

ON A CLEAR, COOL FRIDAY AFTERNOON THE COLLEGE OF EUROPE HAS THE FEEL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS ACROSS THE WORLD, YET WITH A DISTINCTIVE EUROPEAN AMBIENCE. LOCATED IN THE HEART OF BRUGES, IT FACES ONE OF THE MANY CANALS THAT SLICE THROUGH THIS MEDIEVAL BELGIAN CITY. THE COLLEGE'S MAIN ACADEMIC BUILDING SITS ALMOST IN THE SHADOW OF THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY, A 14TH CENTURY GOTHIC CATHEDRAL. OFF IN THE DISTANCE LOOMS THE CITY'S TOWERING BELFRY, WHICH, ON A SPARKLING EARLY SPRING DAY, OFFERS A STUNNING PANORAMIC VIEW OF LARGE SECTIONS OF FLANDERS AND GLIMPSES OF THE NORTH SEA.



Students from around the world study together at the College of Europe: (left to right) Sean Shepley, Great Britain; Manuel Sanchez-Rodriguez, Spain; Caroline Papoulias, Greece; Bob Kulperger, United States of America.

THE COLLEGE OF EUROPE:

Breeding Ground for the Common Market

BY JOHN SHAW

Students enter and leave the College in small groups, carrying books and chatting about class assignments and weekend plans. Conversations are mostly in French and English but bits of Spanish, Italian, German and Dutch are easy to pick up. A few students, with backpacks, make their way to the nearby train station for weekends in Brussels, Paris and Amsterdam. Visitors stand by the College's entrance, studying city maps while they wait for friends. Bicycles are parked in front.

The College of Europe is the oldest and most prominent of a growing number of graduate institutions which specialize in European affairs, a booming field given recent developments in both Eastern and Western Europe. The college's program is well-known and highly respected throughout Europe and especially in Brussels where its alumni are spreading out and moving up in the European Community's institutions and in the law, consulting and lobbying firms which deal with EC

issues. If most countries have elite schools which prepare students for national service, the College of Europe is increasingly the place to prepare for a career in European affairs.

The College of Europe was one of the ideas that emerged from the 1948 Congress of Europe attended by 800 of Europe's leading statesmen seeking to redirect Europe after the carnage of two world wars in less than a generation. The Congress concluded that narrowly focused national education contributed to Europe's conflicts and, as a partial solution, recommended a European college promoting a broad vision of Europe as a single community.

About the same time, some of Bruges' leading citizens were trying to establish a university in the town. The two movements converged and the College of Europe was the result. On September 20, 1949, the College began an experimental academic session with 22 students. It has been going ever since.

Prof. Jerzy Lukaszewski has been teaching at the College of Europe since 1961 and has been the College's rector for almost half of its 40 years. From a spacious office overlooking the College's courtyard, he recalls the school's past and speaks of its present and future.

The early years of the College, Prof. Lukaszewski says, were difficult. Classes were held in makeshift accommodations, funds were tight, and the school was searching for a secure niche in Europe's academic world. Initially, the college offered general courses in European politics, history and culture but was still groping for a specific mission and a sharper focus.

Both mission and focus came in the 1950s and 1960s as the various institutions of the EC were created: the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community in 1958, and the consolidation of the three into a single European Community in 1967.

"The College of Europe," says Peter Ludlow, director of the Centre for European Policy Studies, "is an institution whose primary focus is training future European leaders, especially those who aspire to have careers in the EC or in professions that deal with the Community." Ivo Van Bael, partner in the Brussels law firm Van Bael and Bellis and a professor at the College agrees, adding "It is an institution that offers very direct, practical and immediate training in European affairs."

specific policy issue, conducts training programs for EC officials and offers briefings and refresher classes to chamber of commerce officials from EC states.

The current class has 201 students from 11 nations taught by a faculty from a dozen countries. The College's working languages are English and French; all students must take courses in both languages. The students concentrate in either law, economics or administration. Over 70 percent of the

students are on some sort of scholarship, most of which are sponsored by national and regional governments. For private students, the cost for a year is BF 460,000 (\$ 13,000).

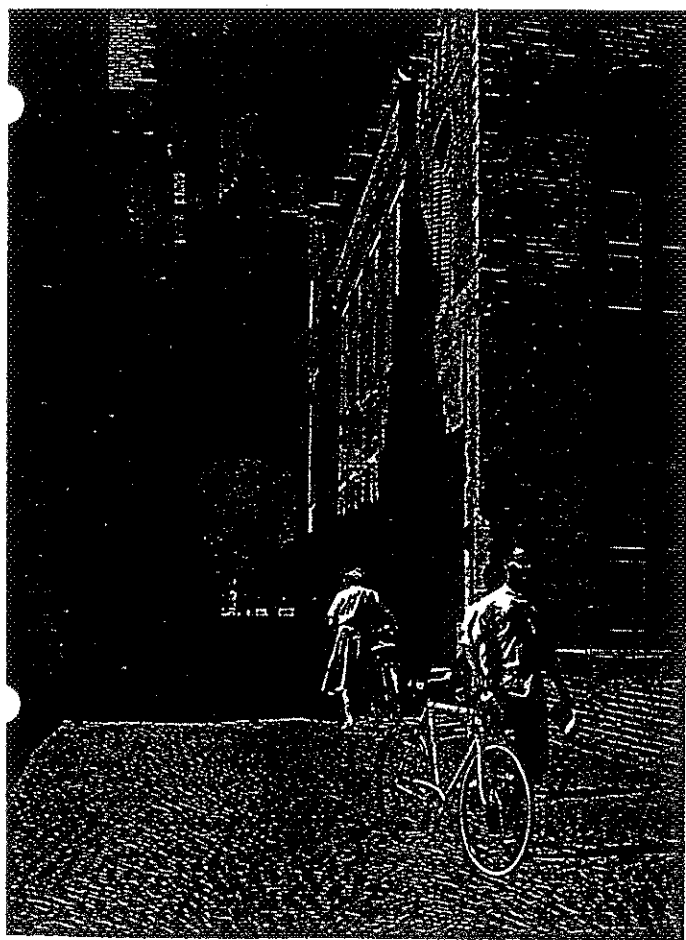
atmosphere of Europe." Constant exposure to other Europeans in classes, study groups and residence halls causes her "to think as a European not as a citizen of one country." Sean Shepley of Britain remarks that he is struck "by the genuine openness and curiosity of people at the College. It is authentic, it is not artificial."

Not everyone finds the multinational atmosphere as satisfying. One former student who asked not to be identified says that while he found the College stimulating and exotic at first, it began to wear thin. "After some time, I found that it was an atmosphere without national grounding or roots. It wasn't normal. And I didn't act normal. It was unreal."

The students here are intrigued by the Europe changing before their eyes: turmoil in Eastern Europe and Western Europe's strong move toward tighter political and economic integration. It is the latter subject in which they are presently immersed and are most comfortable discussing. Several speak of the "new weight of Europe" and attribute it largely to the 1992 single market program crafted by Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission. Both the 1992 plan and Mr. Delors' program for broad economic and monetary union seem popular here. Mr. Sanchez finds the Delors view persuasive and attractive. "After listening to his speech at the College in October, I felt like he has a clear idea and a coherent vision of what Europe should be." Mrs. Thatcher is decidedly less popular. Mr. Shepley believes Mrs. Thatcher is "outside of the European mainstream. She is a force of reaction." Bob Kulperger, an American student, argues that Mrs. Thatcher's view of Europe is too rigid and compartmentalized, seeking closer unity in some areas and looser arrangements in others.

Several students say the enthusiasm for the EC and European integration is not as strong at home as it is in Brussels and Bruges. Anne Kelly, an Irish student, recalls a university project several years ago in which the students interviewed people from their home countries on the perceived benefits of Irish involvement in the EC. "Most of the people I talked to couldn't think of any advantages. For most, Brussels and the Community are abstractions which don't affect their daily lives."

The students are reluctant to describe themselves as an elite, yet they are well aware that they will have excellent career options. Each year



Notes in hand, a student walks his bike to school. The centrally located College of Europe is within easy reach of everything.

The College of Europe's one year graduate course focuses on European political and economic integration, with specific emphasis on the European Community. Classes and seminars offer detailed, technical instruction on the history and workings of the EC's major institutions and programs. Almost all classes are taught by visiting professors from Europe and prominent government officials, usually from the European Commission.

While primarily focused on training graduate students, the College also keeps in close contact with the broader community dealing with EC affairs. It hosts frequent conferences; sponsors an annual week-long symposium on a

The College is supported by funds from the Belgian government, the European Commission and smaller grants from the other states of the EC except Greece.

The students here are eager to talk about college life, current affairs and their futures. Most are stimulated by the multinational environment. "I came here with a piecemeal, fragmented view of Europe," says Manuel Sanchez-Rodriguez of Spain, "but living among so many Europeans and studying issues from a European perspective makes you see Europe as a single entity, a single system." Caroline Papoulias of Greece says she feels "absorbed and immersed in the

dozens of corporations, law, consulting and lobbying firms come to Bruges to interview and recruit students. The College also has excellent contracts with EC institutions, and professors often help students arrange internships in Brussels.

Mr. Ludlow, as director of a Brussels-based research institute calls himself an "enthusiastic consumer" of College graduates. "In my experience", he says, "I have found the College is very successful at training serious bright young people who are anxious to work in European affairs."

Eamonn Bates, an Irish graduate of the College and now director of the Bernard Krieff consulting firm, agrees. "For anyone working in mainline European community affairs, graduates from the College are a must. They have excellent language skills, and a detailed understanding of the EC's institutions. Also, they are used to working in multinational teams which is how business is done in Brussels."

Maria Castillo, a Spanish graduate of the College now working in the Commission, says her experience at the College helped her prepare for the Commission's rigorous examination and also gave her a credential that is respected. "When you come to Brussels and say you studied at the College of Europe people will at least open the door and talk to you. A College diploma is not a guarantee of a job but it is a passport to a lot of interviews."



The tranquil streets of Bruges - an unlikely setting for a dynamite grad school.

If College graduates are noted for their expertise in European affairs they are also known for institutional loyalty. As College graduates land jobs in Brussels, they tend to help classmates find opportunities and the result is a growing number of Bruges students in key Brussels institutions. Mr. Bates notes that it is becoming uncommon to attend a meeting on an EC related issue and not meet someone from the College. "We are not exactly a mafia in Brussels," chuckles Antonia Gomez, a Spanish graduate of the College now working for a Brussels law firm, "but it is only natural that if you hear about a job and have friends from the College who are looking, you will pass on the information to them and put in a good word for them."

So what does the future hold for the College of Europe? Prof. Lukaszewski reflects on the question as he looks out the window of his office, into the courtyard and beyond to the College's library where the silhouettes of students are faintly visible. Things are going well, he says. Funding, while always a problem for private schools, is now on more secure footing due to increasing EC support. Interest in European affairs is growing throughout the world and applications at the College are up. Over 2,000 students applied for the 201 positions this academic year, and the current flow of applications indicates even more will apply for the next academic year.

While reluctant to look too far into the future, Prof. Lukaszewski has medium-range goals: even stronger financial and institutional links to the EC, a slightly larger class, and additional student residences to accommodate more students without spoiling the intimate atmosphere.

There is still much to do, but Prof. Lukaszewski seems satisfied that he has helped shape an important institution which is promoting European unity in small and large ways. And then there are developments in Europe. "We are in the process of a great historical unification process," he says softly. "European integration is one of the most innovative and creative ideas of the 20th century. It has enormous moral, philosophical, political and intellectual implications. These are exciting times." ■

John Shaw is an editor with The Wall Street Journal/Europe

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