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Kosen-rufu in Taiwan faces a big obstacle: The government orders the organization to disband. 'Encountering persecution verifies that we are practicing the correct teaching,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto comments. 'It is only by facing great obstacles that we can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.'

In April, a major obstacle hit the Soka Gakkai organization in Taiwan. Taipei Chapter Leader Zhu Qianxun was ordered to appear at the Taiwan Garrison General Headquarters, which was responsible for national security under martial law, the morning of April 3.

As he left the house, his wife asked a worried look: "Will you be all right? Will they let you come home?"

Her father had been arrested as a "thought criminal" by the Japanese military during the war and spent three years in prison. [Japan's Peace Preservation Law of 1925 and later amendments provided for the surveillance and arrest of those suspected of "thought crimes," which included holding ideas that differed from the defined ideology of the state.] Thinking of this made her all the more concerned.

"Don't worry," Zhu said reassuringly. "Neither the Soka Gakkai nor I have done anything wrong. In fact, this is an excellent opportunity to impart a correct understanding of the Soka Gakkai to the authorities."

At the GGH, the interrogation began. The investigating officers grilled Zhu in great detail about the organization in Taiwan, its activities, its membership, its relationship with the Soka Gakkai in Japan and the doctrines it upheld. Zhu answered each question fully and honestly. He had absolutely nothing to hide.

The questioning continued late into the night, but they still weren't finished. Zhu had to stay overnight. When the interrogation finally ended the next day, one of the investigating officers said: "We have come to the conclusion that the Soka Gakkai is an illegal organization. You'd better prepare yourself for being ordered to disband."

Even though Taiwan's constitution guaranteed the freedom of religion, assembly and association, according to the State of Emergency Civic Organizations Law in effect under martial law, all civic organizations had to apply to the government for official recognition and permission to carry out their activities. The Soka Gakkai in Taiwan had done this, but permission had not been granted.

The law also stipulated that only one organization of each type could be recognized. The government maintained that since an officially recognized Buddhist organization already existed in Taiwan, it could not approve a new Buddhist association. Without official recognition, the Soka Gakkai was operating illegally.

But something had bothered Zhu as he went through the application process. Although the doctrines upheld by the Soka Gakkai and the other Buddhist group were completely different, no matter how much he appealed to the authorities to acknowledge this, they refused to listen.

There was still a strong anti-Japanese sentiment in Taiwan, and it is possible that the real reason the Soka Gakkai did not receive official recognition was because of its Japanese origins. It is also likely that certain parties hostile to the organization in Japan were deliberately spreading rumors discrediting the Soka Gakkai as a dangerous ideological

group in Taiwan.

At any rate, all Zhu's efforts had come to naught, and the Soka Gakkai's application to form an organization in Taiwan was rejected.

On April 9, six days after Zhu had been called to the GGH for questioning, an official came to his home and served him notice to disband the Soka Gakkai's Taipei chapter. Zhu phoned Southeast Asia General Chapter Leader Kazumasa Morikawa in Japan and let him know the details of the situation. Morikawa immediately relayed this information to Shin'ichi Yamamoto.

"What? They're being forced to disband?!" Shin'ichi exclaimed. "How awful for the members! From the perspective of Buddhism, though, this is proof that they have developed genuine faith. Doesn't the Gosho say, 'As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere' (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 770)? Encountering persecution verifies that we are practicing the correct teaching. It is only by facing great obstacles that we can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

"Even if the organization has to disband because the law of the land calls for it, the members must never lose their faith. Taiwan still guarantees the freedom of religion, so it should be possible for our members to continue practicing faith there.

"The Daishonin states: 'Even if it seems that, because I was born in the ruler's domain, I follow him in my actions, I will never follow him in my heart' (WND, 579). This is a grand proclamation of spiritual freedom. The Taiwan members must also continue in this spirit.

"Faith is something that no one can take away from us, no matter how hard they may try. For we are the rulers of our own hearts. Ultimately, it is not so much due to pressure from without that people abandon their faith—it is due to their own fear and cowardice in the face of possible oppression."

Shin'ichi then asked, "Incidentally, how old is Taipei Chapter Leader Zhu now?"

"I believe he'll be 40 soon," replied Morikawa.

"He's still young," said Shin'ichi. "Real victory doesn't come until one's 70s and 80s. There is no way this situation will persist for decades. The day will definitely come when the members in Taiwan will carry out Soka Gakkai activities freely.

"Night always gives way to day. Winter always turns into spring. Now is the time for the members to store their energy, just as plants do when they send their roots deep into the soil, so that when dawn comes, when spring arrives, they can cause a great flourishing of kosen-rufu.

"The important thing is that the members patiently endure this time of hardship with the determination not to retreat even a single step. And that they work to steadily build a solid foundation for kosen-rufu in the future. If they triumph over this obstacle, the Soka Gakkai in Taiwan will see tremendous growth. It will usher in a golden age in the 21st century."

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the
novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto.
The events take place in 1963.