

August 31, 2004

Stewart Pinkerton  
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Dear Mr. Pinkerton:

After receiving your March 19 response to my letter of concern following my January 29 interview with Benjamin Fulford, we answered all of his inquiries, relying on your assurance that the story would be “fair, balanced and accurate.” Unfortunately none of those adjectives apply to the article as it appears in the September 6 issue of *Forbes* magazine.

In spite of multiple interviews, Mr. Fulford does not include a single quote from the Soka Gakkai representatives other than a third-party report from the 1960’s . . . hardly fair, balance or accurate..

James White—who was interviewed by Mr. Fulford and referenced in the article—in his 1970 book, *The Sokagakkai and Mass Society*, cites the same statement but follows it immediately with: “This isolated remark has been widely cited as an example of megalomania; it conflicts sharply with the favorable personal impression he [Ikeda] makes, which certainly has nothing of pomposity or hubris in it. It seems likely that his answer was meant as a realistic appraisal of his position as defined doctrinally and perceived by a great many of the faithful . . . (229) Professor White introduced the quote with: “He [Ikeda] reiterates that although he holds a position of organizational leadership he is really no better than any other believer” (ibid).

A far more representative quote from Mr. Ikeda, and one that is well-known by SGI members around the world, is: “The purpose of Buddhism is not to produce dupes who blindly follow their leader. It is to produce people of wisdom who can judge right or wrong on their own in the clear mirror of Buddhism.”

The sidebar about the Asaki case is outrageous. Mr. Fulford quotes the daughter of the deceased but doesn’t share the ruling—affirmed by the Supreme Court of Japan—that required her and her publishers to publish an apology and retraction of all her accusations about her mother’s death.

From characterizing our seven-story national headquarters building as a “high-rise” in “gilded Santa Monica” to the false attribution of Lisa Jones as “a former aide and follower who ghostwrote an Ikeda book”, Mr. Fulford’s hyperbole betrays his intentions and any sense of journalistic integrity.

I await your response.

Guy McCloskey  
Senior Vice President  
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March 19, 2004

This is in response to your letter of Mar. 12, 2004 to Bill Baldwin, who asked me to reply. I'm sorry that you felt that Mr. Fulford was "emotional and confrontational" in manner. But those characterizations are not consistent with Mr. Fulford's reputation as a journalist--or with the standards we expect of writers at Forbes.

Moreover, in his preparation for this story, Mr. Fulford comes to this project with an open mind, and has simply done his homework by gathering information relating to Soka Gakkai.

Certainly, not all of this information is positive in nature. But to not ask for comment about these matters would be irresponsible. A long list of questions, in fact, has been sent to Soka Gakkai in Tokyo. We await a response, and would also like to be granted an interview with Daisaku Ikeda, whose works Mr. Fulford has read during the course of his research.

Please be assured that any resulting story will be fair, balanced, and accurate. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have further questions or comments.

Sincerely,  
Stewart Pinkerton  
Deputy Managing Editor

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March 15, 2004

Thank you for your letter. I have asked Deputy Managing Editor Stewart Pinkerton to look into the issues you have raised.

William Baldwin, Editor  
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Dear Sir,

On Thursday, January 29, 2004 I met with Mr. Benjamin Fulford, the Asian Pacific Bureau Chief for Forbes Magazine. The interview took place at the request of Mr. Fulford who is preparing a story on the Soka Gakkai and its activities both in Japan and the United States.

We were happy to provide him with information and answer his questions. However, during our interview, I was struck by Mr. Fulford's lack of factual information as well as his emotional and confrontational manner. As the interview progressed it became apparent from both the content and manner of his questions that: 1) Mr. Fulford was determined to find something scandalous to write about Soka Gakkai; and 2) he was relying on questionable sources for his information.

As a case in point, he raised the issue of the death of Japanese local councilwoman Akiyo Asaki in September 1995. Mr. Fulford asserted that he "knew for a fact" that her death was the result of foul play by the Soka Gakkai. He stated that he was "certain" that the police, prosecutors and judges charged with investigating the incident and related court cases were Soka Gakkai members and implied that they had therefore covered up a crime. These are serious allegations that are not supported by the facts.

From research following our interview, I learned the following:

On September 1, 1995, Ms. Asaki, a local councilwoman of Higashi Murayama City (in greater Metropolitan Tokyo) fell from a building and died shortly thereafter from her injuries. She apparently told a passerby who came to her assistance immediately after her fall that she was "all right" and refused any help.

Police investigations indicated that the cause of death was likely suicide, and that there was no evidence to support a murder investigation. It has been suggested that her suicide may have been related to the fact that Ms. Asaki was due to appear before a local prosecutor on a charge of shoplifting on September 5, four days after her death. The police report was forwarded to the public prosecutor's office. The prosecutor initially assigned to this case and his supervisor both happened to be members of Soka Gakkai. This is not surprising since Soka Gakkai members constitute roughly 10% of the Japanese population.

In March and July 1996 respectively, these prosecutors rotated to other assignments—routine personnel transfers—and the investigation was taken over by prosecutors who were not Soka Gakkai members. This second team of prosecutors announced in April 1997 that there was no evidence to support the family's claim that Ms. Asaki's death was due to foul play, and that the "probability of suicide was too high." It should be noted that this investigation took place in an atmosphere of intense public scrutiny.

Sensationalist claims were made by the Asaki family in the Japanese tabloid press accusing the Soka Gakkai of the murder of Ms. Asaki. These claims became the basis of three libel suits filed by Soka Gakkai against Kodansha, publisher of *Shukan Gendai*, Shinchosha, publisher of *Shukan Shincho*, and a local newsletter, *Higashi Murayama Shimin Shimbun*. The Soka Gakkai prevailed in each of these suits, while Ms. Asaki's daughter and colleague lost all three of their lawsuits against the Soka Gakkai. For the record, contrary to Mr. Fulford's assertions, none of the judges responsible for these decisions and none of the police officers in the initial

investigation were Soka Gakkai members. An itemized list of these cases is enclosed for your reference.

We are concerned when a reporter demonstrates such a combination of moral certainty and misinformation. We take very seriously false accusations that are intended to damage our reputation. We expect a magazine such as Forbes to hold its reporters to high standards, and to require that any allegations be supported by facts, and not just a repetition of accusations made by people with their own agendas to advance.

There are individuals and groups in Japan who make a living out of publishing groundless accusations against the Soka Gakkai in the notoriously sensationalist weekly tabloid magazines. In addition, because of Soka Gakkai's connection to the Komeito political party, Komeito's political opposition frequently use smear campaigns against the religious organization.

We understand from Mr. Fulford that he has met with Mr. Masatomo Yamazaki, former Soka Gakkai attorney, and Mr. Toshimitsu Ryu, a former Komeito politician who was the cofounder of the "Soka Gakkai Victims' Association." Both of these individuals bear a specific personal grudge against Soka Gakkai and have a history of creating false allegations against the organization which have consistently been disproved in court. Mr. Yamazaki was convicted and jailed for extorting money from the Soka Gakkai, and Mr. Ryu's group is linked to and has received substantial funding from the Nichiren Shoshu sect which has a vested interest in discrediting the Soka Gakkai.

We are concerned that Mr. Fulford is not objective in hearing our side of the story and that he has already made a prejudiced judgment. Throughout the entire period of his research, he has made very little direct contact with our organizational representatives and those of Soka Gakkai and SGI in Japan.

Because of the frequency of negative stories about our organization, we have fact-based rebuttals in English that respond to various allegations. I would be happy to make this information available to you and Mr. Fulford, and believe they would be essential to fair and accurate research about the Soka Gakkai.

Sincerely,

Guy McCloskey  
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