

“Outdoor Education” and German Scout-Type Youth Organizations in the Czech Lands

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Abstract: The thesis deals with the formation and history of German youth organizations in the Czech Lands. It especially covers those organizations that either directly referred to the Scout movement originating in the UK or US, or at least adopted the fundamental educational methods and principles of working with the youth which were typical for these movements. These organizations marked a revolutionary change in the approach to youth and their education. Such a change was possible thanks to a series of philosophical, pedagogical and political transformations in the society. Scout movements were especially built on the modern philosophical theories based on the ideas of American and German philosophers. However, the roots of this approach to nature and to human education can be traced to the early modern era, when the first modern approaches to teaching appeared and were generally applied under the changing economic and social environment of a modern society. In addition to philosophy, the movement was also influenced by a number of other social, political, ideological and cultural phenomena.

The origins of these organizations can be seen everywhere where industrial growth accelerated, leading to all known cultural, social and sociological implications. School was the first domain where these philosophical and pedagogical practices were used. In the next step, “Outdoor Education” became independent and created its own organizational structure. German youth organizations in the Czech Lands were always partnering with similar organizations in Germany and Austria. We can distinguish between two different time periods, separated by the First World War.

The period before 1914 is the time of establishment and gradual search for options. Within the German environment, this relates to the so-called “youth movement”, represented especially by the Wandervogel organization. In the Czech Republic this phenomenon has not been thoroughly analysed, except for the history of education and sports.

After the World War, youth organizations become commonplace and these movements witness massive expansion, covering increasing numbers of participants from practically all social classes. Youth organizations establish themselves as the instruments of various social, political and religious movements seeking ways to enforce their vision of the world and their perception of the world organization.

Objectives: It is the objective of the thesis to cover basic social, philosophical and political assumptions for the origins of youth organizations. Furthermore, the thesis will track their development and status in the society, including the influence on the current social and political environment.

Methods: The thesis was especially built on thorough heuristic preparation, together with the critical analysis of the collected data. A direct method was used where possible; otherwise, owing to the lack of basic resources the method of incomplete induction associated with deduction was applied. A comparative method was applied for the comparison of various Scout movements.

Key words: Scouting, Sudeten Germans, youth organizations, social ties