

**A RECORD OF MY LIFE
BY DAISAKU IKEDA
THE SGI'S STRUGGLE AGAINST POWER**

‘The Soka Gakkai has throughout its history been engaged in a fierce struggle against the devilish nature of power,’ SGI President Ikeda writes, remembering his unjust detention in 1957.

Because we are advancing along the correct path of Buddhism exactly as Nichiren Daishonin taught, the Soka Gakkai has throughout its history been engaged in a fierce struggle against the devilish nature of power. First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Maki-guchi died in prison during World War II. President Toda was also imprisoned. It is safe to say that the real advance of the Soka Gakkai in post-war Japan stemmed from the intense fight for human rights waged by the first two presidents.

July 3 is the anniversary of the day on which Mr. Toda was released from prison, in 1945. On that same day in 1957, I was arrested and jailed as part of a scheme by the authorities. The warrant for my arrest was delivered by the Osaka Prefectural Police at 7:00 p.m. Oddly enough, this was not only the same date but precisely the same time that President Toda had been released more than a decade earlier.

I was accused of violating election laws, specifically those concerning door-to-door canvassing. These charges were completely unfounded. Yet, without even a shred of evidence, I was arrested.

My incarceration lasted 15 days. I spent several days in the police lock-up and 10 days in solitary confinement in a cell that measured less than six feet by six feet.

The police interrogation was relentless. The official would pound on the desk in an attempt to intimidate me. There were times when I was left in handcuffs during questioning.

Once, I was led handcuffed on foot from the main building of the Osaka District Prosecutor's Office to another building several minutes away for questioning. Then, without being asked a single question, I was immediately escorted back to the main building. They simply wanted to parade me up and down the street with my hands bound for all to see. This went well beyond a simple violation of my rights.

The Soka Gakkai was at the time beginning to show itself to society as a great popular force. Its growth was doubtless appearing to be a major threat to the existing powers.

The dark side of power is quick to sense the presence of an enemy.

It is the nature of authoritarian power to react to even the slightest activity of something that may threaten its existence. True to its nature, the dark side of power, possessing keen intuition, is quick to sense the presence of an enemy.

On July 3, 1957, I was en- route to Osaka from Hokkaido, urgently rushing to help find a solution to the Yubari Coal Miners' Incident [a case of blatant religious discrimination in which miners in Yubari, Hokkaido, were threatened with losing their jobs on account of belonging to the Soka Gakkai]. When we landed at Haneda Airport to change planes, to my surprise I found my mentor waiting for me there. President Toda embraced me and said, "If you should die, I would rush to where you were and join you in death."

I learned later that upon my arrest he called the Soka Gakkai's Kansai Headquarters every two hours to get a detailed report on the situation. At one point, he was calling as

frequently as every 10 minutes. He apparently even berated someone who picked up the phone and couldn't answer his questions.

His voice trembling, he said: "Forgive me for scolding you, but I am concerned about my disciple. If I could take his place, I would gladly do so. Unless you have been to prison yourself, you cannot understand." Words cannot express how wonderful it is to have such a mentor!

Since the charges against me were groundless, no matter how severe the interrogation, I had no choice but to endure. Seeing that they were getting nowhere, my captors began insinuating that they might make a raid on the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and even arrest President Toda.

This was the year before Mr. Toda died. I knew better than anyone how weak he had become. I therefore decided that, even though the charges were unfounded, I had no choice but to take the blame, then settle everything in court later.

In my diary at the time I wrote: "The prosecutors' interrogation was laden with schemes. Angry feelings are growing steadily stronger. We will by all means create a time when truth will win over all. Must accurately record the facts" (*A Youthful Diary*, p. 336).

When I was released on July 17, my mentor was standing at the Osaka Central Municipal Hall in Nakanoshima appealing to his beloved friends of Kansai: "Unless we fight, justice will not prevail. Because the Soka Gakkai is in the right, we cannot be defeated. We absolutely have to win. Therefore, we must fight. A lion is a lion by virtue of its roar."

The trial dragged on for four and a half years. Part of the reason I hesitated to accept appointment as third Soka Gakkai president after President Toda's death, despite repeated entreaties from those around me, was that this matter had not yet been resolved. I personally could have handled a guilty verdict brought against me as president, but it was clear that such an outcome would become a great obstacle to the Soka Gakkai's advance. Even after becoming president, I continued to earnestly pray that justice would be served.

The Osaka District Court handed down its decision on Jan. 25, 1962. The verdict, needless to say, was not guilty. When I heard the court announce, "We hereby find the defendant, Daisaku Ikeda, not guilty," I was filled with deep emotion.

I had endured such a long, arduous battle. I was keenly aware that there were many, however, who, lacking the means to defend their rights, had no choice but to withstand the abuses of authoritarian power. Before the war, there were doubtless a great many. Profoundly aware that such tragedy must never be repeated, I made a strong determination to dedicate my life to working on the side of those suffering from injustice, to advance together with the people.

True to the vow that I made that day, I have fought and called out for justice. I have battled with all my might the nefarious forces that oppress the people. The continuing struggles I have waged throughout my life are themselves my life's record.

People everywhere long for a movement of human rights based on compassion and respect for life.

In May 1999, I met with President Allen Lee Sessoms and Vice President Hamid Shirvani of Queens College of the City University of New York. The day before our meeting, they had paid a visit to the SGI Study Culture Center in Kamakura at what was formerly known as Tatsunokuchi, a place with a deep connection to the Daishonin. Our discussion naturally turned to the topic of persecution at the hands of the powerful.

At one point, President Sessoms said: “You [President Ikeda] are committed to peace. Someone who actively strives for peace is bound to meet with persecution. This was true of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. They were both committed to peace, but they did not compromise or try to fit in ‘peacefully’ with the social realities that they encountered. They sought to change society fundamentally.

“Almost all societies are structured to serve the needs of the powerful. People engaged in activities of real value and meaning pose a threat to those in power and will be harassed and persecuted.”

Persecution by the authorities, he was suggesting, is the sign of a champion of peace. He also asserted his view that a century of human rights and peace must be won through unceasing struggle against the powerful.

Following the end of the Cold War, the current of world peace seemed to be rapidly accelerating. But what happened to that trend?

Sadly, narrow-minded nationalism and racism now prevail in many parts of the world. In light of this reality, people everywhere are longing for a movement of human rights based on the ideals of compassion and respect for life that are the core of Buddhist philosophy.

Voices yearning for human liberation — which was the aim of the French Revolution — can be heard today around the world. Therefore, let us raise high the tricolor flag of humanism toward the creation of a new era of human rights in the 21st century. This can only be accomplished when people in all corners of the globe issue an undying declaration of human rights from the depths of their lives.

Seven in a series