
Adventist Colleges Abroad

Notes From a Recent Itinerary

By Donald R. Sahly

Opportunities for study, the excitement of travel, and the challenge of immersing oneself in another culture are realities for students who study with Adventist Colleges Abroad (ACA).

Through the North American Division Board of Higher Education, Adventist colleges in the United States and Canada affiliate with three institutions in Europe: Colegio Adventista de Sagunto (in Spain), Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen (in Austria), and Institut Adventiste du Salève (in France). I found it a stimulating educational experience to visit these schools, whose creative faculty and students work in unique cultural environments.

Colegio Adventista de Sagunto

The first school I visited nestles on the side of a sloping hill covered by Valencia orange groves. On the nearby horizon one can see the exquisite blue of the Mediterranean Sea, set off by a mountain *promenade* featuring the ruins of an ancient Roman fortress.

Dr. Julian Melgosa, director of the Spanish language program, is a talented educator. Having studied in the United States, he understands the needs of students and visitors from other cultures. The faculty at Sagunto creatively seeks to make language study a quality educational and cultural experience for overseas students.

The students testified to the faculty's caring attitude and their eagerness for students to benefit from their stay in Spain. They rated the faculty as good teachers, and reported: "If you follow the program as outlined, you learn Spanish; and you learn it well."

When a student arrives on campus, he or she receives orientation materials in English. Next, each student takes a proficiency test in Spanish. In addition to the courses in Spanish vocabulary, grammar, and literature, the curriculum includes courses in art, history, folklore, geography, and religion. Credits earned

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for these classes and all courses in the ACA program, are transferrable to any North American Adventist college. Most students thought that the history of Spain course was one of the most difficult and challenging to master.

The school library contains a quality collection of books that adequately supports the courses offered. The assortment of Spanish magazines on library shelves includes such church periodicals as the *Adventist Review*. The students regularly use this functional library to complete required assignments.

The residence halls are newly constructed. Although the water system used to be a problem, much has been done during the past year to ensure a constant supply of water.

The staff at Sagunto carefully matches each foreign student with a compatible, Spanish-speaking roommate. As Sagunto is largely an elementary and high school, there can be an age differential between ACA students and their Spanish-speaking roommates. While some of the former found the gap in ages a distraction, others enjoyed the challenge of being companions to young students who found being away from home lonely and unsettling.

Some college-aged Spanish students

live on campus and attend the university in nearby Valencia. Where possible ACA students room with young people their own age. Many friendships have developed between the ACA group and their Spanish-speaking classmates.

ACA students in Sagunto have 23 days of guided touring each year as part of their regular instructional program. In the fall they visit Castilla and Madrid; in the winter, the principality of Andorra, Catalina, and Barcelona; in the spring Andalucia (southern Spain), and Tangiers, Morocco.

The cafeteria and food service occupy a new building at the center of campus. Here again the administration has shown sensitivity to the needs of foreign students. Many of the suggestions and requests of the ACA students have resulted in improved food service from their viewpoint. The cafeteria is a bright and cheerful place that offers nutritious and abundant food.

Also located on the campus are a vegetarian food factory, a large and thriving Seventh-day Adventist church, and a small seminary program to train ministers and church workers. Like many Adventist schools outside the North American Division, Sagunto operates from a mission-school perspective and philosophy, enrolling students from a non-Adventist background. This means that the educational program serves as an evangelistic outreach of the church. As a result, Sagunto is the largest Adventist education institution in Spain.

Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen

Bogenhofen is located in a rural country setting among rolling hills with small sheep and dairy farms. The cities of Braunau, Austria, the birthplace of Hitler; and Simbach, Germany, are only a few miles away and easily accessible by daily train service. Students walk just one-third of a mile to the nearest train station. Bicycles are provided to ACA students who

prefer to use them to ride to town or throughout the countryside.

Otto Riegler — Herr Riegler to the students — has organized an efficient and effective language program. A caring person, Herr Riegler expresses a genuine interest in his students.

The language program is divided into intermediate and advanced levels. German subjects from the core of each level are supplemented by a variety of optional and elective courses. The curriculum is designed to help students meet the requirements for the highly respected German language proficiency exams at the close of each year. Subjects offered include German literature, reading, composition, diction, Western civilization and Western arts. Almost without exception, ACA students pass the Goethe (language) exams at the required level.

The campus has new dormitory facilities that surpass the standards of most North American institutions. Each large, well-furnished room has its own private bathroom.

This Austrian college offers an excellent mixture of cultures. About half of the students come from North America, the rest from Britain, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe.

Students are granted one weekend per month to leave campus and travel on their own. The school also organizes several tours each year — usually to Vienna, Salzburg, Berlin, and Munich. During the 10-day spring vacation, students travel widely in small groups of four to six persons using automobiles or the economical Eurail-Pass system. It was fascinating to hear their tales of travel to Italy, Scandinavia, Great Britain, France and other places.

The faculty work hard to make the ACA students' experience profitable. In fact, a number of faculty members hold several positions on campus. Students expressed pleasure that the faculty take time to listen—and put student suggestions to work in many places on campus.

The food service is healthful and plain, but adequate. Scrumptious potato and noodle dishes predominate, with lots of homemade bread. The fresh vegetables are picture perfect. The cafeteria staff has responded to student suggestions for a Thanksgiving dinner (American style), to which the whole school is invited.

In its approach to student programs and rules, Bogenhofen resembles a North American academy rather than a college. Participants in the ACA achieve the purpose of the program, learning German, with outstanding results.

Students appreciate being required to room with German-speaking students.

and the lake below. Travel by car, bus, train, or plane is readily accessible, and students take advantage of this prime European location to explore the countries around them.

The Institut is often called "Collonges," after the town in which the school is located. It is a college campus in the truest sense of the word, although it also houses a large elementary school and a high school. The well-developed campus with more than 100 college-age adults, provides a collegiate atmosphere. The Institut serves as a seminary for southern France, the French Polynesian islands, and French-speaking Africa. More than 60 men and women are training there for the ministry. The ACA program serves these and other college students as well as several missionary families preparing for service in French-speaking areas of the world.

Dr. Daniel Gutekunst is the well-organized and efficient director of the ACA program. With his background in psychology and study in the United States, he makes an outstanding administrator.

The excellent dormitories at Colonges are quite comparable with those on American campuses. Unlike Sagunto or Bogenhofen, most ACA students at Colonges room with Americans or others of English-speaking origin. The deans, as well as the faculty, work hard to assure the student's immersion in the French language and culture.

Since most students arrange their own weekend and vacation travel, the college has fewer tour days in its calendar than Sagunto or Bogenhofen. The school does organize a big trip to Paris each year. Other short trips of two to four days are organized by faculty members. I enjoyed spending several hours listening as each student described with excitement his or her spring vacation experience. Several spoke of God's leading and protection, and of testifying about His love to those they met.

The ACA is a productive, positive, and spiritual experience for the students who participate. Although the program was initially established for North American students, the recent enrollment of students from other countries provides a positive cultural exchange for all concerned. Each of the ACA campuses welcomes students from around the world. In each program teachers and students give consideration, respect, and Christian love to one another as brothers and sisters in the family of God. □

Dr. Donald R. Sahly is President of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, Collegedale, Tennessee. He visited each of the Adventist Colleges Abroad campuses in the spring of 1990 on behalf of the North American Division Board of Higher Education.

Oberndorf Chapel, where "Silent Night" was first performed, is just 10 miles from the campus at Bogenhofen.

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However, like Sagunto, there is an age differential of three to five years between ACA students and their German-speaking roommates. The deans show great sensitivity, working out roommate problems satisfactorily early in the year.

Bogenhofen is an emerging mission-oriented school that has shifted from the theological seminary to a high school, that provides an outreach to non-Adventist students in the city of Braunau. The financial needs of the school dictated and demanded the increased enrollment. Steps are also being taken to enlarge the ACA program. The new residence halls will facilitate this expansion. The administration and faculty, a warm and hospitable group, continually make their students and visitors from other cultures feel comfortable and accepted.

Institut Adventist du Salève

Located high on a hill at the base of the mountain from which it gets its name, "du Salève," this school has a magnificent view of Geneva, Switzerland,