

# Chicago College Students in Rome

By JAMES O. O'NEILL  
Rome — (NC) — A unique and far-reaching experiment in American education is being conducted in Rome, where some 200 American college students are getting an education both inside and outside the classroom.

The center is the brainchild of the mild-mannered Maltese, the history of art and began conducting European students from all parts of the U.S. There are 95 girls and 101 boys.

Students have to know what the center schedules classes from Monday through Thursday only. The last three days of the week are left for touring. While it sounds easy to have only a four-day class week, it is not, since classes often run as late as 10:40 p.m. to keep up with standard hours of instruction, Father Felice said.

The great thing is to watch them grow, to see them become independent, curious and open to new things. Probably not 90% of the students who come here have gone into a museum or attended a concert except when taken by a teacher. Now they arrange their own plans, arrange their own tours. They are off to Pompeii or to Florence or climbing around the Roman Forum and going in groups to the opera because they are aware of the limited time to take advantage of the opportunity that has been given them.

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**NEW OFFICERS of the Mothers Club of St. Francis School, Auburn, were installed at a dinner meeting held in the school hall, from left Mrs. Vincent Paris, retiring president; Mother St. Rose, R.N.M., superior and principal of St. Francis School, club moderator; Mrs. Vito Tosti, president; Mrs. Armand Farto, treasurer; Mrs. Joseph Dalola, vice president; Mrs. Robert Remaley, secretary; Mrs. John Helinski, corresponding secretary.**

## Fanatic Sect Gains in Japan

(The following is the second of a series of three articles examining a postwar religious-political sect in Japan, whose phenomenal growth is threatening both Christianity and democracy there.)

By FATHER A. W. BRYSON, M.S.C.

Tokyo — (NC) — Sokagakai, Japan's fanatical anti-Christian politico-religious group, claims it is descended from a 13th-century Buddhist sect and calls itself "True Buddhism."

But the extreme nationalist organization, whose rapid growth and aggressiveness have made it an important political power, actually stems from a nonreligious study group founded in the 1890s and has been repudiated by the nation's traditional Buddhists.

Strongly materialistic, it promises members health, wealth and happiness, and appeals mainly to the poor. It is organized on military lines, has a cell system similar to communism, and carries on an intense propaganda campaign against all other religions, which its members must regard as enemies.

To gain converts and power — it now claims the adherence of 10 per cent of Japan's people — it has used threats and violence. Although it has largely abandoned the use of violence, Japanese religious and political leaders continue to express alarm at its increasing growth.

Although it is still an infant compared with the ruling Liberal-Democratic party and the second place Socialists, the established political parties resent a group that claims to be a religion but has used what some critics have called Nazi-like methods to elect members to the national legislature and fifty local government posts. They fear a sect that turns each convert into a guaranteed vote.

Religious leaders deplore its use of religion for political ends, and the Christian and Shinto sects have formed an association to oppose it.

Sokagakai, or Creative Value Society, had its beginnings in the prewar era as the Soka Kyokai Gakkai or Value Education Society, which was devoted to economic studies. The

prewar society's value system has been taken over by the new sect and is based, it says, on "benefit, virtue and beauty." Money is value, it states, endowing men with virtue, beauty and power.

The prewar society was founded by Teinosaburo Maekawa in collaboration with Hasei Toda on Nov. 18, 1930. Both men were then grammar school teachers in Tokyo. Its initial membership was 62, growing to 3,000 members by 1942.

Its religious coloration became evident only in 1936, when membership was restricted to the followers of Nichiren Daishonin, who founded a sect in the 13th century that claimed to be the true form of Buddhism. Following this restriction of membership, Sokagakai followers had to denounce as evil all other religions, including state-supported Shinto. It can save Japan. Unless you discard your heretical faith, the nation will come to ruin." This led to its suppression during World War II.

Referring to this teaching, the sect's English-language publication, the Soka News, stated recently, "The government ignored their (Maekawa and Toda) warning and as a result Japan was completely defeated, as prophesied. We must not repeat such a miserable experience."

Sokagakai's continued intolerance toward other religions resulted after the war in the arrest of Maekawa, Toda and a large number of the sect's leaders on charges of blasphemy. Maekawa died in prison last year, he was jailed (1948), having lost all his followers but Toda.

Maekawa's death spurred Toda to devote his years in jail to a study of Nichiren's doctrines and he saw the practical possibility of an amalgam of Nichiren's politico-religious emphasis and the value theory of the Soka Kyokai Gakkai. On his release from prison, Toda began rebuilding the old society and renamed it Sokagakai.

Until 1951, Toda concentrated on organization. He set up the society on a military basis with military ranks, thus ensuring strict discipline. Then he

began a nationwide campaign to win over the poor and unemployed, partly by his famous technique of "kegi" (persuasion by changing form), which in practice often took the form of threats and even physical violence.

Sokagakai also began its work among union members, teachers and students, and its youth corps with disciplined male and female divisions who made the spearhead of the sect's political and propaganda efforts.

Sokagakai's first success in the political field came with the election of 31 of its members to the local assembly elections in 1948.

Stepped-up political activity resulted in the election of three of its members to the House of Councillors, upper chamber of the national legislature, in 1956.

It campaigned so successfully that in the spring of 1959 six more members were elected to the upper house and 700 were voted into local assemblies. Three years later, in 1962, 15 Sokagakai members were elected to the House of Councillors, making it the third largest party in the body.

Sokagakai's fast rise has deeply concerned Japan's religious leaders, and orthodox Buddhists have been particularly outspoken in their opposition to the sect. Daishon Suzuki, noted Zen-Buddhist scholar, declared:

"If Sokagakai, a so-called 'True Buddhism,' practices intolerance — and it does — it cannot be true Buddhism, because Buddhism is the continuous striving toward absolute love and a higher wisdom. There is no room for intolerance and aggressiveness. When Sokagakai people claim there is the only religion with value, they contradict the basic tenets of Buddhism. Sokagakai is not Buddhism at all."

Dr. Shobun Kubota, vice president of Risho University, said:

"The principle of Buddhism is to restrain man's desires, such as sex, hunger, wealth and fame. But Sokagakai promises the possession of these desires. It uses man's weaknesses as a tool for its own expansion. It has the same characteristics as nazism. Finally, it is a corruption of Buddhism."

A Million Laity — Baird, Mass. — (NC) — More than four million laity are promoting the Family Communion Crusade, were distributed during 1963 by Blessed Sacrament Fathers from their novitiate base.

## Christians Fear Moslem Pressure

Beirut — (NC) — Christian communities in the predominantly Moslem nations belonging to the Arab League are gravely worried about a Charter of Arab Cultural Unity approved by the league's council, its top executive body.

Church leaders in the Middle East have pointed out that the charter makes no provision for freedom of religion or thought, and to aim more at Moslem unity than at Christian unity, and is strongly influenced by politics.

They add that the charter endangers Catholic schools and they accuse it of totalitarian aims since it seeks to bring all schools in Arab League countries into one single regimented educational system.

The charter was first approved by a majority of the ministers of education of league countries at a meeting in Baghdad, Iraq, on Feb. 29. Also approved at that time was the establishment of an Arab organization similar to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Both proposals were submitted to the league council for ratification.

During a meeting in Cairo, the council approved the charter and the proposed Arab UNESCO. But so steps have yet been taken to put them into effect because several league members — Lebanon, Morocco and Saudi Arabia — asked for modifications of the charter, which are now being studied.

Among league members, most concern about the charter is felt here in Lebanon, the only Arab country without a Moslem majority, although even here Moslems make up close to 50 per cent of the population. At the Baghdad meeting, the Lebanese delegate, Edouard Bonein, a Christian, voiced reservations about the charter, saying it seemed to him to be incompatible with the sovereignty of individual league members.

For too many years our bishops have stood squarely behind the movement for equality, but the adult laity has failed to follow their leadership to any significant degree," the Newman Club said, urging the national congress of the National Newman Club Federation to "take positive action in support of the civil rights issue facing the Catholic citizens of the United States" when it meets in Milwaukee August 30-Sept. 6.

## Little Island's New Church

Hellsgard — (NC) — The 190 Catholics of this North Sea island of 130 acres will soon have their first church building since World War II when the old one was bombed by the British. Property has been purchased and hope given for a permanent pastor.

## Laity Lag On Race Justice

Providence — (RNS) — Brown University's Newman Club has accused the Rhode Island branches of the Knights of Columbus, the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Council of Catholic Women of "not" exercising their leadership, which their position in the Church demands of them in the civil rights issue.

"Although it is 60 per cent Catholic, the State of Rhode Island has continually rejected the fair housing bill supported by their clergy," the Catholic students declared in a letter to Julius C. Gilbertson, president of the National Newman Club Federation, Washington, D.C.

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