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## Questions and answers on Scouting in Ukraine

### An interview with Dr Jacques Moreillon, Secretary General, World Organization of the Scout Movement

- Q. Why does the World Scout Committee not recognise PLAST as the National Scout Organisation of Ukraine?
- A. Because PLAST wants to be recognised as *the one and only form* of Scouting acceptable in Ukraine.
- Q. And why is that not possible?
- A. PLAST tradition, Constitution and practice – though very respectable as such – give it a profile to which too many young people in Ukraine cannot identify themselves.
- Q. What is wrong with the PLAST Constitution?
- A. The most important problem is that, as an organisation “*created to foster comprehensive, patriotic education and self-development based on the principles of Christian morality*” (art. 1.1.) it has as its main aim “*to foster all-encompassing and patriotic self-development of the Ukrainian youth*” (art. 2.2. a). Other objectives are quite secondary.
- Q. But all are Scouts not supposed to be good patriots? To love their country? Don't they have even a “duty” to their country?
- A. It is a question of focus, of emphasis. The Scout has three Duties: to God, to others and to self. The “Duty to others” includes the “Duty to country”. But “Duty to country” is part of “Duty to others”, which is one of the three principles, not even of the purpose of Scouting. But PLAST makes it its primary objective. The problem with PLAST is that the Duty to country is so central to its tradition, Constitution, objectives and practice that it constitutes too narrow a base to be the only one on which to build the future National Scout Organisation of Ukraine.
- Q. Could you be a little more specific?
- A. Let me illustrate my point concretely by quoting two articles of the Constitution of WOSM.
- First, the purpose of the Scout Movement, which is “*to contribute to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities*”  
(Article I, 2)

- Second, the principle of “Duty to others” which begins with the following provision “*Loyalty to one’s country in harmony with the promotion of local, national and international peace, understanding and cooperation*” (Article II, 1)

Within both articles, the concept of responsible citizenship and loyalty to one’s country – patriotism in the good sense of the term – is essential. But that concept is deliberately formulated as an integral part of a much broader perspective in order to avoid the narrow, chauvinistic sense all-too-often associated with patriotism ... This is not a minor matter, but a fundamental difference in an educational movement which attaches importance to peace – local, national and international – as one of its basic values. This is a key element in its universal acceptance, including at national level. True Scouting can and should never be centred exclusively on a patriotic approach, and even less on a nationalistic one.

It is also a question of *perception* of PLAST by other Ukrainians, especially those who do not use Ukrainian as their mother tongue in their day-to-day life (but rather Russian, Hungarian or even Tatar), or those who are not of Greek Catholic confession, but rather Orthodox or others.

- Q. But is not PLAST open to all? Does it not have members from all religions? Is it not present throughout the country?
- A. In principle – with their new Constitution, amended in 1994 – yes. But Ukraine is a very complex country with a very diverse history. And the strong, though limited, identity of PLAST (which opened itself to all by a relatively recent constitutional change) is a barrier for many, who simply cannot feel that this strong identity corresponds to their own perception of Ukraine. PLAST has a history, both in Ukraine and in diaspora which is highly respectable but to which only part of the citizens of the country can identify. It is a matter both of reality and of image, which cannot be solved just by a constitutional change, as we found out. And even if it were only a question of image, it would still be perceived as a reality by too many. Somewhat like those stars that are dead ... but of which we still receive the light.
- Q. But patriotism is not the only purpose of PLAST.
- A. Correct. But if you read Chapter 2 of its Constitution on its “Goal”, you will notice that
- the goal of “good citizenship” (which is the ultimate goal of Scouting) is limited to *national* citizenship,
  - the goal of “self-development“ (which is the intermediate goal of Scouting) is limited to *patriotic* self-development.

So that both the ultimate and the intermediate objectives of Scouting are limited to their “patriotic” dimension. These formulations reflect quite well the history and the reality of PLAST. Once again, a very respectable history and reality, but not one as broad as the true purpose of Scouting. Of course, patriotism is a “good thing” and it is part of Scouting. But only *part* of it. As I mentioned earlier, there is more to Scouting than just patriotism or “citizenship” at national level.

In particular there must be a clear, individual and formal, sense of belonging to World Scouting. It is also significant and symbolic that there should be no reference at all to WOSM in the PLAST Constitution .. just to Baden-Powell! In fact, if WOSM did not exist, PLAST could (and no doubt would!) continue to exist as a much respected patriotic youth movement, using elements of the scout method to reach its objective. As some religious groups in other countries use the scout method to reach their limited and precise religious objectives ... but that does not make them members of World Scouting.

Q. But then why not create a Federation in Ukraine? It would include PLAST on one hand and, on the other, another Scout Association that would not have to follow the PLAST tradition, that would have no links with the PLAST diaspora and that would constitute the kind of broader base which you wish to propose to Ukrainian youth. These youth would thus have the choice between a strongly patriotic Ukrainian youth movement using the Scout method to promote its traditional objectives and, on the other hand, a broad based, "classical", Scout Association acceptable to those young Ukrainians who, you claim, cannot identify with PLAST.

A. In addition to PLAST's narrow perspective, which is itself a problem, there would be two problems to such an approach.

The first is that the World Scout Committee has never accepted the creation of a Federation except on a confessional basis. Which means that we have never had two "open" or "non confessional" Associations in a national Federation. (Attention: "open" or "non confessional" does not mean "atheist"! All Scouts must keep their Duty to God. But it means an Association not particularly linked to one particular church or religion or confession, accepting youth of all confessional backgrounds). And the World Scout Committee would probably not want to create a precedent of two open Associations in one country, for there are still many countries in which Scouting is to be recognised.

The second problem is the unity of Scouting: if we were to accept the creation of a Federation in Ukraine, we would have two very different types of "Scouting" there. One with a strong identity inherited from a long patriotic tradition, at home and abroad, which has been used for generations mainly to keep the Ukrainian language, culture and tradition alive in the diaspora (and did a great job at that!); and the other one born out of today's Ukrainian youth of all backgrounds and trends, essentially focused on the integral development of the personality of young people for responsible citizenship. We can doubt that they could ever constitute a really *united* Ukrainian National Scout Organisation.

Q. So what is the answer? If PLAST is perceived as too "narrow" to be the sole base for a future Ukrainian National Scout Organisation and if the World Scout Committee does not want to create a precedent by admitting a Federation of two "open" Associations, are we not in an impasse?

A. No. We believe that there is a solution which is based on a long-term, future looking, vision of a single, unique National Scout Organisation of Ukraine, that could keep and integrate many positive elements of PLAST tradition and yet constitute a broader basis on which to build a movement aiming at the integral development (spiritual, physical, intellectual, social) of all Ukrainian youth in order to make them responsible citizens, autonomous, supportive and committed to each and every one, locally, nationally and internationally ... which

is the purpose of Scouting, by the way, a clearly larger purpose than that of PLAST.

Q. And what is that solution?

A. We have encouraged the independent creation of an entity called “Scouts of Ukraine”, which is constitutionally in full accordance with the purpose, principles and method of Scouting as defined in the WOSM Constitution.

Membership of this entity is individual, not institutional. This means that it is open, among others, to each and all PLAST members, but as individual members, not as “plastounis”. If it is Scouting (and not just PLAST or the PLAST perception of Scouting) which is really important to PLAST members, nothing prevents any and all of them from becoming members of “Scouts of Ukraine”. In fact, PLAST members could have, as individuals, a majority presence within Scouts of Ukraine. But that majority presence would exist within a constitutional framework which is not only closer to the WOSM Constitution but also open to all these young Ukrainians who cannot identify themselves to PLAST (or to PLAST only) and wish to belong to a broader based Ukrainian Scout Movement.

We believe that PLAST should study that option seriously, in the interest of tomorrow’s Scouting in Ukraine, as was offered to it by the leadership of the Scouts of Ukraine, a leadership to which today’s PLAST members could and should belong, and through it, hopefully one day to World Scouting.

Q. Frankly, supposing the Scouts of Ukraine had not been created, would WOSM have recognised PLAST?

A. Some years ago, we had considered that option. In fact we had hoped it would become possible, if PLAST evolved enough. So we encouraged PLAST to change its Constitution in order to open itself to all, and to endeavour to spread itself in larger circles, geographically, culturally, linguistically, religiously. It did so, to a certain extent; but neither its fundamental identity nor, most important, the perception by others in Ukraine of that identity has really evolved to such an extent that PLAST has become acceptable to as many as a National Scout Organisation should.

The bottom line is that, today, PLAST’s approach still remains too narrow and its identity and image too specific to entirely fulfil the requirements of World Scouting. Thus, in our view, the creation of the “Scouts of Ukraine” is the answer to the difficulty of recognising PLAST – and PLAST only – as the sole Ukrainian Scout Organisation.

Q. How has PLAST and/or the Scouts of Ukraine been informed of the position of the World Scout Committee?

A. By a letter dated 16 November 1999, of Garnet de la Hunt, Chairman of the World Scout Committee, and jointly addressed to Mr Andriy Harmatiy, President PLAST, Ukrainian Scout Organisation and to Mr Boris Skrebtsov, President, Scouts of Ukraine, which you will find hereunder and which your readers may better understand in the light of the above interview.

*“Dear brother Scouts,*

*At its meeting in Cairo on 13 and 14 November, the World Scout Committee has received a detailed report from the WOSM Secretary General concerning the situation of Scouting in Ukraine and on the consultative meeting held in the World*

*Scout Bureau on 27 October involving representatives of PLAST and of the Scouts of Ukraine.*

*On the basis of that report and other information, the World Scout Committee discussed the question of the recognition of a National Scout Organization in Ukraine. As a result, it has reached the following conclusions:*

- *The National Scout Organization to be recognized by WOSM in Ukraine must be a single national organization which is open to all; it cannot be a federation since neither PLAST nor the Scouts of Ukraine are confessional associations, which is the only basis upon which a federation could be considered.*
- *While the World Scout Committee recognizes the important historical role played by PLAST, both within and outside Ukraine, it notes that this organization has acquired, as a result of long tradition, a specificity and an image as a Ukrainian patriotic youth movement, with which a considerable number of young people wishing to become Scouts in Ukraine today cannot identify.*

*This is the reason why PLAST cannot be recognized by WOSM either as the only National Scout Organization representing Scouting in Ukraine today, or as the only one on which to build a single National Scout Organization in Ukraine.*

- *The concept underlying the Scouts of Ukraine, (the newly-created Scout organization which is established in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution of WOSM and which is open to individual members who comply with these requirements), corresponds to the type of National Scout Organization which qualifies for WOSM membership. The draft Constitution of the Scouts of Ukraine is presently in the process of being amended in order to ensure full compliance with WOSM requirements and, once that process is completed, the Scouts of Ukraine should be ready for recognition by WOSM.*

*Needless to say, it will be possible for individual PLAST members to join the Scouts of Ukraine (and indeed it is sincerely hoped that they do so), so that the National Scout Organization recognized by WOSM in Ukraine can unite all Scouts within that country. This need not necessarily preclude the continued existence of PLAST itself, as an organization, but outside Scouting.*

*With all good wishes.”*