Junior Chamber Arrives

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IN SHARP CONTRAST to the so-called "international friendship" meetings which the Soviets and their satellites stage periodically in a thinly-disguised effort to woo nations outside their orbit, was the recent Day of International Understanding sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce in the northern Hessian city of Fulda.

Members of junior chambers of commerce in several German cities participated in the Fulda program, part of a simultaneous worldwide effort for the promotion of international understanding initiated by the Junior Chamber International (JCI) in 35 countries of the free world. The West German Junior Chamber was received into full membership in the JCI at the World Congress in Manila, capital of the Philippines, last year.

The success of the Fulda meeting from an attendance standpoint and the seriousness of purpose evidenced during the main speaking program and the discussions which followed are noteworthy for this reason: members of the West German Junior Chambers of Commerce are men and women from 28 to 40 years of age who, when they were growing up, came under the influence of the Nazi ideology. It is a heartening sign, in Germany's new democratic society, that this group—Hitler's particular targets in a ruthless campaign to reshape the thinking of an entire people—has rejected the class struggle and the "isms" of a totalitarian philosophy to contribute its joint efforts to promoting the democratic way of life.

Their recently manifested desire to go beyond Germany's borders to plead for the ideal of world peace is further convincing evidence of their conversion to belief in the brotherhood of men and of nations.

GATHERING IN FULDA'S US Information Center—decorated for the occasion with the flags of many countries lent by consulates in Frankfurt—the junior Chamber of Commerce delegates opened their session early in order to take in a well-rounded program touching on several aspects of international understanding.

The program was opened by Guenter Preusker, vice president of the West German organization, who spoke on the significance and purposes of the JCI and its interest in world peace, and by Mayor Cuno Heinrich Raabe of Fulda, who emphasized international friendship.

Speakers of other nationalities also addressed the meeting. They included Alfred Boerner, American radio commentator, who spoke on "Our Path to World Understanding;" Walter Buesch, a young Swiss student who is vice president of the youth parliament in Schaffhausen, whose topic was "A Free World to Free Youth;" Josef Joos, French author and former member of the German Reich parliament from Alsace, who spoke on "Mutual Understanding of All Nations—from a Psychological Viewpoint," and Dr. Rudolf Jestaedt, young German jurist, whose speech was entitled "The European Idea." Adal-
While the majority of the audience were youthful, quite a few members of the older generation also attended. In foreground is Josef Joos, noted French author.

Eber Huber of the Fulda Junior Chamber and president of the West German Junior Chamber of Commerce, was chairman of the meeting. Interspersing the speeches were various national folk songs and selections by two school choirs — one from Fulda and the other from Hilders, a village close to the Soviet border.

German newsroom cameramen and members of both the German and foreign press covered the meeting, and Radio Hesse broadcast a roundtable discussion by the leading speakers on its well-known “New Ways” program. Newspaper comment was particularly favorable.

The West German Junior Chamber of Commerce has come a long way since the first chapters were organized two years ago. The initial suggestion came from US Military Government officers. Later, with the change over to administration by the Office of the US High Commissioner for Germany, HICOG resident officers helped to promote the formation of the various community organizations. Ten chapters were soon meeting regularly, and the opportunities they offered for the self-development of young German business men and women quickly became apparent.

Soon the various individual organizations promised to fulfill the need of young Germans to grow in civic stature, broaden their intellectual horizons and create friendly relations with junior chambers in other countries. Last year, they joined forces and established the West German Junior Chamber of Commerce, which requested and received full membership in the JCI at its 1950 congress. The JCI was one of the first international organizations to accept a German group on a basis of strict equality.

The JCI is itself a young organization, begun in Panama in 1946 with a meeting of several national organizations which pledged themselves “to work together for the improvement of their community and nation — and the world.” The constitution was formally adopted at its 1947 meeting in Dallas, Texas, at which there were delegates from 19 national junior chambers, and annual meetings in Rio de Janeiro, Brussels and Manila followed. The Sixth World Congress was held in Montreal from May 25 to 30. Several German representatives were present.

The preamble to the constitution of the West German Junior Chamber of Commerce follows.

WE, THE YOUNG PEOPLE who are members of this organization, express our willingness to observe the principles of tolerance and mutual respect, and thus obtain a wider horizon, and aided by a disregard for party or religious affiliations, to become worthy and tolerant members of the business profession.

“We believe that the brotherhood of man is superior to the rule of nations. We resolve to apply ourselves unstintingly to strengthen and widen the practical influence of the Junior Chamber International (JCI) because the JCI is the coming common meeting ground and intermediary among young people of the various nations. It is our wish that all nations, and especially our own country, will obtain the cooperation of young and able persons who are qualified to meet the various problems of contemporary life.

“We are convinced that the cooperation of the youth in the problems of political affairs can have a decisive influence on the just solution of the problems of mankind. We are resolved to protect the younger generation from misunderstandings and disputes and are willing to sponsor the progress of all peoples.”

THAT THE PREAMBLE is not just a collection of empty phrases has been well demonstrated by junior chambers throughout West Germany. To take Fulda as an example, here are a few of the things they do to exemplify the preamble’s noble purposes: the group regularly sponsors lectures, discussions, workshops, panels, social events, visits to industrial fairs, including international fairs, and other activities designed to educate and stimulate its members to become responsible and well-informed citizens.


In several cities, the Junior Chamber cooperates with the local institution for adult education in holding lectures on business and other economic subjects.

West Germany has many organizations which are working to promote the democratic ideal. Many of them are having outstanding success, but the West German Junior Chamber of Commerce is among the foremost to come close to achievement of this ideal.