Noticeboard

Conference

Boy Scout and Girl Guide Movements in Europe

Montpellier, France, 21–23 September 1999

In France, the historiography of the boy scout and girl guide movements, and more particularly of their Catholic branch, opens up a field that has been widely researched for the last fifteen years.

Jean-Jacques Gauthé's book, *Le scoutisme en France, Inventaire de la bibliographie et des sources* (1997), which proves to be a most useful tool, mentions, among other publications, two general studies, one conference, quite a number of university studies and some monographs that have been roughly sketched by those locally in charge of movements. Such scientific works, together with the idea of gathering documents in record-offices and with the rise in numbers of books of memories, reveal an increasing concern for a better understanding, in the course of time, of a multifarious movement which is not merely a place of 'juvenile sociability'.

We have felt that it is necessary for us to widen the scope of our study to the whole of Europe. Their origins, their crises, their purposes and their meetings, either jamborees or international camps on a smaller scale, show that boy scout and girl guide movements, and more particularly their confessional branches that have a sort of unity of their own, are above all deeply rooted in European culture. So it is important to locate them in their specific dimensions in order to bring out the ruptures as well as the continuity that will lead us to a more exact definition of such movements.

Youth, as an entity, half-way between childhood and adulthood, is part and parcel of our present time. Consequently, for such centralising powers that a state, a political party, or a religion may be, youth on the one hand reflects our society and on the other is a quite autonomous entity. That is the reason why we mean to focus our attention on three interconnected matters:

– The theme of the 'occidental political pattern': liberal democracies and the authoritarian or totalitarian states, World Ward II, decolonisation.

– The theme of 'Christendom': the connection between spiritual and temporal powers, oecumenism, the alterations in the liturgies of the different Churches.

– The theme of 'modernity': the place devoted to women in society, the link between Man and Nature, cultural pluralism, the challenge of the establishment.

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