

Shadows Over Old Heidelberg

*Students at German Universities
Capitulate to Nazis; Colorful Customs
and Centuries-Old
Freedom Sacrificed*



The German Government has now "clamped down" on student corps like this one

To-day shadows have fallen upon the once-proud German universities. The professors have been forced out of the temples of learning or driven into exile or subjected to a subtle pressure which has changed their academic detachment into clumsy conformity with Hitler's ideals."

Shepard Stone, who received his Doctorate at the University of Berlin, so began an article entitled "Twilight of the German University," in the April, 1934, issue of *Current History*.

Up to last week the process of consummating the so-called Nazification of the German universities had been complete except for the resistance of the aristocratic student bodies. Stedfastly, since Hitler's assumption of power, such organizations as the Deutsche Burschenschaft and the Koesener Students' Corporation had refused to yield their centuries-old freedom of thought and action.

Groups Capitulate

Last week both capitulated. They dissolved voluntarily. The Deutsche organization, embracing the famous student dueling groups, was founded in 1815. It has 36,000 members, of whom 26,000 are alumni. The Koesener Corporation, created in 1855, comprises the most exclusive student bodies of Germany, including the famous student corps of Heidelberg and Bonn.

Adolf Hitler, boring in unflinchingly for two years, had set November 4 for a showdown. By that time all student bodies were to make up their minds whether to join the Nazi students' league or face the alternative of forcible dismemberment. To avoid this disgrace they disbanded.

Early in September the hostility of these two powerful recalcitrant groups to Nazi pressure reached a crisis. They refused to expel from their ranks undergraduates

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and graduates of Jewish or partly Jewish descent. Dr. Hans Heinrich Lammers, Permanent Secretary of State for the Reich Chancellery, thereupon dropped them from the Nazi federation of student corps. But Doctor Lammers, discouraged because he had been unable to unify all German student bodies, resigned the directorship of this federation.

Exit Regalia

Under the dissolution of the Deutsche group, German universities will lose one-half, or about 110, of their fraternities. Their houses henceforth will be used as Nazi meeting-halls; and their resplendent regalia will be replaced by the Nazi brown shirt. Likewise, instead of the colorful ceremonies, demonstrations and political discussions will be the order of the day.

Behind these developments *The Manchester Guardian* saw a conflict between Herr Baldur von Shirach, head of the Hitler Youth, and the old student corps.

"The student corps are exclusive clubs, membership of which has been a valued *cachet* in life after university days are over," this great Liberal English daily commented. "The federation which Doctor Lammers headed includes not only the present corps members but also the thousands of 'old boys' among whom a sort of aristocratic Freemasonry is cultivated."

Note of Irony

Ironically, it was the student corps which gave the early Nazi movement a substantial push in academic circles. Disappointed by treatment from democratic Germany, the *Volks-Zeitung* (Vienna) pointed out, the students fell in wholeheartedly with the new political party.

"This hand-in-hand-association continued up to and after Hitler's assumption of power," this newspaper declared. "Then came the period at which the Nazi hierarchy, with the aid of the newly-formed National Socialist Student League, sought to attain a unification of the student mind and student life. This was undertaken because the Nazis at last recognized the significance of the universities as a means to the 'totalitarian' formation of the new German world."

It turned out that economic necessity lay behind the students' decision to dissolve their ancient bodies. Under the new German law membership in the Hitler Youth and student organizations is indispensable for a professional career.

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