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THE JŪGŌ HŌKŌKAI

(HOME FRONT PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATION)

(Translation of an article appearing in the Weekly Report of the Cabinet Information Section for 1 March 1939, dealing with the founding, aims, and organization of this government-sponsored association for promoting, both in war and in peace, civilian backing of the conscription system by giving aid and comfort to soldiers and their families.)

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THE JŪGŌ HŌKŌKAI*1Foreword

On 14 January of this year (T.N. 1939), instructions were issued by the Ministers of Welfare, Home Affairs, War, and Navy concerning the organization and strengthening of support groups on the home front in every city area, town, and village. At the same time, a memorandum was issued in compliance with the instructions by the four Vice-Ministers, setting out in detail the establishment of the Jūgō Hokōkai, which is the practical means for carrying out the instructions. Now that the preparations for its establishment all over the country are going forward, we wish to take this opportunity of describing in general outline the nature of the Jūgō Hokōkai.

The Purpose Behind the Establishment of the Jūgō Hokōkai

The China Incident has finally entered a new stage of long-term construction, and it has become absolutely essential to apply to it the total strength of our nation and people. Especially because home front support has such a great influence on morale in the front lines, we have an urgent duty in planning to strengthen and maintain it, and the Government has put all kinds of measures into effect directed toward this end. However, since the heartening cooperation of the whole population, based on the social spirit of mutual assistance, is a particularly important aspect of home front support, it is considered most essential that we should plan to perfect and strengthen our home front organization, so as to arouse increasingly the spirit of public service on the home front, and to provide well-organized assistance both materially and spiritually.

On 3 October, 1938, the Emperor issued a gracious message concerning aid to soldiers, and gave a large sum of money from the Imperial Privy Purse. Using the Imperial gift as a foundation, the Government established the central Soldiers' Aid Society*2 (Imperial Gift Foundation) in November, and organized branches in every urban and rural prefecture in December, making them the respective pivotal organizations for military aid. However, in order to achieve perfection in our home front organization, the most important thing demanded by the present situation is the completion and strengthening of the several home front organizations in every city area, town, and village, which form the first line of the home front, and which are animated by the tradition of mutual assistance.

For this reason, the Government has carried out investigation and research with the object of perfecting the home front support groups which have been established since the outbreak of the Incident in almost every city area, town, and village in the country, and has finally promulgated a definite plan - the establishment of the Jūgō Hokōkai. Moreover, they took this opportunity of including the objects of the National Defense Cooperative Association (Gokoku Kyodō Kumiai*3), which had dozens of offices all over the country and whose function up to this time was to provide preparation for military service. Thus, there has evolved a complete organization for home front support, not only for military aid, not only for dealing with the China Incident, but as a permanent organization, continuing both in peace and in war, providing military assistance and preparation for military service.

*1 銃後奉公會

Home Front Public Service Organization

*2 軍人援護會

*3 護國共同組合

The Purpose of the Jūgō Hōkōkai

Since the Jūgō Hōkōkai was established for the above reasons, it is clear that its guiding spirit is based upon "the underlying principle of universal conscription and the moral principle of mutual assistance." Thus, while it is expected to be fully active both in peace-time and in war, its purpose is preparation for military service and military assistance. Since the spirit of universal conscription is the fundamental principle of our country's military system, it is the natural duty of our people, in order to carry out this important task, to make of their own accord all possible preparations, both spiritual and economic, even in peace-time. Moreover, rather than leave each individual to his own preparations, it is far simpler and the results are better when they act in cooperation. Making this the objective of the Jūgō Hōkōkai, we shall try to strengthen our home front defenses.

This is not only because of the long duration of the present Incident, but, in order to achieve completeness at home, we must make just such preparations as can be easily adapted from peace-time to times of war or of "incident". In other words, if we make adequate preparations in peace-time, we shall be able to meet the situation properly in time of war or of "incident". The purpose of the Jūgō Hōkōkai is, therefore, in peace and in war, preparation for military service and military aid.

The Organization of the Jūgō Hōkōkai

In consideration of these objects of the establishment of the Jūgō Hōkōkai, its organization is closely associated with the various city, town, and village districts, and it has been made the central body for local cooperation.

A. Name.

In order to merge all the military assistance groups in the country into a unified body, possessing the same guiding spirit, the same purposes, and carrying out the same tasks, their name has been standardized as "District Jūgō Hōkōkai".

B. Districts.

In principle, the areas in which the Jūgō Hōkōkai is established have city areas, towns, and villages as their unit. This is because it was recognized as most suitable to have city areas, towns, and villages for the units of an organization which carries out military assistance with the spirit of mutual aid as its keynote, since in our country the fine custom of mutual aid has made its best progress in these city areas, towns, and villages. However, as there may well be cases in the six great cities and other large cities where it is not sufficient to organize a single group in a city or city area, there is no objection in such cities to a suitable sub-division, based on actual conditions in the area, in order to achieve local cooperation.

C. Members.

Since the Jūgō Hōkōkai is a cooperatively organized body, with individual effort as its warp and cooperation as its woof, in order to achieve its purpose, it has been made a membership organization.

In order to obtain true local cooperation, all householders have been made members in their own city area, town, or village.

D. Officials.

The post of Chairman is filled by the Head of the city area, town or village, and the Chairman selects the other officials from among community representatives, local committee members, and other suitable people. By making the representatives of all the various groups into officials, true local cooperation has been achieved.

The Business of the Jūgō Hōkōkai

The business carried on by the Jūgō Hōkōkai, as is clear from the purposes of its establishment, consists of making the necessary preparations for military service and arousing the spirit of military service, and of perfecting military aid in the spirit of mutual assistance.

The principal points involved may be enumerated as follows:

1. Arousing the spirit of military service.
2. Promoting the principle and spirit of mutual assistance.
3. Preparation for military service.
4. Assistance to regular service personnel, persons called to active duty, sick and wounded military personnel, and their survivors and families.
5. Occupational assistance in the form of labor service, etc.
6. Condolence.
7. Sympathy and consolation.
8. Hospitality to members of the armed forces.
9. Advice on property and domestic matters.
10. Thorough dissemination of ideas on military aid.
11. Miscellaneous necessary business.

The Expenses of the Jūgō Hōkōkai

The expenses of the Jūgō Hōkōkai are met by income from membership fees, subsidies, contributions, etc.

A. Membership Fees.

Since it is a fundamental principle of the Jūgō Hōkōkai to make use of individual effort in order to provide preparation for military service, it was decided to collect membership fees. Also it seemed most convenient to have membership fees as a permanent source of income for the organization.

At the same time, in collecting funds, any kind of abuse, such as raising the fee too high, using compulsion, or other inequities must be severely punished. Thus, by calling on the resources of the members up to a reasonable degree, it is hoped to insure a suitable and equitable sharing of the burden.

B. Subsidies.

The Jūgō Hōkōkai will operate for the most part on its membership fees, but in cases where it has difficulty in operating on membership fees alone, the Government hopes that, so far as circumstances permit, it will be subsidized by funds from the city areas, towns, and villages.

However, as there may be some risk, when the resources of the city areas, towns, and villages alone are relied upon, of inequalities arising in the work of the organization, depending upon the circumstances of the district, it is hoped that the urban and rural prefectures will provide generous subsidies in order to adjust the balance.

Also, in order to maintain the highest standards of military aid, in cases where the Government is at present distributing subsidies for military relief work to urban and rural prefectures (10 million yen in the budget for 1938), and where the work can suitably be done by the Jugo Hokokai, the work and the subsidy for that purpose may both be handed over to the Jugo Hokokai. Since the Jugo Hokokai will remain in existence both in peace and in war, it should make every effort to set aside a fixed sum every year in time of peace in order to prepare for the disbursement of large sums in time of war or "incident".

Relation to the Soldiers' Aid Society

(Imperial Gift Foundation)

Last year the Soldiers' Aid Society was established as the pivotal organization for military aid at the center (T.N. Tokyo) and in the urban and rural prefectures, while this year the Jugo Hokokai has been established as the pivotal organization in the city areas, towns, and villages. Through the concerted activity of the two, the machinery for military aid has been steadily strengthened and perfected. The Jugo Hokokai has not been formally made a subsidiary of the Soldiers' Aid Society, for soldiers' aid is the sole purpose of the Soldiers' Aid Society, whereas the Jugo Hokokai, apart from military aid, is intended to provide preparation for military service; and since the latter's field is wider than that of the Soldiers' Aid Society, it has been decided to keep them separate organizations. However, insofar as military aid work is concerned the Jugo Hokokai is very closely related to the Soldiers' Aid Society, and the Soldiers' Aid Society will establish no branches of its own in the city areas, towns, and villages. We may consider that the Jugo Hokokai in fact carries out the functions of a subsidiary of the Soldiers' Aid Society.

Conclusion

We have now given a general description of the Jugo Hokokai. Its basis, however, lies in the feelings of the people. As we have often said, the spirit of universal conscription is the fundamental principle of our country's military system, and our people, considering their lives as nothing, have come to regard it as the highest honor to go off in good heart to this important duty. The spirit of mutual assistance is also traditional in our country, and by the combination of these two qualities our country has always surmounted her difficulties in the past. These matters are in no way based upon compulsion, but are the spontaneous expression of the faith of our people. The spirit which rises from this source is indeed a noble thing; we believe it is the glory of the fundamental character of our Empire. Therefore, to introduce compulsion into the conduct of the Jugo Hokokai in time of emergency would be to stifle its very life and to run counter to the spirit of our national traditions.

It is our earnest desire to make clear to all our people the purposes stated above, and to entrust to the rising national spirit the promotion and conduct of the Jugo Hokokai.