

Scouting of Eastern Europe analytic report

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A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before we start the analysis of the situation of Eastern Europe scouting (the territories in question are Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine and Byelorussia) it is necessary to mention the basic factors which shaped the consciousness of their inhabitants, of which the most important are:

1. The experience coming from the twenty years between 1920 and 1940 when Latvians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Byelorussians enjoyed independence of their countries.

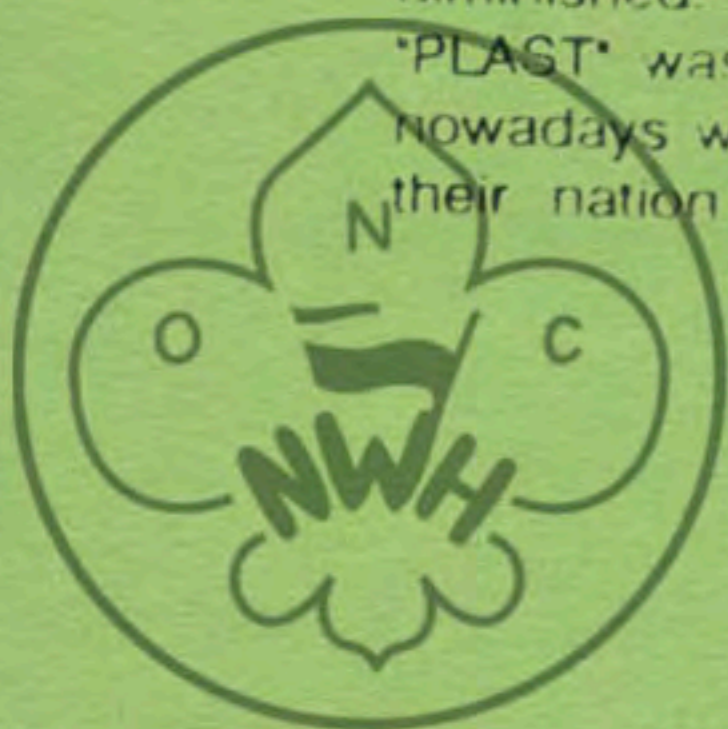
The independence was, in the history of these nations, only a short episode. The countries have been for ages a part of either Poland or the USSR (earlier Russia). Nevertheless, the short period of independence had a tremendous impact upon consciousness of these nations. It was the time in their history to which they come back and which nowadays is exposed to both glorification and mystification. It makes the touchstone for estimation of all the social processes that presently can be observed in the USSR. Independence, as the value once lost and thus the more precious, constitutes the bases for the activities undertaken by democratically elected authorities of these republics. Between the years 1920-1940 Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were the territory of the uninhibited development of scouting which was destroyed only by the Soviet occupiers.

2. Influence of European culture and civilization (particularly Polish) upon the development, accepted value hierarchy and psyche of Eastern Europe inhabitants.

The Eastern Europe territory has, for ages, been the area of coexistence and competition of two cultures: eastern and western.

The first represented by the powerful, imperial Russian civilization and culture, the second, establishing the priority of an individual over a group, an extremely individualistic and personalistic civilization and culture typical of Poland. In the year 1920 the territories of the present Ukraine and Byelorussia were divided, as the result of Riga treaty, between Poland and USSR. The influence of the division from the beginning of the century is very clear nowadays. The contemporary national movements of Ukraine and Byelorussia which stress the necessity of independence of these republics, are particularly strong in the areas which, until 1939, belonged to Poland whereas e.g. Eastern Ukraine has been entirely Russified.

The period between 1920 and 1939 was the time of coexistence of the Polish and Ukrainian nations within one country. The experience was by no means easy, there appeared numerous conflicts, but certainly the national consciousness of Ukrainians was then strengthened, not diminished. It was the Polish territory inhabited by Ukrainians where the Ukrainian scouting "PLAST" was created. In case of Byelorussians the situation was slightly different. It is only nowadays when they are beginning to develop consciousness of their individual character of their nation and their struggle for independence is fairly recent (since two-three years).



Byelorussian scouting has never actually come into being. A few individual scouts participated in the Polish scouting in these areas.

Eastern Europe was the area of rapid development of Polish Scouting. Lwów (Lvov) was its cradle and Wilno belonged to the most effective scouting centers in Poland. During the invaders' occupation, Polish scouting in Eastern Europe went into the underground and fought Soviets and Germans. It participated in the liberation of Wilno by the Home Army.

In the areas which belonged to the USSR scouting as such was non-existent.

3. Changes in psyche and consciousness resulting from 50-years existence under totalitarian and anti-democratic rule.

The system that deprived the individual of the laws he deserved and which proclaimed only one way of thinking and punished severely private attitudes which were contrary to the obligatory existing ones, had to result in conformity of the people who underwent its pressure. Generally speaking, in case of the inhabitants of the areas in question one can observe greater than in case of other Europeans indifference, apathy, cult of conformity, inability to gather to achieve common aims, unwillingness to make oneself distinct in the group, superficiality of judgements and ease of subjecting themselves to any ideological manipulation. Low mobility of the society, living from day to day, questionable honesty and reliability of activity, are among others negative phenomena. Devaluation of work and its ethics, replacing it with greediness and desire to improve one's living status by taking advantage of one's position, contacts from abroad and political activity make another characteristics of these people. In consequence, we arrive at corruption and irrelevance of the education level when achieving professional position. In addition, the system tended to suppress an individual by low living standards and the necessity to spend a great deal of time and energy gaining life necessities (for example prices of flats in Wilno amount 15000 \$ - whereas an average salary is about 10\$). To release social tensions, the authorities successfully applied the rule: "divide et impera" presenting various minorities as responsible for the existing state of things.

National conflicts were also stimulated by the conscious social policy of Moscow authorities. Whole nationalities were repatriated into deep Russia, their place taken by settlers brought from there. In this way, in many republics, Russians started to dominate and suppress local people. The policy was particularly aimed against the independently thinking intellectuals who were separated from the rest of society. Among the most suppressed were Poles inhabiting Eastern Europe. Hundreds of them were sent into labor camps in Siberia, imprisoned or executed. The results are very clear: for example in 1939 several hundred thousands Poles lived in Lwów, nowadays only about 8-10 thousand; in Wilno Polish and Jewish people constituted above 90% of the population, presently not more than 20%. At the spot the Soviet officials left only simple uneducated people who were open to the influence from Moscow.

The education of the youngsters in the USSR was responsibility of the Pioneer organization generously donated by the state, based on educational ideas of Makarenko which shaped pro-group, anti-individualistic, conformistic and non-creative attitudes. Membership of this organization was compulsory, which made it a mass association, the main object of which was to prepare children to participation in the youth organization KOMSOMOL and consequently in the communist party of the USSR. The Pioneer organization in had the monopoly on education of the youth, and the children who didn't want to participate in its activities were either bribed (attractive summer camps) or blackmailed and terrorized.

B. DIAGNOSIS

The above-mentioned factors that shaped consciousness are the main reason for the difference between the scouting of Eastern and Western Europe. The most crucial determinants of its individuality character are:

1. Great emphasis put in the Eastern European scouting upon fulfilling one's duty to his

country which can lead even to sharply nationalistic attitudes.

Although patriotic element is always present in scouting, it remains in balance with the duty done to some universal value (e.g. to God and to people as in the instance of ZHR). The scouting of Eastern Europe, where independence is the most desired value, experience their romantic epoch and aim at educating young people to be ready and able to achieve the independence, which brings the danger of subconscious contribution of these areas.

2. Coexistence, side by side, in the same republic of various national scouting which can result in nationalities' conflicts.

As the result of borders shifting that happened between the years 1920 and 1945 and the conscious policy consisting in mixing of the nationalities and the expansion of Russian-speaking population, in the republics in question very often exist, side by side, various scouting groups and organizations which speak different languages, find their roots in different cultures and traditions. In some republics the scouting of the minorities are stronger than the national scouting. Thus, in Byelorussia, because of the lack of national scouting, Polish scouting is the most outstanding youth association. On the territory of the USSR there live from 2 to 5 millions Poles (depending on whether the criteria is passport registration or national consciousness).

Yet, in the case of liberation tendencies in many a republic, scouting of minorities, which in fact are youth organizations of these minorities, can be welcome without enthusiasm and even without fraternity and trust that are so important in scout movement. Another important problem are Russian scouting organizations created on the ethnically non-Russian territories which can bring about conflicts especially in case of the independence tendencies in the Baltics.

3. The gap between the older and the younger generations of scoutmasters (scout-leaders).

Generally speaking the national scouting (Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian) were rebuilt by pre-war leaders who carried all the burden of positive as well as negative experiences (national conflicts among others) from the period of independence of their countries. In the instance of Ukraine the scouting was restored by the youth yet in agreement with PLAST headquarters on Exile which consists of experienced leaders. Simultaneously, scouting as an attractive alternative to Pioneer organization fascinated young people, especially those more active, very often engaged in the struggle for independence in their country. Those two generations of two different epochs often are not able to communicate. There appears the conflict between two images of scouting:

- the one from before the war: traditional, hierarchical and centralized.
- the one based on the contemporary understanding of scouting - breaking with coeducation, putting the emphasis upon the intellectual elements, opening to other nations.

Conflicts of this type can lead to divisions or inefficiency of the existing scouting organizations.

The problem appears non-existent in case of Polish scouting. Polish Scouting Association in Byelorussia and in Lithuania were created by young people for whom the lack of experience, of scout abilities and knowledge is the major difficulty.

4. Lack of scout authorities - multiplicity of visions.

The generations gap results in another problem which is the lack of authorities and "oracles" in scouting organizations. Young people understand scouting their way and the environments within which they act are too narrow to correct their way of thinking and to work out common coherent concepts. The example can be Latvia where the flow of information between the existing scouting groups is nonexistent. The phenomenon that can be noticed in various extent in various countries (e.g. in Lithuania there has been created a small Wilno fraction within the local scouting), can lead to exorbitant dispersion of power and result in diminishing of public support of scout ideas. However, it is not only a personal conflict, it is the conflict of concepts.

5. Allergy to centralism especially in Moscow edition.

The above-mentioned inconveniences of life in the centralistic system were the reason of

rejection of any form of central government and co-ordination, found similarly to economy, inefficient. The nations which have for years been striving for sovereignty, even in case of language and culture must be very sincere to any form of limiting the autonomy of scouting organizations they created. They must oppose to being subordinated to the coordinating center especially if the center is not of national character. Therefore, it appears difficult for the various organization to find the plane of cooperation and to bring into being a common coordinating body. In addition, the scout leaders from the younger generation, contradicting the vision of scouting of the older generation and trying to strengthen their authority, support "loose" forms of cooperation.

6. "Communitistic" scouting.

The notion stands for the organization which is scouting only by name and not spirit because of being lead by the former officials of the communistic KOMSOMOL and Pioneer organization. So far the danger has not appeared significant and Pioneer Organization is rejected in Eastern Europe as something alien. However it is difficult to predict what is going to happen when such organizations stop using their communist rhetoric.

Yet, there are still other danger that seems real. The former communist officials

(the case of LVOV is widely known) who join in the existing scouting organizations, formally reject their previous viewpoint but their way of thinking remains unchanged. The basic aim of such activities is "remaining in the stream of events", keeping their prestige in the youth movement. Such people most often do the worst work possible, depriving scouting of its openness, spirit of fraternity and ideology. They introduce particular way of thinking fascinated by mass organization and the property the organization possesses. They do not educate the youth. They take advantage of young people to carry out their private aims.

7. Fascination by everything that the notion WEST covers.

The long existence behind the iron curtain and lack of possibility travel abroad have Eastern Europeans fascinated by all the elements of western style of living. Unfortunately, the attitude very often happens to be uncritical and thus created images - superficial. In consequence, they take from the West only the glare and the appearances instead of real achievement of western civilization such as tolerance, fraternity, diligence and others. There is a vast area for the activity open to every western youth organization, unfortunately irrelevant to presented ideology. The main determinant of attractiveness is financial support from the western organization and the possibility of foreign trips. The organization of the Scouts of Europe, which gave a hand to the leaders from Wino, made for destabilization of their organization there and gained some influence in Wino.

C. CONCLUSION

The diagnosis presented above prompts to make the following suggestions for the future.

1. Everything possible must be done to open the Scouting of Eastern Europe to the West and the World.

Common conferences, jamborees, bilateral children's meetings should lead towards overcoming of partiality of these scouting, making them feel valuable and able to find their place in the common scouting family of the world. The people must be shown the international aspects of scouting, fraternity of scouts from different countries and of different nationalities in order to suppress the potentially dangerous nationalist attitudes, and bring up new young people to the values of European civilization.

2. Any attempts to make the development of Eastern scouting quicker by legislative and formal cosmetic changes of the existing Pioneer organizations must be immediately abandoned.

Since the revival of national scouting is spontaneous and the created organizations even if still

weak appear authentic in their spirit and ideas, all the efforts should be concentrated upon supporting their development. Otherwise, an internally conflicted structure is going to emerge and it will take the work of generations to have it united. It is because Eastern Europeans are particularly sincere to falsehood and hypocrisy and they do not want to tolerate the former officials of the communist apparatus acting as tutors of the youth.

3. It is not allowed on any account to make use of the apparatus officials even if they are intellectually efficient.

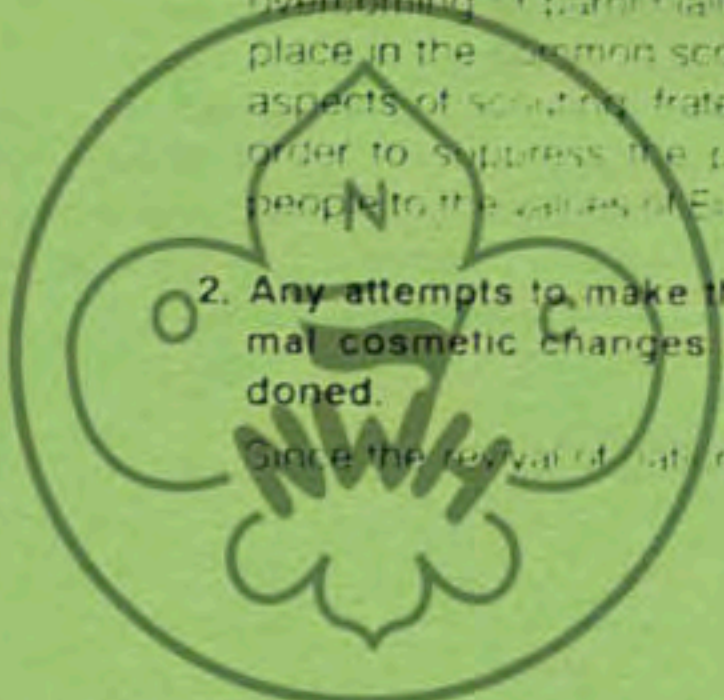
These people are rejected by most Eastern European communities, considered immoral, bent on making their careers and the immediate cause of all the humiliation and troubles. Scouting as the ethical movement can lose public support if it does not base its activities on people, of unquestionable morality.

4. The national tendencies of these scouting should be treated with understanding and respect and delicately prevented from turning to nationalism.

There mustn't be undertaken any forcefully steps leading towards uniformization and unification of the existing scouting organizations. Suggestion is the only acceptable way. It is indispensable to avoid any pressure which may in case of these organizations result in losing confidence in the common scouting family and in consequence separating from it. No coordination attempts should be taken through Moscow. Otherwise, they will be perceived as still other attempt masked this time, to strengthen Russian domination. Equal treatment of the scouting of various nationalities appears of great importance in order to prevent the suspicion of favourization of some of them. Any activity that may stimulate national conflicts should be abandoned in case of contacts with these organizations.

5. The activities aimed at the rebuilding of scouting in Latvia, Estonia, Byelorussia, Lithuania and Ukraine should be carried out by people who have the cultural, historical and civilizational experience common with the above-mentioned nations.

In order to understand the Eastern European situation it is necessary to have a profound knowledge and better the experience concerning the history of the region, conflicts by which it is torn, and the most important of all, the changes in consciousness that occurred in the last half-century. Watching the situation in the region by western man eyes can lead to misjudgments and irreparable loss also as far as world scouting interests go. For example in the instance of Estonia, Finnish people could be of great use. During their first visits there, WOSM commissioners should not move all over the country without the guides who know the region well and who would protect them from getting involved in national and personal conflicts. It would be advisable and well accepted for the guides not to be associated with Russian centralism.



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