

Analyzing Youth

When it comes to polls and young people, evidently, you pay your money and you take your choice. Which view shall one take of modern youth: alarmist or admiring? It depends at least partially on what poll one reads.

The conservative National Review magazine, for example, sponsored a poll on 12 representative American campuses the results of which in the magazine's view made the republic's foundations look rather shaky. Almost half the students favored socialization of basic U.S. industries; seven of 10 would have the U. S. unilaterally suspend atomic weapons development; 40 per cent called American society "sick"; three out of four would permit Marxists to teach citizenship courses in American public schools; and 54 per cent, given the alternatives of world war with the Soviet Union or surrender to the Soviet Union, would choose surrender.

But a Gallup college survey conducted about the same time as the National Review poll showed that 73 per cent of students polled nationally gave the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) a "favorable" rating. Of those holding favorable views, one-quarter gave NATO a "highly favorable"

rating. Only 21 per cent held negative opinions. NATO is of course basically a military organization dedicated to the prevention of Communist expansionism in Europe. If students are, as often alleged, antimilitary and "soft on the Reds," this poll certainly doesn't show it.

Still another poll taken among youth of the six-nation European Common Market listed Switzerland as the nation in which the young people had the most confidence, followed closely by the United States and Britain. The Soviet Union and Red China were at the bottom of their list. The students overwhelmingly rejected Communism and favored European unification along the lines of a "U.S. of Europe."

If there is a common thread uniting these disparate surveys, it is that today's Western college students tend to be internationalist. They may be somewhat disillusioned by real or imagined sins of their home nation-states. Their replies sometimes hearten, sometimes disappoint, their elders. Their answers sometimes seem contradictory. But if they are confused, they may be no more so than the world their parents have made.