of March 28-April 3 as specified in the following. Please be notified of the aforementioned.

The priesthood cancelled the annual scroll-airing ceremony, which has been

conducted to perpetuate the Daishonin's teaching; instead, it voluntarily held a "Grand National Ceremony" to pray for Japan's victory in the Pacific war.

We have mentioned in the above only a fraction of the priesthood's war efforts. In light of these facts, how could anyone possibly say that the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood followed the government policy merely "on surface"?

Even if we consider those who were manipulated by the military regime's propaganda as victims of war, the priesthood's war support was too aggressive and prompt to be called the actions of a victim. The priesthood clearly acted as an agent of the oppressor.

## **II. The priesthood's distortion and revision of the Daishonin's teaching**

As quoted before, the Committee on the Current Affairs states that the priesthood unwillingly adopted the government policy "not to allow the secret doctrine that had been transmitted from Nichiren Daishonin to be destroyed and deified by the military regime's oppression and the Minobu sect's ambition." This is a lie.

The priesthood, in fear of governmental oppression, catered to the military regime's nationalistic beliefs and on many occasions actively "destroyed and defiled" the fundamental teaching of the Daishonin's Buddhism in order to

support war. The priesthood did so solely for the purpose of self-preservation. Nothing is more despicable for the Daishonin's disciples than this. The sense of purpose to protect "the secret doctrine" is nowhere to be found in the priesthood's behavior despite its assertion.

Quoting from the Nirvana Sutra, the Daishonin admonishes us, saying, "He should never hold back any of the teachings, even though it may cost him his life" (MW-4, 253). In light of this sutra passage, the priests' behavior was the exactly opposite—holding back the Buddha's teachings for their lives. We loudly condemn such behavior as a grave slander.

#### (1) The deletion of the Gosho passages

The priesthood took early care to protect itself in 1941—immediately before the start of the Pacific war. In August of that year, the Minobu sect decided to stop publishing the Reikokukan Publishing Company's version of the Gosho and issued a ban on its use. The Minobu sect also actively deleted Gosho passages [that might be considered offensive to the military regime or the State Shinto].

This preemptive move by the Minobu sect gave the senior officials of Nichiren Shoshu a sense of growing crisis. Shamelessly discarding their pride and awareness as the original Buddha's legitimate successors, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood chose the same path as the erroneous Minobu sect.

In September 1941, the Nichiren Shoshu Study Department issued a memorandum that instructed the deletion of the Gosho passages where the Sun Goddess, which Shinto considers as the supreme deity, or the 'nation's sovereign is described as inferior to the Buddha. For example, the priesthood deleted the following Gosho passage where the Daishonin declares himself to be the original Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law: "I am the foremost sage in the entire world" (MW-2, 259).

This Study Department memorandum also strictly prohibits the use of the deleted passages, stating, "Do not quote [the deleted Gosho passages] in sermons or lectures."

One-month prior to this Study Department memorandum, the Administrative Office issued a memo on Aug. 24 titled "Regarding Publication of the Gosho." The memo states that because the Gosho were written over 700 years ago in accordance with the social conditions of the Kamakura period, people of the present age in reading the Gosho might "doubt the Daishonin's desire to respect the emperor and protect his empire." The Administrative Office, therefore, decided to stop the publication of the Gosho.

The Administrative Office memo also states: "The doctrine that the Buddha is true while deities are transient is a vulgar belief in Buddhism.... This school, therefore, shall not rely on this doctrine in its original meaning." The priesthood shamelessly denied the Daishonin's teaching that the Buddha is true while deities are transient, thus committing another treachery against

the master, Nichiren Daishonin.

Currying favor with State Shinto, the priesthood deliberately withdrew its view that the Daishonin is the original Buddha. The priesthood, however, realized that the Goshō would present an obstacle to its scheme, and hence the ban on Goshō publication. The priesthood committed an even more insidious crime of slandering the Law than the five senior priests, who, slighting the importance of the Goshō, burned and destroyed it.

The priesthood abandoned its significant responsibility while claiming to be the only orthodox lineage of Buddhism. It went so far as concealing the original Buddha in order to praise the Sun Goddess and the sovereign. The priesthood's servile, shameless attitude was indicative of the obscuration of the Pure Law—the true cause that invited the misery and atrocity of worldwide conflict. The Daishonin states: “Buddhism is like the body and society like the shadow. When the body is crooked, so is the shadow” (MW-3, 308).

## (2) The revision of the silent prayers

For both priesthood and laity of this school, morning and evening gongyo is the basic daily practice. Two days before the memorandum that prohibited the publication of the Goshō, the Administrative Office issued another memorandum regarding a revision of the silent prayers in gongyo. The priesthood revised the silent prayers to promote the military regime's

nationalistic beliefs based on Shinto.

The priesthood adopted the erroneous doctrine that the Sun Goddess is true and the Buddha transient—an idea that Jimon Ogasawara, a senior Nichiren Shoshu priest, who was scheming to take over the priesthood in league with the military regime, was propounding at that time. The revised silent prayers were entirely based on praising the Sun Goddess.

The revised first silent prayer reads:

I humbly thank the Sun Goddess, the ancestor of the emperor, and all emperors of the successive reigns since the time of first Emperor Jimmu for the great debt of gratitude I owe to them. I also offer benefits that I derive from the Law to gods of the sun and moon and all other deities—the guardians of the Empire. I sincerely wish that they mercifully accept my offerings.

The priesthood first singled out the Sun Goddess among various Buddhist gods, honoring her beyond reason. Then it expresses appreciation for the successive emperors. Finally the prayer for other Buddhist gods follows in an abbreviated fashion—”gods of the sun and moon and all other deities.”

In the second and third silent prayers, the prayers that should express the greatest degree of appreciation for the three treasures are overly simplified

and downplayed when compared to the rest of the silent prayers.

In the fourth silent prayer—the prayer for kosen-rufu, the priesthood purposefully inserted nationalistic words and expressions such as “the unity of government and people” or “the increase of the nation’s majesty.” The priesthood here committed slander by misrepresenting the Daishonin’s view of worldwide kosen-rufu and incorporating the military regime’s nationalistic Shinto views. Such action was warned against in [Miao-lo’s] statement regarding “crushing the noble Buddhist teaching and incorporating it into a lesser non-Buddhist teaching.”

In the past we thought that the priesthood expelled Ogasawara because he propounded the erroneous doctrine that the Sun Goddess is true while the Buddha is transient. However, now that the reality of the priesthood’s corruption has been revealed, it is clear that the priesthood expelled Ogasawara for the sole purpose of preventing his scheme to take over the priesthood.

If we just compare their positions from the doctrinal standpoint, it is conclusive that the priesthood, influenced by Ogasawara, held a view extremely similar to his.

(3) The priesthood’s betrayal against the Buddhist spirit to uphold the dignity of life

When the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) broke out, the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy pleaded with Japanese Buddhists to uphold the Buddhist spirit not to kill and arise in an antiwar campaign. The representatives of the Japanese Buddhist clergy replied that they were subject nationals of Japan and they must cooperate with war. This episode precisely indicates the narrow and inflexible attitude of the Japanese Buddhist clergy.

Needless to say, the fundamental spirit of Buddhism lies in absolute pacifism based on compassion and non-violence. The Daishonin states: “Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life” (MW-i, 267). In other words, the Daishonin teaches here that one human life contains absolute value that cannot be compared to all the treasures of the universe. The dignity of life is dearly expounded in the Daishonin’s teaching.

The unprincipled priesthood continued to curry favor with the military regime. Instead of condemning war as an act of killing that goes against the fundamental spirit of Buddhism, it nonchalantly *encouraged* killing. The extent of the priesthood’s corruption is truly amazing, and it infuriates us. In the following we reveal some of the priesthood’s atrocities as published in the *Dai-Nichiren*.

1) In January 1942, Chief Priest Kocho Kakinuma of the Yahata Temple in Kyushu decided to consecrate and then donate metal Buddhist accessories for munitions. During the service, Mr. Kakinuma stated: “If [the Buddhist accessories] become bullets for soldiers’ rifles, these bullets shall be the ones



that kill [enemy soldiers] with a single shot, thus ‘crushing the evil and revealing the truth.’” He also stated that he “sincerely offered prayer” to the Gohonzon for this to happen.

2) In September 1942, the annual memorial service for Nichikan Shonin was held at the head temple. As part of the commemorative events, the head temple sponsored a bayonet fencing tournament for the students of the Ueno Village Youth School on the playground of the Fuji Seminary. Chief Priest Jijin Ochiai of the Rikyo-bo temple—one of the lodging temples on the head temple grounds—served as a referee. The *DaiNichiren* explains the event’s significance as training to kill enemy soldiers with a “relentless spirit” in case of “an airborne landing of the demons and beasts from the United States and the United Kingdom.”

3) At the end of page 8 of the January 1944 *Dai-Nichiren*, there is an article soliciting financial contributions for munitions. The author, who identifies himself as “Person-in-charge,” states: “We need weapons to blow [American and British soldiers’] goddamn heads off at every opportunity available.” “Person-in-charge” asks those who wish to make donations to talk to “Accounting Section Chief Jikan Maekawa of the Organization of Nichiren Shoshu Believers Dedicated to the Service of the Nation within the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office.”

Such behavior by the priesthood should not be regarded as unavoidable on the pretext of the wartime frenzy sweeping the country. Nichiren Daishonin issued a warning against Buddhist clergy who debased themselves in the

minion of the political authority. To revive the humanism and absolute pacifism originally inherent in Buddhism, the founder stood up for a religious revolution.

Therefore, if Nichiren Shoshu priests wish to call themselves the Daishonin's disciples, they should become warriors of peace and heroes of religious revolution who fight against established authority and spread the dignity of life always standing on the side of the people. The priesthood's cruelty to encourage killing or pray for the success of killing while completely ignoring the fundamental Buddhist precept of non-killing is truly preposterous.

#### (4) The priesthood's acceptance of Shinto talisman

As the government revised the Peace Preservation Act, people were forced to accept the Shinto talisman regardless of their religion. Nikko Shonin inherited from the Daishonin the teaching that when people slander the Law, the Buddhist gods [protective functions of life and the universe] leave the land and devils and demons [destructive forces of life and the universe] enter the land instead. The priesthood, who supposedly inherited this teaching from Nikko Shonin, should have held strongly to the belief that the Shinto shrine is a dwelling of demons and devils.

Yet the priesthood easily surrendered to the government authority. Surprisingly, High Priest Nikkyo took initiative himself and praised the

emperor's pilgrimage to the Ise Imperial Shinto Shrine. The high priest states: "His Holiness and Majesty [Emperor Hirohito] paid a visit to the Ise Shinto Shrine and worshiped there on Dec. 12 of last winter [1942]. We nationals as [His Majesty's] babies feel tremendous awe and excitement at this."

Around the same time, Soka Kyoiku Gakkai President Makiguchi and General Director Toda were, in order to protect the Daishonin's true teaching, resolutely maintaining their strict attitude to refuse to visit Shinto shrines or accept the Shinto talisman.

If its own lay organization resists the military regime, the priesthood would risk the oppression from the government. So thinking, in June 1943, the priesthood summoned President Makiguchi and other senior Soka Gakkai leaders to the head temple. With the attendance of High Priest Nikkyo, General Affairs Department Chief Jikai Watanabe pressed President Makiguchi to accept a Shinto talisman.

But President Makiguchi strictly refused to accept a Shinto talisman. [The Soka Gakkai] was completely isolated. Soon after, he was arrested and imprisoned. He courageously walked along the road of martyrdom with the spirit of the Daishonin.

On the other hand, the priesthood prohibited the Gakkai members—its own believers—to come to the head temple to worship the Dai-Gohonzon, pretending that it had no relation to the Gakkai. In November 1943, the

priesthood also issued an Administrative Office memo encouraging believers to worship the Imperial Palace and visit Shinto shrines. (According to Jimon Ogasawara's document, the priesthood's decision to accept Shinto dates back to the Nichiren Shoshu Senior Council held on Aug. 20, 1941, before the Pacific war.)

In light of this undeniable history, the Soka Gakkai is clearly an organization that appeared in accordance with the Buddha's intent and decree to fulfill a significant mission. It is also amazing how deep-rooted is the current Nikken sect's slanderous behavior.

Those who claimed to be Nichiren Shoshu priests forced their believers to commit slander. Once they found out that their believers would not bend, they mercilessly cut off the relationship while ingratiating themselves with Shinto, which was backed by the government authority. This is despicable. For whatever reason they committed this act, their grave crime takes many lifetimes to expiate. The same can be said of the priesthood's recent cruel measures against the Gakkai, such as the excommunication of the Gakkai and the expulsion of President Ikeda.

The priesthood's behavior is a great betrayal of the master, a treachery against the great compassion of the original Buddha, who always shared the sufferings of his believers. As he states:

If you should fall into hell for some grave offence, no matter how

Shakyamuni might urge me to become a Buddha, I would refuse; I would rather go to hell with you CMW-2, 278).

That was an unavoidable compromise to protect the Law-so the priesthood says. By using this kind of excuse, they just bring more shame upon themselves. You must quickly realize this. Even priests and lay believers of the Honmon Hokke sect-one of other Nichiren sects-fought against the oppression of the government authority until the end.

To counter our argument, you would probably say something similar to the following from the document titled "On the Shinto Talisman Issue" by the Committee of Current Affairs.

If other religions collapse, we should rejoice for the sake of all people. However, if Nichiren Shoshu goes to ruin, this would mean that all people lose the basis of their enlightenment. If the Dai-Gohonzon was placed under the Minobu sect's control and the heritage of the Law was ceased, how could all people of the world attain enlightenment?

Distorting and dwarfing the Daishonin's teaching, the priesthood acceded to the nationalistic Shinto beliefs. Although the Dai-Gohonzon and the high priest were physically safe, did the priesthood truly protect the Dai-Gohonzon and the heritage of the Law?

The Daishonin states: “Errors in Buddhism lead the nation to ruin without doubt like the high winds and billows destroy a small boat” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1521).

These golden words of the original Buddha have never proved false. Despite High Priest Nikkyo, who supposedly inherited the heritage of the Law, repeatedly offering desperate prayers for the nation, Japan was defeated and devastated by war. Despite its efforts to protect itself, the priesthood lost many temples in fires caused by war. After all, High Priest Nikkyo himself died in flame. The law of cause and effect expounded in Buddhism is truly fearful.

The Daishonin’s spirit and correct teaching are the lifeline we must protect at any cost. When votaries of the Lotus Sutra stand up with unshakable resolve to protect the Law, no matter what their circumstances, they will be protected by the three treasures and Buddhist gods, and thus they can preserve the Dai-Gohonzon into the distant future. This, we believe, is the great way of priesthood and laity who uphold the correct faith in accordance with the great conviction of the original Buddha. As the Daishonin states: “Although it is uncertain whether Nichiren will live or die, the wide spread of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo is beyond the shadow of a doubt” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p.963).

In other words, the battle of martyrdom waged by the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai to protect the Daishonin’s spirit and teaching during World War II was a great Buddhist struggle to protect the Dai-Gohonzon in exact accord with the

original Buddha's intent.

### **III. The priesthood's responsibility for its war efforts**

The priesthood, taking advantage of the trend of the time, compromised its beliefs and the Buddhist teaching. This it did in order to support the war and thus curry favor with the military regime. Now there is no room for doubt about this fact. The priesthood naturally should take responsibility for actually supporting the war, and that includes yourself.

Priests of postwar generations should also share equal responsibility and apologize. Self-reflection and apology for the priesthood's war efforts start with individual priests' awareness of their roles as religious practitioners. It is only to be expected that a genuine religious practitioner would feel a keen sense of responsibility for the priesthood's war efforts, strictly reevaluate his own attitude and express apology.

Many current young priests have been influenced deeply by the priesthood's militaristic discrimination, which is based on position and seniority. Freedom of speech is suppressed by violence among young priests. In response to our "Letter of Disassociation" addressed to you, the representative student priests wrote a childish rebuttal that stated:

"Buddhism has no bearing on democracy." The fact that those student priests can say such an outrageous thing nonchalantly is proof that the priesthood

has not taken a single step to rid itself of its negative tendencies since World War II, and that young priests are following the examples of elder priests from the wartime generation, especially your dictatorship and violent character.

The Daishonin states: “A teacher’s offense affects his disciples” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1352). The issue regarding the priesthood’s acceptance of responsibility for its war efforts is deeply related to the problematic nature of the current priesthood.

While the priesthood’s responsibility, as we discussed, should be dealt with by all priests, the focus of that responsibility should naturally be placed on you as you hold the highest office in the priesthood.

To whom should the priesthood apologize? First, it should offer its sincerest apology to the Daishonin for all the slanderous acts it committed. The priesthood should also officially apologize to the Soka Gakkai, acknowledging the fact that during World War II, it deserted and betrayed the first president, Makiguchi, and the second president, Toda, causing their imprisonment.

Furthermore, the priesthood should honestly recognize and reflect on its past error of supporting Japan’s aggression of China and Southeast Asian countries and sincerely apologize to the people of these nations. The priesthood should also pledge to these countries that it will never support any kind of war in the future. Without expressing its sincere apology, the



priesthood disqualifies itself as a trustworthy member of the international community and thus deserve the criticism such it gave up on world kosen-rufu.

Ultimately, Nichiren Shoshu priests, as Buddhists who uphold the dignity of life, should apologize and pledge to all people who equally share the Buddha nature.

From this perspective, as members of the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu and as Nichiren Shoshu priests, we honestly recognize that the priesthood supported Japan's inhumane aggression during World War II, and we offer our heartfelt apology to the founder and the three treasures and also express our sincere apology to the people of the entire world.

We pledge that we will never compromise with any forces that support war and will continue to uphold the dignity of life. We are determined to fulfill our mission as priests toward the realization of lasting world peace together with SGI President Ikeda and SGI members around the world, who are entirely dedicated to the accomplishment of world kosen-rufu—the mandate of Nichiren Daishonin.

Regarding acknowledging responsibility for war efforts and expressing apology, other religions have been taking much more positive steps. For example, in 1947, the Minobu sect acknowledged that it deleted passages from the Daishonin's writings and expressed regret over the same offense

that Nichiren Shoshu committed.

The Minobu sect expressed its sense of remorse, stating: “Those who delete passages as they please from the founder’s writings—his blood and soul—shall be known as the ones who have committed one of the five cardinal sins, that of injuring the Buddha and causing him to bleed.” The Minobu sect also expressed its pledge, stating, “Taking this opportunity, we reflect and change our past attitude.”

Furthermore, the Pure Land sect recently acknowledged its responsibility for supporting war and issued an official apology as the antiwar sentiment became prevalent within the sect because of both the Gulf War and last year being the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Of course, these sects are all erroneous Buddhist sects. We have no intention of endorsing their beliefs. Yet their acknowledgment of responsibility for war efforts and their expressions of remorse deserve some attention.

How about Nichiren Shoshu? Although you were directly involved in the priesthood’s war efforts, you have never expressed any self-reflection or remorse as an individual or as chief executive and high ‘priest of Nichiren Shoshu. Because of your influence, priests of the Nikken sect are refusing to apologize for the priesthood’s support of the war. Moreover, they criticize the Gakkai’s antiwar and peace movement in a shameless, ungrateful manner, which is even worse than priests of erroneous sects.

The document “Nichiren Shoshu and Its Responsibility for War” by the Committee on Current Affairs is a good example. It repeats weak statements and **excuses** such as “Japanese people must apologize deeply” or “It was unavoidable even from the viewpoint of us who live today.” The Committee on Current Affairs never acknowledges and apologizes for the priesthood’s culpability in its war efforts.

Surprisingly, this document asserts that the priesthood already “reflected upon itself after the war,” citing the following as the evidence:

- (1) The priesthood pray for world peace daily at the *ushitora* gongyo.
- (2) After the war, the priesthood deleted from the fourth silent prayer the part that reads “for His Majesty Emperor to protect and uphold the Mystic Law.”

After vilifying President Ikeda’s efforts for peace, the Committee on Current Affairs concludes the document saying, “True to our mission as religious practitioners, we would like to pray steadily for the peace and happiness of humanity.” While taking not a single concrete step for peace, the priesthood is trying to justify its laziness.

The priesthood’s “self-reflection” is just a word. In this document, we can clearly see the priests’ incorrigible arrogance and self-centeredness just as we saw with the “Letter of Inquiry,” when the priesthood retracted its questions without any apology to the Soka Gakkai.

The priesthood has no right to attack the peace movement of the Soka Gakkai to whom it owes praise and an apology. No other religious organization in the world is more hypocritical and despicable than the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

Although you insist you pray for world peace at the *ushitora* gongyo, your recitation of the sutra and daimoku are empty since you lack the heartfelt self-reflection and sense of remorse for the priesthood's actions during the war. As the Daishonin states: “Some people recite the Lotus Sutra but only with their mouths. They recite words but not with their hearts. Still some recite with their hearts but not with their bodies” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 12~13). Even if by chance you pray for peace in your mind, because you lack concrete action for peace, your practice shall still be called self-centered.

As symbolized in the recent surge of secession by chief priests of local temples, the countdown toward the Nikken sect's destruction has already started. It will not be long before you, the high priest, who is a dictator unbecoming a religious practitioner or even a decent human being, receive retribution for your attempt to destroy world kosen-rufu and must step down from your position amid internal conflict.

We sincerely wish you would manifest even a fraction of reason and, while publicly acknowledging the priesthood's crime of supporting war, offer sincere apology to the Dai-Gohonzon and the six billion people on earth.

The Daishonin admonishes:

Even a small error will destine one to the evil path if one does not repent of it. Yet even a grave offense can be eradicated if one repents of it sincerely (MW-4, 164).

Please ponder this matter calmly and do not commit yet another act of stupidity by daring to lose out on this opportune time.

*August 15, 1992*

Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren  
Shoshu

To Nichiren Shoshu Chief Executive Nikken Abe