

DOCUMENTATION AND FEATURE SERVICE

## "A Picture of Japanese Students"

by G. Naidenoff



There are no illiterates in Japan. The birthrate is high there. There are many young people. They disappear into the maelstrom of the schools and from there, into the universities.

A university education is the highest goal since it is considered the necessary preamble to a lucrative or interesting career.

The universities have been remodeled on the American plan and engage in every discipline, including those of Technical Colleges.

Both young men and women students avidly follow the sciences, but also seek "a style" of living, the confrontation of East and West, the commencement of a social community and every other experience which can give them a provisional answer to the problems which broke their elders.

Western thinkers, Marxist prophets, the existentialists, American pragmatists and scientists, French literary figures and artists and their films forbidden to those under 16 years, Hollywood movies, sensational journalism, the austerity of Chinese Communism, the Russian mirage, the easy life of the Westerner form currents which mingle as the background of a life of necessity, hunger, instability, of restricted professional horizons but which have no outlet or artery to the traditional religions nor, above all, to the recent heroic past.

Contemporary Japan and its youth demand a little opium and escape from the countryside, the cinema, and magazines but they are pessimistic and sad, not knowing to which ideal they should vow themselves. The majority believe in nothing, state their agnosticism, even their atheism. The weakest youth allow themselves to be carried away by pleasures and fun. The ravages of birth control are not only due to the worry of overpopulation but also, as in other countries, to the disastrous results of moral licence.

However the traditional virtues of this sound people have not been smothered. Far from it. The solid pillar of the family, the exquisite discretion and modesty of the woman, the man's sense of the social hierarchy are not banished and flourish continuously.

An officer, a prisoner in Russia, wrote to his daughter, "The only thing I want for you is that you can follow your vocation, that you become a perfect Japanese woman, and that you work for the good of the country. Yes, work hard... Our country is suffering. There are those who have become pessimists and lost their faith in Japan. Also I want you, from now on, to bend all your energies to becoming more perfect and stronger in order to help others... Don't worry about me. I will always believe in you."

The woman is always attentive to such male advice, especially if, as in this case, the young student is a Christian. She had asked her pagan

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father's permission to enter the convent of the Religious of the Sacred Heart. This was her father's reply and he added, "I see that your determination is so strong that nothing can change it. And for someone who has chosen a religious life, I understand perfectly that it must be this way... For myself, I do not regret having given myself to my country."

For these reasons, the tiny Catholic community in Japan can influence, far beyond its capacity, a highly moral population who are shaken but not overcome by post-war events. What are the 200,000 Catholics among the 90 million Japanese? Statistically, they are nothing. But their role is important as the leaven in the dough. Their position on family ethics, on political society, and the meaning of life finds echo in the deep Japanese soul as a welcome, and more powerful, light on something already acknowledged. Even the most cynical intellectuals guard a nostalgia for society's lost equilibrium and are deeply impressed by those who preach purity.

Catholics are the witnesses of Christ in the present and the future, through their lives and their principles. They are heard. They direct five universities with a student population of about 5000, the majority being at Sophia University, a Jesuit institution in Tokyo. After the war, another university was opened by the Divine Word (SVD) fathers in Nagoya, and two women's universities - the only ones in Japan - are directed by the Religious of the Sacred Heart.

In 1954, there was a flood of half-a-million candidates of whom only 125,000 were admitted to higher studies. There are 226 universities caring for 447,000 men and women students in addition to 65,000 students in university colleges. The grand total shows 512,000 students under the care of 49,800 professors. This is a prodigious number, especially when we recall that the level of Japanese university study equals that of any Western institution.

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DOCUMENTATION AND FEATURE SERVICE"The Human Situation in South Africa"

by C. Gardner



It is not surprising that the whole world has become interested in South Africa, for in that country many of the big conflicts of our times are caught in a nutshell. Most countries, especially the Western ones, have not realised that the tensions which are gripping South Africa may soon come upon them. Yet we must at the same time see the South African situation in its uniqueness.

The Dutch settlers who came to the Cape of Good Hope in the middle of the seventeenth century were, on the whole, aiming simply at what they could gain for themselves and for the Dutch East India Company. As they spread further and further into the country they came into contact with an increasing number of the dark-skinned Africans who had a primitive technology and a culture quite different from their own. Many battles were fought between white and black, and the former got the upper hand; but as they felt themselves superior to the Africans, and as they were a minority (and therefore afraid), they were unable to exercise a generous and creative leadership. There was little love or understanding. Meanwhile another colonising force, the British, had come to the Cape, and it proceeded to make its over-confident "Generosity" felt throughout the country. The Dutch themselves became an "underdog" nation; and the British who now joined in the task of developing the country treated the Africans in roughly the same way as the Dutch had done. The conflict between the Dutch and the British flared up in the South African War (1899-1902); the ill-feeling continues, and it has only been whipped up by recent developments. From this background has come the present tense racial situation: three groups of people, each having very little sympathy for the other two.

We must beware of judging or blaming. The European colonizers would perhaps have had to be saints to have acted differently; and even if they are much to blame, the fault lies in an unfortunate arrogance which has often come to be associated with the Western culture and way-of-life. It is our job to correct this at once; we have to be grateful for the wider knowledge and wider sympathies we are able to have.

The present situation: three groups of people, each having very little sympathy for the other two. There are the "non-Europeans" (Africans, Coloureds - of mixed blood - and Indians). They make up over 80% of the population and they have suffered most. They have not been allowed to enter into their responsibilities within the community, and they have had to endure the humiliation of race prejudice. It is the educated men and women who have been most cramped; there has been comparatively little bodily brutality. Now, however, by the restrictions of the Bantu Education Act which provides for the educating of the coloured peoples "along their own lines," the government in power has tried even to make the existence of an educated African class impossible.

Then there are the two European peoples. The Africans - the descendants of the Dutch settlers - form the larger group; it is their Nationalist government which is now in power. This vigorous people is at present exhibiting

its vitality and its rich culture; but unfortunately its force is, as we have seen, dominant rather than creative. The Afrikaners are afraid, their sympathies have been narrowed; often they have even allowed their Christianity to become an instrument for oppressing the "non-Europeans." Yet the white man's fear has to be understood and sympathetically. The English-speaking South Africans, the other group, have on the whole tended to be avaricious, complacent and otherwise inactive. They were shaken into serious thought about South Africa for almost the first time in 1948 when the Afrikaner Nationalist government came into power. They have been the most bewildered of the three groups. And perhaps they have been (although they are not aware of it) the least honest: for example, they have recently opposed the Afrikaner movement to keep the coloured peoples permanently suppressed, but most of them are secretly content with the legislation. Indeed it must be obvious that the whole complex situation is fraught with subconscious dishonesties. But the dark-skinned people have, for the most part, been forced to be honest.

But there is always hope. The seeds of it are there in South Africa. There have always been members of the Coloured races who have not only (like all their brethren) clamoured against the whites but have also sought, as far as they could, to understand and to educate them. There have always been whites who have been aware of the bad trends and have fought against them. And there have been - and there are - the missionaries, although they have often fallen into some of the usual European errors. Today there are many of the coloured peoples and a very small but fairly strong minority of whites who are trying to understand their fellowmen and to spread sympathy and awareness and thus to forge a valid way-of-life for the whole of South Africa. The Catholic Church and most of the other churches (but by no means all of their white members) are standing out against the Bantu Education Act and apartheid. There is dedication and creative thought within the coloured peoples' political movements and in the new liberal party (yet the new growth cannot come from simply political action), and also for example, amongst many students of all races.

There is good hope in the African peoples who are, in spite of everything, beginning to realise themselves. There is hope, too, in the embittered people of all colours, for the very ignorance and lack of understanding mean that knowledge and wisdom and love can come and can work the spiritual and mental revolution which South Africa needs.

Now the situation is coming towards a crisis. This means that people can become more harsh and more prejudiced. But at the same time, paradoxically, people - especially the whites - are being made to think; they are becoming astonished. Subconscious motives are flowing to the surface; things are being spoken on the house-tops.

It is this moment that Christian and all men of goodwill must seize upon. South Africa is perhaps approaching the point at which it will be made or ruined. If the different peoples can come to work together, this perfecting on the natural level will be not only a prelude to, but a part of Christ's establishment of his reign.