

53-14-B-219

**THE FOUNDATION OF
THE AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE
OF BEAUVAIS
(1/4)**

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I- THE FOUNDING EVENT

The Higher Agricultural Institute of Beauvais (I.S.A.B., France) is a School of engineers in Agriculture, which has a five-year preparation course for careers in the Agro-Industry, and the Agricultural Environment. Its engineering diploma is recognised by the State. This establishment, founded by the Brothers, is still under the trusteeship of the Institute, and a community of Brothers works there; but it is also a school associated with the Institut Catholique in Paris. The I.S.A.B. is on two sites nowadays, in Cergy-Pontoise and in Beauvais, and has 600 students (most of them aged between 18 and 23). The I.S.A.B. has undergone several changes in the course of its nearly one hundred and fifty years. This text intends looking at the foundation and the plan of its beginnings, particularly from the point of view of the education of young people from the rural society.

The founding of the Agricultural Institute of Beauvais has already been related in several documents (1). All the authors, especially Brother Jean-Baptiste Gagne stress the two events which set the foundation of the agricultural Institute in motion: the first is sociological, the second is set in the history of three people. The first event was one of the forms that the flight from the countryside in France took from the 1840s-1850s: More and more young men, sons of agricultural farmers, did not return to the land after their studies in a boarding school usually sited in town, and run by religious. In the case of Beauvais, Brother Menée (1804-1864) had become headmaster of the primary school in 1833, then started a boarding school in 1842 into which a Teacher Training Course was incorporated. He accepted pupils from the agricultural society and realised that the studies they were pursuing, prepared them more for working in State administration or businesses in town, in law offices, etc., that they were not preparing them to return to the land (2). So he first had the idea of

introducing agricultural courses into the boarding school and Training Course (3).

Who was Brother Menée? Jean-Julien Baron was born in Romazy (Ile et Vilaine) in 1804. He entered the noviciate in Paris in ?... Brother Menée was appointed to Beauvais in 1833, «to be head of the primary school which dated from 1817» (4). In 1842, he started the boarding school and, in 1851, accepted from the Prefect and General Council of the Oise, to be headmaster of the new Teacher Training School of Beauvais (5). From 6th January, 1854, a resolution of the Council of the Regime made him visitor of the Brothers' establishments in the Oise. (At that time the Brothers had schools in Chantilly, Beauvais, Noyon, Compiègne) (6). In 1854-1855, he founded the Agricultural Teacher Training Institute with the help of MM. Gossin and de Tocqueville, then the Saint Lucien farm, where he placed a community (1859). He directed the setting-up of educational programmes and the regulations for the new school, and actively participated in the development and experiments on the farm. He was awarded several medals at the universal exhibition in London in 1862. He died in Beauvais in 1864.

The second important event, therefore, in the development of an agricultural school in Beauvais, was the meeting of Brother Menée with M. Gossin, first of all, and with M. de Tocqueville later. These meetings were on the level of co-operation, then a real active association, between people with complementary abilities. It is interesting to see to see that a co-operation which appeared to be fortuitous and likely to last a short time, was, in reality, to become an association bonded by an institutional and educational project. When Brother Menée intended having agricultural courses at Beauvais, he met (probably in 1851) Monsieur Louis Gossin (1818-1880), recently appointed departmental teacher of agriculture. He had been teaching this speciality since 1848 at the College of Compiègne and in the junior seminary of Noyon (7). Brother Menée invited him to teach agriculture in the training school for three consecutive years (1852-55). Louis Gossin introduced Brother Menée to his friend Viscount Edouard de Tocqueville, president of the agricultural Society of Compiègne. So it was out of the combined goodwill of a Brother of the Christian Schools, a departmental teacher of agriculture, and a peer, who was both a farmer and president of a departmental society, that the plan of founding an agricultural Institute was gradually formed (over a period of three years).

On 10th June, 1872, a Brother (probably Brother Eugène-Marie) wrote a note summarising the agricultural Teacher Training Institute of Beauvais, in which he makes a report about the creation in 1855 «at the request of M. Randouin, Prefect of the Oise, Mgr Gignoux, Viscount de Tocqueville and the deputies of the Oise, Viscount Plancy, Baron de Corberon, MM. Lemaire and Barillon» (8). So to the initiators of the

project, we must add that the explicit request of the political authorities and the Bishop of the Oise are generally mentioned. One untapped and extremely clear document relative to the foundation is the minutes of the discussion in the council of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, dated 25 January, 1855 (9). In it we learn that the «agricultural lessons, taught for the past three years in the boarding school of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Beauvais by the honourable M. Gossin, have been more than satisfactory in their success. They have attracted the attention of very devoted friends of agriculture in the Department of the Oise and have inspired Baron de Tocqueville and M. Gossin to give each Department courses similar to those held in the Oise for 7 years, and by this to introduce agriculture into public teaching». So the first initiative came from MM. De Tocqueville and Gossin, to set into a vast plan of departmental courses of agriculture, a logical framework of the activity of the departmental teachers of agriculture. According to this text, the political authorities were consequently contacted: the Prefect of the Oise, Randouin, wanted to apply «an idea which was both Christian and social». He took the initiative in a report to the Minister for Agriculture and a request for a grant of 10,000 francs for the «establishing of a Teacher Training School of Agriculture». This grant would in effect be given in 1855, and each year the Ministry would give 5,000 francs until the last grant voted under the Gambetta Ministry (1881). The document of the governing council then reports: «Steps were taken to approach the Brother Superior by MM. de Tocqueville, de Corberon, Gossin and Brother Menée to obtain his support to the effect that the Brothers of the boarding school should be authorised to join the agricultural Teacher Training School to their establishment». Brother Philippe's reservations were then to become known. It would be better, then, according to the two texts that we have cited, to distinguish de Tocqueville and Gossin's initial plan, a plan of a political nature consisting of creating a departmental, agricultural teaching, and the first realisation of this plan with «The agricultural Teacher Training Institute of Beauvais». The Prefect of the Oise, Randouin, made the first approach to the Minister. Brother Philippe, as the religious authority, was consulted last at the request of the worthies of the Oise: the two archives cite the Bishop of Beauvais, Mgr Gignoux, the Prefect Randouin, Viscount de Tocqueville, Louis Gossin and the four deputies.

The technical and professional aims of this foundation, the education programmes and their evolution, have been amply described in the texts to which we referred in the first lines of this article. Following on from this study, we would like to broach the question of the educational model in place, a question which has not yet been treated in a systematic way: Which educational intention was apparent in the foundation of the agricultural Institute and for the first twenty years? In other words from 1855 to 1875, through which elements of the course and the life of the institution, could one pinpoint an intention of giving a formation integrating the different dimensions of the personality to young Christians aged between 20 and 25?

(1) INSTITUT AGRICOLE DE BEAUVAIS, 1955, The centenary book, 1855-1955, Beauvais.

GAGNE J.-B., 1978, Summary of the Foundation and History of the Higher Agricultural Institute of Beauvais, Technique, Economics, Sociology in Agriculture, n° 197-198, 1977-1978, Old Boys' Association of ISAB, Beauvais.

QUEMERE P., TAILLEFER A., PERRU O., The teaching evolutions at the Agricultural Institute of Beauvais from 1855 to 1945, Colloquium, E.N.E.S.A.D., Dijon, 1999, to appear.

(2) Brother Gagne writes with regard to this: "Brother Menée stated with regret that a large number of his pupils from the countryside, after receiving a little instruction, and especially their certificate, did not return to the land. Having become town dwellers, instead of villagers which they should have remained, the majority then languished miserably as clerks or shop assistants".

(3) GAGNE J.-B., Summary of the Foundation and History of the Higher Agricultural Institute of Beauvais, p. 5.

(4) RIGAUD G., 1945, General History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, vol. V, Plon, Paris, p. 406.

(5) Ibid., p. 386, and: BAVENCOVE J., 1921, the Agricultural Institute of Beauvais (Oise), Section on higher education of Agriculture of the Catholic Institute of Paris, Beauvais, p. 8.

(6) BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS, 1824-1855, Register containing the Regime's discussions, Council of the Regime, general government of the Institute, EG430, Archives FSC, Rome, pp.200-201.

(7) BAVENCOVE J., The Agricultural Institute of Beauvais (Oise), Higher Teaching Section of Agriculture of the Catholic Institute of Paris, p. 20.

(8) AGRICULTURAL TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTE OF BEAUVAIS, 1872, Information, Archives FSC, NC 423-1, Rome.

(9) BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS, 1824-1855, Register containing the Regime's discussions, Council of the Regime, general government of the Institute, pp.200-201.