

An indication of the thinking which has been done in Pax Romana on the woman student and graduate and her problems.

The notes are in chronological order and are based on documentation in the General Secretariat.

Articles which have appeared in the Pax Romana Journal

1. 1950, no. 5. Les Femmes sont-elles présentes dans Pax Romana? by Rosemary Goldie.

This article is particularly useful because it outlines the history of the Sub-Secretariat for Women Students (set up in 1931, dissolved 1948); the Feminine Commission established in 1949, dissolved 1953 (?). It also touches on the Spiritual Life, Women in Politics, Involuntary Celibacy, Women in International Life etc.

2. 1954, no.8. October. Les Femmes dans Pax Romana, by Ax. (Axelle Thon). Review of the work done and plans

for the future. The 1950 article had mentioned the need for a theological basis for discussions on the role of woman. Axelle points out that the meeting in Lausanne, 1954, had even formed a small group to study "La pensée chrétienne sur la femme".

3. 1955, nos. 3-4, may-june. La vocation universitaire chez la femme by Maria de Lourdes.

Invaluable ideas on the meaning of woman's vocation, of that vocation against the background of a University, education, of what the woman student should expect from the University and of the responsibilities from her professional training.

Notes for Maria Isabel Diaz, C'man of the Feminine Commission, set up by the DC Meeting, Rome, April 1957.

1928 Letter referring to a meeting on feminine problems held in Cambridge. Hence these study of these problems is nearly as old as the IMCS!

1938-39 "Pour Preparer Notre Avenir" - study theme for the SS. for women students. The document is in the form of a questionnaire which is superficial compared to the basic problems which come to the fore after the war. The section headings are indicative of a limited, more "practical" vision:-

- a. Attitude of the Woman Student towards Her Family
- b. " " " " " " " " Studies and Her Faculty
- c. The Woman Student and Social Life
- d. " " " " Leisure
- e. Sentimental Life of the Woman Student.

1950 1. Meeting held at La Verna, Italy, 1-7 September.
Emphasis on the lack of a vocation among women students:
"On a constaté chez la plupart des étudiants des différents pays le manque d'un sens de vocation.....il faut donc/ une orientation professionnelle pour celles qui se préparent à l'Université mais, pour faire oeuvre valable, il faudrait savoir, non seulement les aptitudes de l'étudiante, mais aussi les possibilités d'épanouissement et d'action que telle profession offre normalement à la femme."
(Underlining mine - BOM).

2. Aims of the Feminine Commission (translated from the French)

- a. To exchange ideas and experiences on the problems of University women students
- b. With the help of the Gen. Secretariat, to put documentation on these problems at the disposal of the federations, and especially the groups of women students
- c. To collaborate with the Gen. Secretariat in preparing articles, reports, study weeks etc. of interest to women students as such

women

- d. To make/students aware of these problems (formation for women students, professional guidance, social problems, spiritual problems etc.
- e. To guarantee the presence of women students from the IMCS at meetings arranged with the ICMICA and the feminine organisations like the Union Mondiale des Organisations Féminines Catholiques et Fédération Mondiale des Jeunesses Féminines Catholiques.
- f. To form a working team to elaborate ways and means of international collaboration in the spirit of PR.
(I presume this collaboration would be between women students and graduates - the French does not say so explicitly).

N.B. Study theme chosen by the Commission in Fribourg, April 1950: "Etudes universitaires et vocations féminines".

3. Report sent in by the FUCI. Salient remark on the woman who exercises a liberal profession in Europe: "on a remarqué qu'elle n'a vraiment affirmé sa position qu'aux Etats-Unis ou on arrive jusqu'à une inversion des rôles traditionnels familiaux confiés à l'homme et à la femme....."
(This masculinity of certain professional women - I should like to develop separately if I have the time. BOM).

1951

International Meeting for Women Students and Graduates, Boulogne near Paris. Notice the basic titles of the lectures:- Vocation Féminine?

Valeur du travail féminin
Equilibre de la femme dans et par son travail
La femme et son foyer.

FFEC. Report on the Conseil Federal, Yerres, 27-29 October. Rapport D'Activité du Secretariat Feminin. Both extracts given below strike me as being pertinent and realistic. Extract 1. is taken from the section entitled: "Structure Masculine de la Societé", while Extract 2. comes from the section devoted to "Adaptation Personnelle de Chacune".

Extract 1. "la jeune fille arrivant à l'Université y trouve un cadre préparé pour des garçons. Si l'on met à part les quelques professions strictement féminines, infirmières, assistantes sociales, jardinières d'enfants, l'étudiante désireuse d'acquérir un métier est obligée de décrocher les mêmes examens que les garçons, et en suivant les mêmes programmes.

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"Est-ce normal? N'y aurait-il pas moyen, à l'intérieur de chaque discipline, de faciliter, par un jeu d'options assez larges, le choix pour la jeune fille d'une spécialisation plus conforme à ses aspirations. En prenant l'exemple du Droit, n'est-il pas possible de faire approfondir, tout au long des trois années de licence, la psychologie de l'enfant, avec ses fondements physiologiques et sociologiques, à la jeune fille qui désire devenir juge dans les tribunaux pour enfants, orienteuse professionnelle etc....et ceci en lui épargnant d'autres matières qui peuvent lui être totalement inutiles: droit romain pour certaines, commercial pour d'autres."

(What a study awaits to be done on this question of optional subjects suited for women students - BOM).

Extract 2. (Even those students who come to find a husband, have a duty towards the community): "Il y a celles qui viennent en Faculté uniquement pour trouver un mari, et qu'elles il faudrait arriver à faire comprendre que si leur situation de famille leur permet de se 'meubler' l'esprit en 'attendant', la communauté toute entière doit profiter de leur passage à l'Université: elles n'ont pas le droit de se cultiver uniquement au profit d'un mari bien-aimé autant qu'hypothétique. Autrement dit, elles doivent, puisqu'elles le peuvent, exercer leur intelligence, et la mettre au service des autres."

1952 - 27 July - 3 August, Héverlé, near Louvain, Belgium. Meeting for Women Students and Graduates. Theme: "L'Université et la Formation de la Personnalité de la Femme en Relation avec les problèmes contemporains" - Programme in English attached.

1954 Camp for Women Leaders in Flüeli, Switzerland. Titles of main themes (translated from the French):
1. Guiding Principles in the life of the Christian (woman) - spiritual life etc.
2. The Future of the Woman Student (professions etc.)
3. Student life at the present time.

18 - 25 July, meeting in Lausanne, for hand-picked women leaders, students and graduates: "University Women and the apostolate in the professions."

N.B. cf. page 1 - after these discussions, delegates felt the need to get to the root of the theology of woman's vocation etc.

On reading the article in the Journal, the chaplain at the Catholic University of Lyon wrote a letter to the Secretariat and I give a few extracts below (I'm sure you'll read the French easily):

The chaplain remarked that in the FFEC, as in the IA - Flüeli, not all the women students agreed on the need for "un travail spécifiquement féminin au sein du Mouvement" and that such an attitude amazed him;

"Je pense que les réticences de certaines étudiantes devant le mouvement féminin viennent d'une crainte de se couper du mouvement général, elles y voient une revendication séparatiste. A moins qu'elles n'aient peur de découvrir l'originalité de leur vocation....." He then goes on to say that his women students, although they work in mixed groups as well, undertake certain ~~social~~ activities on their own (social work - visiting the sick, paralysed children, old people etc; international work - liaison with Pax ~~the~~ Christi etc.) Once a week, they meet for an hour

"pour écouter à leur manière le message de la vie commune, ou pour aborder des problèmes spécifiquement féminins, dans leur langage et par leurs méthodes....." He finishes by saying that the women students must find "leur style" indicating that University life as it is today will not help the women students to become more truly feminine.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Letter from Maria de L. to Bernard Ducret in which she speaks of the need to have "fundamental notions on the role of women and the meaning of their destiny" - translated from the French.....back to basic ideas once more!

1955

July. Report from Maria de Lourdes which analyses the situation from 1954-55 with suggestions for the future, and which is a mine of wealth. (I'm sending you a copy which belongs to the files - the yellow paper.)

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro