



Jean-Dominique Durand. *Christian Democrat Internationalism: Its Action in Europe and Worldwide from post World War II until the 1990s.* Bruxelles: Peter Lang GmbH/Wien, 2013. 2 Bde., 244 + 295 S.

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J.D. Durand (Hrsg.): Christian Democrat Internationalism

Research on the history of political parties seems to have gone out of fashion. If this is so, then one reason for its secular decline could be its long-standing politicization by party foundations and networks. On the Left and Right, they have fostered this historiography to cultivate party heritage and the collective memory of political ideas, great party leaders and active rank-and-file members. In Germany this legacy is especially strong as foundations affiliated with the political parties have had lavish resources. They have invested them into securing archival sources of party sections, national party leaderships and private papers of politicians, but also into generating yearbooks, journals and book series devoted to their political party tradition and its legacy.

Ultimately, the blurring between research and heritage politics has undermined the academic credibility of much of this research and literature in times when political parties can no longer fill professorships through their networks – even in countries like Italy, where patronage systems strongly persist, but funding is severely limited and political parties are in a constant state of flux. In the past it was already advisable to draw upon English-language literature for broader books on transnational or comparative European themes. Concerning the Christian Democrats, for example, several English language volumes provided comparative accounts of key party features and developments in historical perspectives See e.g. Tom Buchanan / Martin Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1965*, Oxford 1996; Wolfram Kaiser / Helmut Wohnout (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Eu-*

rope 1918-45, London 2004; Michael Gehler / Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy in Europe since 1945*, London 2004. , or they developed major arguments, for example about the driving forces behind the formation of Christian Democracy or its role in the origins of European Union. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*, Ithaca 1996; Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union*, Cambridge 2007. Literature in other languages was usually focused on the national level of political ideology and party developments, for example. More recently much of this nationally focused research has dried up, especially in countries like France where the Christian Democratic tradition is now a negligible factor in centrist and centre-right politics.

Foundations close to the Christian Democrats in Italy, Germany and Belgium have now formed *Civitas*, a transnational organization created to reinvigorate historical research on Christian Democracy. Although controlled by the Italian-based organizers of a number of preparatory colloquiums, the two volumes edited by Jean-Dominique Durand mark the first result of this incipient cooperation. Unfortunately, they do not augur well for what may follow once *Civitas* is fully operational. Several non-academic ‘introductions’ and ‘Round Table’ contributions by former politicians underline the books’ intended celebratory character. In his minimalist introduction, the editor claims (p. 31) that 1979, the year of the first direct elections of the European Parliament, marked a ‘year zero’ – including the creation

(three years previously) of the European People's Party (EPP), the first real international party in the history of Europe and probably the world; a claim not corroborated by historical evidence that rather suggests that the period between 1979 and 1989 was initially one of business as usual for the Community's institutional system and for Christian Democratic party politics.

The first volume then kicks off with the most useful part of the two books, a section about archival sources in different European countries and in Latin America. In Germany, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation has well-organized archives and sources including (for the moment) those transferred to it by the EPP. In other countries such sources are more widely disseminated among smaller political foundations and regional archives, and their access is sometimes arbitrary, so that these overviews can be very useful for new researchers in the field and for developing new pan-European comparative and transnational perspectives. Unfortunately, the remaining chapters in the first volume recycle Franco-Italian research which in several cases is more than 20 years old. Upon original publication and in the present volume, this research suffers from a number of fundamental flaws, especially a traditional history of ideas approach that does not pay sufficient attention to the political, social and cultural context in which such ideas are developed, and lack of access to languages like German and Dutch – something that is especially fatal in the case of research on the EPP which became more and more dominated by the German Christian Democratic Union and

Christian Social Union from the 1970s onwards.

The second volume, similarly, is largely based on old research. Thus, the first section on the role of the Catholic Church continues to suffer from limited access to the Vatican archives. The second section does include shorter chapters on under-researched topics such as the role of women in Christian Democratic cross-border cooperation and the interrupted experiences of Christian Democracy in Eastern Europe. There, centre-right parties formed after 1989-90, but they lacked the Christian Democratic core of the continental Western European party tradition. But here, as in the second part with papers on individual politicians in international cooperation, the quality of the chapters varies enormously. In one extreme case, Godfried Kwanten competently writes about mediators from the Benelux countries, especially Belgium, but without documenting one single thought or piece of information with a footnote.

Ultimately, most chapters in the two volumes only recycle old research and publications. The aim is obviously to make some of these findings available in English. Unfortunately, the papers appear unedited, and the translations are amateurish. The books lack a common perspective and guiding questions, and they make no collective contribution to the state of the art. It remains to be seen whether Civitas, if it wishes to be more than a forum for social interaction of like-minded researchers, will succeed at raising the conceptual and scientific quality of its cooperation and associated printed outputs in the future.

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