

Economic and political unification of Europe is seen by many as the best alternative to crippling competition and international suicide. But such unification is dependent on the modification of nationalistic viewpoints.

The European Schools may well play a unique and influential role in this unification process. Emerging from the initial attempt at unity by the European Economic Community, their international curriculum is influencing students to work for greater European unity, politically and economically.

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The International Schools of the European Community: Cause or Consequence of European Unity

Education has played a vital role in the development of Europe as we know it today, and this is particularly true of the development and extension of nationalism during and following the eighteenth century. The very fluid sense of belonging which the seventeenth century European experienced had gradually solidified into national molds, cemented by certain common features. The educational systems, both formal and informal, incorporated these national features into their curricula, thus establishing permanent divisions among the various European states.

Today, many responsible European and American statesmen are attempting to lower — if not to remove — these national barriers. The economic and political costs of international rivalry are too great. Between 1870 and 1950 Europe's share of the total manufactured products of the world dropped from 70 per cent to less than 35 per cent.¹ Conversely, the United States had during this time risen to first place, and her success could be attributed largely to the unrestricted economic movement among her states.

In military matters, too, European experience vividly showed the suicidal nature of intra-European competition. The past two wars were terribly costly; another one might well be fatal to the human race. United States Senator J. W. Fulbright, in a lecture delivered at Tufts University on May 1, 1963, said:

Since the age of discovery when the Atlantic Community was formed, its members have periodically fallen upon each other, with mounting savagery,

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¹*The Facts*, European Community Information Service, Brussels-Luxembourg (September, 1962), p. 8.

reflecting the refinements of their technology. As long as the North Atlantic nations dominated the world and as long as weapons of war were limited in the damage they could do, the "civil war" of the West was something which its members could survive if not afford. That time is now past. The Atlantic nations no longer dominate the world, nor could they expect to survive as organized societies a conflict with those who threaten them. History and reason and common sense tell us that unity is the condition for preventing such a conflict, that in unity lies our best hope of preserving the civilization we have built and of fulfilling its considerable promise.²

Achievement of this unity is no longer a mere visionary's dream or desert mirage. The first real steps toward European unity were taken in 1951 with the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community,* followed by the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community. Granted, these Communities were economic in nature, but the political hopes and implications were nevertheless obvious: unity in economics necessitates unity in politics.

In spite of the very promising beginning, there are major obstacles in the path toward full political unity. Before unity can be achieved there must be a change of attitude toward international co-operation on the part of the leaders of the various countries. Those who were actively involved in directing the Common Market nations toward unity were well aware of this. "We are convinced," they said, "that European union in the spheres of economics, social welfare and politics can only be successful if its members feel a sense of oneness which extends beyond national frontiers and turns them into citizens of Europe."³ This, then, becomes, at least in part, an educational problem.

It is, of course, natural that the national systems of education would be nationalistic, and it is unlikely that these would provide the type of attitude formation which would prepare leaders for the cause of European unification. In this context the European Schools assume a greater significance.

These European Schools, established under the auspices of the European Coal and Steel Community, are truly international schools with a European curriculum. Dr. Karl Voss, Principal of the European School at Luxembourg, has called this unique venture an "extraordinarily different and absolutely new . . . experiment in education."⁴ Thus, it is hoped, education will be used as the tool to remove the barriers it helped build in the past.

If the European Schools are to be successful in providing an objective education rather than reinforcing national bias, then it is imperative that the content of their curriculum be internationalized. And this is precisely

²J. W. Fulbright, "A U.S. View of the Atlantic Partnership," *European Community*, LXIII (June, 1963), p. 7.

*Hereafter referred to as "Community."

³C. Whiting, "Supranational Schools of the Six," *Times Educational Supplement*, 2698 (February 3, 1967), p. 350.

⁴Karl Voss, *The European Schools — An Experiment in Education* (Britain in Europe Ltd., Europe House Paper 13, London, 1964), p. 2.

what has taken place. According to a paper issued by the European Community Information Service, "the curriculum of the European Schools is built around the "European" point of view, and textbooks which reflect this viewpoint are now being written."⁵

The national textbooks, of course, present history and geography in the light of nationalism and regional bias. The details of a certain war, for example, may be presented in an altogether different light in the textbooks of two different countries. And according to Daniele Heymann, women's correspondent of *L'Express*, "the smallest plateau in his homeland took on Himalayan proportions for want of standards of comparison in the outside world."⁶

Since European textbooks and materials are not readily available, an even greater burden for objectivity rests upon the teachers. Therefore the teachers selected for these schools are carefully screened on the basis of their ability to re-think their teaching approach and adapt it to an entirely different educational environment. And according to Albert Von Houtte, member of the Board of Governors of the European Schools, "an open mind, much tact, understanding, and tolerance" are the indispensable attributes which the teachers in the European Schools must possess.⁷

It seems evident that the European Schools are in a good position to provide an objective education for its pupils — one which "turns them into citizens of Europe." But there is some doubt as to its impact on the total European political scene. There are presently six European Schools, one or more in each of the Common Market countries except France, with a 1968 pupil population of 7000.⁸ Compared with the total pupil population in the six participating nations this number is very insignificant. Therefore, if the European Schools wish to produce a real unifying influence on European politics they will have to broaden their scope of operation.

Such an increased scope of operation is being envisioned by some of the Community leaders. Professor Whiting has stated that: "In the last ten years the Common Market has begun to impinge more and more on the life of the average man in the street; finally it is also beginning to have its impact on the education of the member countries' youth, and it will continue to do so in the future to an ever increasing extent."⁹

Those responsible for the European Schools are convinced that there will be additional schools established in other European capitals, especially

⁵Some Facts About the European Schools, European Community Information Service, Washington, 1963, p. 2.

⁶Daniele Heymann, "European Schools Broaden Educational Frontiers," *European Community*, LXX (April, 1964), p. 8.

⁷Albert Von Houtte, *The European Schools* (Washington: European Community Information Service), March 2, 1961, p. 6.

⁸C. Whiting, "Common Market and a European School," *Educational Forum*, XXXIII (November, 1968), p. 91.

⁹*Ibid.*

those with large supranational populations. Along with more schools there will be more students, and the total pupil population is expected to rise to 20,000 in the foreseeable future.¹⁰

The impact of the European Schools upon the unity of Europe, however, may be considerably greater than its relatively small number of pupils would indicate. In the first place, most of the pupils are the sons and daughters of diplomats and Community officials. It is therefore predictable that they will have a proportionately greater influence on the political affairs of Europe than will the children of the working class.

Furthermore, the teachers who return to the national schools after teaching some time in the European Schools bring with them a broader outlook and a more international attitude. Their cumulative influence on the national pupil population can be expected to be significant.

And finally, the curricula of the European Schools can serve as a model for the gradual Europeanization of the national systems. According to Whiting, this Europeanization of the national systems is inevitable because of the increased mobility of the Community workers.¹¹ Workers within the Community may now move about freely and settle down more - or - less permanently in a country other than his own. This implies that large numbers of children of different nationalities will be thrust into the national systems. While the parents of these children may not have a decisive voice in curriculum change, there will be an increasing demand for more international and less biased education in the national systems. It is reasonable to expect the European Schools to furnish a wealth of resource materials for any Europeanization process.

The question of whether the European Schools are a cause or consequence of European unity eludes a positive answer. The first schools were established in response to the needs of an already existing economic community; in this sense they were a consequence.

On the other hand, however, full European unity which was the dream of the founders of the Common Market, is far from reality at this time. Nor can it be achieved without an understanding of greater European problems and a change of attitude brought about by an objective education. The European Schools are attempting to provide this kind of an education with an international curriculum taught by open - minded teachers. "With a little bit of luck," as the song goes, the European Schools might become a major factor in bringing about a truly united Europe.

¹⁰C. Whiting, "Supranational Schools of the Six," *Times Educational Supplement*, 2698 (February 3, 1967), p. 350.

¹¹C. Whiting, "Common Market and a European School," *Educational Forum*, XXXIII (November, 1968), p. 73.