FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM   USPOLAD Tokyo

TO   THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.   January 31, 1952

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SUBJ: Transmittal of Memorandum on the White Lotus Society.

Byakurensha

There is transmitted herewith for the information of the Department a copy of a memorandum prepared by Foreign Service Officer William H. SULLIVAN on the White Lotus Society (Byakurensha), a Buddhist organization established in 1948 by a prominent Japanese lay Buddhist, Kazumasa ONISHI.   Although the original purpose of the organization was the undertaking of welfare work as a means of rejuvenating lay Buddhism in Japan, under the dominance of an ex-naval officer, Tsunezo WACHI, the activities of the organization have been channeled into: (1) the solace of the souls of those Japanese soldiers who died defending Iwo Jima, and (2) the spiritual guidance of the war criminals imprisoned at Sugamo Prison.

In pursuing these ends Wachi, former commander of the Japanese naval garrison at Iwo Jima, has made and maintained contacts with highly placed officers in the General Headquarters and in the Japanese national Bereaved Families Association (Izokukai). Chiefly through his persistence, authorization was received by the Japanese Government from SCAP and CINCFE for the despatch of an official mission under the leadership of Wachi to Iwo Jima to hold services for the war dead and to repatriate certain of the remains. A member of the White Lotus Society is presently acting as chaplain at Sugamo Prison through whom Wachi maintains active contact with Japanese war criminals imprisoned there.

According to Wachi's statements, he is a graduate (class 1923) of the Japanese Naval Academy and has spent about half of his career in the Japanese Navy in intelligence and cryptographic work. At one time he was allegedly assigned responsibility for breaking the American and British diplomatic codes. Assigned in 1940 as assistant naval attaché in Mexico his duties consisted chiefly of monitoring operational messages of the United States naval forces in the Atlantic. Following internment in the United States at the outbreak of the war, he was repatriated to Japan where he was assigned to the office of Naval Intelligence until his appointment in 1944 as commander of the Japanese naval garrison on Iwo Jima. Shortly prior to the United States attack on Iwo, Wachi claims he was relieved of his command as the result of a disagreement with the Japanese officer commanding air force units there. Wachi was detained in Sugamo Prison for several months after the Japanese surrender, but

Sullivan:ac/bjb

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was .. n brought to trial as a war criminal. Following his purge he
retired to Kyoto to enter the Buddhist priesthood.

Sullivan emphasizes the unusual capabilities of Yachi and
the fact that his activities in the White Lotus Society have already
acquired for him considerable prominence. As the movement for con-
solation and repatriation of the remains of the Japanese war dead
increases, it may be assumed that Yachi and his society will grow in
strength now. It should be noted, however, that the recent resurgence
of rightist organizations makes it difficult to single out any one
organization as possessing sufficient influence to gain any national
importance. Rather the danger appears to lie in the total general
influence which the aggregate of all these organizations having cer
to similar aims and objectives will exert during the coming post
treaty era.

For the Political Adviser:

Charles N. Spinks
First Secretary of Mission

Enclosure.

Memorandum prepared by FSO W. B. Sullivan.