

THE HISTORY OF GUIDES AND SCOUTS OF EUROPE

Here is the plan of the intervention :

- Introduction
- The idea and the intuitions
- The acts of faith and the symbols

Aims :

- To give you steady bases about the creation of the Movement.
- To be able to dispatch a just and true information.
- To give back to our associations the sense of their common origin.

Introduction

Our history started here, in Cologne. It is not just by chance that the first non French Federal Commissioner deals today with our topic: the history of European Guides and Scouts.

Was it intentional or not? Never mind. We are now on the place where our history started, 54 years ago. A German history, if I may say so. A Russian history too. A history that Belgium, Luxemburg and Italy will join quite soon. A history of peoples injured in their flesh, in their children, by the apocalyptic violence of war.

And those among you who may have known the battle fields of our present world may evaluate the state of trauma in which our German brothers and sisters were in 1956.

I am going to talk to you about this history which may still change the world, like yeast in the dough.

I want to precise that I am now speaking on behalf of Maurice Ollier, who is a living witness of the history of our Movement. He is also a "fighting man" in so far as he fought with others for decades on all fronts, like all of you, so that our beautiful Movement may remain faithful to its origins without corrupting itself in the various calculations that generally threaten scouting:

- Political influences,
- Pedagogical drifts,
- ... or personal assumptions of power.

At the end of this introduction, I would like to say that we are a free people. The people of God's children. The people of slaves who have come out of Egypt and who are crossing the Red Sea : this biblical story is ours. We'll see the reason later on.

Part 1 – The European Guides and Scouts, an astonishing idea

The notion of Europe was born in the XVIIth century... And the paternity of this term is claimed by all the big nations !

Let's forget about the Greek and Cretan myths and look at Europe in 1956.

Europe remains wrecked, in spite of the reconstruction, the Marshall plan (ended in 1951). Nazism has made its damages, as a distant consequence of the clever and foolish geopolitics of Great Britain : in order to keep the control of waters in front of France, this maritime power has done all it could to bring chaos onto the earth.

The great Empires were "frank" or "german", two cousin powers, in competition, having such mutual esteem that they poured out blood.

Let us not be too long on these main historical preambles: but the knowledge of history, our national history of Germany, England, Belgium, France... is nothing else than understanding the context and the movement of ideas that gave birth to our European scouting.

We know that if we ignore this history, we condemn ourselves to giving life to ideas that are far beyond our understanding. We are now in a demanding situation, for our children and for ourselves first.

The child is the adult's father, as an old maxim teaches us.

Cologne 1956... 20 to 30 chiefs and chieftains gather in Macchabeus street ! The town is destroyed... because of area bombing.

They are... catholic and protestant. They belong to the BEP (Bund Europäischer Pfadfinder).

(Note : the BEP was created in 1953 by Hermann von Schrödel zu Simau with the will of becoming European Scouting).

Besides, in Austria, a few months later, feeling the opportunity of history, the Austrian Friedrich Perko changes the name of his movement from Neutraler Pfadfinder Verband to "Europa Scout". At that time, there are very few contacts between the BEP and the "Europa Scout".

As we can see, the European worry is active in the environment of Germanic culture... with a famous antagonism: confessional scouting or neutral scouting!

More deeply, this challenge shows the distinction between:

- A movement educating each young person: movement of young people, scouting.
- A movement being the same for all (principle of laity + equality): movement of youth (often with the risk of totalitarianism).

During BEP camps, the idea and the dream of a reconciled Europe was born.

As soon as 1954, a French Orthodox scout camps with the Germans. Jean-Claude Alain is known as an idealist, a writer of scout novels, a strong and artistic personality.

By friendship and by chance, he is back in Cologne in 1956. He does not understand German very well but he intervenes during a council of over-excited chiefs.

Because of their methodological superiority and above all their numerical superiority and also Friedrich Perko's charisma, the Austrian chiefs want to impose to the German chiefs the nomination of district commissioners.

It is both an inverted Anschluss and humiliation. Germany is occupied, down-hearted but not on the point of yielding its prerogatives.

Behind this antagonism, another one is appearing: the various types of scouting which are offered.

Two models of scouting, coming from Baden Powell, have coexisted since 1930...

- Anglo-saxon scouting: made of consensus, open to all confessions (and later on to coeducation), very Commonwealth like and at the same time extremely formalist and militarist.
- French (and even Latin) scouting: Cartesian, methodic, matured and thought by the educational genius of Catholic pedagogical traditions. This scouting is organized, creative and above all conquering. Because Father Jacques Sevin, as well as other genial priests after him, knows that he has a unique tool to evangelize youth.

What will be born with European Scouting will still be different from these two models. It will be something new.

New wine deserves new jars... we know that perfectly well.

Our German chiefs, led by Karl Hermann Bergner and Karl Schmitz Moormann, decide to choose scouting of French inspiration. Why ?

It is difficult to solve this question because we have no elements or formal proofs. Yet the first texts, the first magazines give quite a precise idea of the inspirations. The Germans know both forms of scouting at that time through troops of occupation:

- The military model (represented by the Anglo-Saxons as well as by Perko's Europa Scouts) which they beware of. The Hitler Jugend is not so far away.
- The French model, from which they protect themselves: Latin people are friendly, talk a lot but seem quite confusing.

However, two French men have gone beyond the orders - others could be quoted but we have not enough time! : father Sevin and Pierre Joubert.

- It is the covenant between thought and symbols.
- And between spiritual commitment and its translation into art.

Before the war, in Europe, everybody could read the "Scout de France". This magazine has inspired several generations.

Attilio Grieco, one of our UIGSE chairmen, told me how moved he was when he spent all his pocket money to read THE scout magazine !

This first reason is going to weigh in the scale.

A second reason, a very strange one, joins the chorus of circumstances: **the Franco-German antagonism**. We love each other very much and we get on the other's nerves in an age-old fight for the domination of the earth. Divided heirs of Charlemagne's Empire, then of the German Holy Empire, we have this fratricide friendship which has given birth to Napoléon (loved, then hated) and Hitler, both considered as butchers by their fellows at the end of their "reign".

And in this love of cats and dogs, a treasure is revealed: don't touch my enemy, whose breath and flesh are nearer to me than you... foreigner!

I invite you to read René Girard and the mimetic crisis perfectly illustrated by our great conflicts.

Third reason: Jean-Claude Alain...

He is famous and has an obvious aura of author of scout novels. Karl Hermann Bergner met him most probably through his scout novels. His future wife (French) worked in the environment of "Signe de Piste".

This leader is not common: French, Orthodox, member of the "Eclaireurs neutres de France". He is in the middle of the assembly of Cologne on November 1st 1956 at random. Of course, he has taken part in fantastic camps with the BEP scouts. He has dreamt with them, and he has been seduced by their free style, very similar to the Wandervögel : to drink black tea, to sing, with the guitar or even the balalaika... Jean-Claude Alain is generous, a good troop leader, and he has a huge heart. **Against his will, he accepts to become the first federal commissioner of European Scouts.**

Here are the three reasons revealed by the documents which are going to launch European Scouting on its trajectory, with some incomprehension however. Jean-Claude Alain does not understand German and some aspects of the German dream will escape to him till the clash.

On November 1956, the figures of the future European Scouts are:

- 30 motivated young people, of two nationalities,
- A German inspiration
- And the Providence, working very discreetly behind.

Part 2 – The acts of faith and the symbols

A – The time of acts of faith

This young scouting needs convictions: it has plenty of them, often quite in advance for their time. Too much in advance...

The chiefs and chieftains who have gathered in the greyness of Cologne have very... German convictions.

Vatican II has not started yet. And the Great Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917 has not been applied because of the Revolution. (Their conclusions are quite similar).

Nevertheless, these chiefs launch three main ideas, as three acts of faith:

1) Ecumenism

- European Scouting will be ecumenical. (This word bothers: today, it has plenty of meanings). What the founders mean is that European Scouting will be open to each Christian confession: Catholic, Reformed, Orthodox.
- By doing this, European Scouts will not be immediately understood in their countries, where the Church authorities will often have difficulties to understand “this richness in diversity”.
- However, I now quote Wilhelm Jung, one of our 30 founders. This is the way he expressed things: “We had known the 30-year-old war. Religion and chapels were no longer a subject of a debate, only the place of understanding and mutual respect. We were no longer quarrelling on these religious questions”. Nothing to add.
- From 1956 to 1965 – end of Vatican II- , this ecumenical position will not be well understood and will lead to firm condemnations of European Scouts.

○

2) Europe

- European Scouting will be... European. At that time, nobody imagined a transversal organization. The ECSC was created in 1952 to control the production of coal and steel, with the agreement of all... (because coal + steel usually produce weapons for war), but it was only the beginning of the political European dream.
- Our scouting is European because of great men not enough mentioned in Europe (in the European institutions) or even in our camps: Schuman, Adenauer, de Gasperi.
 - In front of this war that burst out, they wanted to build a fairer world, a worthier world, and above all a world that would never again get ready to play a new tragedy of war, condemning to death millions of innocent people.
 - Their Europe is definitely ours. It is a Christian Europe. A Europe in which no rule, no procedure can promote the slightest respect of rights: it is a positive Europe, open-minded, with a spirit of enterprise. We are in the free Europe of Christians, of men of common sense.
 - A late text of Schuman gives the spirit of Europe. Probably our founders have seen this text. Anyway, we find in it the spirit of that time (other texts from Schuman and Adenauer have preceded this one) :

“We have to make Europe, not only for the interest of free peoples, but also in order to be able to welcome Eastern Countries who, set free from the bondages that they have supported till now, could ask us their adhesion and our moral support. For many years, we have painfully felt the ideological limit which cuts Europe into two parts. It has been imposed by violence. May it disappear in freedom! We consider as a full part of living Europe all those who have the wish to join us in a reconstituted community. We render homage to their courage, to their faithfulness as well as to their sufferings and to their sacrifices. We must give the example of a united and fraternal Europe. Each step that we make in this direction will constitute a new chance for them. They will need us in the huge task of readaptation that they will have to do (...). Our duty is to be ready”. France Forum, Nr 52, November 1963.

Paul VI will write a similar text on November 9th 1963... in his “Message to the Europeans”.

3) **Baden-Powell's method**

- Finally, European Scouting will be faithful to Baden Powell's method, while adopting standards coming from father Sevin and remaining faithful to national traditions.
 - o Integral application of the "system of patrols"
 - o No co-education
 - o Christian education
- It seems useless to detail the bases of the method that we all prize. *A priori*, all of us here know them!

B) Symbols

Some symbols are going to express this commitment. They deserve our attention, in order to check their meaning with our young people.



- **1) The eight-point cross in 1957 :**

- o Created by the Germans, the eight-point cross becomes the symbol of the first Guides and Scouts of Europe. From the very beginning, our founders were looking for a common sign: the cross of Christ, in which all can recognize themselves.
- o Because he is studying theology in France, Karl Hermann Bergner meets Pierre Joubert, who improves the badge.
- o The origin of this cross is the anchored cross of the abbey of Morimond (founded in 1115 – dioceses of Langres) which will become later on historically the cross of Saint John of Jerusalem.
 - Morimond will spread out in France, in Germany, in Poland, in Bohemia, in Spain... It is quite symbolic!

And the Beatitudes?

- The eight beatitudes are associated to this eight-point cross. We even used to recite the eight beatitudes in the first camps of European Scouts, after the flag ceremony :
- *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*
- *Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*
- *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*
- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*
- *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*
- *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
- *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.*
- *Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness's sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*
- Yet, no document enables us to prove that the eight-point cross was chosen for this reason. It is probably a happy conjunction of circumstances...

2) The Baussant flag : it appears in 1966, during the crossing of Mont-Saint-Michel bay.

- o White and black do not represent the fight between good and evil, as we often hear it.
 - They evoke our baptism ;
 - Or also the crossing of the Red Sea (crossing of the bay) ;

- It means the liberation from slavery, the image and metaphor of liberation from death by the resurrection of Christ.
- This passage from darkness to light is expressed every year during the pilgrimage of our rovers in Vézelay.
 - When a Rover knots three times at the main door of the basilica at night, the nave opens suddenly and is full of light...
- This period marks a step of unification for the 700 young people who took part in this event in Mont-Saint-Michel. A style was born, the style of man as a pilgrim (homo peregrinus – der Wandernde Mensch !)
-

3) The European flag :

- It also appears in our camps in France regularly between 1961 and 1963... As a matter of fact, it was already present in the German camps.
- After war, the Germans didn't hoist their national flag any longer in the scout camps. The enrolment of the previous years was still weighing heavily and the faithfulness to the motherland had been perverted.
- So the Germans invented to use the European flag instead of their national flag in their camps (this flag existed officially since December 1955).
 - We may say that without the Germans, the French people of that time would never have thought of hoisting the European flag in their camps.
 - In 1960, during the gathering of St-Loup-de Naud (near Provins), the French scouts will induce the Germans to hoist their own national flag...! So this first so-called Eurojam (400 German and French scouts) is an important step for the Germans.

Moreover, a federal song will be created. It is not so much sung in the camps, not deliberately but because the music is not so easy.

Some texts, as a reminder...

A last mention must be done to our Core texts, at the end of this presentation.

Right from the beginning, our founders wanted to anchor the practice of European Scouting into texts of reference:

- Their writing will be corrected several times since the foundation, from 1956-57 to 1963. Afterwards, they will not change, except some details... till 1997.

These texts are :

- The Carta of European Scouting,
- The Religious Directory of the Federation of European Scouting
- The three principles of European Scouting
- The scout / guide law, the text of Promise.

And their symbolic translation in the ceremonial.

This slightly "juridical" aspect should deserve more attention from us. Summarizing these main texts, we may say that they are the base expressing the intuitions of the foundation of our movement.

It is up to everyone to read them again, to understand them, to adopt them as ours. Just as any troop leader should read *Scouting for boys*, so also any commissioner should know these texts!

We must read them regularly in order to understand better the cause that we accept to serve... because we are only servants.

These texts still remain very actual because they express the essential: a method at the service of the child's growth and development.

No other text prevails on these ones: no orientation note, no white book, no aggiornamento.

Because these texts have been validated by all our associations before being our law.

Conclusion :

It is up to us to transmit this inheritance to our boys and girls.

We are responsible for this transmission, so that generation after generation our children may transmit this European flame, which is certainly nearer to the founders' spirit than present Europe, often too much worried by economy and easily reluctant to its Christian roots.

Relying on this inheritance, sure of ourselves, of our identity, we may easily go forward and propose to the youth of Europe a European adventure which is as young as it was at the beginning.