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The German Academic Exchange Service
in London – The early years*

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The 25th anniversary this year of the re-opening of the London office of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) will invoke a feeling of instant nostalgia only in a few people who have been in the university business generally and in that of academic links between Great Britain and in Germany in particular for a long time. But for them the year 1952 marked the end of one period and the beginning of another in German educational reconstruction after the second World War. To be in favour of academic interchange across frontiers nowadays is like saying that one is in favour of a sound economy or of accident-free traffic or of political morality. This was not always so, and it is the part the German Academic Exchange Service has been allowed to play in helping to bring about those climatic conditions in which alone academic mobility can flourish which gives rise to some modest commemoration.

The German Academic Exchange Service itself was 50 years old in 1975. It belongs to that peculiar kind of private or semi-public body which sprang up in Germany after the first World War, the traumatic effects of which, if one is to believe those who experienced both wars, caused even more of a break in international relations, including cultural relations, than the second one. These bodies were, in effect, emergency associations, institutions which the academic community itself created in order to achieve that which Government, as then

constituted, would not do or was not then able to do, or was not able to do to the desired degree. All through the early years of the Weimar Republic we can observe the formation and frequent re-grouping of organisations with a broad spectrum of tasks and aims, ranging from student welfare bodies on the one side, via professional societies of university personnel and associations of research workers to the teaching and research establishments themselves, inside or outside the universities, on the other. They had in common an interest in overcoming the international isolation into which they had been thrust by the political events of the previous years, and the isolation of one from the other.

The idea of self-help, therefore, was at the basis of the German Academic Exchange Service. If wider and overriding public concern soon made itself felt in the various forms in which government alone can express such concern, it was to the credit of the democratic Governments of the time that they remained enlightened enough to make use of these instruments of academic interchange without essentially wishing to dictate their direction, or the values they wished to re-establish and uphold.

That the Nazi period and its apocalyptic final stage had a pernicious influence on such institutions and finally destroyed them altogether is a matter of unfortunate record, and has been documented elsewhere. It should, however, also be remembered, that because of their devotion to international scholarship, these institutions were amongst the last to succumb, and at least some of its officers and scholars were called upon to pay the price of courage.

It is astonishing how little time it took after 1945 for a conviction to gain ground that organisations for academic interchange must be re-created. It is even more remarkable that not only the German administration and the German institutions of higher learning, who could hope to be amongst the beneficiaries of the re-opening of frontiers, shared this conviction. In Germany, government, in the late forties and until the "Bonn Convention" of 1952, terminating the Occupation Statute of April 1949, meant not only the administrations of the Federal Länder or the Federal Government of September 1949, but also, and prominently so, the Allied Administration in its various manifestations. Those people who were charged with the "control" of what remained of Western Germany in the three zones into which it and Berlin were divided, came to feel a personal concern for recon-

struction, including university reconstruction, which it is difficult to imagine for those who have not lived through this period.

The re-foundation of the German Academic Exchange Service early in 1950 thus happened by three strands coming together: firstly, there was the strong desire to re-establish academic links on the part of German institutions of higher learning. These were in the main, but not exclusively, represented by the West German Rectors' Conference, whose elected officers were usually scholars of international repute. Secondly, there existed a resolve on the part of the German Federal Government, as well as of the Land Governments, that never again should academic relations be the tool of cultural propaganda, and that therefore a large measure of self-government should exist in cultural relations between Germany and countries abroad, of which academic ties formed so important a part. Thirdly, and this was probably decisive, men and women in the Allied Armed Forces, later the Control Commission, and later still the High Commissions and Embassies, came to the aid of that sector of German public life which they had been sent out to control. Not for all of them can it be said that the road from London or Paris or Washington to a small town in Germany was the road to Damascus, but something of a feeling of conversion was present. Obviously, the increasing political tensions between East and West also played a part, but at least as far as the United Kingdom's role in Germany is concerned, once political steps had been taken in a certain direction, one must look towards individuals without whom that which has been achieved would not have happened or at least not so soon.

It has been said that the British Zone of Germany was fortunate in that it was considered such a problem by the British, that a Minister was made responsible for it within the Foreign Office, and the name of LORD LONGFORD (still better known in Germany as LORD PAKENHAM) must inevitably be mentioned. Much in advance of public and published opinion in the United Kingdom, during 1947 and 1948, he laid the ground-work for that rapid development which took place in the early 1950s. It was he, the successor of JOHN HYND, and the staffs in the German Department of the Foreign Office, who created a climate with rare political courage in which the first steps were taken in the direction of a rapprochement, but which were in reality steps towards reconciliation. Indeed the Christian element in all this was never very far away. The old German Academic Exchange

Service itself had sprung from a feeling of concern first voiced by senior members and students of the University of Heidelberg in the mid-20s, and it was from Heidelberg and to Heidelberg that, in the context of oecumenical relations, people like KENNETH RICHES, later Bishop of Lincoln, but then head of an Anglican College in Oxford, and EDWARD BOYLE, just out of university, and at the beginning of an outstanding political career, established those links in '47 to '49 which were later strengthened by people like ERNEST BARKER and MICHAEL FOSTER, who underwent the rigours and deprivations of life in a German university of the time before the currency reform of 1949. They were the first British Guest Professors at the University of Cologne in 1947-48 and are still remembered there. The German Academic Exchange Service later created scholarships tenable in Oxford and in Germany, commemorating Michael Foster's name.

A special mention must be made of ROBERT BIRLEY. He came to Germany in 1947 from his Headmastership of Charterhouse, and returned to Great Britain in 1949 to become Headmaster of Eton. People in Germany were at the time not quite sure who had chosen whom, when the post of Educational Advisor to the Military Governor, Control Commission, Germany was created: Was it Sir BRIAN ROBERTSON who suggested taking up the appointment to the Head of his son's school, or was it MR. BIRLEY himself who saw the challenge of a post which did not then exist in any establishment sense at all? It appears, however, that SIR JOHN MAUD (later LORD RADCLIFFE-MAUD), then permanent Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Education, and a great friend, suggested to MR. BIRLEY that he spend a sabbatical term in Germany. BIRLEY did so and a report was the result. It was as a consequence of this that he was appointed Head of the Education Branch with the title of Educational Advisor.

He came to Germany as a school-master, and one believes that this is what he would like to be remembered as, even though he subsequently lent his distinction to a number of university chairs. Up to that time, though, he does not seem to have addressed himself very often to university audiences, but he was struck, so he tells us in an interview of 1975, by the large number of German teachers he encountered when lecturing on English Shakespeare Criticism since 1933 during a visit to Germany in 1946.

Perhaps this experience played a part in his decision to come, and while his field was the whole of education, it was on the university

scene that his influence came to be felt most deeply, and not only in what then was the British Zone of Germany. In the course of his work he became well known to the German administrators he had to deal with, but to many professors and students of that time he also was the man who explained T. S. Eliot to them. In conferences, intimate talks and lectures up and down the country he advised, goaded and challenged his partners to action.

In his person he, more than others perhaps, displayed that 'cogency for behaviour', the loss of which Eliot had lamented in his "The Idea of a Christian Society". Birley made a decisive contribution to the mood of the period which could be described as one of lack of belief in easy solutions, but open to transformation into hesitant optimism through trust between individuals. One would say: "If you will do so-and-so, I will do such-and-such", and one would expect that bond to hold.

The actual re-opening of its London Office has been described elsewhere as the culmination of the first phase of the DAAD's reconstruction after the War. The actual date was the 7th May 1952. BIRLEY, then already at Eton, had, during his time at the Control Commission, played a decisive part in helping the Bonn headquarters on its way. He was also President of a British educational charity, the EDUCATIONAL INTERCHANGE COUNCIL, with offices in Parliament Street, Westminster. He, together with FRANK BELL, its chairman, saw to it that the DAAD's London Branch was received as a guest in premises so near the seat of power—Downing Street on the one side, the Houses of Parliament on the other, and Westminster Abbey not too distant for prayer in time of crisis. The grandeur of the address was only exceeded by the modesty of the actual bureau. The EDUCATIONAL INTERCHANGE COUNCIL's General Secretary JOHN CORSELLIS acted as host, found a room and a "Royal" typewriter of an age just below that at which Secretaries are wont to rebel. He also found the Secretary. The most elegant feature of the house apart from the latter and a number of half broken but still beautiful Adams fireplaces, was the Ministry of Works Commissionaire, resplendent in his uniform and willing to endure, and make heroic efforts to understand, the murder of the English language that was daily committed by what was first a trickle but soon became a stream of German students and other visitors to that one man, one Secretary, one desk and one telephone outpost of the Service.

No. 43 Parliament Street was said to be haunted. Certainly, the first Girton girl in the employ of the DAAD has often seen Nell Gwyn's ghost wandering about the three staircases from which innumerable rooms issued. Opposite, on the Whitehall side, lay the Gilbert Scott ministries, then considered rather passé by champions of that extraordinary Bauhaus/Festival-of-Britain-style of architecture but soon to be recognised again as the stuff capital cities are made of. At the back, (the office having been moved to the back, then to the front of the building, then back again at different times), old New Scotland Yard and Cannon Row Police Station, always good for a conversational opening. It is probably true that 43 Parliament St. must lie deep in the unconscious of thousands of German students and not a small number of English students and students of other nationalities, especially after an office of the GERMAN STUDENT TRAVEL SERVICE complemented the DAAD bureau; for many of them it was their first port of call in a strange and often overpowering environment.

It was also missing persons bureau, a post office, a bank, a club, a marriage guidance clinic, a labour exchange (laws permitting) and many other things besides. The actual task of the office was to be "active in the field of Anglo-German academic interchange in the widest sense of the word". This was all the brief the first holder of the title of 'Head of the Branch Office' got before leaving Bonn, together with what to him then appeared to be a cheque for an extraordinary amount of money which he was earnestly advised to keep in a special satchel concealed on his person while travelling on a converted troop carrier from the Hook of Holland to Harwich, and which he was to deposit with a reputable bank as soon as it opened at 9 or was it 10 o'clock on Monday morning!

„Furtherance of academic relations" meant for the representative first of all to be sitting in his office, but it also meant that on the third evening after his arrival he was expected to sit on a panel together with a distinguished and not unfriendly academic, and the not less distinguished foreign editor (Jewish and much mutilated by the war), of a now defunct Sunday tabloid: to discuss and, where possible, to defend the behaviour of the German officer corps in Poland and Russia during the war. It was only the obvious fact that the by contrast rather undistinguished but unexpectedly available German panel member was so young that he could not possibly have done any of the things which were the subject of debate which secured him a sympathetic hearing.

For a long time afterwards, even taking into account the general fairness of the academic public and of the public at large, the friendliness of the friends soon made, and the devotion to a better image of Germany at all levels and by all manner of people on and off the staff of the DAAD, the London office was much concerned to let it be seen that a new beginning was intended. Indeed, if it was the youth of the first incumbent which led to his appointment in the first place, there must, in the second place, have been the idea that it would not do to have a former diplomat about when there was only a German diplomatic "Agent" but not yet an Embassy in London. That HANS SCHLANGE-SCHÖNINGEN, though in moral and physical stature the Cabinet Minister he had been, (and from whom as from all of his successors, the office received many kindnesses), had the personal rank of Ambassador, but the substance only of a Consul General, was also a sign of the times. One likes to think that the establishment of the DAAD bureau encouraged the German side to propose, and the British side to welcome, the establishment of further formal opportunities for contacts, and the BRITISH COUNCIL to expand its services in Germany.

Anyone born 25 years ago who now looks at the many links between people and institutions in Great Britain and Germany will have to make an effort to imagine with what small means it was all begun. Whereas nowadays in the bilateral as well as in the European context, scientific projects costing millions of Pounds and Marks are jointly administered, moved physically across frontiers, staffed by multinational, multilingual, and not inexpensive bodies of experts, and explained at all levels to fellow experts as well as laymen by an equally expensive flood of publications, in the early 1950s it was considered worthwhile to have arranged for a number of girls (or boys in rarer cases) to stay au-pair in the old English or German family. If one remembers, on the other hand, that a whole generation of German teachers of English had grown up, who had never had the opportunity of actually hearing the language they taught spoken in its proper environment, (and who were probably responsible for the number of funny accents which the previously mentioned Commissionaire had to contend with), the zeal with which exchange programmes for language assistants in schools was pushed forward can be understood. Technical training arrangements also gave a high yield at low cost.

A special feature of the work, as moving now as then, was, that

among the first contacts of the office were those with that group of people which Germany had thrown out or done worse to in the early 1930s. To say that one felt a sense of terror at having to confront somebody, most of whose family might have been wiped out in Buchenwald, would be the grossest understatement. But one of the main tasks of the early years was to advise these survivors of German racial and political persecution on matters relating to financial and other restitution on educational grounds.

The new office also was to be a source of information to government departments, universities, schools and professional associations on the German educational scene. In practice, it also provided Women's Institutes, Workers' Educational Associations, Extra-Mural societies, clubs and other more esoteric bodies with courses and lectures on aspects of the German educational system. In the first six months of its existence, so the records show, more than twenty such lectures and talks were given. Often, on the part of audiences, and of recipients of the other information emanating from 43 Parliament St., there must have been a sense of *déjà vu* or worse, of which its originators were happily unaware. One still sometimes shudders at the bravado then displayed.

The office received much help from many sides in fulfilling its tasks. It was one of the seminal experiences of its youthful Head, to be visited in his garret by the then over 70-year-old Nobel Laureate MAX VON LAUE who, on a visit to London as a foreign member of the Royal Society, gave encouragement with these words: "If you can use me, do so". This was on the third day of the Office's opening. The office has since then seen a number of distinguished people within its walls, people already distinguished and people who were to become so in the future, apart, of course, from less distinguished ones. It was another winner of a Nobel Prize who, 15 years later used similar words: this time in English: "Here I am, make use of me in whatever way you wish." That was HOWARD, LORD FLOREY, in whose name the German Academic Exchange Service has since established a number of Anglo-German scholarships.

The break-through, as far as the reputation in Germany of the London office was concerned, (and it was for many reasons most important that it should have such a reputation), probably came on the occasion of the European Rectors Conference in Cambridge in 1955. This was an extraordinary gathering, both because of the display,

almost for the last time in Western Europe, of the sartorial splendours of Vice-Chancellors and Rectors, and because of the even greater splendour of the intellectual and academic power of its participants, led by the DUKE OF EDINBURGH and given its guidelines by GILBERT MURRAY, who even then was living history. The conference came at a fortunate juncture for Germany. It fell to the office to help in the preparations for the large German delegation and to brief it on the more difficult aspects of the evergrowing number of academic contacts. Among the German Rectors represented were HEIMPEL of Göttingen, then the not so secret candidate for President of the Federal Republic of Germany, PERCY ERNST SCHRAMM, one of the few German professors who not only believed that scholarship of the highest order could be fun, but also showed it by not fearing to appear the brilliant man he was, and MARCHIONINI of Munich, one of a long line of distinguished academics, with whom the Munich universities seem to have been and still are particularly blessed. And there was also EMIL LEHNARTZ, the biochemist from Münster, who at that time perhaps had already held more posts in German academic life than he could remember, but who, one believes, got his resolve to be the third President of the DAAD in its post Second-World-War history while at this Cambridge meeting.

A whole lot would have to be written about him, and especially about the happy coincidence in time of his presidency with that of the tenure of DIETER SATTLER at the head of the Cultural Department of the German Foreign Office. If a certain dionysian element was present, checked, if necessary from time to time by HUBERTUS SCHEIBE, the General Secretary during most of these years, it was also LEHNARTZ' soundness of judgement which let his collaborators be confident in their own.

Since that time the German Academic Exchange Service has grown. Its budget, which was 2 million marks in 1956, has amounted to ninety million marks in 1976. The London office has fully participated in this expansion. In fact, foreshadowed in its work of 25 years ago were the great tasks in the field of development aid. From the beginning the London office was concerned with establishing relations with what was to become the independent Commonwealth. In the course of time it has shed some of the early programmes, notably those concerned with exchanges below university level. It has, however, continued to assist the international relations of those institutions of higher learning, which

since the middle '60s have become increasingly part of the tertiary sector. The German Academic Exchange Service was thus the first institution to include schools of engineering in its bilateral programmes. Amongst other projects it has sponsored are those relating to an intensive exchange of senior university personnel, special programmes for younger students and prospective teachers of English and German, and, in the European context, programmes for young professional lawyers, both in order to enable them to understand the legal systems of each others' countries, and to permit them to contribute to the growing corpus of European law.

But essentially the tasks of the German Academic Exchange Service have remained the same: it assists people, and in the widest sense of the word all activities of the DAAD are concerned with the provision of finance through scholarships and fellowships of one kind or another.

At a meeting in London at the beginning of March 1977 the London office intends to bring together as many as possible of the British academics who have participated in the programmes of the DAAD during the last 25 years. They will come from the sciences and from the arts, including the visual and communicative arts and from the field of music. They are, today, in a variety of positions: some have stayed on in the universities as university teachers, others are in schools, and by far the larger number appear to have gone into the professions and into Government service. While one knows that most of them hold highly responsible posts, contacts with some of them have been easier than with others, because as university teachers for instance they have remained in the academic complex, and in fact have helped to draw successive student generations into the orbit of the DAAD. But the meeting should also provide an opportunity to see again face to face and after a long period those, with whom it has been less easy to keep in touch. One would be intrigued to know what has become of, say, the veterinary surgeon who obtained a grant, no doubt for reasons of academic excellence, but also because he was able to suggest a cure for a horse which the chairman of that particular Selection Board had entered for the Derby, (and on which all the Board members lost their shirts, when the cure apparently did not work). One would also be interested to learn where the soprano now is who thanked her accompanist kindly for his contribution to the Schubert song, "but hadn't he been a bit too fast in the second part?", not recognising that the

accompanist, who was also the chairman of the Board, happened to be GERALD MOORE.

If nostalgia, then, must be one of the emotions of that meeting in London, it will also afford an opportunity to look ahead, and one hopes that this brief description of the pioneer years of the London office will have helped to explain why those engaged in the furtherance of British-German academic relations are not at all despondent.

