

Unification Church political activities

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Politics are an integral part of the **Unification Church's** concerns and activities, although the church itself largely remains aloof from politics. The degree of involvement of the movement, as well as some of its specific stances, have also been part of the reason for the movement's controversial status over the years. The belief in the establishment of a literal Kingdom of God on earth and church founder Sun Myung Moon's teaching that religion alone is not enough to bring this about provides a motivation for political involvement.^[1]

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Cold War era

In the 1940s Moon cooperated with Communist Party members in the Korean independence movement against Imperial Japan. However after the Korean War (1950–1953) he became an outspoken anti-communist.^[2]

In 1964 Moon founded the Korean Culture and Freedom Foundation, a public diplomacy agency which promoted the interests of South Korea and sponsored Radio Free Asia. Former U.S. Presidents Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Richard Nixon were honorary presidents or directors at various times.^[3]

In 1972 Moon predicted the decline of communism, based on the teachings of the *Divine Principle*: "After 7,000 biblical years — 6,000 years of restoration history plus the millennium, the time of completion — communism will fall in its 70th year. Here is the meaning of the year 1978. Communism, begun in 1917, could maintain itself approximately 60 years and reach its peak. So 1978 is the border line and afterward communism will decline; in the 70th year it will be altogether ruined. This is true. Therefore, now is the time for people who are studying communism to abandon it."^[4]

In 1974, Moon asked church members in the United States to support President Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal when Nixon was being pressured to resign his office. Church members prayed and fasted in support of Nixon for three days in front of the United States Capitol, under the motto: "Forgive, Love and Unite." On February 1, 1974 Nixon publicly thanked them for their support and officially received Moon. This brought the church into widespread public and media attention.^[5]

In 1976 church president Neil Albert Salonen met with Senator Bob Dole to defend the Unification Church against charges made by its critics, including parents of some members.^[6]

In 1976 Moon established News World Communications, an international news media conglomerate which publishes *The Washington Times* newspaper in Washington D.C. and newspapers in South Korea, Japan, and

South America partly in order to promote political conservatism. According to the *Washington Post*: "...the *Times* was established by Moon to combat communism and be a conservative alternative to what he perceived as the liberal bias of The Washington Post."^[7] Bo Hi Pak, called Moon's "right-hand man", was the founding president and the founding chairman of the board.^[8] Moon asked Richard L. Rubenstein, a controversial rabbi and college professor who had written on the Holocaust, to join its board of directors.^[9] *The Washington Times* has often been noted for its generally pro-Israel editorial policies.^[10] In 2002, during the 20th anniversary party for the *Times*, Moon said, "The *Washington Times* will become the instrument in spreading the truth about God to the world."^[11]

In 1977 the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, of the United States House of Representatives, found that the South Korean intelligence agency, the KCIA, had used the Unification Church to gain political influence within the United States and that some Unification Church members had worked as volunteers in Congressional offices. Together they founded the Korean Cultural Freedom Foundation, a nonprofit organization which acted as a public diplomacy campaign for the Republic of Korea.^[12] The committee also investigated possible KCIA influence on the Unification Church's campaign in support of Nixon.^[13]

In 1980 church members founded CAUSA International, an anti-communist educational organization based in New York City.^[14] In the 1980s it was active in 21 countries. In the United States it sponsored educational conferences for evangelical and fundamentalist Christian leaders ^[15] as well as seminars and conferences for Senate staffers, Hispanic Americans and conservative activists.^[16] In 1986 it produced the anti-Communist documentary film *Nicaragua Was Our Home*.^[17]

In 1980 church members in Washington, D.C. disrupted a protest rally against the United States military draft.^[18] In 1981 the Appellate Division of New York State Supreme Court ruled that the Unification Church was not entitled to property tax exemptions on its New York City properties since its primary purpose was political, not religious.^[19] In 1982 this ruling was overturned by the New York State Supreme Court itself, which ruled that the church should be considered a religious organization for tax purposes.^[20]

In 1983 some American church members joined a public protest against the Soviet Union over its shooting down of Korean Airlines Flight 007.^[21] In 1984 the church founded the Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy, a Washington D.C. think tank that underwrites conservative-oriented research and seminars at Stanford University, the University of Chicago, and other institutions.^[22] In the same year, church member Dan Fefferman founded the International Coalition for Religious Freedom in Virginia, which is active in protesting what it considers to be threats to religious freedom by governmental agencies.^[23]

In August 1985, seven years before the fall of Soviet Union, the Professors World Peace Academy, an organization founded by Moon, sponsored a conference in Geneva to debate the theme "The situation in the world after the fall of the communist empire."^[24] In 1986 CAUSA International, a church supported anti-communist organization, sponsored the documentary film *Nicaragua Was Our Home* about the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua and their persecution at the hands of the Nicaraguan government. It was filmed and produced by church member Lee Shapiro, who later died while filming with anti-Soviet forces during the Soviet war in Afghanistan.^{[25][26][27][28]}

Post Soviet era

In April 1990, Moon visited the Soviet Union and met with President Mikhail Gorbachev. Moon expressed support for the political and economic transformations under way in the Soviet Union. At the same time the Unification Church was expanding into formerly communist nations.^[29] In 1991, he met with Kim Il Sung, the North Korean President, to discuss ways to achieve peace on the Korean peninsula, as well as on

international relations, tourism, etc.^[30] In 1994, Moon was officially invited to the funeral of Kim Il Sung, in spite of the absence of diplomatic relations between North Korea and South Korea.^[31]

In 1994 the *New York Times*, in a review of a PBS *Frontline* documentary on the Unification Church, said that, "outside investigators and onetime insiders ... give a picture of a theocratic powerhouse that is pouring foreign fortunes into conservative causes in the United States."^[32] In 1998 the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* criticized Moon's "ultra-right leanings" and suggested a personal relationship with conservative Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.^[33]

In 1995, the former U.S. President George H. W. Bush and his wife, Barbara Bush, spoke at a Unification Church event in the sold-out 50,000-seat Tokyo Dome. Tickets ranged from \$80 to \$120.^[34] "If as president I could have done one thing to have helped the country more," Mr. Bush told the gathering, "it would have been to do a better job in finding a way, either through speaking out or through raising a moral standard, to strengthen the American family."^[35] Hak Ja Han, the main speaker, credited her husband with bringing about Communism's fall and declared that he must save America from "the destruction of the family and moral decay."^[36]

In 2000 Moon founded the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO), which describes itself as "a global organization whose mission is to serve its member organizations, strengthen and encourage the non-governmental sector as a whole, increase public understanding of the non-governmental community, and provide the mechanism and support needed for NGOs to connect, partner, and multiply their contributions to solve humanity's basic problems." However it has been criticized for promoting conservatism in contrast to some of the ideals of the United Nations.^{[37][38][39]}

In 2003, Korean Unification Church members started a political party in South Korea. It was named "The Party for God, Peace, Unification, and Home." In an inauguration declaration, the new party said it would focus on preparing for the reunification of the South and North Korea by educating the public about God and peace. A church official said that similar political parties would be started in Japan and the United States.^[40]

Moon was a member of the Honorary Committee of the Unification Ministry of the Republic of Korea.^[41] The church member Jae-jung Lee had been once a unification minister of the Republic of Korea.^[42] Another, Ek Nath Dhakal, is a member of the Nepalese Constituent Assembly,^[43] and a first Minister for Co-operatives and Poverty Alleviation Ministry of the Government of Nepal.^[44]

In 2012, December 19, the candidate Park Geun-hye, with the support of the Unification Church, became the first female President of South Korea.^[45]

Commentary

Michelle Goldberg: "Like most Americans, Wineburg had been unaware of the power Moon holds in our nation's politics. The reverend, who once served eleven months in prison for income tax fraud, is best known for marrying thousands of strangers in mass weddings. Those events earned him a public reputation as a spectacle-mad eccentric, but that obscures his role as a significant D.C. power broker. In fact, Moon is an important patron of the Republican party and of the conservative movement."^[46]

Robert Parry: "Over the past quarter century, South Korean theocrat Sun Myung Moon has been one of the Bush family's major benefactors – both politically and financially."^[47]

Richard Rubenstein: "I especially appreciated Rev. Moon's commitment to the fight against Communism. From his own first-hand, personal experience and out of his religious convictions, he understood how tragic

a political and social blight that movement had been. I had been in East and West Berlin the week the Berlin Wall was erected in August 1961 and had visited communist Poland in 1965. Unfortunately, many of my liberal academic colleagues did not understand the full nature of the threat as did Rev. Moon. I was impressed with the sophistication of Rev. Moon's anti-communism. He understood communism's evil, but he also stood ready to meet with communist leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Kim Il Sung in the hope of changing or moderating their views."^[48]

Thomas Ward: "With the Cold War's conclusion, a rush began amongst scholars, analysts, and pundits to identify the key personalities and factors that contributed to the Soviet Empire's collapse. Competing theories abounded, with key roles being assigned to Ronald Reagan, John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, Norman Podhoretz, Alexander Solzhenitzyn and Sidney Hook, as well as to freedom fighters, refuseniks and populist movements such as Solidarity. In their interpretation of various events, some scholars opted to depersonalize the process, crediting the fall of the Soviet Union to phenomena such as evolving patterns of economic development and the information revolution. Among the contributions to the postmortem literature is Richard Gid Powers' *Not Without Honor* (1995), which professed to be "The History of American Anticommunism." Powers' 554-page opus of names and organizations omits all of the American entities associated with Reverend Moon, and denies them any role in rolling back communism in the 1970s and 80s. In the 672 pages of *On the Brink: The Dramatic Behind the Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women who Won the Cold War* (1996), Jay Winik records a brief mention of one Moon-related organization, The Washington Times, but only in noting its early reporting on the unfolding story of Iran Contra. Accounts by Brian Crozier, Adam Ulam, Bob Woodward, and Jack Matlock, US Ambassador to the Soviet Union under President Reagan, also make no mention of Moon's efforts. Intentionally or not, Reverend Moon has been expunged from the record in spite of the adverse, critical coverage his activities received in the mainstream and alternative media when anticommunism was viewed with disdain."^[49]

See also

- Unification Church and North Korea
- List of Unification Church affiliated organizations
- List of supporters of the Unification Church
- Unification Church of the United States

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External links

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