

THE SCOUT MOVEMENT IN POLAND

The analysis of the situation of Scouting in Poland has formed the subject of four successive missions, amounting to a total of twenty days spent in the country from April to December 1990. These missions have enabled in-depth meetings to be held with the Minister of Education, the Polish Episcopate, the Committee for the Revival of the ZHP, and with the various Scout associations at both leadership and local group level. This document aims to synthesize all the information collected.

1. Analysis of the present situation of Scouting

1.1 The importance of Scouting in Polish society

Before the last World War, the Polish Scout Union (ZHP) was one of the most dynamic Scout associations in Europe. Its conduct during the German and Soviet invasion of 1939 and during the resistance earned it enormous prestige in Polish society. After the war, in all the countries "behind the Iron Curtain", Scouting was disbanded and replaced by the Pioneer organization of Communist allegiance. In Poland, however, the Pioneers only officially existed from 1949 to 1956. In 1956, owing to the policy of relative liberalization of the Gomulka Government, the ZHP was officially recreated within the framework of a compromise with the Communist government. The main external forms of Scouting were maintained (with a new promise and law), but the Communist Party held control of the leadership, and the ZHP became a mass organization linked to the school and run by several thousand full-time staff. In spite of this, at unit level, Scouting practises was preserved, especially in urban groups. In the course of time, and in particular after the birth of Solidarnosc in 1980, numerous groups were established clandestinely within the ZHP, in order to operate more closely according to the traditions of Scouting. The original promise and law were reintroduced.

1.2 The "alternative" Scout associations

During this period, and notably during the "state of war" (in 1981), many Scout leaders were worried by their underground activities within the Movement. In 1989, an agreement between Solidarnosc and the Communist government started the process of democratization and liberalization. After that, many of those involved in underground Scouting activities within the ZHP decided to create their own Scout association. As a result, several "alternative" organizations were created spontaneously, with no coordination and in different places. These organizations number a total of 35,000 to 40,000 members.

1.2.1 *The Zwiazek Harcerstwa Rzeczypospolitej (ZHR)*

The ZHR (or "Republican Scouts") is the largest and, seemingly, one of the better structured of these organizations. They claim to have existed for 14 months underground, for 7 months legally, and boast a membership of 20,000. It is an open association (not specifically catholic) which admits both boys and girls, but which has a double educational structure (Chief Scout and Chief Guide). Due to the fact that it is developing good relationships with all the associations, the ZHR could play a positive role in the development of Polish Scouting. The association has many contacts with associations in other East European countries (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States, etc.). During their last congress, the ZHR adopted the traditional Scout promise ("A Scout serves God and Poland") in place of the alternative promise they used previously. This decision opens the way for unification with the ZHP-1918 and the POH.

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1.2.2 The Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego - 1918 (ZHP-1918)

Until recently, this association refused to be recognized as a new association, claiming that the ZHP, founded in 1918, was never legally disbanded and requesting moral continuity with the first Polish Scout association. The term ZHP "founded in 1918" distinguished this association from the ZHP "recreated in 1956". However, the "ZHP-1918" recently changed their opinion and obtained their registration from a judge simply under the name of "ZHP", which risks causing conflict with the organization which already bears this name. The "ZHP-1918" has about 10,000 members (boys and girls in separate units). In keeping with the tradition of Polish Scouting, it is an "open" organization, with no official links with the Catholic Church. Notably active in the Cracow area, the "ZHP-1918" nevertheless seems to have close contacts with the catholic clergy. One of their leaders is responsible for the organization of the world youth gathering called for by the Pope and which is to take place next summer in Czestochowa.

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1.2.3 The Polska Organizacja Harcerska (POH)

This is a small Christian (multi-denominational) organization comprising a dozen or so groups (1,000 to 2,000 members). There is no coeducation; there are specific units for boys and for girls, with a Scout leader and a Guide leader for each group. This "bicephalous" system exists at all levels of the organization. A particularity of the POH is that, with the support of the Minister of Education, they have set up a secondary school operating on the basis of the Scout method and open to members of the various Scout organizations.

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1.2.4 The Stowarzyszenie Harcerstwa Katolickiego - Zawisza

The SHK-Z is the only Scout association which claims to be specifically catholic. It is almost exclusively active in the Lublin diocese and has about 1,000 members. Boys and girls are placed in separate units but sometimes undertake joint activities. The SHK-Z believe that their method - conceived for the education of youth catholics - is specific. The SHK-Z uniform differs noticeably from those of the other "alternative" associations, which have all adopted the traditional uniform of Polish Scouting (also worn by the ZHP).

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1.2.5 An appreciable dynamic force but a regrettable division

Having been created underground in different regions and by distinct initiatives, these four associations, each under the leadership of strong personalities, represent an undeniable dynamic force. Their lack of means is compensated by a very strong militancy. They request - and rightly so - the practise of quality Scouting, based on tradition and without question in line with the requirements stipulated by the World Organization, particularly in respect of "Duty to God" and of autonomy vis-à-vis political parties. For the time being, they refuse to merge into a single organization; this institutional solution is viewed very negatively owing to the

monopoly held by the ZHP for more than 45 years (the watchword is "pluralism"). As far as they are concerned, the only acceptable solution for the future of Polish Scouting appears to be the creation of a federation. They all express, to various degrees, a mistrust of the ZHP, whose development they consider belated and opportunistic. Yet only the "ZHP-1918" so far refuses to have any contact with an association which they condemn as "post-communist". All of these associations, with the exception of the SHK-Z, have similar characteristics. It has to be hoped that they will eventually accept to merge and, as a first step, to organize joint structures. Indeed, most of them have not reached the critical size to enable them to establish efficient plans for the development of youth programmes and leader training. It would appear that the openings presently exist for a future merger of the 3 largest alternative organizations: ZHR, ZHP-1918 and POH. This eventuality should be strongly encouraged; if it materializes, it will represent a very significant step forward on the path towards the revival of Polish Scouting and its recognition by the World Committee. The conclusions adopted by the recent congresses allow for such a development.

1.3 The ZHP - a changing association

The ZHP, which currently claims to have almost one million members, represents an extremely significant potential for the education of young people in Polish society. The question raised by many asks whether this association's previous history, present situation and possibilities for development will permit it to be considered as a member of World Scouting.

1.3.1 *The influence of the past*

The ZHP (Zwiazek Harcerstwa Polskiego) was authorized in Poland once again in 1956, thanks to the initial policy of liberalization of the Communist government (Gomulka Government). A well known Chief Scout, Alexandre Kaminski, became president of the Supreme Council of Scouting. However, in 1958, Kaminski had to relinquish his position, and the Movement once again fell under the influence of the Communist party. The external marks (terms, symbols, badges) were maintained but the principles of Scouting were modified to meet the requirements of a mass organization: renunciation of spiritual development, dependency vis-à-vis the Communist party, absence of voluntary membership (all school children were obliged to be members of the ZHP), bureaucratization and absence of democratic functioning. On the international front, the ZHP belonged to the International Committee of Children's and Adolescent's Movements (CIMEA), the purpose of which was to federate all national Pioneer organizations. At national level, the ZHP was the only authorized youth organization and had a monopoly on state subsidies. Thanks to this privileged institutional status, the association was able to declare a membership of almost 3 million members in 1979. Many of the criticisms both from outside and within concerned the excessive weight of the machinery (2,000 professionals), which absorbed a large part of the resources. Although the practise of a genuine form of Scouting was able to be maintained at grass roots level, in particular in urban society, in rural society the ZHP often developed extra-curricular leisure activities or holiday centres which were rather different from the fundamental elements of Scouting. As early as March 1989 (before the first democratic government), a ZHP congress made a commitment to introduce changes, by declaring the non political character of the association and by adopting constitutional amendments. However, the ZHP, presided over until December 1990 by Mr. Irzyszt of Grzebyk, an elected member of parliament on the list of the PZPR (former Communist Party), was the subject of harsh public criticism. Calls were made - even by the Secretary General of the Episcopate - for the Government to stop granting subsidies to the ZHP, in order to force them to lighten the machinery and reorganize staffing. Many leaders and young people left the organization, and some, but not all, joined the "alternative" associations. Membership decreased

from 3 million to 973,000 (424,000 Cub Scouts, 430,000 Scouts, 69,000 Rovers and 49,000 "instructors" [leaders]). The ZHP also lost a great deal of the support it received from the school structures. Under these circumstances, there is a fear that the ZHP will continue to erode, and that this erosion will not be offset by an equivalent growth in the alternative associations.

1.3.2 *The positive aspects*

This negative presentation of the situation is tempered by the fact that many former leaders have, in several instances, agreed to intervene within the ZHP in order to maintain the association's engagement in Scouting as far as possible and to avoid a total "pioneerization". This attitude of compromise is not peculiar to the ZHP organization; it has been used in virtually all sectors of Polish society. Among the former historic leaders of the ZHP - those who were active before and during the war - there are some who believe that the ZHP has remained fundamentally engaged in Scouting. They claim that since 1947, many leaders and instructors have remained within the ZHP in order to keep alive the tradition of Scouting and to avoid the total indoctrination of young people. They do not see why it should be necessary to leave the ZHP, now that democracy has been reinstated and fundamental changes are possible. They add that, in rural areas, the ZHP often represents the only educational activity offered to young people, that the programmes are different because they have had to be adapted to difficult conditions, and that progress is possible through improved leader training. It is true that it is impossible not to be struck by certain aspects which show the social and educational importance of the ZHP. For example, the "Obstructed Path" programme, aimed at underprivileged children (the sick, the mentally and physically handicapped), numbers some 2,500 local groups and has 45,000 young members. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that all the leaders of the alternative associations come from the ranks of the ZHP, within which they were able to discover Scouting and be trained. Contacts with ZHP groups at grass-roots level enabled them to see how Scouting should be practised. Finally, it should be added that several Western European Scout associations (Austria, France, Germany, Sweden) have maintained consistent relationships with the ZHP, at both local and national level, and can testify that the developments are favourable.

1.3.3 *The December 1990 congress*

From 6-9 December 1990, we participated, as observers, in the 28th Congress of the ZHP, which took place in Bydgoszcz. Almost 400 elected delegates from each region attended. Several factors are worth noting. First, the composition of the delegations: many young leaders (average age 27) represented the base groups. Secondly, the atmosphere of freedom which governed the discussions: many delegates, repeating the words of certain members of the leadership, regretted the past errors of the ZHP, the monopolistic nature of the association, the weight of the bureaucracy, the existence of a "nomenklatura", the links with the ruling party, etc. The debates were often animated and displayed a genuine democratic force. The desire for change was clearly reflected in the constitutional amendments and the election of a new leadership, in spite of the fact that outside criticisms sometimes gave rise to reactions of defense and "united patriotism". As a mark of the will for reform, the former president was not a candidate. However, the former programme and training executive, Mr. Ryszard Paclawski, was elected Chief Commissioner, but he is a young man, capable of progressing and apparently very popular within the Movement. In any event, the new president, Mr. Stefan Mirowski, cannot be suspected of sympathizing with the former power. A member of the ZHP leadership during the war, he was one of the organizers of the underground resistance Movement. He was barred from the Movement in 1947 when the communists took control. He is a man respected by all the Scouting tendencies. A careful study of the texts adopted by the Congress should be made. The principle of adher-

ence to Christian values was adopted, as was the former promise, which clearly states "Duty to God". Unfortunately, a system of "alternative promise" was also adopted, giving young non-believers the possibility of making a promise without "Duty to God". It is probable that this text will not be approved by the World Committee and that it will therefore have to be revised. On the whole, this Congress represents a very important step in the right direction. It is therefore important to support the efforts of the new president, to follow-up the changes which have begun.

1.3.4 Conclusion

The ZHP has considerable influence in the spectrum of Polish Scout organizations. They retain a social role of prime importance. Of course, the criticisms made against them by the "alternative" associations must be taken into account, but it is not possible to "write off" the hundreds of thousands of young ZHP members who consider themselves to be Scouts. It would be paradoxical if the ZHP were to be left to their own devices now that the fall of totalitarianism renders all hopes possible. It is therefore important to do everything to encourage the internal changes currently taking place within the ZHP and to support the new leaders in their difficult task. It is clear that the situation of near monopoly held by the ZHP, particularly in rural areas (30% of the Polish population), has caused them to develop types of activity which differ from traditional Scouting. Any criticisms made in this respect should take into account the fact that the organization also represents a social service. The present nature of the ZHP should be evaluated at all levels without naïvety or complacency, but also in a spirit of open-mindedness, bearing in mind the need to adapt Scouting - without betraying its fundamental forces - to the various situations of Polish youth, in particular in the rural environment.

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1.4 Polish Scouting in exile

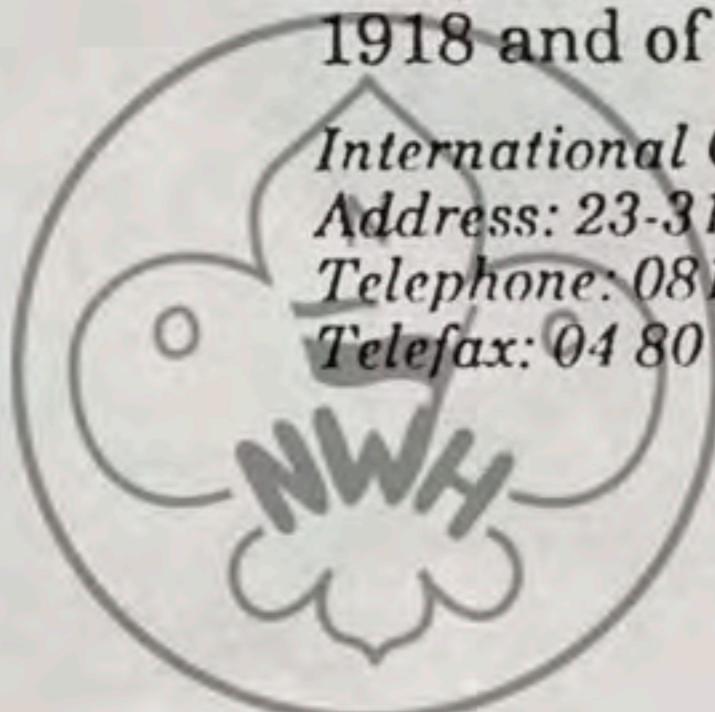
During the whole duration of communist rule in Poland, The Polish Scouts in exile have endeavoured to ensure the continuity of Polish Scouting. Furthermore, they too used the traditional name of Polish Scouting (Zwiazek Karcerstwa Polskiego - ZHP). Their headquarters are in London, but there are active groups in every Polish community in Western countries (Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Great Britain, USA). They attach great importance to the unity of Scouting and have expressed reservations at the idea of a federation, which they do not consider consistent with the tradition of the Movement in Poland. They made their point of view quite clear to the representatives of the alternative associations who attended their biannual meeting in England at the end of October, a meeting in which we also participated. The Polish Scouts in exile decided to adopt a policy of support but non-intervention, which is very well-advised. They could represent a pole capable of influencing in favour of maturation and unification. They were represented by their president at the ZHP congress, as well as at the congresses of the ZHP-1918 and of the ZHR.

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1.5 The Committee for the Revival of the ZHP (KKO-ZHP)

During a first mission to Poland, in April 1990, the Committee for the Revival of Scouting (KKO-ZHP), led by two historic leaders of Polish Scouting, Messrs. Stanislas Broniewski and Léon Marszalek, seemed to us to be WOSM's favoured contact in Poland. At that time, the KKO-ZHP had succeeded in putting pressure on the ZHP leadership, forcing them to accept an agreement aimed at organizing a congress which would bring together all the various Scouting tendencies in Poland with a view to revising and reunifying the Movement. This agreement received the support of the supervisory authorities (Ministry of Education). A "ZHP Social Council", composed of an equal number of members designated by the KKO and by the ZHP leadership, was entrusted with the responsibility of following through the process leading to the congress. Unfortunately, the plans for a congress failed, due to the fact that the two parties could not manage to put the agreement into practise, especially after the ZHP's decision to convene an assembly comprising ZHP members only, with a view to adopting a new electoral law.

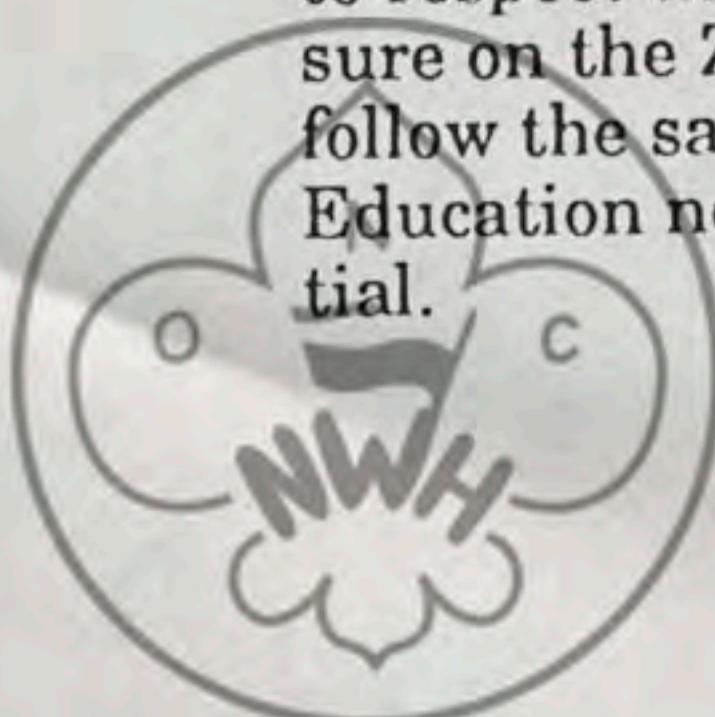
Nevertheless, the KKO-ZHP, under particularly difficult circumstances, has maintained the plan to recreate a single Polish Scout organization (modelled on the organization which existed before the last World War) and has provoked significant changes within the ZHP. It is important that it supports Mr. Stefan Mirowski in his difficult task and contributes to the efforts towards the unification of Polish Scouting.

1.6 The position of the Catholic Church

The Polish episcopate has stated several times through its representatives - Cardinal Maharski, Archbishop of Cracow; Monseigneur Gorny, auxiliary Bishop, responsible before the Polish Episcopal Conference for the pastoral element of Scouting; and Monseigneur Dabrowski, Secretary of the Episcopal Conference - that its position was not to encourage the development of a catholic Scout association but to favour the revival of the ZHP as a single Scout association, open to different religious denominations and explicitly expressing its commitment to Christian values and to helping young people in their search for God. This attitude of the Church is tied to the hope of far-reaching changes within the ZHP, at leadership, constitutional and educational level. The recent ZHP Congress constituted an important step in this direction, and it is to be hoped that the Church will take this into consideration and continue to support the efforts of all those who are working for the reunification of Polish Scouting.

1.7 The position of the government

At the time of drafting this report, the first democratic presidential elections have just taken place in Poland and Mr. Walesa has been elected President of the Polish Republic. The composition of the future government is still unknown. The former Minister of National Education, Mr. Henrik Samsonowicz, and the Vice Minister, Mrs. Radziwill, actively supported the proposal for a general congress of the various tendencies, with the aim of bringing about the reunification of Polish Scouting on the bases required for membership of the World Movement. They hoped for the emergence of a single, open and pluralistic association. At the same time, wishing to respect the freedom of association, they refused to put anything but moral pressure on the ZHP. It is difficult to know whether the new Minister of Education will follow the same line of conduct. In any event, it would be difficult for a Minister of Education not to pay attention to the future of an organization with such potential.



2. The prospects for development and the position of WOSM

2.1 The aim and the obstacles

The aim of the 4 missions to Poland was not to interfere with the developments taking place, but to collect first-hand information on the situation. Having discovered the extraordinary wealth of Polish Scouting, we hope that it will rejoin the World Brotherhood as soon as possible. However, the European Regional Office of WOSM will not be involved in the recognition process; this is the sole responsibility of the World Committee. It is up to the leaders of Polish Scouting themselves to establish the formulae which will make it possible for the World Organization to recognize a Polish Scout Movement which groups the various tendencies on the basis of the aims and method of Scouting.

What are the obstacles to be overcome?

2.1.1 *The unity of Scouting in Poland*

The first condition required for recognition by the World Organization is simple:

"Only one National Scout Organization from any one country can be recognized for membership in the World Organization" (Article V, paragraph 2)

This condition guarantees the unity of World Scouting. An organization cannot claim to be a member of a world brotherhood if it is unable to ensure this same brotherhood at national level. There are presently 5 Scout associations in Poland (none of which is spared criticism). How and on what basis can unity be built? This is the first question to be asked. Naturally, the solution of a single association is not the only one. Article V continues:

"A National Scout Organization may consist of more than one Scout Association participating in a Federation based on the common Scout purpose. It is the responsibility of each Federation to ensure that all its constituent Associations meet the requirements of this Constitution."

The solution of a federation is therefore possible; however, in this case, the grounds for the existence of several associations needs to be clarified. In Europe, these differences are usually of a denominational nature (there is a catholic association, a protestant association, a jewish association, etc.). This is not the situation, nor the tradition in Poland. All the associations, with the exception of one, are open and multi-denominational. The true reason behind the present diversity is recent history, which has caused the underground organizations existing within the ZHP, impatient to function according to the fundamental principles of Scouting, to declare themselves independent associations as soon as democracy was re-established. The fact that they did this separately is understandable, given the difficult realities of the recent past. But is it necessary to face the future frozen in a situation inherited from the past? Hasn't the time come for those who share the same goals to join forces and pass over small differences? If there are no developments in this direction, it will obviously lead to the belief that the existence of several associations stems from personal ambitions and quarrels, which would be fundamentally contrary to the requirements of the Scout Brotherhood. The question of the ability of a divided Polish Scout Movement to meet the new challenges in respect of the education of young Poles is also raised. Unity represents strength, and pluralism can also exist within a single organization, as long as democracy and tolerance reign. The problem of possible differences in concept or method between the so-called alternative associations and the ZHP should also be examined in the light of the last sentence of Article V; the creation of a federation would not release the various associations from the necessity to hold fundamental discussions. There again, perhaps it would be more in keeping with the Scouting spirit, and in fact more effective, to encourage the changes which are taking place within the ZHP and to support those who are responsible for implementing these changes, rather than denying the reality of this situation.

An in-depth study on the question of the establishment of unity therefore should be made. This study should be encouraged and supported by a group of independent Polish figures who are recognized by the various associations.

2.1.2 Respect of the fundamental principles of Scouting

"Membership of a National Scout Organization in the World Organization requires:

- a) *Establishment of its legal entity and evidence of its national operation.*
- b) *Adoption of and sustained adherence to the purpose, principles and method as laid down by Chapter 1 of this Constitution.*
- c) *Enrolment to be open to all who agree to conform with the purpose, principles and method of the Movement.*
- d) *Maintenance of the Organization as an independent, non-political, voluntary movement of probity and effectiveness." (Article V, paragraph 3)*

In the light of the recent developments, it would appear that all the Polish Scout associations should, in the short or medium term, be in a position to comply with this second set of requirements. The ZHP has adopted the principle of a so-called "alternative promise", which the ZHR has just dropped. This type of promise was exceptionally authorized to a few Associations in the early years of Scouting, but it is not longer constitutionally possible within WOSM. Nevertheless, the first part of the ZHP text quite clearly states "Duty to God", and this is an important factor. Discussions should take place with the World Bureau to examine the amendments which need to be introduced in order to fully respect the conditions required by the World Organization.

The ZHP plans to review its educational and leader training programmes. The European Regional Office and the Services of the World Bureau are willing to respond to any request for assistance in this respect.

2.2 The possible stages

2.2.1 Creation of a communication and coordination body

Following the recent congresses held by the ZHR, the ZHP-1918 and the ZHP, the progress achieved towards the path of the unity and recognition of Polish Scouting should be taken into consideration. To continue heading towards this path, it would perhaps be useful to create a communication and coordination body representing the various associations. This task of this body, chaired by a leading figure respected by all, would be:

- a) To manifest the will for unity of Polish Scouting.
- b) To be the privileged contact of the European Regional Office and the World Bureau for the coordination of requests for assistance or information and for negotiations with a view to recognition.
- c) To clear the way and identify the stages leading to the unity of Polish Scouting and its recognition.

2.2.2 Grouping of alternative associations

From an objective viewpoint, there appear to be few differences between most of the so-called alternative associations. They have followed similar paths and share the same dynamism. An important first step on the path to unity would be the creation of joint services between these associations (youth programme, leader training, international relations, publications), followed by a merger.

2.2.3 Intensification of change within the ZHP

The new ZHP leadership has been elected on the basis of a programme of reform. This process should be encouraged, first by favourable reasoning. Exaggerated criticisms from outside could, at present, only serve to strengthen resistance to change and make the leaders' task all the more difficult. The direction which the World Organization and the European Regional Office wish to see the ZHP take is clear: to rectify anything that still needs to be rectified in order to fully comply with the principles of the World Organization (in particular concerning "Duty to God"), to reinforce the democratic functioning of the association, to reduce bureaucratic tendencies, and to move towards decentralization, to revise programmes and reinforce the recruitment and training of leaders in order to apply the educational principles of Scouting in a more effective way, to continue and develop the work already begun to meet the needs of underprivileged youth.

2.2.4 Opening of common "task forces"

The adherence to common goals, the sense of solidarity and the path towards institutional unity could be strengthened by the opening of "common task forces", enabling the present and future needs of Polish youth to be better met. For example, Scouting in rural areas, the development of men and women in Scouting, Scouting serving the local community, spiritual development in Scouting, Scouting with the handicapped, Scouting with national minority groups, etc.

2.2.5 The unification and recognition of Polish Scouting

All this work being undertaken in an endeavour to build the future should result in the establishment of a new structure, in one way or another achieving unity, in accordance with the principles of the World Organization, and making it possible for Polish Scouting, as a whole, to be recognized by the time of the Bangkok Conference in 1993 at the latest. In any event, recognition cannot be made case by case, association by association. A united and joint effort is indispensable. In this effort, the historic leaders ("Senior Scouts") of Polish Scouting, who, incidentally, hold important positions at the head of each or almost each association, will play a key role. They know all about Scouting and they know each other, but will they accept to join forces and to help each other, instead of being engulfed in personal quarrels? It is their responsibility to offer present and future generations a genuine, united, pluralistic, faithful and creative Scouting.

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