

~~This is an unedited translation~~

PROFILE OF KODAMA, YOSHIO, MAN OF ADVENTURE—Zembo (All Facets) 15 July 1953

The Liberal Party's internal strife flamed up again on the question of Secretary in Chief last January, and MIKI-HIROKAWA alliance menaced the Yoshida camp. Just then when a possibility of conference between Hatoyama and Hirokawa was afloat and talked about in the political world amidst such a situation, the "Yomiuri" scooped a picture that bore witness to the conference in question. It was no wonder that the general public was astonished when they knew the conference took place at the residence of Kodama Yoshio, situated at Jiyagaoka, Meguro Ward, attended by MIURA Giichi, nicknamed Maromachi Shogun, besides Hatoyama, Hirokawa and Miki. Rumor had it that Hatoyama could found the Liberal Party after the war thanks to the financial backing up by Kodama. The "Yomiuri" report endorsed the existence of such a relation between Hatoyama and Kodama and highlighted the existence of Kodama on the surface of journalism after a long interval.

Kodama, who was needless to say the responsible head of the former Kodama machinery, was born in February 1911 in Fukushima Prefecture. He is quite young yet, being 42.

Kodama, who had been brought up in the tradition of Byakkotai (White Tiger Squad), plunged into the rightist movement after graduating from the Junior High School at his native place, then moved to Tokyo and played an active part in the movement as a focal figure of the Radical Patriotic Party along with Tsukui Tatsuo and others. He was then a stripling of youth, a little over 20 years old, but had been already known as a man of chivalry among the rightist group. Later on he had been in jail now and then seven years in all implicated in the case of Independent

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Youths Party and others. He had written famous "Inside the prison and out of it." This made his name widely known.

It was Kawaso Tetsuo, the former President of Intelligence Bureau (then Chief of Foreign Ministry's Intelligence Department), that extended helping hand to Kodama, who came out of prison with 70 yen he earned by making paper toy balloons there in his pocket in the fall of 1937. Kawaso sent Kodama to China with an ready present of 3,000 yen from his own pocket money. This was the start of the Kodama machinery's being founded. While he was back home for the time being in 1941 the war developed at last into the Pacific war. He crossed the sea to China again in the end of that year with a tremendous task of collecting war materials in which mission was entrusted to him by the then Naval Aviation Headquarters Chief Vice-Admiral Yanagata who fell in love with his personality. Primarily a man of great chivalry, he collected resources from interior parts of China at the risk of his life. In a short three years thereafter till the war's end his war profits are said to have totaled a daring 3300 million yen. Indeed he is an epochal man of adventure.

When he was nominated Councillor to the Higashikuni Cabinet soon after the war at rather a green age of 35 some backbited that the power of money was responsible for the appointment. But it is too short-sighted to ascribe it to the monetary power only. Vice-Admiral Onishi Takijiro, initiator of Tokkotai (Special Attacking Squadron), and Kodama were friends trusting each other implicitly. When Kodama rushed to the bedside of dying Admiral who had committed "harakiri" (TH: suicide by cutting bowels), Admiral said to him, "Mine being a rusty sword, it gave my bowels rather acute pain. Mr. Kodama, please take care of the matter after my death" and passed away smilingly. This postwar hidden episode tells well the personality of Kodama.

His true spirit seemed to have been revealed on the day when he was declared to be a A class war criminal. Wearing black national suits on his small stature, he candidly disclosed the details of his war profits, and said with no pretension, "I will donate all to the public utility enterprises and become empty-handed myself."

After having been absolved from war crimes in December 1948, he was trying to avoid what might attract public attention saying he would like to observe the world quietly for a while. Nonetheless, how complicated and diversified are his relations with a variety of circles may be imagined from the fact that his name has often appeared behind the scene of notable affairs since then.

When one sees him with a curiosity as to what kind of a man he may be, he is found to be a man impressively courteous, quite different from the type one imagined. Not a dandy, but he is immaculate in his apparel verging on nervousness. One is rather disappointed to find him speak sluggishly, but once on a platform he is capable of making audiences stunned with admiration by his great eloquence. As exemplified by his books "Inside prison and out of it," and "I am defeated," writings of his also have power to make readers shed tears. His way of thinking also differs from that of ideal spiritualists. In his younger days, when he was serving under Akao Bin of Kenkokukai (National Foundation Association), he declared in regard to the practice of Misogi (The Shinto rite to purify one's body by sprinkling water over it according to a prescribed formula), "I disdain to take part in such a foolish rite," and plunged into a heated dispute with other fanatical members which resulted in a fray both sides brandishing naked Japanese swords. The battle was ended by Kodama's getting scolded severely by Akao. He excels of course in making money, but seems not to have hoarded much, for he spends a lot as quickly as he collects a great deal of it.

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Hers is an episode. A man who was on intimate terms with the Kodamas happened to be shown the deposit pass with a balance of less than 3000 yen by Mrs. Kodama. Thinking such a meager savings might sometime cause Kodama, a prominent man of the world, to incur shame on himself, he managed to spare some 30,000 yen and persuaded Mrs. Kodama to place the same on deposit. Kodama, discovering incidentally this deposit pass book, is said to have scolded his wife, saying, "It's a damned extravagance for a man without occupation to place so much as 30,000 yen on deposit."

He doesn't drink. His hobbies are angling and Shakubachi (TK: traditional Japanese bamboo-flute).