Role of the University

Address
By JOHN J. McCLOY
US High Commissioner for Germany

During the past year, I have had many invitations from the authorities of this university to visit Freiburg and I have continuously promised myself the pleasure of coming. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be here today.

You will quickly realize that I am neither a scholar nor a scientist. My New York-Pennsylvania accent will convince you that I am not a philologist or expert in languages. I am not a Transcendentalist or an Existentialist. My philosophy, such as it is, is of a less advanced school. My faith, however, rests firmly in the youth of this world and particularly in the youth of Germany.

Now to say that one places his faith in youth is somewhat like saying the future lies ahead of us. As an old professor of mine once said to me when as a student at Harvard I made a similarly profound remark, such statements are like the utterances of Balaam's ass, entirely sound—but they presuppose no human intelligence on the part of the creatures from which they proceed.

There is, however, a real basis for my statement. It lies in my own experience in Germany. I have had many contacts among the youth of Germany since I have been here—in schools, in youth homes, in youth gatherings at universities and elsewhere. From these contacts I have received concrete evidence that the young people of Germany have the stuff and the determination to live a free and tolerant life in something wider than an exclusively national state. That is why it is not a conventional platitude when I say: It is in the German youth that I place my faith for the political advancement of the community.

In the years before 1933 the University of Freiburg was one of the great institutions of learning in Europe. Many distinguished names were associated with this university. Today, I recall only one, Professor Husserl, the philosopher whose Phenomenology made Freiburg known around the world. Germany's progress out of the Nazi ruins is symbolized by the fact that here today we can honor Professor Husserl's name. To me it is a special privilege to do so, for his son is a valued member of my staff.

Here in the southwest corner—to keep out of trouble I have not said southwest state*—of Germany, the civilizations of France and Germany have always been interwoven. In this city, therefore, it is especially appropriate for us to honor such French and German statesmen as Schuman and Monnet, Adenauer and Hallstein, whose vision and courage have just given the free world great hope. The ratification of the Schuman Plan can become an historical event of prime importance.

We all know, however, that France and Germany have more than coal and steel to give to the world. Together they can nurture and strengthen the roots of civilization and peace. The University of Freiburg, strategically located at the French-German crossroads, has a challenging opportunity to be a center of thought and action in the new community of Europe.

Today, I would like to discuss briefly the role of the university, that is, the role of the student and scholar in Germany.

In a different way and for different reasons you stand today at the beginning of an epoch such as faced young Americans a hundred years ago. A new world was in the making, and new challenges faced the young men of the day. New ideas and new concepts had to be developed. In 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the noblest minds America has produced, talked to the students of Harvard University on the role of the American scholar. I want to quote a few of the remarks he made to the young people and scholars of his day:

Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier.

Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it he is not yet man. Without it thought can never ripen into truth... Inaction is cowardice.

And again:

I do not see how any man can afford, for the sake of his nerves and his nap, to spare any action in which he can partake... The true scholar grudges every opportunity of action passed by as a loss of power.

Emerson believed that the student and scholar must learn, must know the facts; that he must be fearless in standing up for truth, for freedom and individual rights. He believed that the student and scholar must participate in the life of his community. Emerson encouraged the young American scholar of his day to have new thoughts and beliefs and to advance them with courage and vigor.

Is that not the challenge facing the young European today? It would be

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* See "The Southwest State," page 3.

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dangerous indeed, if under the hard pressure of getting a job and making a living, the young European student and scholar did not rise to meet his wider obligation to the community — the European Community of free men and women. At a time when regressive forces, forces of negation and totalitarianism, seek to put man’s mind in chains, inaction on the part of the young, free European would not only be cowardice as Emerson says — it would also be suicidal.

At this moment great opportunities are open to the German students and German scholars. The Schuman Plan, the European Community, the coming together of the Free World to defend its freedom mean that horizons are widening, chances are growing. The continent rather than a country is your home. But all these opportunities cannot be realized if people assume that all that is needed is the vote of parliaments elsewhere or the Bundestag (Lower House) in Germany. Work, imagination, sacrifice on the part of the people will be needed to give spirit and life to these new developments.

Such is the compelling challenge to the European student and scholar: to become proficient in his chosen profession or work; to recognize his obligation to the society in which he lives; to be a democratic leader in thought and action. No village is too small, no city too large in which to make a contribution to the new community of free men.

THE IMPORTANCE OF the participation of every citizen in the life of the community may be seen in the following example, which takes me into the political arena.

I need not tell you why the outside world watches for any evidence of the rebirth of Nazism in this country. It is my belief that the German people, which has also suffered terribly as a result of Nazi rule, ought to be in the forefront of those opposed to any recrudescence of Nazism.

My office frequently undertakes studies to determine the strength of neo-Nazi movements in the Federal Republic. Our research, I am glad to say, suggests that only 13 percent of the German people would today support a Nazi-like party or movement. Of course, it is incomprehensible that even 13 percent of the German people would again support such aberrations. Nevertheless, this percentage shows there is no immediate threat.

The real danger, according to our surveys, lies in the apathy of millions of men and women in this country, in their failure to recognize that they must act in defense of their own liberties. Here, for example, are some of the results of our surveys:

1. Eighty-seven percent of the people questioned stated they would not support a neo-Nazi party. That is encouraging.

2. But, in order to get at the deeper problem, the following question was asked: "Suppose a new party — similar to the NSDAP — would try to come to power in the Federal Republic, what would be your attitude toward it?"

Here are the results:

Only 20 percent said "I would do everything I could to prevent it."

Thirty percent: "I would not like to see it happen, but I would not do anything to prevent it."

Twenty-three percent: "I would not care."

Ten percent: "I would like to see that happen, but I would not do anything for it."

Three percent: "I would support it and do everything I could to support it."

Fourteen percent expressed no opinion on the matter.

IT STRIKES ME as rather alarming that such a sizable part of the population should be so indifferent to the political structure of their country. This is particularly important in Germany where political lethargy in the recent past induced the excesses which wrecked this country. Since 1945 many Germans have said that the personal risk during the Hitler years and the fear of punishment prevented action on their part. Today there are no concentration camps in the Federal Republic. And there is no fear of punishment. Men are free to speak and to take a stand.

There will be no concentration camps, either Nazi or Communist; there will be no punishment, Nazi or Communist, if every German citizen, now and in the years ahead, is active in the defense of his own liberties. Nobody in this country should ever again be prepared to say: "I couldn’t do anything about it; I was only an ordinary citizen."

Public opinion surveys are obviously not conclusive about the state of a people’s mind. I repeat, nevertheless, that not enough Germans are alert to resist extremist movements. Much remains to be done before all of us can be confident that democratic habits and tendencies are secure in Germany.

It is a fact that since 1945 there have been some strong, democratic developments in this country. There are outstanding groups, organizations, men and women who are working vigorously to strengthen the Federal Republic as a progressive, liberal force in the European Community. Partnership in that community gives reason to believe that the German people will be in a better position to develop their democratic institutions and beat off any attack of repressive forces.

But as I have said, every student and scholar carries the obligation, whoever he is and wherever he may be, to play a leading role in this conflict. The memory of the Goettinger Sieben should be a living inspiration for all German scholars today. The memory of the Geschwister Scholl should be an inspiration to every German student.*

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG, the introduction of the Studium Generale has marked an important step in German higher education. Men like your Pro-

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*"Goettinger Sieben" were seven professors, including the two Grimm Brothers of fairy-story fame, who were forced to leave the University of Goettingen in 1837 by order of the king of Hanover for not yielding to a royal decree. This decree meant a change in the state’s constitution and limitation of civic rights. "Geschwister Scholl" refers to the martyrdom of a brother and sister during the Hitler regime for anti-Nazi activities at the University of Munich. See "Inge Scholl, Schoolteacher," in Information Bulletin, April 1950.
Professor Tellenbach have demonstrated courage and vision in helping to mold university life to fit the changing world in which we live.

Your Professor Grewé, who plays such an important role in the negotiations on the bilateral agreements in Bonn, is a fine example of the scholar tackling the realistic political problems of the day.

I would also like to mention the example of Freiburg’s Academic Council. The close contact which the university representatives on it have with the delegates from the state legislature, churches, unions, chambers of commerce, professional organizations and the press undoubtedly goes a long way toward preventing the isolation of the university from governmental, political and economic life.

The class in the Freiburg Law College given jointly by a Swiss and German professor demonstrates the friendly relationships of your university with the Swiss universities, and your effort to benefit from the centuries of undisturbed democratic development of free Switzerland.

**WE ALL HAVE MUCH** to learn from each other. I consider it a credit to my country that in the 19th century American higher education was so highly receptive to the influence of the German university. Scholarship and research were the essence of the German university. Our students and scholars came to Germany to see and to learn, and on their return they stimulated a new era of American education.

Today the German university, for the sake of its own future, must be eager to study and to accept the experience of non-German universities. The postwar German university must go further to meet the problems of the young generation in this country.

Few, if any, suggest that the German university lacks a high standard of learning or of scientific achievement. There is full recognition of the high intellectual level of German faculties. Many believe, however, that there should be more contact between the German university and the community; that the university could do more to prepare the student for active citizenship. The Humboldt concept of the university, applied to today’s needs, would fill the gap. If the noble Humboldt were alive today, he would undoubtedly relate the humanistic ideal of education to the social community.

**Studium Generale** is a development of the Humboldt concept. It brings teacher and student together. They live together, discuss together, work together. In this common experience the professor has greater opportunity to influence the student; the fresh and adventurous spirit of the student helps liberalize the views of the scholar. This academic community in which people live in mutual respect and tolerance then becomes a model for the greater community, for later life.

Freiburg, as I have mentioned, has given other German universities an excellent example of the **Studium Generale**. I recognize, of course, the large resources that are needed to establish colleges of this type within the German university. But if the German university needs such colleges in order to fulfill its mission, the German people and authorities must find the means to meet the need. The main task is now theirs.

The people of the United States have shown great interest in the problem of the German university. During the past few years we have been privileged to assist many education institutions. We have tried to help **Studium Generale**, to build student union houses, to establish institutes for political science, sociology and pedagogy. We have put great effort into the Exchanges Program to send thousands of scholars and students to the United States and other countries; we have tried to expand the program of visiting professors and students to Germany.

I wish that our resources were such that we could increase these activities. We shall continue to do what we can. But the German university will only flower and fulfill its obligation to the German people and to the world community if new and determined efforts are made from within Germany to fit the university into the needs of the second half of the 20th century.

At the German university in the next decade we can hope that the community ideal will be firmly interwoven with the ideal of scholarship. We can hope to see a flowering of the social and political sciences in Germany in the study of the most important problem of all: how men—all men—can live in freedom and tolerance. May this old institution continue to sow the seed. +END