

## AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA THE SUNLIGHT OF VICTORY

*SGI President Ikeda recounts how on July 17, 1957, with his release from prison, 'the flames of our indomitable struggle for human rights leapt high, bathed in the sunlight of victory.'*

In his *Apology*, Plato quotes the words of his teacher, the great philosopher Socrates: "And this is what will convict me, if it does convict me, ... the slander and envy of the many. This has convicted many other good men, too, and I suppose it will also convict me. And there is no danger that it will stop with me." As we all know, Socrates, though innocent, was treated as a criminal by the authorities of his day, arrested, imprisoned and condemned to death.

Mr. Toda often used to warn us: "Throughout history, huge numbers of good, honest people have been persecuted by the slander and jealousy of others. That is the reality of the world we live in."

Nichiren Daishonin also attributed the great persecutions of his exile and sentence of death to the false accusations of evil people. The charges against the Daishonin were lies concocted by jealous rivals in order to ensnare him, and he endured terribly cruel punishments for their spurious claims.

*The Daishonin writes, "They leveled false charges against me in order to silence me" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 348), and "Giving credence to the false accusations against me, the nation's rulers exiled me and sentenced me to death" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 356).*

On July 3, 1957, I presented myself for questioning at the Osaka Prefectural Police Headquarters and was arrested on suspicion of violating the election laws. I was finally released from police custody on July 17.

The day of my release, as I sat in the Osaka Detention Center, I heard our brass band playing rousing Soka Gakkai songs from early in the morning.

I was released a little after 12:00 noon, and several hundred members were waiting for me before the iron doors of the detention center. When I appeared, they broke into applause. The scorching summer sun dazzled my eyes. "Thank you!" I said to my comrades. "I apologize for the worry I've caused you. As you can see, I'm fine."

Then someone in the crowd shouted "*Banzai!*" and soon everyone was cheering joyfully. My fellow members in Kansai had felt my imprisonment as if it were their own; they had worried about me and been sad and angry. I will never, as long as I live, forget them or cease to be grateful for their sincere support.

That night, a meeting was scheduled at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall, just across the Dojimagawa River from the Prefectural Police Headquarters. It was to be a protest rally against the actions of the Osaka Police and Prosecutor's Office.

After my release, I went immediately to the airport to meet Mr. Toda, who was flying in from Tokyo. I hadn't seen him for two weeks, since July 3, and I was struck by how much frailer he had grown in that time. But he smiled and said: "Daisaku, the real battle still lies ahead of us. Everything is understood by the Gohonzon. The outcome of this battle will

be decided in court. The judge will understand.” He said this with such firm conviction that it seemed a prophecy.

That night, a small article appeared in the papers, saying that the Osaka Prosecutor’s Office had released me without pressing charges, but that it was regarded as inevitable that they would do so in the future.

The Osaka rally was about to commence at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall, an imposing structure of red brick with a copper roof. The hall was filled with indignant members, and more than 10,000 members stood outside the hall, listening over loudspeakers. All of them decried the actions of the authorities, who had imprisoned their innocent chief of staff. They were outraged by the injustice. They were all true comrades, determined to stand by me, to share in my tears and laughter, to fight alongside me throughout their lives.

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m. Soon after, the clear skies darkened and filled with black clouds, and a fierce rain began to fall. Lightning flashed, and thunder boomed. We all felt spontaneously that this was the anger of the heavenly deities—the protective functions of the universe—at the high-handed forces of authority. The police officers in the area of the hall were the first to run for cover from the rain, but our members stood outside, completely soaked, listening to the proceedings over the speakers.

The atmosphere in the hall was electric. Sitting on the dais, I could see Mr. Toda’s thin back, and I prayed with all my heart that he would soon be restored to health.

When it was my turn to speak, I was very brief. “Let us challenge this trial with the conviction that the correct teaching of Buddhism and those who strive tenaciously in faith, steadfastly upholding the Dai-Gohonzon, will definitely emerge victorious,” I said. Mr. Toda had whispered to me that it would be best to keep my remarks short and simple, partly because I had just been released from detention.

“We must never lose in our struggles!” I added. “We must never be defeated!” From that day on, this became the motto of our Kansai members. It has remained their tradition to this day, as those who are familiar with Kansai know very well.

The date July 17 became the anniversary of this transformation of Kansai into the glorious, proud Ever-victorious Kansai.

My trial for the Osaka Incident lasted four-and-a-half years, with 84 court sessions. My attorneys said to me at the start: “Even if you are innocent, it will be hard to refute the prosecution’s charges. Prepare to be found guilty.”

I was on my own in this struggle for justice. During it, Mr. Toda, my mentor—and in a very real way my father—died. I also became third Soka Gakkai president. If I were convicted, I would be forced under the terms of the Religious Corporations Law to resign my position as the Gakkai’s representative, and the members would all be terribly shaken and distressed.

But I had complete faith in Mr. Toda’s words “The judge will understand.” And I continued my struggle in court. Then, roughly 1,670 days after my arrest, on Jan. 25, 1962, the court gave its verdict: “Daisaku Ikeda is not guilty.”

At last my name had been cleared. The sun of justice broke through the darkness and rose, burning brightly, into the sky.

In every age, the fundamental nature of persecutions that befall the Soka Gakkai will be the same. But Buddhism teaches us that these persecutions are in fact our greatest pride.

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The Soka Gakkai spirit and the spirit of mentor and disciple continue to pulse in the unflinching spirit to fight evil and injustice.

The great Victor Hugo wrote: "To those condemned! Let us lift our brow for lightning to illuminate! Let us lift our brow so the masses will cry: What so purifies the faces of these men? One could only reply: It is the illumination of the coming revolution!"

On that day, July 17, the flames of our indomitable struggle for human rights leapt high, bathed in the sunlight of victory. I will never forget the dedication of all our members! I will never forget July 17!

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