The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 2
Long Journey
BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Translation of parts 13–18 of the 'Long Journey' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

Athens' political leaders were eager to be accepted by, to become popular with, the citizens. In this context the *demagogos* — from which the English word *demagogue* derived — first appeared. These politicians specialized in smearing the reputations of fine, noble people, people dedicated to truth and justice, by inventing scandals and spreading false rumors that were gleefully seized upon by the masses.

The *demagogos*' modus operandi was to falsely brand such individuals as villains in order to consign them to oblivion. Their only aim was to plant an image of their opponents as evil, whatever their true characters might be — their objective was to thwart the efforts of others, to triumph at their expense.

The fact that such demagogues were thriving in Athens meant that the city was already a society wracked by jealousy and rivalry. A good example of this development was the practice of ostracism. Originally instituted to prevent the rise to power of a tyrant, it was a means by which Athens' citizens could banish, for a period of 10 years, a person who appeared to have despotic ambitions.

The reason this form of banishment was called ostracism was that citizens voted by secret ballot, writing the name of the accused on shards of pottery or pieces of earthenware, called *ostracon* in Greek. But this policy, originally designed to protect Athenian democracy, was perverted and used to cause the downfall of any person of outstanding ability. For example, the Greek statesman Aristides (c. 520–468 B.C.E.), who was praised by the populace as a man of principle for his just, moral actions, was also envied because of his high reputation and ostracized.

Plutarch recounts the following anecdote:1

An illiterate man approached Aristides, ignorant of his identity, and handed him a pottery shard.

"Will you write a name on this for me?" he asked Aristides.

"Whose name shall I write?" Aristides asked.

"Aristides," replied the man.

"Why?" asked Aristides. "What harm has he done to you?"

"None," said the man. "In fact, I don't even know him. But wherever you go, you hear people calling him 'the Just.' And I've grown quite tired of it."

The great tragic dramatist Euripides (c. 484–406 B.C.E.) writes, "On the noblest objects / Is Envy wont to wreak her ruthless hate."2 How true this was in the case of Aristides, who was ostracized for his moral excellence!

Though a society may call itself democratic, if it is actually motivated not by justice and truth but by envy and rivalry, does it deserve the name it claims?

In 404 B.C.E., Athens was defeated in the Peloponnesian War, the struggle for control of the Greek Peninsula that it had waged against rival city-state Sparta over a period of 27 years, and was forced to surrender unconditionally. The real reason for Athens' defeat was its citizens' preoccupation with internal rivalries. This jealous society had begun its spiral of decline.

Title: Volume 6: Chapter 2 Long Journey (13-18)
Subject: World Tribune 06/20/97 n.3144 p.5 WT970620p05
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: Chapter History Human Journey Kosen-rufu Long Revolution Tribune Volume World

On two occasions, during the war and immediately after it, democracy was overturned in Athens. After the war, the so-called 30 Tyrants carried out a reign of terror, but it only lasted a short while. The democrats returned to power.

Because their power base was still precarious, they took steps to eliminate all opposition members. One of Socrates' disciples was included among the 30 Tyrants, which led Anytus, a democrat leader, to conclude that Socrates was a danger to Athenian democracy. But Socrates had opposed the rule of the 30 Tyrants — his life had even been threatened because he refused to obey an order they had issued him.

Anytus chose to ignore that fact. He seems to have believed that condemning the great philosopher Socrates to death would have a powerful, chilling affect on his opponents. This led to Socrates being accused of heresy and corrupting the minds of young people, two charges of which he was completely innocent.

Athens' conscience, the pillar of its spirit, was about to be toppled. But most of Athens' citizens in fact rejoiced at this. Because Socrates was such a man of principle, in reputation and deed, he had long been envied and the target of demagoguery. Over time, this had created the image in Athenians' minds that Socrates was somehow a danger to society.

For example, the famous playwright of the time, Aristophanes, made Socrates the leading figure in a comedy he wrote entitled *Clouds*, which exposed the great philosopher to public ridicule. In the play, Socrates is the leader of the Sophists who mislead youth and a heretic who declares: "What gods indeed will you swear by! For first of all, we don't credit gods."3

Of course, the exact opposite was true. Aristophanes had created a clever fake, a character whom he presented as Socrates but who was very different from the man. Still, the public believed the picture that Aristophanes painted. Though others besmirched his name, Socrates remained a sole voice of truth.

Socrates' disciple Plato, who witnessed the proceedings, described his teacher's trial in great detail in the *Apology*. Socrates defended himself courageously and eloquently before 500 (some say 501) jurors and a large audience. He was neither cowed nor did he ask for forgiveness. Those who were to judge him were put on trial by his passionate defense.

What does a person know about himself, about his soul? he asked. Those who know their own ignorance and humbly seek the truth are wise. Yet while most act as if they were wise, they lack true wisdom and remain unaware of their ignorance.

He cried: "As long as I breathe and am able to, I will certainly not stop philosophizing, and I will exhort you and explain this to whomever of you I happen to meet, and I will speak just the sort of things I am accustomed to: 'Best of men, you are an Athenian, from the city that is greatest and best reputed for wisdom and strength: are you not ashamed that you care for having as much money as possible, and reputation, and honor, but that you neither care for nor give thought to prudence, and truth, and how your soul will be the best possible?'"4

Finally, Socrates declared that if the Athenians executed him, they were doing a great harm not to him but to themselves. He spoke with invincible conviction, which greatly moved many jurors. But the result of their vote was 280 guilty, 220 innocent. If another 30 had voted for his innocence, the outcome would have been the opposite.

Next, it came time to determine his sentence. According to the custom of the day, the accused had the right to suggest the punishment he thought appropriate. If Socrates had accepted the guilty verdict, shown an attitude of remorse and asked for a punishment other than execution, there is no doubt his life would have been spared. But when asked what his punishment should be he said, "I propose this: to be given my meals in the Prytaneum (the

Title: Volume 6: Chapter 2 Long Journey (13-18)
Subject: World Tribune 06/20/97 n.3144 p.5 WT970620p05
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: Chapter History Human Journey Kosen-rufu Long Revolution Tribune Volume World

state guesthouse).”5 He insisted that, as a public benefactor, he should be rewarded with the highest dignity and honor by his country.

Such was the pride of Athens’ pillar of principle, its king of the human spirit who resolutely upheld the truth.

But his unbending conviction was interpreted by jurors as an arrogant challenge to their authority. On the second vote, to determine Socrates’ sentence, a resounding majority selected the death penalty.

Socrates chose death over compromising his principles. He gave his life to show others the lofty path of true humanity.

Socrates remained brave even in prison. Two days before his death, his friend Crito visited him, told him that his execution date was set and urged him to escape. But Socrates insisted that one injustice should not be answered with another. He refused to escape, calmly accepting his impending death.

Who is happier — one who suffers injustice or one who perpetrates it? Socrates believed “There is nothing bad for a good man, whether living or dead.”6 And he was afraid of nothing.

On his execution day, Socrates conducted a dialogue on the soul’s immortality. In exploring this theme, he said that the pursuit of philosophy is “the practice of death,”7 encouraging his friends to perfect their souls by putting the virtues of thought, principle, courage, liberty and truth into practice. Perhaps Socrates shared a view of the eternal nature of life approximating that expounded in Buddhism. Whatever the case might be, without an awareness of life’s eternity, no one can overcome the fear of death.

Socrates also warned his friends not to allow his death to make them “misologists or haters of argument, as people become misanthropists or haters of man; for no worse evil can happen to a man than to hate argument.”8 Socrates wanted his friends to continue engaging in debate and dialogue, himself having followed this chosen path to his life’s very end.

At dusk, word came that the time to carry out the execution had arrived. Socrates received a cup of poison hemlock from the official attendant and drank it down. The friends gathered around him were overcome with grief and began to weep and wail. He said: “What conduct is this, you strange men! I sent the women away chiefly for this very reason, that they might not behave in this absurd way; for I have heard that it is best to die in silence. Keep quiet and be brave.”9

Comforting his friends, Socrates lay down on his deathbed, thus bringing to end a great philosopher’s life.

Standing in front of the prison where Socrates had spent his last moments, Shin’ichi Yamamoto couldn’t help but be overcome with profound emotion. The Athenians judged Socrates, but wasn’t it really the Athenians who were judged? The story of their degeneration, of the dark stain they made on human history in this debasement of democratic ideals, would be talked of forever after.

The young men with Shin’ichi Yamamoto were all well acquainted with Socrates’ story. They stood quietly before the cave cell, recalling this great thinker’s life and martyrdom.

Deeply moved, Eisuke Akizuki said: “Socrates’ story reminds me of Mr. Makiguchi’s struggle. The Japanese military government caused his death in prison. Mr. Makiguchi bravely endured their harsh treatment and laid down his life for his beliefs.... Truly great people have much in common, don’t they?”

“Yes, that’s true,” Shin’ichi agreed. “And the disciples of such great teachers always

Title: Volume 6: Chapter 2 Long Journey (13-18)
Subject: World Tribune 06/20/97 n.3144 p.5 WT970620p05
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: Chapter History Human Journey Kosen-rufu Long Revolution Tribune Volume World

stand up to carry on their teachers' work. Socrates had such a disciple in Plato. He predicted that the jurors who condemned him would all experience retribution immediately after his death. What Socrates meant by this was that his followers would rise up to fight for the truth, and right the wrong the jurors had perpetrated.

"Socrates most assuredly had confidence that Plato would transmit his teachings faithfully and prove he was right. As he awaited death, I am sure the image of his brave young disciple, Plato, shone brightly in his heart. The same was true of Mr. Makiguchi. Even in prison, he was at ease because he knew that he had Mr. Toda. And Mr. Toda told me he could rest assured because he could count on me. For my part, my only course is to devote all my energies to cultivating young people of whom I can say the same.

"If the Gakkai ever falls under the control of self-serving individuals who have ambitions of fame or power, or who seek to gain a high position so that they can just sit back and relax, it will be very unfortunate for our members. That is why I am determined to foster genuine disciples. That is why I must nurture 'lions of truth' — disciples of Plato's quality...."

Plato was 28 at the time of Socrates' trial. He had been under Socrates' tutelage for nearly nine years, from the time he was 20, spending his youth alongside his teacher. Plato was furious at Socrates' outrageous trial. According to one account, he asked to testify in his teacher's defense but the judge forbid him to do so.

His beloved teacher's execution was a tremendous shock to Plato, so much so that he fell ill. But he wiped away his tears of rage and arose with a powerful resolve: to devote his life to letting the world know that his teacher had been right, to making his nation just and principled, his mentor's dearest wish.

Over about 50 years, until his death at 80, Plato produced an enormous body of work, including the *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo* — all to record Socrates' true story for the ages. Through this he waged a great battle of philosophy and debate.

He also founded the Academy, devoting himself to educating youth and nurturing talent. The theme to which Plato dedicated his life was how to achieve a just world. The conclusion he arrived at was the ideal of rule by those who earnestly pursue philosophy.

In his great work *The Republic*,10 he specifically maintained that the rule of a philosopher-king was the best path, the one requiring the least change to bring the state to a government for the nation and its people's true welfare.11 He also ranked the other various types of government, placing aristocracy first after rule of the philosopher-king, followed in descending order by timocracy,12 oligarchy,13 democracy and tyranny. Plato had a low opinion of democracy, which he ranked fourth.

Democracy is the creation and product of the people's great wisdom. But unless the people who actually comprise the democracy know how to control their egoism and discipline themselves, Plato astutely pointed out, it can easily lapse into a vicious, self-destructive form of mob rule — a far cry from democracy.

Plato said that democracies proudly trumpet liberty as the highest virtue: "You may hear it said that this [liberty] is best managed in a democratic city, and for this reason that is the only city in which a man of free spirit will care to live."14 But, he goes on, the insatiable, all-consuming pursuit of freedom leads to the birth of a greedy populace. Soon corrupting desires "seize the citadel of the young man's soul."15 Young people then become confused about the true meaning of freedom, coming to name "reverence and awe 'folly,'" Plato charges; "Temperance they call 'want of manhood'" and "moderation and orderly expenditure are 'rusticity' and 'illiberality.'"16 Thereby genuine virtues are demeaned and banished from young minds.

Title: Volume 6: Chapter 2 Long Journey (13-18)
Subject: World Tribune 06/20/97 n.3144 p.5 WT970620p05
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: Chapter History Human Journey Kosen-rufu Long Revolution Tribune Volume World

At the same time, he asserts, they "euphemistically denominate insolence 'good breeding,' license 'liberty,' prodigality 'magnificence,' and shamelessness 'manly spirit,'"17 lavishly praising all manner of vices as virtues — until vices become rampant among the populace. According to Plato, the chaos created by such unchecked freedom eventually becomes uncontrollable. And to bring order to the land, the people begin to seek a strong leader. When they find such a leader, he or she inevitably falls victim to power's temptations, becoming a tyrant, the kind of ruler Plato ranked last.

(To be continued)

1. *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden, ed. A. H. Clough (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), vol. 1, p. 440.
2. *The Nineteen Tragedies and Fragments of Euripides*, trans. Michael Wodhull (London: E. Blaekader, Printer, 1809), p. 344.
3. Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's* Euthyphro, Apology, *and* Crito *and Aristophanes'* Clouds, trans. Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 125.
4. Ibid., p. 81.
5. Ibid., p. 91.
6. Ibid., p. 97.
7. Ibid., p. 281.
8. Plato, "Phaedo," *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 309.
9. Ibid., p. 401.
10. In *The Republic*, Plato speaks through his protagonist, Socrates.
11. Plato, *The Republic: Books I–V*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 507.
12. Timocracy: rule by those motivated by ambition for power and honor.
13. Oligarchy: rule by a small group that exercises control, especially for corrupt and selfish purposes.
14. Plato, *The Republic: Books VI–X*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 305.
15. Ibid., p. 297.
16. Ibid., p. 299.
17. Ibid.

Title: Volume 6: Chapter 2 Long Journey (13-18)
Subject: World Tribune 06/20/97 n.3144 p.5 WT970620p05
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: Chapter History Human Journey Kosen-rufu Long Revolution Tribune Volume World