

■ A British member of parliament reports on a journey with his wife to talk to students in European universities.

HEIRS TO THE NEW EUROPE

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No generation ever had such a tantalising future as that which is now passing through the universities of Europe. They are the first which can reasonably hope to live their lives without fighting a major war; they have the prospect of repairing the failure of the generation now ruling them and of building the first truly European community. At the same time they must enter an ideological struggle which has divided the whole world and threatens them with annihilation. The young men and women who throng the lecture halls from Berlin to Naples in numbers which overwhelm their instructors have the destiny of Europe and of the Western world in their hands.

My wife and I visited universities in France, Italy and Germany to try to find out

what these students feel and think. Everywhere we were struck with the apparent well-being, the good manners and, above all, the appearance of the young people. Beatniks seemed non-existent; no black stockings, no long hair or dirty fingernails.

But the students of France, whom one might have expected to aspire to European leadership in view of the attitude of their President, are the least interested. Although almost all of them are critical of General de Gaulle and, even when avowed Roman Catholics, tend to be Socialist, they have unconsciously absorbed the General's propaganda and are obsessed with the future, not of Europe, but of France.

There could scarcely be a more romantic setting for a university than the old once-

Roman city of Aix, which seems to grow out of the woods and hills and vineyards of Provence. The university buildings themselves are new and oppressively ugly; but once the lectures are over the students leave them in droves and head for the broad Avenue de Mirabeau.

It is there, in the cafes on the side-walks, in sunshine dappled by the plane trees overhead, that the real life of the university goes on. Occasionally you hear English or German voices, for among the 11,000 students 800 come from abroad — 300 of them belonging to an American Foundation. But most of the groups drinking coffee or "coke" were dark-complected and some, whose parents had recently come over from Algiers, were almost Arab in appearance.

The students were delightfully easy to talk to. None of the French students spoke English or any second language; few had been abroad or wanted to travel except to Africa; none would have voted for General de Gaulle. He was "old-fashioned," "a man of another century."

Yet although they would discuss at length who and what should come after him, in the same breath they would echo the General's "regret" that Britain's terms for entry into the Common Market had been too harsh. The government-controlled radio and television services had done their work.

The chief faculties at Aix are Letters and Law, and the usual student ambition is to become a civil servant or to practise law or medicine in a French city. It was the advantages or disadvantages of living in a particular part of France and not the possibility of living elsewhere that interested them. Those studying economics saw some point in the Common Market from France's point of view, but the idea of Europe as a Community had become quite unreal.

It somehow seemed right that the section of the University of France which is established at Grenoble should possess a nuclear reactor and be renowned for its faculty of science. There is nothing of the softness of Provence here; instead, the towering Alps hem in the university

so that the eye is inevitably carried upwards towards the space which the physicists are probing.

The Dean of the scientific faculty, who gave us lunch in the nineteenth-century chateau which the State has converted into a club for its employees, was a celebrated young professor who at once claimed to be living an international life; he admitted, however, that this was an eccentricity confined mainly to scientists. But unlike most professors on the Continent, he knew some of the students personally and offered to introduce us to them. "But I warn you," he said as we parted, "that if you criticize Karl Marx you will get nothing out of them."

Student life at Grenoble seemed more of a struggle than at Aix. Within a few minutes of talking to any group of students we found ourselves discussing the cost of living and the difficulty of paying for board, lodging and books on an allowance of less than £300 a year.

And the professor was right. As at most French universities the number of women students outnumber-

ed men, and a charming girl with a crucifix round her neck told us although she and her closest friends still went to church, they were all "true Socialists." Guy Mollet, the moderate leader of the French Socialist Party, was as much an object of derision as de Gaulle. In Grenoble we found definite hostility to the Common Market.

The only student organization of any kind was the Socialists' Student Union, and the president, a girl with fine brown eyes who was planning to be a teacher, poured scorn on the whole European idea. She admitted grudgingly that it might have raised the standard of living a little, but because it had at the same time strengthened the "capitalist-monopolists" it was not in the interests of France.

"Let us socialize France first," she said. "We can then think about Europe later."

And although in Paris we found sons and daughters of business men who took the opposite view, the interest in the Common Market was also purely economic. The

idea of a political union of Western Europe which M. Monnet and M. Schumann were advocating with such passion ten years ago, seems not to have touched these young people at all.

In Paris also we met the one undergraduate — he planned to become a banker — who was actively hostile. He was guarded in his replies to us, and afterwards the Frenchwoman who had introduced him told us that he said to her, "How can I talk frankly to those English people when everyone knows that England is our enemy and only wants to wreck all our plans?"

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We had not been long in Milan before we realized that the Alps have now taken the place of the English Channel. In political terms, crossing from France into Italy is to go from an island on to the mainland. Already 2,500 of the 14,000 students at Milan University are learning English, and their interest in other countries — particularly Germany — is almost greater than in Italy itself.

Whether the students were

the sons of famous Italian families or young men and women whose parents had recently migrated from the south, Europe seemed their one great hope. The idea of Europe — not de Gaulle's Europe of nations but a strong federal Europe with a parliament directly elected by the people — is the answer not only to their dreams but to their domestic problems as well.

For Catholics the European Community is the best defence against Communism and the only cure for the unemployment which is still visible everywhere from Naples to Sicily. The Common Market is the beginning, not the fulfillment, of Italy's miracle; if prosperity is to spread downwards and the poverty of the South which has seemed eternal is really to disappear, then the Common Market itself must be expanded. Even the leaders of Italian Communism have deviated from the Moscow line far enough to recognize that Italy has benefited from the Treaty of Rome, and the young Communists are straying farther than their leaders.

The famous Pedrocchi cafe in Padua, where the hole made by the Austrian bullet which killed an Italian student in 1866 is framed in the wall, is still the meeting place for the students of Europe's second oldest university. As we sat talking to two or three, more and more drifted into the famous "White Room" until our circle must have numbered twenty.

They explained, in a mixture of German, French and English, that to them the new Europe was the natural extension of the *Risorgimento*. Italy had never become one nation; Italians must find their true expression in the European family. The Alps had not been a barrier under Austria; they did not think of them as a barrier now.

Ever since the Common Market has been founded Italians have poured across the Alps, and although they do not assimilate easily with the French or Germans (or with any other of the northern races) they feel passionately that they have a right to work and settle among them.

All this the students echoed and re-echoed, yet every one of this particular group called himself a Communist and talked of the "alienation" of their souls which would take place when they left the university and began to work for a "capitalist-monopolist."

"Our labour is all we have to sell. It should not be bought by any individual," they asserted. However, when I asked how they proposed to effect their revolution they were shocked. "We do not agree with the Russians," they said. "We are sure we can win the co-operation of our people."

Their simple faith in the humanity of the State as an employer was tempered only by their dislike of Rome. They explained to us the virtues of the proposals for "structural reform" which would turn Italy itself into a federation of autonomous provinces, several of which would be Communist controlled.

One young writer complained that only "pornographic books could make money in Italy" and that neither a book nor a poem with-

out a Left-wing slant has much chance of being published: although not a Communist himself, he was prepared to accept a period of Communist rule as a "purge." But a professor pointed out that the authors to whom this young man was objecting could not really be described as pornographic, and the young Communists themselves dismissed the idea that corruption or decadence among the upper classes had anything to do with the increase of a million Communist votes at the last Italian election. Success was due simply to the force of Communist ideas.

Only one of those with whom we talked in Padua — and I took him to be their leader — had parents who were members of the Communist Party. The rest all came from Roman Catholic families, but said that they did not discuss their views at home.

"Our parents simply do not understand and it would be useless to try to make them."

But for all their zeal for Socialism, none of them was looking for a job at the

hands of the State; the majority of the little group in Padua were being trained as engineers and expected jobs in industry where high pay might to some extent compensate them for the indignities of private employment. The only student who intended to try for a job as a member of Professor Hallstein's European civil service was the son of an ancient and wealthy Italian family in Milan.

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The impression that the northern passes of the Alps are less of a barrier than those between France and Italy is not purely subjective; in the most northerly Italian villages German is the common language and the church spires take on a faintly Byzantine look so that each village might have been transplanted from the Danube valley.

In Freiburg, the last university town we were to visit the narrow streets were festooned with branches of birch and the entrance to the thirteenth-century cathedral was paved with patterns of flowers in honour of the Feast of Corpus Christi. It was

too cold to sit in the square, but from seven o'clock, when the service of celebration finished and the bells were quiet, the cafes in the cathedral square filled with students. The young couple who came to our table were engaged to be married, she a physical training instructor, he studying to be a doctor. They longed to talk and we were soon caught up in all the yearnings and anxieties of the new Germany which seem only to increase with prosperity.

The next night the whole of a fraternity, twenty young men living in the same house, came to dine at the invitation of an old friend of ours who had himself been at Freiburg in the 1920s. These fraternities are neither clubs nor colleges, but simply houses, financed largely by past inmates, where students live together and run their own establishment. The twenty young men we met were a fascinating cross-section of modern German life.

Two impressions stood out after conversation lasting into the small hours. These young Germans are already

international in outlook. During the afternoon their host had taken me up to a platform on the mountain above the town and shown me the panorama of the Rhine valley with the mountains of the Vosges in the distance. "When I was a student," he said, "we never went into France. Those lovely mountains were closed to us." Today hundreds of students cross over into France every week-end and of those who came to dinner two had spent a year in the United States, two a year in England, a young woman who had just got her medical degree was soon leaving for Nigeria, and others had plans to work in Africa and the Middle East.

In their outlook on Europe they were not less enthusiastic than the young Italians, but far more practical. In spite of their admiration for President de Gaulle they had no interest in his vision of a Europe of the Nations; but in discussing a truly federal Europe they at once wanted to know just what powers the central government would have, how it would collect its taxes, through what insti-

tutions it would govern and in discussing a truly federal Europe they at once wanted to know how it would organize its civil service. And for the first time we ourselves were plied with questions. Was England really interested in Europe? Were the British afraid of being dragged into a war by Germany as they had been told? Were the British still suspicious of Germany?

As the evening wore on and we became more intimate, we were able to broach the subject of the war, and to ask what they were being taught about Hitler and what they thought of the inter-war years. All spoke nostalgically of the Weimar Republic and blamed its failure upon the Allies and the Treaty of Versailles; about the war itself they knew practically nothing.

Yet we learned from each student that Hitler was the great dividing line between them and their parents. For it seemed that each, at some time, had come to ask his parents the same question: how was it that they had allowed Hitler to do the things that he did. And although

they told us that their parents had tried to explain the power of the Gestapo and the psychological effect of terror, they had plainly been unable to exonerate themselves in the eyes of their children.

As we drove slowly across France to Brussels, sorting out our ideas, we could not help feeling deeply depressed. The dynamic has gone out of Europe. The vision which Sir Winston Churchill resuscitated in 1945 of the world's most talented peoples joining together to rekindle the flame of Western civilization, in alliance with, but not dependent upon, the United States — in opposition to Communism but also in the hope of being a catalyst which would bring understanding with the Communist world — is dying.

For all the enthusiasm of the young Italians and Germans, one could not feel that they alone would be able to revive it. We had been astonished to learn that however politically-minded they might be, no student in any of the three countries we had visited belonged as a full member to a political party.

These young people will not join the parties because they despise the politicians who lead them.

We realized, as we reflected, that not one student had proclaimed his intention of entering political life, and at Freiburg the young Germans had confessed that however strongly they held their views, they knew they would not have the slightest effect.

In Brussels the Community's liaison officer with universities and youth movements within the Common Market countries reflected our anxiety. He was relieved to know that we had found any interest in Europe at all. He said that few of the youth organizations still took Europe seriously; the young farmers in particular, and notably the French, were doing excellent work thrashing out in detail the harmonization of the price and support systems of their respective countries.

But when I suggested that all these youth officials would form the cadres of the new European community and would finally realize the European idea, he could do

no more than hope that I might be right.

Neither he nor any other politician or professor with whom we had talked could see any end to the pause in the evolution of Europe which General de Gaulle's rejection of Britain has brought about. And if the dilution of the Europe idea is to be prevented, if the enthusiasm of all the young Europeans outside France is to be harnessed before it evaporates, if the radicalism of the young French is to be given any other expression than a Socialism which would ally itself naturally with the Communists, then a new inspiration must be found.

As a French professor said to us, "It is useless preaching anti-Communism. Unless the philosophy of the individual can be vividly reclothed, liberalism in Europe will die." To the Continental liberal Britain is still the supreme example of that philosophy, and it is from Britain that the inspiration must come.

What hope is there that we can fulfill this role? To

do so we need to be bold. We need to speak in Europe, unflinchingly, of our political beliefs. We need to oppose at home and abroad all trends towards personal governments. We must take the

initiative in forming new and responsible political institutions in Europe; and we must *propose* a form of federal government and define its power. — *The London Times*, July 28, 1963.

THE WANT OF HAPPINESS

The more perfect civilization is, the less occasion has it for government, because the more it does regulate its own affairs, and govern itself; but so contrary is the practice of old governments to the reason of the case, that the expenses of them increase in the proportion they ought to diminish. x x x But how often is the natural propensity of society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of the government! When the latter, instead of being ingrafted on the principles of the former, assumes to exist for itself, and acts by partialities of favour and oppression, it becomes the cause of the mischiefs it ought it prevent. x x x Whatever the apparent cause of any riots may be, the real one is always want of happiness. It shows that something is wrong in the system of government that injures the felicity by which society is to be preserved. — *Thomas Paine*.