

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH RISE UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT!

President Ikeda discusses standing up for what's right and says that 'if you do, you will find that you have twice the power you thought you did.'

Takashi Nade: Our topic this time is why those who stand up for right and good are persecuted. Many of the high school division members have requested that we ask you, President Ikeda, about the Osaka Incident, in which you were falsely accused of breaking the law and imprisoned.

Misaki Taguchi: You wrote about this incident in detail in the “Osaka” and “Trial” chapters of volume 11 of *The Human Revolution*. Our members in Kansai, especially, are earnestly studying those chapters.

President Ikeda, then the Soka Gakkai's chief of staff, was unjustly accused of encouraging Gakkai members to canvas door to door for votes — an activity that is illegal in Japan — and of directing them to buy votes during a 1957 Upper House by-election in the Osaka electoral district. He was arrested in Osaka on July 3, 1957, and was held in prison for two weeks of questioning on charges of violating the election laws. By an astonishing coincidence, this was the same date that, 12 years earlier, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda was released from prison, where he had been placed for his opposition to Japan's military government.

All governments must have a basic purpose, or they won't be able to create concrete policies.

SGI President Ikeda: I'll be happy to talk about it again for my young readers. In those days, people looked down on the Soka Gakkai, regarding it as a gathering of the poor and the sick. Then, in 1956, three Soka Gakkai-backed candidates suddenly won seats in the Upper House elections. This surprised the political establishment, which began to regard the Soka Gakkai as a threat.

Why did the Soka Gakkai decide to field candidates for public office? Our decision was based on Nichiren Daishonin's treatise “Rissho Ankoku Ron” (Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Propagation of True Buddhism). Our aim, then, was to ensure the realization of a government based on a philosophy of peace, thereby bringing peace to our country and security and happiness to the people.

All governments must have a basic ideal, a basic purpose, in order to create concrete policies. Without a solid philosophy, a government grows corrupt and becomes solely pre-occupied with its vested interests.

The Osaka Incident was unmistakably the reaction of the political establishment to the Soka Gakkai's commitment to cleaning up the realm of politics and government. The authorities wanted, at all costs, to prevent the Gakkai from venturing into the political arena.

Nade: A high school division member who read *The Human Revolution* commented:

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“One scene that really stayed in my mind was when the prosecutors questioning President Ikeda moved him from the district prosecutor’s office to a nearby annex and forced him to walk the distance between the two buildings in handcuffs — in full view of the public. I can imagine how pained and upset the women’s division member and youth division members who happened to see Sensei in that predicament must have been. And although no one could have been more frustrated and angry than President Ikeda himself, he still managed to convey a message of encouragement to those members as he passed near them. I found this so moving! I was also incredibly angered by the roughshod tactics employed by the authorities.”

Many innocent people are falsely incriminated through the authorities’ underhanded tactics.

Taguchi: Another student writes, “I find it very strange that the authorities could get away with leveling charges against President Ikeda when they had no evidence of his guilt.”

Ikeda: Many innocent Soka Gakkai members were arrested, and their questioning by the prosecutor’s office was also ruthless and heavy-handed. The interrogators would drill the suspects from morning to night for several days in a row.

One of those who was questioned later said, “Although I knew I had done nothing wrong, after the relentless questioning I began to wonder if perhaps I hadn’t done something wrong after all....” The prosecutor’s office abused its authority, using it to terrorize defenseless, innocent people with impunity.

In his testimony in court, one of the charged members said that the police detective questioning him had brought unfair pressure to bear on him. The detective played on the member’s emotions, reminding him that his imprisonment would jeopardize his son’s participation on a special school trip. If he confessed to the charges, on the other hand, the detective said, he would be released. “Don’t you care about your children?” the detective asked. “Don’t you have any feelings for them? Are you a monster? If you’re stubborn, we’ll just question you day and night, in shifts, without even allowing you to sleep, until you finally confess.” During his testimony, with tears rolling down his cheeks, the man stated: “We were already having a hard enough time making ends meet on my paycheck, and I was afraid that if the police detained me too long, my family would starve. I couldn’t bear the thought of their suffering. At the same time, I couldn’t confess to something that never happened and betray the Gohonzon. But if I didn’t, they wouldn’t let me out. So I made a silent apology to the Gohonzon, and I said what they wanted. I lied. I said that Chief of Staff Ikeda told us to canvass door-to-door for votes.” For more on the history of the Osaka Incident, see President Ikeda’s essays “Kosen-rufu Is Intense” and “The Sunlight of Victory” in the Aug. 13 World Tribune.

Many weak, innocent people are falsely incriminated through the underhanded tactics of the authorities. There have been many examples of this, and it may still be happening today.

Nade: That’s really terrible. All the Osaka members were furious. They cried: “What’s

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going on?! This is unbelievable! He hasn't done anything wrong — free Mr. Ikeda!" Several of them, concerned about your condition in prison, tried to visit you there and have various daily necessities passed on to you.

Others were so worried that they stood in front of the prison for hours at a time. The Osaka organization's Brass Band played Soka Gakkai songs on the street nearby, hoping you would hear them inside.

Authority is devilish by nature.

Ikeda: During my 14 days in prison, Mr. Toda and all our Osaka members were very worried about me. To this day, I continue to chant daimoku for those fellow members who were imprisoned for alleged election law violations along with me.

When I was in prison, I was aware that conditions there were very different from the dark days during which Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, the first and second presidents of the Soka Gakkai, were imprisoned during World War II. And I would have been embarrassed to even complain, given what they went through.

My confinement was just 14 days. It certainly wasn't pleasant, but in the end, it was no big deal. The only time that I was really distressed was when I heard that the police were thinking of arresting Mr. Toda or raiding the Soka Gakkai Headquarters.

I knew better than anyone else how poor Mr. Toda's health was at the time, and I knew that a stay in prison might cost him his life. My only thoughts were that I must stop the police from getting to Mr. Toda or trampling on the Gakkai Headquarters, our precious citadel of kosen-rufu.

Taguchi: It was four-and-a-half years later, on Jan. 25, 1962, that your name was finally cleared of the false charges made against you. The trial extended to 84 sessions, and you had to travel to Osaka many times and sit for long hours on the hard wooden seats of the court. You also gave testimony.

The sessions were held in the mornings but occasionally continued into the afternoon. For most people, I think that such tension and strain would be incredibly wearing and debilitating, but you managed to spend the evenings at meetings in Osaka, standing before members and encouraging them — without showing the least sign of anything untoward going on. Those who knew what you were going through have said how tremendously moved they were by your indomitable spirit.

Ikeda: At the end of the long trial, I was declared not guilty — a verdict that was only natural given my innocence of any wrongdoing. After the judge handed down his decision, the chief prosecutor came over to me and said: "The verdict was just as I expected. It's only natural." As a prosecutor, that's something he shouldn't have admitted. It goes to show you just how frightening the power of the authorities can be.

Taguchi: It's unbelievable that you were imprisoned, seeing how all you had ever done was work for the cause of good and justice. It's completely twisted.

Ikeda: Yet that is how human society has been up until now. In "Civil Disobedience," the great thinker of the American Renaissance Henry David Thoreau says, "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison."

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Thoreau is saying that when a government is unjust, the very people who are labeled villains and put in jail are in fact the most just and decent people.

Taguchi: In such a society, people who champion justice and truth are persecuted, while the corrupt and evil are praised and celebrated.

Ikeda: I think that is very frequently the case, and it is important for us to be aware of this and recognize it when it happens.

Nade: Speaking of the power of government authorities, I will never forget the heartless response of the Japanese government to the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995. What is the government there for, if not to work for its citizens' welfare? Don't our political leaders have any conception of the value of people's lives, of their livelihoods?

Taguchi: We see the same thing in the case of HIV-infected blood products being sold to hemophiliacs in Japan with government approval. Though the government officials and the pharmaceutical companies knew that there was a high probability that hemophiliacs would contract AIDS and die, they continued to sell the contaminated products.

Such behavior is impermissible. Only monsters could do such a thing.

Ikeda: Authority is devilish by nature. The single aim of those who wield authoritarian power is to manipulate people to their own advantage and protect themselves. It's a topsy-turvy world: Anyone who opposes their means or aims will be treated as a criminal.

Buddhism teaches that the reason why the evil are protected and the good despised is that the earth is ruled by the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. The dark spirit of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven enters the hearts of those in power. The Daishonin's life was also a series of harsh persecutions.

Buddhism is a struggle against devilish forces. With strong faith, we can resist and fight against all attacks and onslaughts. To win in this struggle is kosen-rufu. On our journey for kosen-rufu, we are destined to encounter many heavy obstacles and negative forces.

The ideal we must aim for is a world in which good people work together.

Nade: Adults are often saying that they find today's junior high and high school students scary, or that they don't understand today's youth. But I think that when you really look around the world, it's the adults who are much worse than the young people.

In our world today, bad people have free reign, and they do as they please — while people who are trying to lead good, decent lives are often made to feel miserable.

Ikeda: Your mission, my young friends, is to change that.

Seven hundred years ago, the three martyrs of Atsuhara — loyal followers of the Daishonin who refused to recant their faith — were falsely accused of crimes by priests hostile to the Daishonin and in league with the political authorities of the day. [The three followers were eventually executed by the authorities, dying for their beliefs.]

The authorities are always envious and resentful of the good and just. It is an instinctive, primitive response on the part of those who wish to protect themselves and their own interests at all costs.

Another thing is that corrupt people join forces with others of their kind easily and have

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not the slightest scruple in doing so. Good people, on the other hand, don't form alliances so easily. The ideal we must aim for is a world in which good people can join hands and work together.

"I don't care what happens to anyone else, as long as I'm OK" —this is the kind of thinking behind the possession of the atomic bomb. It is an evil way of thinking. And that applies to both nations and individuals.

The crucial question is this: Are you going to ally yourself with evil or good? Wrong or right? Which road will you take in life?

Education, in its essence, should be studying how to live as a good human being. The same should be true of government and religion. Unfortunately, all these different fields have become confused on this point, with the result that our world is now in chaos.

A certain philosopher says, "Champion truth, and your strength will be doubled." That's my lesson to all of you, too: Whatever persecutions you may face, my disciples, rise up for the sake of what is right! If you do, you will find that you have twice the power that you thought you did.

Part one of a discussion on standing up for justice among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division leaders Takashi Nade (young men's secretary for the Kansai region) and Misaki Taguchi (young women's secretary for the Kansai region. The conclusion will appear in an upcoming issue.

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