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**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Four venerable and somberly constructed high schools stand in Giessen. Each has a distinctive character. Each has a director cast in a different mold. Each has an individual role in providing the city's 3,000 youngsters of superior intellectual ability with a crack at higher education.

From one of the schools, the Justus von Liebig Schule, there shines a light that penetrates the other three even to the murkiest corners. It is a light known throughout the Bundesrepublik - honored by some, deplored by others. The light comes from the 64-year-old director of the Liebig-schule, Wilhelm Floerke. Chemist, geologist, physicist, author, former City Council member, anti-Nazi when it wasn't easy to be, builder of youth hostels, editor of a science teachers periodical - Dr. Floerke has been all these and more. He stands about 6 feet tall, has humorous blue eyes, a mighty jaw, and wispy white hair. His face is reminiscent of Winston Churchill. He wears half-rim glasses and a hearing aid. His left hand is lame from being "a little too eager as a chemistry student." He is witty and strong-willed; a reformer whom some call a radical. His reforming instinct has driven him to demand some basic changes in the State's educational system: He would like to alter what he calls the "grotesque" final examinations. He has urged that science teachers come out of their laboratories long enough to see what's going on in the world. He has proposed that lower schools be strengthened and expanded so that more children can obtain a better education. Six years ago, Dr. Floerke proposed still another reform to the Hessian Ministry of Education. He called it the Auflockerung der Oberstufe. This can be translated as the "loosening up" or the "unbuttoning" of the upper grades. The unbuttoning, pioneered by Floerke and a couple of other progressive Hesse school men, is perhaps the outstanding German school reform of the decade. It has signified the breaking out of a strait-jacket that has held German high school students prisoner for more than three centuries.

Briefly, the Auflockerung does this: Allows students in the last two years of high school to pick their own major subjects and concentrate on them; Encourages a self-reliance and initiative in homework unheard of in most German high schools; Emphasizes group work and class projects. Subjects are divided up into "class" subjects, major subjects, and supplementary subjects. A whole class, for instance, takes German, religion, history, and art together. Extra hours are allowed the student each week for his major subjects. The supplementary subjects are usually suggested by the faculty so that the sciences and arts are balanced. The Auflockerung alters the course schedule so that students can spend two periods together on one subject - instead of changing subjects (and teachers) every 45 minutes.

Students participating in the Auflockerung appear to be almost unanimously in favor of it. Most of the Liebigschule teachers are too. Critics, whose number is large outside the Liebigschule, have this to say about Floerke's plan: "too soon for students to specialize," "they aren't mature enough for it - it's university at high school level," and "unreasonable." Floerke's reason for developing the plan was: "I got tired of spoonfeeding 18- and 19-year-olds. This system gives them more freedom." Five Hessian schools are now practicing the "Auflockerung" - including Dr. Floerke's Liebigschule.

Dr. Floerke became director of the school in 1945, only a few months after Allied bombs had reduced it to a sort of monstrous rainbarrel. "We had to drain the place," says Floerke. The school was begun in 1837 as a boys school. It became a coeducational school after the war. The present building was constructed in the late 19th century. It contains 800 pupils and 40 teachers divided, among 24 classes and 20 classrooms. Like all Giessen schools it is short of space - 8 classrooms at least. Yet the school has many superior qualities - an excellent library, a large collection of maps for schoolroom use, science laboratories which would delight the school's namesake (see DB - 1), and sets of chemical product, mineral, and metal specimens. It has good teachers too:

Dr. Peter Petersen is a 50-year-old North German. He is a lanky, black-haired history teacher with the carriage of a cowboy and the vague manner of an idealist. He is not vague when he talks about history - his own or that of Germany. Here are some of the things he said over a cup of strong coffee two weeks ago: "From 1933 to 1938 I had fun - did what I wanted. I was in business for awhile, taught in Berlin - I didn't take Hitler seriously. But it didn't blow over. I said: 'You can't change it.' We didn't want to see clearly then. The war came. As a German I couldn't want my fatherland to lose the war. I said: 'I'll join in.' The moment a man becomes a soldier he has to want to win. One was a German - then again one wasn't. We should have said: 'We have a criminal regime' - but that was too hard for most of us. In 1945 I learned for the first time what had been going on after 1918. Before that I had only read falsified history. Today I think it can be said we (historians) comprehend the Nazi period - but not what went on before. (Petersen cited a recent history teachers conference) I was astounded at some of the things they said. Some still believe the Hindenburg legend - that he was a hero. Ha. We Germans always have to have a hero. We've had more than enough 'heroes'. And we've always honored the wrong ones. Many historians still haven't seen what went wrong in the Weimar Republic. We didn't love our Weimar Republic enough!" Petersen makes sure his students learn truth and objectivity. He shows them the source of the post-World War I stab-in-the-back legend (Hindenburg's memoirs). He shows them copies of the documents with which Hitler established his illegal rule. He has them learn the stupidities committed at Versailles in the name of Nationalism. With sardonic wit he teaches them to be careful of such loaded words as Raum and Volk.

Erwin Glaum is only 28 - and if he is a little unsure of his ability as a teacher, his superiors are not. Glaum is a graduate of the Darmstadt Technical High School, where he specialized in biology and chemistry. As a participant in Dr. Floerke's plan for broadening the range of specialists, Glaum teaches social studies in addition to science. This youthful, bushy-haired extrovert gives as much energy to the one as to the other. His Untersekunda (10th grade) class in social studies has a daily report on current events by one of the students. If the student skips something important, the class fills in the gap. The day I visited the class, Glaum appointed three boys to lead a discussion on automation. Nearly all of the 25 boys in the group got into the talk about general education versus early specialization, the problems of workers with time on their hands, and the problem of workers displaced by machines. The class conclusion: "Science has developed so far that a single man cannot have a complete view of the world - we'll have to specialize earlier." After class Glaum described his background - Hitler Youth and a year in the Wehrmacht. "This is hard for my generation," he said, "we didn't learn to discuss in the Third Reich." Glaum also directs an Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Work Group) in chemistry one afternoon a week. Participation in the group is voluntary, except for students in the Oberstufe, who must join one. There are Work Groups in history, music, art, and literature as well as chemistry.

There is no stigma attached to the Arbeitsgemeinschaft. Grades are based only on classwork. The afternoon sessions are for pleasure and interest. They are also free. In Glaum's group, students were doing experiments in ionization, making silicates, reducing copper sulfate, and producing a 15-minute film on school life. They worked mostly in pairs. Another one of Glaum's activities is riding circuit in Upper Hesse science teacher conferences. The teachers from Volksschule and Mittelschule meet about every six weeks. At these meetings Glaum directs seminars in chemistry teaching. The project is a brainchild of Floerke's - an effort to improve the quality of lower school science instruction.

The Liebigsschule has other teachers as worthy of mention as Petersen and Glaum: Aloys Krumscheid, the music teacher who fled Nazi Germany in 1940 to teach in Spain. He has pippin cheeks, a snowwhite mane, thick glasses, and boundless energy. His 25-piece school orchestra is going to play in Spain this spring at the invitation of the Government. Karl Holler is a chemist by training and preference, but also a social studies teacher on a par with Glaum. Holler, 34, and prematurely gray, says: "We must teach this generation to talk more - my generation only got orders." Alfons Mueller, the 47-year-old assistant director, teaches French and English in addition to his administrative duties. He was thrown out of Giessen University in 1933 because he belonged to a Socialist student group. His precise manner does not disguise his sharp wit and his keen liberalism - the product of a working class background.

The three other high schools in Giessen are: the Herderschule for boys, the Landgraf Ludwig Gymnasium - a coeducational "classical" school, and the Ricarda Huch Schule for girls.

The Director of the Ricarda Huch Schule is Fräulein Irmgard Feussner, the daughter of a Marburg University professor. She is 64; wears her gray hair in a bun, and has a saintly smile. Her nickname outside the school is "the motherly friend," a dig at Fräulein Feussner's reknowned piety. However, it might have been her piety that made her refuse to join the Nazi Party back in the Thirties. She stuck to her refusal, and it cost her continual trouble with Party fanatics in the Frankfurt school system. "I lived under terror," she says now. She came here to the girls' school in 1952. Like other schools, it too was damaged by bombs. Today it has 1,010 pupils, 29 classes, and 17 classrooms. Five additional rooms in another school are on loan to the Ricarda Huch Schule until more classrooms are built,

The girls' school is run on the old scheme - in contrast to the Auflockerung. That means 15 to 16 subjects are dished out in six daily classes. This goes on for nine years - 5th grade through 13th - for those who can stand the pace. Roughly 70 per cent of the girls drop out by the 10th grade. The level of instruction at Ricarda Huch is as high as at the Liebigsschule. Moreover, there is no shortage of progressive teaching methods - within the bounds of the strict old system.

For instance, Karl Reichert's Quinta (sixth grade) English class is learning our complicated language with honest to god pleasure. The reason is simple: Reichert utilizes the girls' still lively sense of imagination and make-believe. The day I visited the class they played circus - in English. "What do you want to be?" Reichert asked a pigtailed blond. "I want to be a bear," said the girl. "Allright, you are a bear - now what does a bear do?" The girl got down on the floor and growled. "I'm growling," she said. Then, looking at Reichert, she continued: "I see a foot, and I want to catch it." She pounced on the teacher's shoe.

The next animal produced by the class was a giraffe. Reichert suggested that the giraffe might have a sore throat. A doctor and nurse promptly volunteered services - in English. "I bandage you," said the doctor, gravely. "I see that you stay in bed," said the nurse. All this was unrehearsed. In his upper classes, Reichert uses equally effective methods. One class recently devoted its hour to a discussion of a painting by Breughel (Icarus) and W. H. Auden's poem about the painting (Musée des Beaux Arts). Reichert is 48, a native of Giessen, and a former Wehrmacht interpreter. He writes occasional theatre and music reviews, and runs a lecture series. He wants to write a book on methods of teaching English. It ought to be a good one.

Fräulein Maria Werner teaches geography, history, and social studies. Her Unterprima (12th grade) class was working on "Leninism in the latter subject last week. The girls, most of them in slacks and sweaters, had a free-wheeling discussion of freedom in a planned economy versus freedom in a free market economy. They talked about nationalization of capitalist holdings in Russia, the degree of paradise in the Workers' Paradise, and comparative living standards east and west of the Iron-Curtain. When Fräulein Werner asked a question, the class answered it through discussion. Her geography class enjoyed some of this same freedom of discussion. Fräulein Werner is 52. She has a slow smile and a quick sense of humor. A native of Łódź in Poland, she studied at the ancient University of Cracow and taught in Poznań until the end of World War II.

The Landgraf Ludwig Gymnasium, aged 352 years, is Giessen's oldest living school. It smells of age; one might almost say reeks. Even its present building, constructed in 1879, looks older than its years. The director, Mr. Heinrich Klenk, is no chicken either. His large head is as bald as a lightbulb. His eyes have circular brows above them and circular bags below them. Having been a staunch Freemason, Klenk was forbidden by the Nazis to teach anything but Latin and Greek during the Hitler Period. Although he was nearly 50, the Wehrmacht sent him to battle in Russia during the war. He is the author of four books - on Latin and Greek archeology. Klenk is a classicist; his school is classical. The 460 boys and girls at the Ludwig Gymnasium study Greek for six years and "Latin for nine." "This is in the age old tradition of the humanistic gymnasium (upper school)," Klenk says proudly, "Education through Form!" Asked whether he contemplated any changes in the school's future, Klenk said: "When I look upon my school I say, 'I don't want to reform it.' I only want to keep an eye out for details that need fixing. My only problem is to modernize this building - I've got 17 classes and only nine classrooms."

The Ludwig Gymnasium may be old-fashioned and conservative, but some modern ideas have penetrated its musty chambers. The 12th grade class in Greek taught by Herr Schwarz does its work in groups of four. One pupil reads, one translates, one does the grammar, and one looks up words. The 4-man teams compete against each other in work on Homer, Sophocles, and other ancients. I couldn't help envying them their fluency in the most beautiful of languages. Herr Schwarz, a devoted 40-year-old classicist, commented on his teaching technique: "Group work was forbidden by the Nazis because it was against the Fuehrer principle."

What about Giessen's high school students? Remembering that this is an intellectual elite, I am still impressed with their alertness, enthusiasm for their homework, and their ability to express themselves. Here is what some of their teachers have to say about them:

Peter Petersen: "They are capable of unbiased criticism. They are more mature than we were at their age. ...They haven't enough respect for art and aesthetic beauty - still too much influenced by their personal futures. They are not interested in things for themselves but in what they will get out of them. They all marvel at an Albert Schweitzer - but none wants to be a Schweitzer. Yet they are appealing. The old class-consciousness has been washed away - they haven't got it."

Heinrich Klenk: "The youngsters of today aren't a bit different from those before the war."

Fräulein Elsa Adolph (teacher at Ricarda Huch Schule): "Their trouble is they don't know how to deny themselves anything. They can't say no."

Alfons Mueller: "The students are keyed up - nervous. Some say it is the result of the war. Some say we've become too mild - that it would be better if we thrashed them. I think it is the nervousness of the times. We're only dealing with symptoms here, not origins."

Certainly these students are freer than their parents were. They come from a larger section of society - not just the middle and upper classes. They have more liberty to pick their professions. More than 60 per cent are going into professions different from those of their fathers. The boys seem to have a sensible attitude towards the new Army - which will be drafting most of them soon. For example, Klaus Grebe, 19, said: "It's a necessity now. It will check us, hold us back for a year, but it won't hurt us. I know no one among my friends who is against it." Said Gerhard Vetter, also 19: "For the pay the Army gives I can't get very excited about it."

Their school spirit is strong - within the walls of the school. Their class spirit is stronger. This is encouraged by a wide assortment of extra-curricular class activities - a school newspaper, sports, hikes, festivals, and trips. Two of the upper classes from the Liebigschule and the Ludwig Gymnasium have had reserved tables (Stammtisch) in a small tavern where they meet twice a month to discuss class affairs over beer. Neither group is exclusive in any way. The Liebigschule graduating class turned its Stammtisch into a hilarious comedy scene last week. They threw a farewell party for themselves and their teachers to cap the day of their final examinations. The class co-operated in producing a marvelous 2-hour show including poems, songs, and sketches about each of the graduates and their teachers. Blades of humor thrust in all directions. One teacher was described as having the problem: "How can I teach my class without disturbing their sleep?" Another: "He was small. smaller than his own head. He was so small we couldn't even see him when he came in the room. His head was larger than his body. But his head was small. His brain was smaller...." There was plenty of beer to bathe the wounded ones.

Dr. Floerke looks at school spirit from another angle. He points out that the high schools are supported by the City, which gets its school money from the State. There is never enough, of course. "We put the bite on parents," Floerke says. This fund - which brings in 9 marks (\$2.00) per student per year, a total of \$1,000 - is used for additional classroom materials. "We're also trying to stir up alumni interest in the school," Floerke said. "We could use more money." Two attempts at starting an alumni association for the Liebigschule have failed since the war. Alumni interest in the Ludwig Gymnasium, material and otherwise, is stronger.

Giessen's high schools had final examinations (Abitur) and graduation exercises last week. Last January, the Oberprimaner (13th graders) had waded through hours and hours of written exams. The exams last week were oral. They were also an ordeal - 10 hours long. Students are examined in 15 subjects - everything from biology to religion. Those who pass the Abitur may enter any German university. I went to the exams at the Liebigschule. Teachers and students alike were dressed for the occasion in their wedding and funeral suits. There were flowers on the examining board's table. Four teachers sat on the board. The students - in groups of four to 10 - sat facing them. In back of the room the rest of the faculty gathered to watch the fray. From 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. the questions were fired: "What philosophical principles can be derived from quantum physics?" "What is the role of religion in British politics? (answered in English)" "What is a Bundesstaat (state in the Federal Republic)?" "How did Hitler become Reichsfuehrer?" "What are the basic principles of chemistry?" The Oberprimaner were in good spirits. I couldn't see why. A teacher later remarked somewhat cynically that this wasn't such a serious business - that the student's grade was pretty well determined before he faced this firing squad. Not so. I listened to some of the final grading. Dr. Floerke would like to alter this Reifeprüfung (maturity exam). He calls it overdone. In a proposal to the Hessian Ministry of Culture six years ago he suggested: 1--the exam be shortened to three hours, 2--the students be examined as a group, not as individuals. Apparently the proposal fell on deaf ears.

Graduation came eight days after the Abitur at the Liebigschule. Some 270 guests crowded into the school's small auditorium. It began at 11:25 a.m. There were earnest speeches by the class teacher, the junior class president, a representative of the parents, Dr. Floerke, and a city official. Two poems were recited and the school orchestra gave several renditions. The finale was Schubert's Heroica. Conductor Krum-scheid was in his glory. His arms flew and so did his hair. The music swelled, sunshine streamed through the windows, and my heart was up-lifted - except for one thought: The 17 boys who graduated represented a class that had begun school nine years before with 94 students. The others had fallen by the wayside, knocked off by tough exams and hard requirements.

The percentage of those who never finish high school in Germany varies from 60 to over 70 per cent. It's the main thing that's wrong with these schools. Dr. Floerke bemoans it too. "They too have a right to a decent education," he said. In a recent article in the Giessener Anzeiger he developed this feeling further. He said the low percentage of graduates is based on a "negative principle of selection." The way to improve the situation, he suggests, would be to make the curriculum in the high schools a little less stiff and to strengthen the lower schools. "Isn't this an injustice when we close our eyes to this (percentage of fallout)?" Dr. Floerke asked. It certainly is.

How about the future for German high schools. Dr. Floerke, who calls himself a "sceptical optimist," states the problems this way: "We must teach our students to cope with their own era - to develop their self-confidence and self-reliance. ...We need technicians, but technicians with souls. We can't allow general education to go under in the age of specialization. ...The German tends to look up to the State and say: 'I can't change it.' This resignation, this pulling on the sleepingcap, must change." Floerke has opponents. I asked about them. He chuckled, "They look at the world with eyes that didn't require glasses a couple of centuries ago." Floerke, I repeat, wears glasses - good ones.

David Binder