

New Times, New Chances

After World War II the Hungarian defeat was followed by another disaster: being affected by the Russian empire. So the atheistic education for young people marred youth activity until the 70s. There have been a lot of pastors and priests arrested.

Before the war the activity had worked in young persons movements. These movements are well-known in West Europe too - for example, WMCE, CE, IMCS, SDG - and these had been equal to the student organisations. These movements had worked inside the denominations but there had been a few ecumenical movements within the Protestant denomination: for example, Student Union of Gospel, and unions for the several circles: peasants, and trades people.

POST-WAR PERIOD

Between 1950 and 1952 these organisations were forbidden. And at the same time they put a stop to religious instruction. Juvenile education was stopped and became part of the task of congregations. In practice it was ended. But there were some pastors arrested because of this work. Meanwhile the landed property of the churches was secularized. Only the pastors' rest-houses were left. Pastors and some shifts of pastors went on juvenile efforts: conferences and meetings were organised. Villages were

ruined by the violent collectivising, so the numbers of the congregations was reduced. Besides the generation growing up without religion, the secularisation - which could also be experienced in West Europe - made the position more difficult. The pastors' houses were empty and the desolated villages were occupied by Gypsies.

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

The first changes came at the start of the 80s. There were a lot of old churches which became the places where the young people from all over the country came to have meetings, and spend a week together, led by pastors. These meetings were the symbols of new hope: Balatonszárszó, Gárdony, Balatonfüred, Szenna, Csokonyavisonta, Berekfüdő.

Balatonszárszó is an allegory in our history. In 1943 there was another meeting here. At this time Nazism raved in all Europe. And here writers, fabric-workers, peasants, and the leaders of the Calvinist Church, gathered and were thinking about the future of Hungary. What forces had they got to build Democracy? Everybody agreed that this must be the first step of the escape from the miseries of war. But unfortunately it has been hampered.

The past, present and possible future of the Hungarian youth movements

These little initiatives became the bases for the juvenile work. At the end of the 80s other church institutions joined. It was discovered that the spiritual claims of the youth grown up without faith were really great. The results of the meetings and congresses could be noticed in the denominations.

The change of régime was a turning point in this field too. Suddenly several societies and unions are in the initial stages now, and it seems they cannot work effectually enough by the old methods. Now one of the main questions is whether they will conform to the old conditions.

Are the old leaders able to give their places to the young and agile ones?

Or

Will the leadership be a nostalgic meeting place for a small circle?

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