

**SIGNIFICANT DATES**  
**JULY 3: MENTOR-AND-DISCIPLE DAY**  
**THE COURAGE TO ALWAYS LOOK AHEAD**  
**BY JASON HENNINGER, LOS ANGELES**

Early in the evening of July 3, 1945, Josei Toda was released from prison. His health had deteriorated during incarceration, his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, had died in prison, and his beloved Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (forerunner of the Soka Gakkai) was broken. Scattered and frightened, many members had gone into hiding, quit practicing Buddhism or turned against the organization. Japan in general was in a state of terrible crisis, and many thousands were on the brink of starvation. One way of looking at that July 3 is to say he was released from prison into another nightmare.

But this was not how Toda saw his life that day. For him, it was not just the day he got out of prison — it was the day he began to reconstruct the organization. Amid the chaos of poverty, disease and foreign occupation, he had only his own wisdom and ferocious determination with which to resurrect the Soka Gakkai phoenix-like from Japan's ashes. And he did more than just resurrect it: He transformed it into a vast, powerful movement for change, an organization with 750,000 households by the time of his death.

On July 3, 1957, just after 7:00 p.m., Daisaku Ikeda, Toda's disciple, was also arrested. He was charged with violating the election laws in support of a Soka Gak-kai-backed candidate in the Osaka Upper House by-elections. By remarkable coincidence, it was at 7:00 p.m. *exactly* 12 years earlier that Toda has been released from prison.

Some members from Tokyo had been involved in election law violations in Osaka. Though prosecutors knew Mr. Ikeda was not involved, they threatened to arrest his mentor if he would not personally accept the charges. Toda was very ill at the time, and his youthful disciple knew that any time in prison would be the same as a death sentence for his mentor. So he took on the charges of voter fraud and fought to prove his innocence in court. "If I take the blame, what does it matter if I am falsely accused, if it is for the sake of President Toda and the Soka Gakkai?" he thought (September 1991 *Seikyo Times*, p. 30). In the end, Daisaku Ikeda was cleared of all charges.

So why is July 3 celebrated as Mentor-and-Disciple Day? What do July 3, 1945, and July 3, 1957, have in common, apart from where they are on the calendar and having something to do with imprisonment? In both cases, it is clear the mentor's and the disciple's eyes were on the future. The spirit of this day is to work toward the future.

In *The New Human Revolution*, when Shin'ichi Yamamoto (President Ikeda's character) considers the possibility of jail and the reality of the court battle, he says to himself, "When viewed in terms of the long journey we have yet to travel to accomplish kosen-rufu, these troubles are trifling. They are like a spring storm" (vol. 4, p. 35). After his two-week imprisonment, President Ikeda went on to prove the righteousness of the Soka Gakkai and protected his beloved mentor. If Toda had been arrested instead, the still-young organization would have been dealt a possible setback.

Mentor-and-Disciple Day ultimately celebrates the courage and dedication shared by the Soka Gakkai presidents. Where would we be if any of them had been less than courageous? Where would we be if we as SGI members were not also determined, forward-thinking and brave? We, mentor and disciples together, see the future for all its promise, despite its difficulties. And because of that, we continue to advance.