

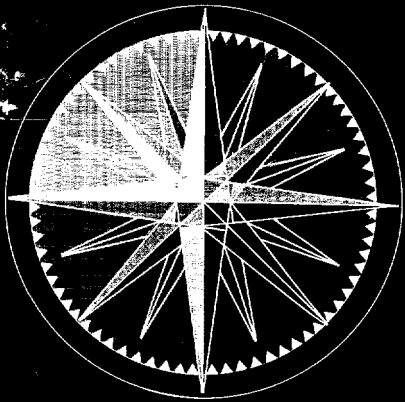
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SPECIAL REPORT

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

BUDDHIST MILITANTS IN JAPANESE POLITICS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MORI/CDF Pages 1 thru 9

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BUDDHIST MILITANTS IN JAPANESE POLITICS

Militant members of a nationalistic Buddhist sect, Soka Gakkai, have forged a powerful, highly disciplined organization of growing importance to Japanese politics. Riding high on the revival of religion and nationalism in Japan, the Soka Gakkai now claims over nine million members, or 10 percent of the population. It has recently strengthened its position in local government, has the third largest representation in the Upper House of the Diet, and may enter the lists for the Lower House in the next general election. Its orientation is ambiguous, and it might throw a decisive weight in the political scales either to the right or the left.

Prewar Origin

The Soki Gakkai--literally the Value Creation Academic Society--began as an obscure secular group some 30 year ago. Its members now regard its founder, Jozaburo Makiguchi, as a reincarnation of the 13th century Buddhist reformer Nichiren.

Makiguchi's early life in backward northern Japan was characterized by economic privation and limited schooling. Making the most of his opportunities, he and his followers turned their experiences to profit by providing "cram courses" and study-aids and outlines for growing numbers of Tokyo students. Out of this grew Makiguchi's "short-cut to happiness" formula, which held that man's happiness is attained by pursuing a trinity of values: beauty, goodness, and gain or profit, with strong materialistic emphasis on the last. He organized his "value-creating education society" to publicize and promote his highly pragmatic

theory, and linked it with religious faith by adhering to the Shoshu sect of Nichiren Buddhism.

His fanatical support of the sect's deification of Nichiren appeared to Japan's military rulers in 1943 as a threat to the Shinto-supported Emperor, and Makiguchi and his principal followers were jailed. He died in prison in 1944.

Postwar Expansion

Makiguchi's favorite disciple, Josei Toda, was largely responsible for reviving the movement after the war. He combined evangelism and a shrewd business sense.

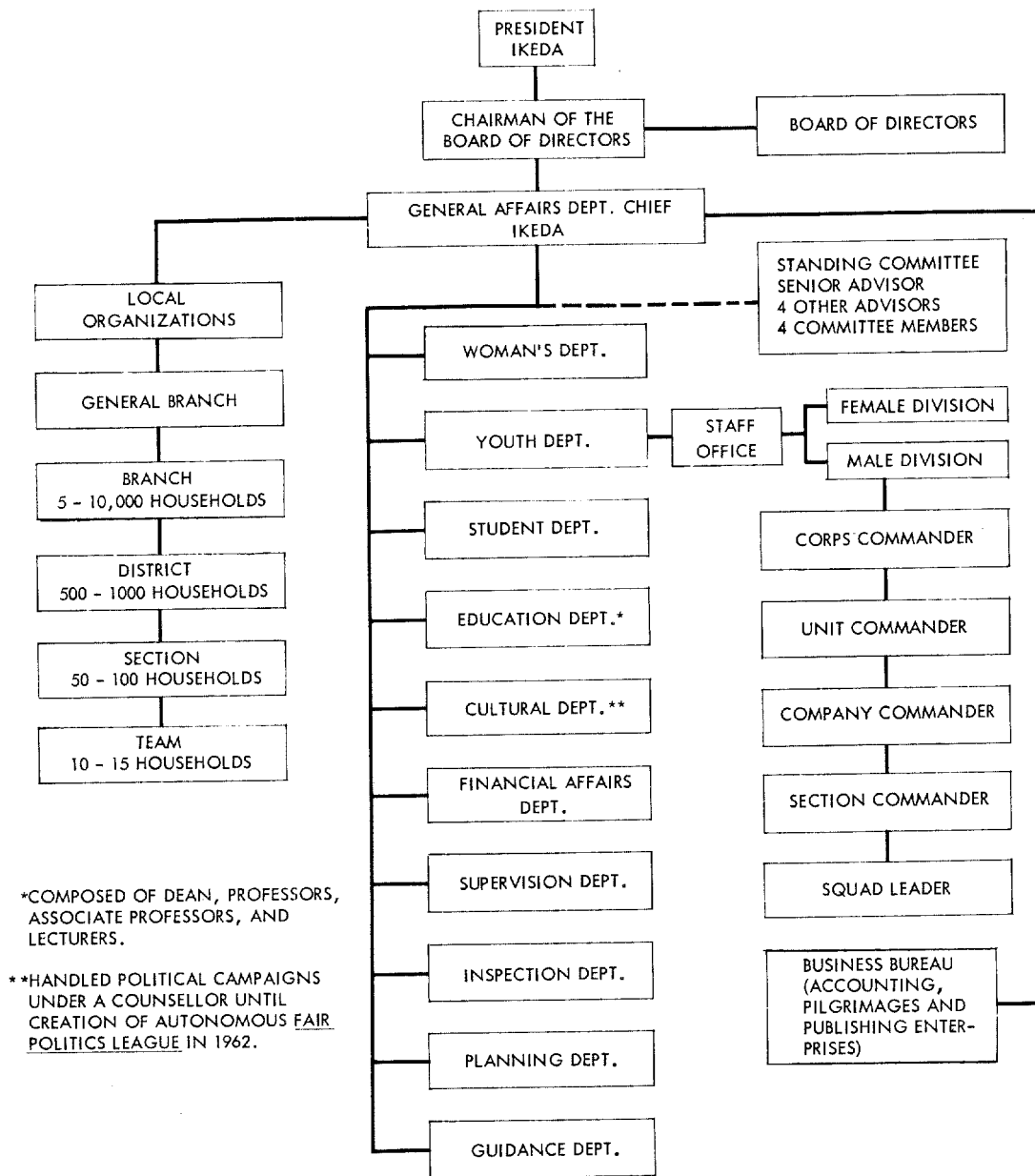
Toda's genius produced funds, publicity, and above all dynamic young leadership. His personal knowledge of the yearnings of insecure youth and his organizational flair set the Gakkai on a continuously successful course, in contrast to the languishings of most other "new religions."

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**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SOKA GAKKAI
AT ACCESSION OF PRESIDENT IKEDA**

(3 MAY 1960)



*COMPOSED OF DEAN, PROFESSORS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS, AND LECTURERS.

**HANDLED POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS UNDER A COUNSELLOR UNTIL CREATION OF AUTONOMOUS FAIR POLITICS LEAGUE IN 1962.

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Toda also established the religious framework which prevails today. He began by purging "heretical" elements in the Shoshu sect. Gakkai control was guaranteed by the strength and unprecedented wealth that it brought the previously minor sect.

Gakkai's claims to represent the orthodox line of Nichiren Buddhism have been hotly but ineffectively disputed. It has continually denounced and violently attacked its rivals, asserting that the Gakkai represents the one true religion which is destined to become Japan's national faith.

After becoming president of the society in 1951, Toda launched a membership drive featuring forcible conversion or shakubuku--literally "beat down and subdue." The society gained great numbers of new recruits and much notoriety. Success has given the Gakkai greater confidence and patience and now it is using somewhat subtler methods of coercion. Although such an approach to religious conversions may be a poor guarantee of permanence and depth of faith, the elan of the youth, the impact of refurbished superstitions, and the disciplined surveillance of potential deserters--who are threatened with the direst sanctions--have reduced or obscured the drop-out rate.

A youth corps Toda formed spearheaded the aggressive con-

version campaign couched in terms of a crusade or "holy war." The corps is organized and rigidly disciplined on military lines. Uniforms, unit colors and martial music are reminiscent of both prewar Japan and the Hitler Youth. At Toda's death in 1958 the corps had over 200,000 members; it now has over 800,000.

The youth corps is largely credited with the upsurge of membership in Toda's years as president. In his first two years in office, membership in the society is said to have increased from about 5,000 to over 50,000 "households," the Gakkai's vague unit calculated to have an average of three persons.

The most significant development during Toda's incumbency was the society's decision in 1955 to enter politics, initially at the local level. Political action may have been developed as one more technique for demonstrating how the saint Nichiren, working through the Gakkai, could help his followers. The decision was apparently prompted by a struggle with the trade union and socialist leadership in Hokkaido for the allegiance of local coal miners.

Leader Daisaku Ikeda

In the two years following Toda's death, Daisaku Ikeda, a favored youth corps leader and deputy director of the society, gradually consolidated his control, and although only in his

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thirties, was installed as president in 1960. He is the paragon of postwar leaders who are making the Gakkai so successful.

Of humble origins and no kin to Japan's prime minister, Ikeda as a teenager was handicapped by Japan's postwar malaise. He was unable to complete his education and had an illness which he claims was cured by association with Toda and the Gakkai. He worked in Toda's publishing house and in a related firm while being tutored in the ways of the society.

After 1951 he rose rapidly to a top position in the youth corps and then moved on to Gakkai headquarters. He was instrumental in stalemating leftist and labor union resistance in Hokkaido. Ikeda's ability to attract votes away from the left has contributed much to Gakkai electoral successes. While Ikeda is not known as an

orator he is a successful evangelist who has personal magnetism and stage presence.

Growth Abroad

Under Ikeda Gakkai membership has proliferated abroad and among aliens, as well as among native-born Japanese. The sect had spread to the Ryukyus before he became president, and he quickly initiated action to extend the organization around the globe. An "Orient Academic Research Institute" was founded to provide material for a Far and Middle East mission, at present mostly in Okinawa. The Gakkai claims to have 7,000 households in the Ryukyus now.

A major effort was centered on Taiwan, where the faith already had been spread by Japanese-educated mainlanders and Taiwanese. The sect has met resistance from the Nationalist government and was banned in April of this year. While it has formally disbanded, its more than 1,000 members may continue worshipping in private.

The society is apparently growing in the US, attracting principally Americans of Japanese descent. It had about 7,500 members here in 1962. Ikeda made his first trip to set up branches in the US in 1960 and has returned on several occasions. He had hoped to meet President Kennedy this spring to represent the wishes of "one million Japanese youth" that nuclear testing be ended, but canceled his trip, apparently out of pique over a casual reference to his society

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as "heretical" on the part of a spokesman for the governing Liberal Democratic Party.

The Gakkai has also attracted American servicemen stationed in or returned from Japan through their Japanese girl friends or wives. US Forces Japan reports members at practically all bases, numbering at least 450 men, and another 1,500 previously assigned to Japan may have joined. The Society had begun publishing some of its propaganda in English.

Recent Political Success

Under Ikeda, Soka Gakkai has steadily improved its extraordinary record for winning in local and Upper House elections, as political action assumed an important place in the society's program. In the local elections of 1959 the Gakkai elected all of its 76 candidates to the Tokyo ward assemblies and over 90 per-

cent of its contestants to other municipal assemblies. When in 1962 it elected all nine of its candidates to the Upper House, it became the third largest party there.

Increasing political activity led Soka Gakkai to create a separate organization to conduct its campaigns. In 1962 this "Fair Politics League" took over political action responsibilities from an informal staff in Ikeda's headquarters, enabling the parent organization to maintain a primarily religious image.

The League enlarged the Gakkai's political role in the 1963 local elections, electing 56 of its 57 candidates for the more important regional legislatures and 881 of its 886 in municipal assemblies. In the key Tokyo elections, all 17 of its candidates won seats in the metropolitan legislature and all 136 in ward assemblies. Gakkai support was again enlisted for the incumbent conservative governor, helping to defeat his Socialist rival.

SOKA GAKKAI ELECTORAL RECORD

YEAR	REPRESENTATION IN UPPER HOUSE JAPANESE DIET	POPULAR VOTE (in millions)	CANDIDATES ELECTED IN LOCAL ELECTIONS
1955	—	—	50 ±
1956	3	1	—
1959	9	3	700 ±
1962	15	4	—
1963	—	—	1000 ±

Provisions for Upper House elections enable the League to muster its tightly knit organization for the greatest national impact. Elections for the politically more potent Lower House are run on a basis that would impede similar reflection of highly disciplined but localized strength. Although it has not yet felt the time ripe to enter general elections for the Lower

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House, the League is steadily developing potentialities to exploit in that key contest when it wishes.

Political Orientation

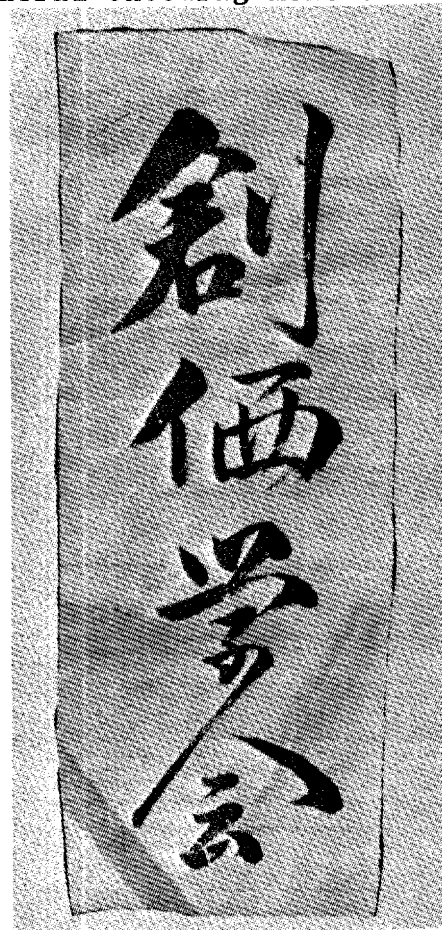
Through all these successes, the society's political orientation has remained ambiguous.

At the outset, the Gakkai denounced both major parties and called for a general clean-up of politics. Since then it has increasingly espoused widely popular demands such as opposition to nuclear testing and rearmament, return of both the Ryukyu and Kuril islands, closer ties, especially economic, with mainland China, and sweeping social welfare measures. The organization has indicated it opposes any revision of the constitution to modify Article 9 which formally renounces war and war-making potential. Municipal assemblymen belonging to the sect have participated in recent efforts to block visits of US nuclear-propelled submarines.

The amorphous character of the Gakkai's political stand suggests that it could go either to right or left. Japanese intellectuals tend to relegate the Gakkai to the "lunatic fringe" on the far right because of its military-style organization and espousal of nationalist aims. At the same time its self-styled "new socialism" includes emphasis on social welfare and on major foreign policy goals which coincide with those of the

left. Ikeda calls for a synthesis incorporating the "good points" of both dialectical materialism and "Christian" capitalism to provide Japan with a fundamental philosophy under which it can prosper in peace.

In any event, nationalism, long anathema in postwar Japan, is making a comeback, and the Gakkai is in the vanguard with its symbols and slogans, its flags and its loyalties, and its general encouragement of



"SOKA GAKKAI"
IN JAPANESE SCRIPT.
THE SOCIETY ENCOURAGES
CALLIGRAPHY.

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traditional Japanese arts. Moreover, its missionary effort accords with Nichiren's belief that it would be Japan's role to carry "the light of Asia" back to Buddhism's original home in South Asia and hence throughout the world.

Prospects

Some Japanese political observers hold that the Gakkai is at last approaching a political zenith, having attracted the maximum following from depressed elements of society. The Gakkai will probably continue to profit some from trends toward urbanization. The great bulk of Gakkai membership is concentrated in the industrial centers where it appeals to newly arrived rural immigrants, as to the "lonely crowd" of the diseased, the dispossessed and the frustrated.

Although the Gakkai now has the strength to elect a fair number of Lower House members--about 50 to 60 out of 467--its leaders, probably feeling that they would have to do

better than that to maintain their spectacular record, deny any intention to run candidates. They are certainly opportunistic enough to jump into the arena should the immediate prospects of electoral success improve by the time of the next general election--which must be held by October 1964. In the meantime the Gakkai's representation in the Upper House and throughout local government keeps it in the limelight.

In most cases the Gakkai has cut more heavily into left-wing votes than it has into the conservatives'. Its bargaining position has been progressively improved as the left slowly rises and the conservatives decline. Thus both ideologically and tactically Soka Gakkai's political arm occupies a central place in Japanese politics. While it can move in either direction, in a national crisis its nationalist orientation suggests it would probably throw its weight toward the right. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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