

STUDENT AND STATE IN IMPERIAL JAPAN

In Japan, as yet, little emphasis is placed on higher education for women. But for men who are capable the demand is increasing so rapidly that there are not enough institutions to go around. For this reason, students are constantly faced with severe competitive examinations. Education is compulsory through six years of primary school. To continue in the middle school, the student takes an entrance examination. If he succeeds he is among the fortunate few. Often from more than 2,000 applicants only 150 are picked. This process is repeated in the higher schools and again in the university. The obvious result is that only the cream of the nation's youth ever get near the door of a college.

Democracy of a type is demonstrated here. There is no favoritism. Wealth and family prestige mean nothing. Merit is the only basis for entrance.

As in most states with totalitarian aims, all phases of education are directly under government control. The government wants men of high attainment who have demonstrated their ability to obey orders. There is no place for original

thinking and academic freedom. The curriculum is carefully inspected. Textbooks must be selected from an approved list. The social sciences are particularly under government scrutiny. History is taught from only patriotic angles.

Universities have long been recognized centers of unrest and the breeding ground for what the government styles "dangerous thoughts." Socialism and communism have found ready acceptance among a certain class of students. To cope with these problems the government has adopted methods of censorship and patriotic propaganda.

Several years ago two of my students were arrested for communistic agitation. The faculty was put on the spot, and to exonerate ourselves we had to submit all our examination questions to the school authorities, who passed them on to the Minister of Education in Tokyo for further inspection. The day after the arrests were made, some 15 military officers politely asked if they might attend my lecture. They stood at attention for one hour, understanding little, for the lecture was in English.

This miniature army was in my classroom to impress all of us that the government would tolerate no more radical thought from either student or teacher. Of course, beneath all this pomp and circumstance a secret investigation was being conducted. After two weeks of hushed activity it was discovered that these wicked thoughts were leaking into the university through the kitchen. The cook turned out to be the culprit. This might not have been discovered if the cook had not become over-ambitious and shot the vice-president of the university in the leg to impress upon him the injustice of the arrest of the two students.

Despite this rigid supervision, the student wields power that is greatly feared. In his strikes and mob demonstrations he is able to bring before the public gaze certain issues, grievances, and radical ideas. By boycotting the classes of an unpopular instructor, or threatening a strike, the students may bring so much pressure to bear on the authorities that they are forced to replace the professor. At Waseda University, not long ago, a strike was precipitated by the charge that several teachers were dishonestly issuing passes to the baseball games.

The greatest strike in academic history broke out in

1933. It was precipitated by the dismissal of Doctor Takikawa, professor of politics in the Imperial Law School, for political unorthodoxy. The students demanded his reinstatement, and went on strike when the Minister of Education remained adamant. A few days later 6,000 students in the Tokyo Imperial University, 400 miles away, staged a sympathetic strike. A series of incidents precipitated pitched battles between the students and the police. Many students were arrested. The strike was given wide publicity. At length, when public opinion began to side definitely with the students, a strict censorship was clamped on the press, and the students were ordered to resume their work in the name of the Emperor. The united force of throne and government was behind the ultimatum. Rebellion against the Emperor was farther than even the hottest heads would go. School was resumed. Professor Takikawa was out and his career ruined.

This incident showed the government that it must tighten its hold on the Empire's youth. The result has been greater restrictions and an increase of national propaganda. Within the recent year the latter has centered around religion. A vigorous campaign is being waged to call the students back to the

worship and exaltation of their heroic ancestors, who lived only for national honor and glory. As a part of this religious revival the Emperor has been granting his portrait to private and Christian institutions which do not come directly under government supervision. This seems innocent enough, but the gracious grant carries with it certain commands. The picture must be housed in a specially-built vault-like shrine, and a 24-hour watch maintained over it so that in case of fire or earthquake the picture can be saved. On special occasions the picture is placed behind heavy curtains in the school auditorium and students and faculty must bow in worship and reverent adoration to the omniscient spirit of the God-Emperor.

In Japanese Christian circles there is an uneasy feeling that, following the bringing of Christian schools within the scope of the national religion via the

picture method, individual churches may come next. There is no way to reject the gift of the Emperor's portrait. To do so would only mean arrest on a charge of lese majesty.

The true patriot must accept the Emperor as the supreme object of his devotion and be ready to fight and die for him. Any philosophy, religion, or school that does not emphasize this fundamental concept is not wanted in the Japanese Empire.

And so the graduates who pour out of the universities today are highly trained instruments of national policy— young men who believe in Japan's manifest destiny, who are rallying under the slogan: "The flag of great Japan will wave above all the world." The few who rebel quickly disappear. There must be but one deity, the Emperor; one authority, the government; and one destiny, world domination.—*Paul E. Eckel, in Education.*

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Thespian

THE class in public speaking was to give pantomimes that afternoon. One freshman got up when called on, went to the platform and stood perfectly still.

"Well," said the Professor after a minute's wait for something to happen. "What do you represent?"

"I'm imitating a man going up in an elevator," was the quick response.—*Grit (Sydney, Australia).*